Church Participation as Intercultural Encounter in the Experiences of Chinese International Students in the UK

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In memory of Professor Andy Furlong

Abstract

This study is a mixed-method analysis of church participation as a direct intercultural encounter in the experiences of non-Christian Chinese international students in the UK. Its setting in a religious context makes the whole research unique among research on the topic of international students' cross-cultural experience.

The study aims to address the overarching research question: What is the role of Christian churches in the intercultural experiences of Chinese international students in the UK? There are five sub-questions further developed from both student and church perspectives to comprehensively explore the main issue: 1) Why do non-Christian Chinese students choose to go to churches after they arrive in the UK? 2) Do Christian churches serve as a medium of intercultural encounter for Chinese international students? 3) What is the institutional motivation of the Christian community for attracting international students, especially Chinese students? 4) What are the Christian churches' strategies in working with Chinese international students? 5) What is more important for students, religious or intercultural experience?

The study employs survey, semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis as research methods to provide an analysis on international students' church experiences. In the context of the non-Christian Chinese students' international mobility and Christianity in China and UK, it investigates the intentions behind and purposes of the intercultural engagement between churches and students. What underpins the interaction between Chinese students and the international Christian community is the interplay between educational, religious, socio-cultural, and psychological factors. The study also presents the western culture, Christianity, as well as the cultural/religious background of Chinese students, and highlights Christian ambitions and missionary strategies (working model) towards non-Christian international students. The findings indicate that social connections with the host environment and the nature of organisation play a significant role in the cross-cultural adaptation and individual development of international students. Besides offering an explanation for the mechanism behind the students' church participation, the findings also demonstrate that it is Christian churches, rather than universities in the experience of Chinese international students in the UK to facilitate intercultural encounters. The study recommends that universities be encouraged to undertake relevant interventions to facilitate meaningful intercultural engagement among students in the multicultural campus environment.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Signature _____

Abbreviations

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
CABS:	Chartered Association of Business School
CGSS:	Chinese General Social Survey
CPC:	Chinese Communist Party
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
EU:	European Union
FBO:	Faith-based organization
HE	Higher education
HESA:	Higher Education Statistic Agency
IELTS:	International English Language Testing System
LVG：	Local volunteer group
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PhD:	Doctor of Philosophy
SCAR-R:	Revised Sociocultural Adaptation
SPSS:	Statistical Product and Service Solutions
UK:	United Kingdom
UKCISA	United kingdom Council for International students Affairs
UKCOSA:	United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs
UNFPA:	United Nation Population Fund
US:	United States

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The recent flourishing of student mobility has seeded a booming research area in intercultural education and integration, as more and more students engage in this migratory trend. A number of groups, including educational authorities (universities), governments, and migration researchers, are working on the issues of adaptation, communication and transformation, intercultural engagement and involvement, and intercultural learning. Their intention is to enhance intercultural communication competence in the individual sense as well as foster the cultural integration of students from various nations, 'races' and cultures (Kim, 2001; Berry, 1992). It is therefore to be expected that research in this field will bring valuable knowledge and resources, which can be used to enhance the well-being of international students and local people, and aid the cultural development of host countries. In order to understand how the overseas experience contributes to the efficiency of adaptation into a new environment, there is a requirement for awareness of cultural differences, mutual comprehension, and the involvement of different people in eliminating the existing barriers to intercultural engagement and integration (Pless and Maak, 2004), as well as for efforts to combat racial discrimination and isolation in international education (Hurado, 1998).

Numerous prior studies have investigated migrants, who are undoubtedly the main subjects of the adaptation process. However, there is relatively little theory and empirical research relating to the situations of the receiving countries that provide the adaptation environment. Studies have found different sources of support for migrants, particularly what they receive from family, relatives, and other co-nationals (Finch and Vega, 2003). The influence of host nationals in the adaption process in terms of the overall host environment or the Western cultural environment has remained obscure and ambiguous. It is irresponsible to generalise and simply attribute all the changes in migrant population in the host country to the Western environment or to ethnic influence from co-nationals (Kim, 2001). Rather, it

requires a more specific and detailed examination of the various contexts in which migrant individuals lives in their host countries.

Transferring the focus from the abstract to the concrete, this study aims to reveal how some specific forms of host environment, or organisations operating there, impose their influence on Chinese international students in the UK. In addition, rather than focusing on the roles of educational institutions, which have attracted much of the relevant prior research, this study instead concentrated on the wider encounters which take place around religious organisations, as these places were anecdotally found to be popular among Chinese students but to have drawn less attention from researchers.

Beyond its epistemological background, the study initially stemmed from the personal experience of the researcher. As an international student pursuing a PhD degree in the UK, I experienced similar issues of cross-cultural adaptation and engagement as other international students did. Occasionally invited by one of my friends, I was drawn to visiting the church near the campus a few times out of curiosity. I was surprised to meet many Chinese students there and even more surprised to learn that some of them were regular attendees at the church. If this were out of simple curiosity about the church buildings and history of Christian culture[1], it would have made sense to me that students would visit the churches once or twice. However, frequent church visiting by non-Christian Chinese students was more difficult for me to understand, and prompted my interest in exploring the phenomenon of the continuing interaction of Chinese international students with local Christian churches.

1.2 Research Problem

Taking the increasing popularity of international education and the global trend of connection and integration as its fundamental starting points, this study examines various related theories to construct the theoretical framework for its analysis of the potential

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[1] Christian culture is a term primarily used in academia to describe the cultural practices common to Christianity.

religious-cultural contact between Chinese students and the host environment. The overall intention is to explore the relationship between church participation and intercultural engagement. The trend of mobility in the educational arena has generated numerous theories and research studies on the quality of international education, educational equality and justice (Marginson, 2012; Tannock, 2013), and the intercultural experience of international students. The purpose of some of these studies is to understand international students, protect their human rights, and preserve the currently highly profitable market in international higher education (Robertson, 2011). According to Marginson (2012), international students currently inhabit a 'grey zone' or 'limbo', where their 'non-citizen outsider status and the related facts of cultural difference, information asymmetry and communication difficulties' render their existence in the countries where they attend university 'uncertain, vulnerable and de-powered'. The current links between the internationalisation of higher education, and its rapid marketization, privatisation, and commodification, raise questions about the historical and contemporary unjust geopolitical conditions that underpin the current recruitment of international students in Britain (Tannock, 2013). In terms of the intercultural experience of international students, the established and growing interest and research in the domain of cross-cultural interaction among international students focus on relationships (interpersonal or contextual), involvement and inclusion, and the associated patterns of intercultural adaptation (Kim, 2001). As for the intercultural contact within a religious context, large volumes of research concentrate on religious conversion issues and on the multicultural meaning of social support offered by churches to immigrants and refugees in the host environment (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000; Min, 1992; Warner and Wittner, 1998; Williams, 1988; Yang, 1999, Stewart et al., 2008). Other than Li (2012), there is little research into the context of Christian volunteer groups for international university students.

This study focuses on the involvement of international students in their host community, and on the relationships formed between them. It sets out to explore the experience of cultural engagement and interaction in the adaptation process for Chinese students. Specifically, it concentrates on the context of religious organisations and examines the

wider social contact (beyond the university campus) and the engagement between non-Christian Chinese international students and Christian churches.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the research background and position as outlined above, the study intends to answer the following the overarching question: **What is the role of Christian Churches in the intercultural experiences of Chinese international students in the UK?** In order to understand comprehensively the relationship between Chinese students and Christian churches, five research questions have been developed to explore the perspectives of both the students and the faith organisations:

1) Why do non-Christian Chinese students choose to go to Christian churches after they arrive in the UK?

2) Do Christian churches serve as a medium of intercultural encounters for Chinese international students? What do Chinese students do in the churches?

3) What are the institutional motivations of the Christian communities to attract international students, especially Chinese students?

4) What are the Christian churches' strategies for working with Chinese international students?

5) What is the influence of church participation on Chinese students? What is more important for them: religious or intercultural experience?

1.4 Research Design

In order to answer the above questions, the present study used a combination of survey, participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interview, and document analysis methods. The fieldwork took place in two Christian churches located in the area of an

established university campus in the UK. In total, 501 Chinese Master's students of the university completed the survey, of whom 15 students who were frequent churchgoers were invited to take part in semi-structured in-depth interviews. In addition, five Christian church representatives were interviewed, including group leaders and volunteers with different responsibilities in the international groups. More details about the research design are given in Chapter 4.

1.5 Research Originality and Significance

It is the religious context along with the participation of non-Christian Chinese international students that ensure this research can make an original contribution to the field. Most other studies into the learning and social experiences of international students and their short-term adaptation process choose as their context the university campus, classrooms, or other university-led organisations, and social and educational institutions. In contrast, this research considers the religious experience during the students' adaptation period beyond the university boundaries. Given the cultural/religious background of non-Christian Chinese students in the UK, the trans-religious and cross-cultural perspective in the study fills the gaps in the literature in terms of the diversity of encounters in the area of intercultural relations and communication. Furthermore, although there are researchers interested in the religious participation of immigrants intending to relocate their social capital to their host country, obtain social resources, and engage with the local community (Tillie，2004), the related experience of international students has been ignored. Due to the different durations spent in their host environment, the situations and needs of short-term intercultural sojourners, such as international students, business people, and foreign workers, are likely to be different from those of long-term groups. This research explores the potential characteristics that typically belong to sojourners through religious encounters based on a sample group of international students.

As an interdisciplinary research project drawing on theories and methodological approaches from the fields of education, sociology and psychology, the present study fills a

gap in our knowledge and understanding of the religious engagement and involvement of short-term sojourners, which differs from the related experience of immigrants. This study identifies faith-based organisations and communities as different from the usual university context and which offer wider social contact for international students in their overseas experience. This research provides cross-cultural and comparative perspectives to explore the Chinese students' experience within the host environment not only from the viewpoint of the students but also from that of the local people. It investigates the phenomenon of intercultural interaction from both sides, and compares their ideas and behaviours in order to find the similarities and differences in terms of cultural communication. Through detailed descriptions of the international students' experience of intercultural engagement in which they have participated, it is possible to understand the factors that shape the international students' choices and actions through the intercultural contact, and the transformations they undergo as a result of the cultural encounters. The categorisations about types of church participants, church representatives, and students' friendship modes based on churches and the attitudes of Chinese students towards Christianity[2] make the study with the originality and knowledge to understand the interaction between Christian churches and Chinese international students. In terms of the analysis on church events for international students, I regarded the missionary work as kind of business to look for the recruitment or "faith profit" and applied the "business model" to understand the whole process, which also an original contribution to the field. In addition, reflections are provided on the development of intercultural education, particularly in terms of informal education and the nurturing of students' intercultural competence in international higher education.

In summary, this thesis explores the experience of Chinese international students, without Christian backgrounds, to join in with the activities of Christian churches in the UK during their overseas studies. Specifically, it aims to understand the cultural encounter and engagement of non-Christian Chinese students with Christians and Christian churches.

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[2] Christianity is a monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who serves as the focal point for the religion.

Given its religious context, the study's setting is unique in its research on the topic of international students' cross-cultural experience. The thesis investigates the factors shaping this phenomenon from the theoretical perspective of intercultural encounter, cross-cultural interaction and adaptation, cultural contact, social support, and social network, for which I draws on Kim's theory as a key resource.

In order to conduct a comprehensive and thorough investigation of this area, it employs quantitative and qualitative methods in the study. The analysis contains three dimensions: reason, procedure and result. The "reason" dimension presents the expectation gaps and intentions of Chinese students as well as the motivation of church organisations; the "procedure" dimension relates to the interaction and engagement of Chinese students with the churches from the perspective of the Christian organisations; and the "result" dimension deals with the effect of the Chinese students' church participation on their cross-cultural adaptation, and on the perceptions that the sampled Chinese students and church representatives have of each other. Some reflections on the research process and the identity of the researcher are also included.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of a further eight chapters, which can be summarised as follows:

Chapter 2 introduces the context of the study. Firstly, it provides an overview of the literature on international students' mobility in general and in the UK, before focusing on Chinese international students, in particular. A discussion of Christianity, Christian churches, and church participation is then provided to understand the background of church involvement in the local community through social support. A contrast is made of the different developments of Christianity in China and the West, and of the different attitudes towards Christianity that people hold in the UK and China. Chapter 2 also introduces the "business model" as a means to analyse the church community.

Chapter 3 reviews the concepts most relevant to the study and develops the theoretical

framework. Section 3.2 reviews the conceptualization of intercultural encounters, the terms 'inter-culture' and 'cross culture', and the meaning of 'culture' as defined in intercultural studies. Section 3.3 discusses intercultural contact and interaction, reviews the approaches used in the field, and examines the theory of positive intercultural contact or communication. Section 3.4 explores the literature relating to the intercultural engagement of international students, and the internal and external factors playing a role in the process. The literature on intercultural transformation as an outcome of this engagement is also examined.

Chapter 4 presents the methods used to address the research questions. Four methods are used in the study: survey, interview, participant observation, and document analysis. The chapter discusses the selection of methods, the issues of reliability and validity connected with the methods and data analysis, and the specific problems faced in the fieldwork. Section 4.2 presents these methods one by one, with the reasons for their selection, the process involved, the expected level of reliability (for quantitative methods), and their trustworthiness (for qualitative methods). Section 4.3 describes the population, the sample selection criteria, and the recruitment of the sample. Section 4.4 outlines the data analysis process. Section 4.5 introduces the location of the fieldwork in the study. Section 4.6 reflects on the position and identity of the researcher in the study, and what influence they may have had. Section 4.7 discusses the ethical considerations for the study.

Chapter 5 presents the results and analyses of the data relating to the church participation of the Chinese students in their adaptation experience. From the expectations and expectation gaps encountered by Chinese students in the UK, the chapter examines the adverse situation of Chinese students in the university environment, which potentially pushes them to explore more opportunities in wider fields of social contact, such as Christian churches. Associated with the cultural background of the Chinese students, a comparison of the intercultural interactions in other public locations found that Christian churches are an attractive and positive place of contact.

Chapter 6 presents findings on the intentions of Christian churches in their interactions with Chinese students. Associated with the current development of Christianity both in the British and Chinese contexts, it interprets the reasons that the church members gave. The intentions are considered from a broader perspective and light is shed on the essential motivations behind Christian groups. Reasons given by church representatives, including empathy, friendship and missionary work, are critically analysed via the researcher's observations and interviews. Church members are characterised into four types.

Chapter 7 presents findings relating to the international Christian community for international students (most of them are Chinese). It explores the mission model of the international Christian community that provides systematic work for their "customers" in order to evangelise and convert Chinese international students. The discussion starts with an introduction to the nature of the international Christian community, which displays the role of Christian charity Friends International, and its relations with churches within the community based on an analysis of its official website. The next section attempts to abstract the missionary work model of churches for Chinese international students according to the general business model from the process viewpoint. Through the cases of two Christian churches within the community, it analyses the organisation of the events and social support, which the international Christian community provides for international students. Section 7.6 summarises the routine or model that Christians use to preach among non-Christian internationals, and their approaches to identifying potential Christians, which underpins the operational agency behind intercultural interaction.

Chapter 8 presents findings on the limited role which intercultural interaction with Christian churches plays for Chinese international students, even though the international Christian community would seem to be a useful organisation exists for Chinese students. Section 8.2 discusses the general relationship between church participation and students' cross-cultural adaptation. In addition, some of the factors abstracted from the intercultural contact are more closely analysed. Section 8.4 focuses on the attitudes of Chinese students

towards Christianity. The students are divided into four categories according to their perspectives, as: recognisers of universal values, denials, believers, or hesitators.

Finally, Chapter 9 concludes the research by outlining its contribution to the knowledge and understanding in the areas of cultural engagement and integration, intercultural learning, and student diversity in international education. It offers implication for theory and practice. The last section contains some reflections on the research's limitations, research process, and the personal growth of the researcher from the doctoral study.

Chapter 2 Research Context – International Students and Church Participation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research context of the study. It sets out the background of Chinese international students in the UK, followed by the issues of Christian church participation. Starting with the situation of international students in the UK, it then focuses on Chinese international students and their cultural/religious background. Section 2.3 concentrates on Christianity, Christian culture, church participation, and faith-based organisations.

2.2 International Students in the UK

Over the last decade, the rapid growth in international student mobility has made it an increasingly significant feature of the higher education landscape. Universities worldwide, especially those in Europe, Oceania, and North America, have seen rapid development in the internationalization of education. According to the statistics presented in *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, from 1975 to 2014 the number of international students who enrolled outside their own country rose dramatically, from 0.8 million worldwide to 5 million, more than a five-fold expansion over the three-decade period (see Figure 2-1).
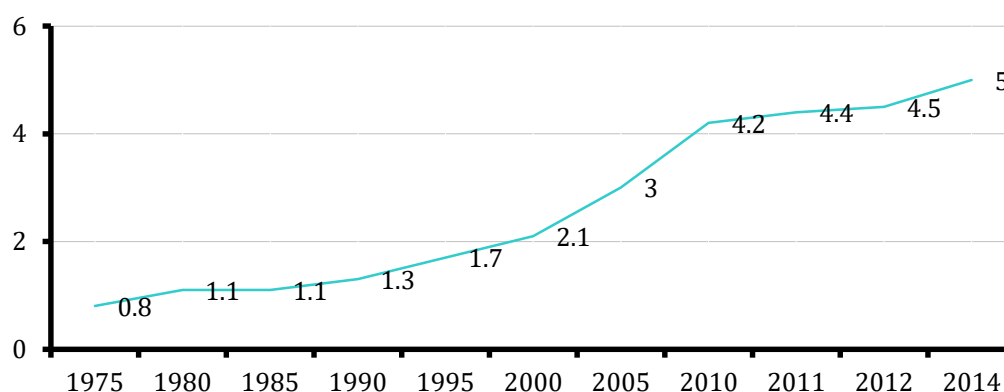
Figure 2- 1 Growth in the Number of International students (1975-2014, in millions)[3]

It is worthy of note that in the 12 years from 2000 to 2014 the number of international students more than doubled, with an average annual growth of around 7% (OECD, 2016). In terms of the most affected regions of the world, Europe's institutions have the highest intake of international students (48%), followed by North America, and Oceania (OECD, 2015). The high levels of internationalisation of universities in these regions are reflected in the rate of increase in international student numbers. Among these regions, the US and the UK account for a large portion of the global international student population, with 16% and 13% in 2014 respectively, followed by Germany, Australia, and France with a share of 6% each. The proportion of international students choosing the US dropped from 23% to 16% between 2000 and 2012, while, in contrast, the UK attracted 2% more international students and recorded a 13% market share in the same period. In terms of countries sending students abroad, the OECD statistics for 2014 demonstrate that Asian international students were the largest group who enrolled for education outside their own countries, constituting 53.1% of the overall international student population. Chinese students accounted for 22% of all international students in the OECD area, which is the highest share of all the reporting countries (OECD, 2016).

With its reputation for quality in higher education, the UK plays a significant role in the global education market. The number of international students has grown steadily in the

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[3] Figure 2-1 is adapted from Box 4.1 in *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators* Source：OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics

past ten years. Around 18% of all students in UK higher education came from other countries in 2012-2015, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2017). This constituted an increase of about 1.2% compared with the figure reported in OECD statistics for 2011-2012 (16.8%). According to HESA (2017) data (see Table 2-1) there were 438,101 students from outside the UK enrolled at UK educational institutions in 2015-16, among whom the number of non-EU students (310,575) was almost triple the number of EU students (127,440). Combining the HESA data from 2008-2017, the number of international students in higher education from both EU and non-EU countries generally increased, although 2012-2013 saw a slight decrease of around 2% compared with 2011-2012 levels. The number grew again, showing a 3% increase for 2013-2014 numbers compared with 2011-2012.

Level of Study/ Domicile	Full-time	Part-time	Total
EU students (non-UK domicile) in HE			
Total non-UK EU	112,410	15,025	**127,440**
Non-EU students in HE			
Total non-EU	285,120	25,450	**310,575**
All non-UK domicile in HE			
Total non-UK	397,530	40,475	**438,010**

Table 2- 1 International students in UK HE by domicile, level and mode European Union (EU) (excluding UK) and non-EU, 2015-16[4]

These international students together with native students potentially create a diverse environment for UK higher education. Newest HESA statistics (2017) show that in the academic year 2015-2016, 81% of students studying in higher education in the UK are from the UK. 6% are from the rest of the EU and 14% are from the rest of the world. 54% of students studying at postgraduate level in the UK are from the UK and other EU.

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[4] Source: HESA, 2017

These international students also contribute £7 billion per year to the economy through fees, off-campus expenditure, and jobs around universities in the UK. It should be noted that one-eighth of a university's income comes from tuition fees, and it is predicted that tuition fee income will increase to £4.4bn in 2020 (based on 2011 prices, assuming constant fee levels in real terms), and living expenditure will increase to £7.7bn (also based on 2011 prices) (CABS[5], 2016). The above figures demonstrate the profitable market of international higher education and the significance of international students to the UK.

2.3 Chinese International Students

2.3.1 Chinese International Students in the UK

Chinese students constitute the largest proportion of all international students worldwide. Not only that, but they also account for the largest number of international students coming to the UK during the last five years, and it is assumed that this number will continue to increase over the next few years in the UK (OECD, 2015). Among all international students, the number of Chinese students far exceeds any other nationality at 91,215 (HESA, 2017). China is the only country showing a significant increase in student numbers in the academic year 2015-2016. As figure 2-2 shows, during the five years from 2010 to 2016, the number of Chinese students in the UK grew at an average rate of 9% annually. The number has accounted for about 20% of all international students (438,101) (UKCISA student record). For the academic session from 2014-2015, one in every five international students in the UK as a whole is Chinese. Early in the academic session 2013-2014, it has found that one in every four non-EU students came from China (Fakunle et al., 2016).

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[5] CABS: Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2016

Top Ten non-EU countries for HE student enrolment by location of
High Education provider and country of domicile from 2010/11 to
2015/16

— China
— India
— Negeria
— Malaysia
— United States
— HongKong
— Saudi Arabia
— Singapore
— Thailand
— Parkistan
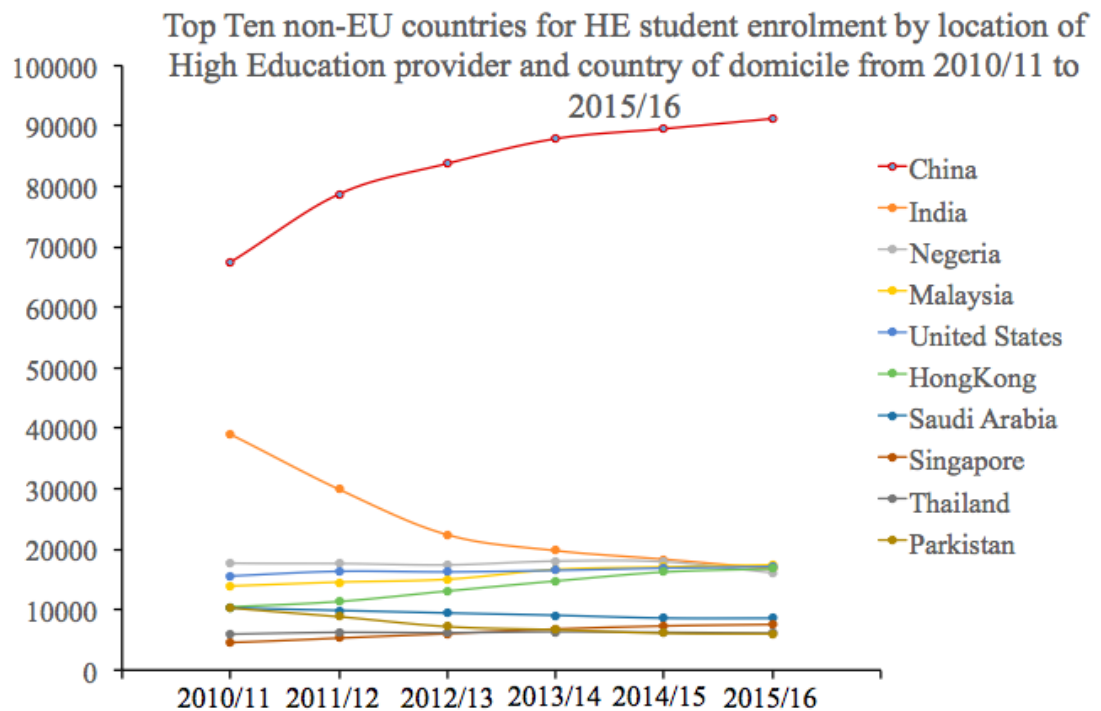
Figure 2- 2 Top Ten non-EU countries for HE student enrolment by location of High Education provider and country of domicile from 2010/2011 to 2015/16 [6]

In the academic year 2012-2013, among all international students at postgraduate level in the UK, 39% of those coming from non-EU countries were pursuing a taught Master's degree (usually a one-year programme). 23% of those pursuing a taught Master students were from China, which amounted to almost the same number as taught Master's students from the UK (only 26% of all taught Master's students in the UK came from the UK). Combing the data from HESA (2014) and FEFCE (2014), in the academic year 2012-2013, on average, 52% students take the business and administration courses were from China (FEFCE, 2014). In some universities, the share was even as high as 60%.

The number of Chinese students in the global market is increasing for a set of specific reasons that relate to the country's development. In order to explain the growth of student mobility in contemporary China, it is necessary to refer to the Economic Reform (implemented since 1978, and known as the 'Reform and Open-up' policy). Before the reform, China was a relatively closed country and it had no close economic or educational

[6] Source: UKCISA 2013，2014，2015, 2016, 2017

ties with other countries. However, in 1978 China entered a new stage of modernisation with the launch of this reform aimed at increasing interaction with the outside world.

As a result of the opening policy by 2005, more than one million Chinese have received an overseas education (Hayhoe, 2011). The number of Chinese students going abroad for further study has steadily increased to the point that they now constitute the largest group among all international students. Since 2000, and especially after 2005, the number of students leaving China has risen dramatically. According to data from the Chinese Education Ministry, the number of Chinese international students in 2014 (459,800) had increased four-fold compared with the number in 2005 (119,000), and 12-fold compared with the number in 2000 (39,000). According to OECD data from 2012, about 28% of these students went to the United States, while 11% chose to study in the United Kingdom.

Chinese students have gradually become an indispensable part of UK international education. Taking the combination of data both from top receiving and top sending countries, the UK is set to continue to attract foreign-born students from all over the world, especially from China, in the years to come. In return for the great contribution Chinese students make to the British academic community, such as the financial resources they provide and the cultural diversity they offer, Chinese students receive the international higher education and a varied plethora of cultural experiences.

2.3.2 The Cultural and Religious Backgrounds of Chinese Students

When exploring the cultural and religious experience of Chinese students in the host country, their national, cultural, and religious backgrounds should be taken into consideration, because the cultural and religious context in the West is so different from that in China (MacCulloch, 2010). It follows that any examination of these differences requires a prior understanding of the cultural and religious origins of Chinese students.

Given the topic under discussion is particular pertinent, the history of Christianity in China can be traced back hundreds of year and its arrival heralded the interference by European

powers in Chinese territories that became synonymous with the Qing dynasty. At the end of the 18th century, with the decline of the Qing dynasty, Roman Catholics and Protestants found an opportunity in China (MacCulloch, 2010). Roman Catholics concentrated on missionary work, while Protestants started their diplomatic and economic assault on China. MacCulloch further observed that, a series of treaties with European powers in 1842, initiated by the British, opened the door to the Protestant penetration of China. The exporting of opium to China before the treaties had led to a crisis of addiction throughout the Chinese Empire, and the authorities were desperate to prevent the further shipment of drugs. After the treaties, the opium trade grew further after the. Many of the Protestant missionaries who arrived were involved in the drug trade, although missionary work was their top priority. They received a lot of their funds from the trade, either directly or indirectly. As a result, traditionally, both the Chinese people and the government of the time had been hostile to the Protestant missionaries. The government was disgusted by the regime of the time, which allowed them access to the country (MacCulloch, 2010). Christianity encountered a catastrophic rebellion lasting almost a century and culminating in the collapse of the Qing dynasty, after which churches were not able to free themselves from association with this imperial humiliation until 1911. Even now, the official Chinese attitude to Catholicism is distinct from, and different to, that shown towards 'Christianity', with the latter, in the Chinese context, referring mainly to Protestantism (MacCulloch, 2010).

Working in an alien culture, there were other difficulties that emerged in the process of missionary work. According to the Protestants, one of the problems was the inadequacy of the Chinese language (Wang, 2010). They preferred to blame the language itself for their difficulties in translating biblical concepts, rather than their own inability with Chinese. At the same time, imbued in Chinese culture was a very negative view of Protestantism (MacCulloch, 2010, 898). The Protestants later followed the Catholics' earlier successes by adopting and adapting their methods of missionary work. For example, in 1865, Englishman Hudson Taylor set up his own Christian mission society named China Inland Mission, which was not dependent on the opium trade and had no campaign for funds. In

order to be better accepted by the local people, members of the society even wore Chinese dress[7], including the women, which was difficult for them at that time. Some schools were designed to educate the mission families' younger generations to become acculturated to China instead of sending them back to Europe. However, the missionary work could not sustain itself successfully as the schools were found to be no different from other missionary societies. As a consequence, Christianity never became a nationwide religion in China.

The limited development of religion in China is, however, just one side of the story as, officially, China became more tolerant towards Christianity after the Cultural Revolution[8](1966). The primary political focus shifted to economic development, and from 1978 the government pursued an Open Door Policy. Along with this shift, the existence of religious belief in China was officially recognised and this cooperation between socialism and religion was able to contribute effectively to modernisation ("Zhongyang Dangxiao Minzu Zongjiao Lilunshi", 1998, 389–390). From the end of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s to the present day, the long-term existence of religion has come to be accepted as the Chinese government realised its value for the development of modern China. Religion has come to be portrayed as contributing to modernisation through cooperation with socialism, with a clear separation made between the state and religion by a new law in

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[7] In Qing Dynasty, a new style of dress, called *tangzhuang*, included the *changshan* worn by men and the *qipao* worn by women. Manchu official headwear differed from the Ming version, but the Qing continued to use the Mandarin Square. Foot binding became more popular and women were required to wear very small shoes. Most Han Chinese women followed the practice of foot binding during the Qing dynasty (but Manchu women did not). By restricting movement, bound feet deterred women from leaving home and husband, and encouraged a compliant fidelity. Bound feet were also a sign of beauty and refinement, which enhanced the prospect of marriage. The swaying walk of a woman with bound feet was considered particularly alluring. (Source: http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/hsc/evrev/chinese_dress.htm)

[8] The Cultural Revolution, formally the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, was a socio-political movement that took place in China from 1966 until 1976. Set into motion by Mao Zedong, then Chairman of the Communist Party of China, its stated goal was to preserve "true" Communist ideology in the country by purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society, and to re-impose Maoist thought as the dominant ideology within the Party. The movement paralyzed China politically and negatively affected the country's economy and society to a significant degree, (Chen, 1992).

1992. The development in modern China was not constrained as much as it previously had been, and a growing number of people are adopting Christianity as their faith. Christianity had been along with other religions such as Buddhism and Daoism, was encouraged to contribute to the diversity of cultures in China; however, the government remains atheist and still controls the development of religion. China is a country that regarded Christianity as "Western imperialism" in the past and for that reason still keeps an eye on its influence, especially in politics (Perry, 2008)

Although freedom of belief was recognised after the Cultural Revolution (Hirotaka, 2008), religion and education remained separate. Religious activities or actions relating to religious propagation or proselytization were forbidden within school education. On the one hand, this can be interpreted as an attempt to constrain the influence of religion or religions on education itself, or on the content of the religious education delivered in schools. On the other hand, when considered together with the rule of separation of state and religion, China could be seen to be taking a clear stand against religion and against those people who might wish to promote it (such as Christians). Religious education in China, whether for students in high schools or universities, is strictly limited. Only education that aims at a basic knowledge of religion is permitted, and the religious issues discussed in this thesis are therefore of a politically sensitive nature in China.

Western missionaries have not been slow in their efforts to spread Christianity across China. Recently, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, was invited to visit Shanghai by the government and by the officially recognised Three-Self Patriotic Association of the Protestant church. It has been suggested that the visit was a landmark that will see the explosion of Christianity in China, and that it is on course to become the world's most Christian country within 15 years (Bingham, 2015).

It is important to note that the meaning of religion for Chinese people is different from that in traditionally religious countries. Historically, China has been a cradle for a variety of the most enduring religious-philosophical traditions in the world. Chinese culture is shaped by the constitutional creeds of Confucius, Taoism, and Buddhism (Miller, 2006). In ancient

times, people participated in religious practices with their emperors, who claimed to have a "Mandate from Heaven". However, modern China is not a religious country, particularly since the atheist Chinese Communist Party (CPC) gained control. From the foundation of the People's Republic of China (1949) to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (1966), religious disappearance was seen as part of social development. It became the object of oppression and suffered the national supersession of that time.

The majority of Chinese people are not bound to any religious belief. According to surveys conducted in 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2011 as part of the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), an average 6.2% of Chinese identified as Buddhists, 2.3% as Christians (of which 2% were Protestants and 0.3% Catholics), 2.2% as members of folk religious sects, 1.7% as Muslims, and 0.2% as Taoists. In addition, unlike the requirements of most religions, in Chinese religions there is no demand for official adherence (for example, Christians are not required to register in China). Some scholars have suggested that the terms "cultural practices", "thought systems" or "philosophies" are more appropriate with reference to "religion" in China (e.g. Paramore, 2016).

China's historical development and the government constraints currently in place means that, the country is seen in the West as one of the worst in the world with respect to belief in liberty (Lodge, 2015). Lodge, as well as other European scholars (e.g. Carlson. 2005; Brown and Tiemey, 2009), from the perspectives on human rights and freedom, pointed out that religion in China is restricted to Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism, with close regulation and monitoring by the Chinese government. These religions are not permitted to conduct themselves freely, particularly Catholicism and Protestantism. The Chinese government has adopted the policies of "independence and deciding for ourselves", "managing churches by ourselves", and the "three selves" policy - Chinese propagation, Chinese management and Chinese financing. These policies make it clear that the Chinese government wants to prohibit any interference from foreign forces that might use religion to penetrate Chinese politics. The growth of Christianity is regarded as a threat to the Chinese government (Aikman, 2012). The government has long distrusted

Christian organisations with international ties, especially since the CPC took over (Bingham, 2015). Christianity was widely associated with Western imperialism in China and the disruption that followed. Christians typically attend unofficial or underground churches in China. The Telegraphy in 2014, argued (by Philip) that Chinese Protestants were worshiping at illegal underground "house churches", which held unsupervised services in an attempt to evade the prying eyes of the Communist Party. The Guardian newspaper additionally considered from their perspective in 2015 that authorities in Zhejiang Province forcibly removed the crosses from 400 churches as a way of controlling the growth of Christianity. We can see that the development of Christianity in China is not free as it is in the West. It has also been experiencing slower development in China compared to other Asian countries, such as Korea (Ching, 2006). For political and historical reasons, most Chinese citizens are not familiar with Christian beliefs even though they have existed in China since the 7th century AD (Ching, 2006).

The long history of constraints placed on the development of Christianity has resulted in a dearth of knowledge about the religion for the majority of Chinese people. Christianity for a Chinese person from an atheist family background is tantamount to an exotic idea, borrowed from Western culture. Unless there is someone in the family who is a believer, or who is studying religion at degree level, it can be assumed that Chinese students will not have had experience many encounters with Christianity. Given the understanding that Chinese people develop at school of Christianity's significance to the West, most Chinese students in the UK will regard the religion as part of Western culture and alien to them.

2.4 Church Participation

2.4.1 Christian Culture in the West

Throughout history, "Western" and "Christian" culture have been considered almost synonymous (Dawson, 1961, 108), with Christianity contributing significantly to the early foundations of Western culture, from its architecture to its education, and music. It has a far-reaching significance to the West world. Christianity is the foundation of modern

European culture and this can be more apparent to the people coming from outside of European or Christian civilisation. By as early as the 4th century, it was already playing a prominent role in shaping Western civilisation (Beyer, 2013; Dallmayr, 2016). Despite the decreasing numbers of modern-day Europeans believing in God, the influence of Christianity on the establishment of the Western world is undeniable. Nowadays most of the modern-day population of the Western could generally be described as "cultural Christians". They are a secular people with a Christian heritage who may not believe in the religious claims of Christianity but live with a popular culture, art, and music intrinsically related to it. Christian culture has influenced philosophy, literature, art, music, and science (Koch, 1994). Christianity has played a significant role in education, medicine, and science, as the churches created the bases of the Western system of education. Their first universities originated in a Medieval Christian setting (Rüegg, 1992, XIX–XX). Many Christians contributed to the development of science and brought the ideals of Christianity into social welfare, economics (Weber, 1905), politics, literature (Buringh and Zanden, 2009), and family life. Many customs or festivals are still part of the British culture. The notions of "Europe" and the "Western World" have been intimately connected with the concept of "Christianity and Christendom", and many even attribute Christianity as being the link that created a unified European identity (Dawson, 2010, 108).

The significance of Christian culture does not imply Christianity, as a religion, is as popular as it has been in popular before. Today, the number of Christians is declining in many areas of the world (developed countries), including the northern and western United States, Oceania, and northern and western Europe (Great Britain, Scandinavia, France, Germany). Places like Brazil, and the southern United States have seen a decrease in the percentage of Christians, though the population size remains the same. Likewise, according to census data in New Zealand and Australia, the Christian population there has decreased both in number and percentage. In most developed countries, the symbol of Christian identity, church attendance, has been falling in the last few decades (Putnam, 2000). This is regarded by some people as a sign of a decline in religious faith in general. According to the latest projection from the Pew Research Center in the US, the proportion

of the population identifying themselves as Christian will fall from 64% in 2010 to 45% by 2050 if the current trend continues. Furthermore, whereas 66% of the world's Christians lived in Europe in 1910, this figure has now fallen to about 25%, and by 2050 it will be only 16%.

Britain is becoming less religious as the numbers who affiliate with a religion or attend religious services are in continual decline. According to the 2011 Census, 50% of British people did not regard themselves as belonging to a particular religion (this mainly refers to Christianity), while the largest proportion of religious affiliates (20%) belonged to the Church of England. Religious affiliation does not automatically relate to religious practice. Apart from on special occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms, more than half (56%) of those who belonged to or were brought up in a religion never attended religious services or meetings. For the remainder of this group, practice varied widely and just 14% attended weekly.

Some groups in British society are found to be more religious than others - women compared with men, the old compared with the young, and the less well educated compared with the better educated (see Table 2-2). In particular, there are large differences between the young and the old. Around two in three (64%) of the youngest age group (aged 18-24) did not belong to a religion, compared with less than one in three (28%) of the oldest age group (aged 65 years and over). A similar pattern is seen with religious attendance, with around four in ten people aged 65 years and over attending religious meetings, compared with slightly more than two in ten of the youngest age group.

		No Religion	Religious but don't attend meetings	Religious and do attend meetings[9]	Base
All	%	50	18	30	*3297*
Gender					
Male	%	56	17	25	*1442*
Female	%	45	19	35	*1855*
Age					
18-24	%	64	10	24	*230*
25-34	%	57	14	28	*446*
35-44	%	60	11	28	*637*
45-54	%	51	18	30	*557*
55-64	%	47	21	30	*563*
65-97	%	28	31	39	*857*
Highest educational qualification					
Degree	%	48	12	39	*643*
A-level	%	55	14	30	*780*
O-level	%	58	17	25	*537*
CSE	%	56	21	20	*183*
No qualification	%	42	27	28	*1129*

Table 2- 2 Religious Affiliations and Attendance by Demographic Characteristics (Lee, 2012)[10]

The decline seems to be continuing, not only as older, more religious generations are replaced by younger, less religious ones, but also as the younger generations increasingly

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[9] 'Religious and do attend meetings' includes anyone who attends, however infrequency – that is, any of: Once a week or more, less often but at least once in two weeks, less often but at least once a month, less often but at least twice a year, less often but at least once a year, less often than once a year.

[10]   Data source: Census 2011

opt not to bring up their children in a religion - a factor shown to be strongly linked with religious affiliation and attendance later in life (Lee, 2012). This reflects the fact that each generation is less likely than its predecessor to be born into religious families. Furthermore, the lack of religiosity tends to remain with individuals, as they get older. The Church of England and the Church of Scotland are believed to be collapsing as they have lost touch with people's everyday lives and have failed to win the hearts and minds of young people for several generations (Woodhead, 2004, 208). Whether or not Christianity is on course to become a minority religion in the UK (Bingham, 2015), at least Christianity as a religion is not as important as it was for British people.

Apart from the declining trend of Christianity in Europe today, Christianity is the religion with most followers compared with other religions, numbering over 2.4 billion adherents (Zoll, 2011). In the last hundred years, around 33% of the world's population has been Christian, which is one Christian in every three individuals. According to the 2011 Pew Research Centre survey, 76.2% of Europeans and about 86% of people in the Americas described themselves as Christians. It is the dominant religion in some parts of Asia, such as Georgia, Armenia, East Timor, and the Philippines. The Christian population has seen large increases in developing countries (Mcleod and Ustorf, 2003). This represents a major shift in the demographics of Christianity in today's world. Christianity will continue to grow significantly in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly thanks to the high birth rate and falling infant mortality. Associated with government policy towards religion in China, the prediction raises questions about the approaches of missionary work in modern China.

2.4.2 Christian Church Participation and Immigrants

This section presents the meaning of church participation and the relations between churches and local communities in the current UK.

2.4.2.1 Meaning of Church Participation

Church participation or attendance originally and traditionally is an aspect of theological practice. It is part of life for many Christians, and almost all branches of Christianity encourage or even require church attendance with biblical imperatives. For example, according to the Bible, Christians who worship God can gain spiritual growth by congregating with other believers. Church is regarded as the place where Christian believers can love, encourage, serve, instruct, and be kind and compassionate to each other, and it is the place in which to meet regularly and communicate. Church participation or attendance is "the foundation for Christian life" (Roos, 2013, 99), and one of the fundamental aspects of a believer's life. Although there is no requirement for Christians to attend church weekly, someone who belongs to Christ should have a desire to worship God, receive the Word of God, and continue the fellowship with other believers. Church participation for many Christians is an essential and required part of their religious life (Bass, 2009, 84).

2.4.2.2 Social Support, Immigrants and Refugees

In addition to the theological praxis for believers, researchers also find that churches play the role of social support for non-believers, including immigrants and local community members. This role has been documented in the research into interactions between post-1965 immigrants to the US and churches (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000; Min, 1992; Warner and Wittner, 1998; Williams, 1988; Yang, 1999). For newcomers to a country, their limited personal resources and scant social networks serve as an impediment to coping with the challenges of integration and settlement (Stewart et al., 2008). Religious institutions have had an important place in the lives of new immigrants and refugees in supporting them and relieving the pressures of change and assimilation into their host environment. Traditional source of support such as ethnical family have been reduced and are often unable to provide guidance for new immigrants to help them adapt to life in new and changing circumstances. 'New immigrants, therefore, are looking for new forms of

authority through which they can achieve a sense of certainty and security, and find guidance and protection in their new life' (Cao, 2005).

In the process of achieving this sense of security and protection, ethnic religious[11] institutions have played an important role. For both the earlier European groups and the more recent "new" immigrants, the role of ethnic religion in the adjustment process of immigrants, and in maintaining group identity and culture has been documented (Dolan, 1972; Fenton, 1988; Haddad and Lummis, 1987; Miller, 1977; Mol, 1976; Palinkas, 1982; Rutledge, 1985; Williams, 1988). Zhou and Bankston (1998) studied New Orleans Vietnamese youth and demonstrated that church participation protected some Vietnamese immigrant youths from inner-city youth subculture. Religion in Zhou and Bankston's research connected these youths to ethnic culture and networks, and helped their parents exert control over them and support their schoolwork, which had a positive influence on their scholastic performance. In addition, the role of religion in ethnic identification has been noted in studies of immigrant religions (e.g. Chong, 1998; Bankston and Zhou, 1996; Yang, 1999). Korean-American churchgoers reported that the Korean ethnic church supported the development of the group's defensive and often highly exclusive ethnic identity in two key ways: first, through a general institutional transmission of Korean culture, and second, by way of a set of core traditional Korean values that are legitimised and sacralised through the identification with a conservative Christian morality and worldview (Chong, 1998). Zhang (2006) concentrated on conversion issues and explored the role of the Chinese Christian church and the "para-church" organisation, China Outreach Ministries, in Chinese immigrants' conversion to evangelical Protestantism. Yang (1998) explored the decisive importance of social and cultural contexts to the social and cultural changes in Chinese society, and the identity reconstruction of immigrant Chinese. Her research went beyond the individual conversion model, and recognised the institutional influence on these immigrant Chinese. The rationalisation of evangelism is highlighted in promoting the conversion of Chinese. Besides evangelical and ethnic factors, Wang and Yang (2006) found that ecological factors were also significant in the

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[11] The religion of the immigrants from their home country

conversion of Chinese to Christianity in the United States. Since Christianity has never been an indigenous religion among the Chinese, the fact that most Chinese Christians in America are converts after immigration highlights the role of religion in the uprooted lives of immigrants.

The above studies are all focused on the role of ethnic religious organisations in the lives of immigrants. As for the role of host religious organisations, there is less research available. Two possible reasons are the lack of documentation and the preference for ethnic religious group where immigrants could strengthen their ethnical relations in the Chinese community to achieve their required security and guidance. Also important to note for the purposes of this thesis is that most research on adaptation and religious organisations centres around groups of immigrants who may feel under pressure to assimilate. There are few studies on groups of sojourners such as international students. Li (2012) researched the context of university and Christian volunteer groups for international students, focusing on the transformations of Christian identity. Another scholar, Williams (2012), investigated the new Christian identity and actions of international students after they finished their studies and went back to their home countries. Both researchers were more interest in religious influences on international students. With regard to students' engagement with host religious institutions or other social-cultural meanings of their church participation, there is even less scholarship. This thesis follows research on immigrants and refugees, as well as on international students, as mentioned above. It explores students' off-campus activities in Christian churches, and aims to increase knowledge and understanding of the cultural engagement of international students. It focuses on the experiences of international Master's students in the host religious institutions to investigate comprehensively any socio-cultural and psychological changes resulting from their experiences with the Christian churches.

2.4.3 Faith-based Organisations (FBO)

The involvement of faith-based organisations in the provision of social events is not new,

and with the advent of "charitable choice"[12], it is likely to increase. In recent years, there has been an extraordinary growth in interest in the charitable activities of congregations and other religious organisations. A significant number of studies (e.g. Wineburg, 1994; Printz, 1998; Billingsley, 1999; Mata, 1999; Reese, 2000; Saxon-Harrold et al., 2000; Ammerman, 2001; Chaves and Tsitsos, 2001; Cnaan and Boddie, 2001; Dudley and Roozen, 2001; Bartkowski and Regis, 2003) have greatly expanded our knowledge of congregations' involvement in caring for the needy. The following sections review the definitions, typologies, and working models of faith-based organisations, as well as the missionary work related to immigrants, as these elements are closely related to the role of religious institutions or faith-based organisations for community members.

2.4.3.1 Definition of Faith-based Organisations

What is meant by the term faith-based organisation (FBO)? Literally speaking, an FBO is an organisation associated with an organised faith community. It is based on the religious ideology of the community, and the staff, volunteers, and leadership will usually come from that religious group. In addition, it holds and follows religious-oriented mission statements. It receives substantial support from a religious organisation, or it was established by a religious institution (Cnaan and Milofsky, 1997; Wuthnow, 2000). Woldehanna (2005, p.27) defined an FBO as a 'general term used to refer to religious and religion-based organisations, places of religious worship or congregations, specialized religious institutions, and registered and unregistered non-profit institutions that have religious character or missions'. Jennings and Clarke (2008) offered a more comprehensive definition of faith-based organisations:

> A faith-based organisation is any organisation that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within that faith (p.6).

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[12] Charitable choice refers to direct United States government funding of religious organizations to provide social services.

These organisations explicitly claim to have a religious motive (Kirmani and Zaidi, 2010), and the religions on which they are based 'are often expressed in their mission statements, which outline the overall purpose of the non-government organisations (NGOs)[13] and describe the underlying values and principles' (Petersen, 2010). Although the term 'FBO' encompasses the broadest possible swathe of agencies with any and all connection to religion, other scholars argue that it excludes all but those agencies that are religious in a narrow sense (Smith and Sosin, 2001; Working Group[14], 2002). Jeavons and Cnaan (1997) even considered the catchall term "faith-based organisation" confusing, as there is no clear definition of what it means to be "faith-based", since it normally refers to organisations affiliated to a certain faith.

According to their different visions and orientations, faith-based organisations can be categorised in various forms, such as

> "a religious congregation (church, mosque, synagogue, or temple); an organisation, program, or project sponsored/hosted by a religious congregation (may be incorporated or not incorporated); a non-profit organisation founded by a religious congregation or religiously-motivated incorporators and board members that clearly states in its name, incorporation, or mission statement that it is a religiously motivated institution; and a collaboration of organisations that clearly and

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[13] A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a not-for-profit organization that is independent from states and international governmental organizations (Willetts, 2002).

[14] Working Group：a project called the "Working Group on Human Needs and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives". It provided valuable experience and a sense of possibility of what could be achieved by bringing diverse stakeholders to a common table for dialogue and deliberation. The Working Group was conducted under the auspices of Search for Common Ground (www.sfcg.org) and was chaired by one of the founding Leadership Council members of Convergence, former U.S. Senator, Harris Wofford (D-PA). The purpose of this Working Group was to forge a consensus on appropriate ways of increasing the opportunities for people in need to get help from community-based organizations, including those inspired by religious faith.

explicitly includes organisations from the previously described categories. "[15]

In the context of this study, the term "faith-based organisation" refers to the places of Christian worship or congregation and religious organisations that have Christian character or missions in the form of churches and non-government organisations.

2.4.3.2 Faith in the FBO

Many researchers have found that faith has a very strong and distinct influence on the functioning of faith-based organisations. Jennings and Clarke (2008) suggested that faith influences the agency and identity of the organisation at both organisational and programmatic levels. Different understandings of 'faith' within different organisations determine how it will affect the functioning of an organisation. Clarke (2008) pointed out that 'the faith element of the FBO is not an add-on to its development activity rather an essential part of that activity, informing it completely'. Berger (2003) further emphasised the motives and the values that establish the meaning of an organisation around its faith. James (2009) found two areas where the influence of faith can be directly observed: in the conducting of religious ritual and activities, and in the use of religious teaching in the organisation's main activities. Unruh (2004) highlighted nine features that may indicate religious affiliation with a distinct identity that set the FOBs apart from mainstream organisations. These are 'self-descriptions, sacred objects, invitations to religious activities, prayer, use of sacred texts, worship, sharing of personal testimonies, religious teachings, and invitations to a personal faith commitment.'

Ebaugh et al. (2006) suggested examining the religious nature of FBOs in terms of three dimensions, namely service, staff, and organisation. Like Jennings and Clarker (2008),

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[15] Office of Management and Budget Guidelines. Quoted in the Corporation for National and Community Service, 'FACES State Commission Toolkit: Implementing the President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative at the Corporation for National and Community Service,'
The Resource Center: Tools and Training for Volunteer and Service Programs, available at http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/initiatives/faces/state_commission_toolkit_faces/faces_state_commission.php,accessed 6 December 2005.

James (2009) thought that faith affects the organisation in two main ways: in the organisational features and in the programme features. It influences organisational dynamics in ten aspects, namely 'structural affiliation and governance; values and staff motivation; mission; strategy and theory of development; selection of partners and choice of beneficiaries; faith practices and teaching in programming; staffing and leadership; organisational culture and decision-making; constituency and sources of funding; and external relationships.'

In addition, the religious practices observed by the staff are important elements in the organisation's decision-making. One typical example of staff religious practice within an organisation is the time taken off for observing religious duty/prayer. Another characteristic is any meeting or important work starting with recitations from the religious books. Therefore, in a highly involved organisation, it may be mandatory for the staff to attend the prayers or rituals, whereas it may be voluntary in other cases. From the above demonstration, we can see that it is the feature of faith that distinguishes FBOs from common organisations. Faith can affect an organisation with relation to 'internal operations, leadership, relationships, culture and policies' (James, 2009), and also give the related organisations special meaning in the social context.

2.4.3.3 Significance of FBOs in Development

For centuries, FBOs have provided 'education, health, humanitarian relief, and microfinance to hundreds of millions of people, substituting for absent governments across large swathes of the developing world' (Kaplan, 2009, 106). Tyndale (2006) outlines the role of FBOs in development and proposes that these organisations can prove to be an effective alternative to mainstream counterparts. Lunn (2009) and Lybbert (2008) suggest they play an important role in the formation of social capital. Marshall and Keough (2004) opine that FBOs have a strong affinity with local people and the potential to reach the grassroots. They have the best network for service delivery because the religious institutions are relatively well connected to the poor and play an important role in their lives (CIVICUS, 2011). UNFPA (2008) advocates the role of faith and chalks out a

strategy for how government agencies and donors can partner FBOs. According to the Faith Community Unit (2004), Christian churches in England have made a significant contribution in the field of community development and social inclusion thanks to the government's interest in the role of religious institutions in public policy implementation. Another point that underlines the significance of FBOs is the fact that connection with faith is more profound in developing countries (Goulet, 1980). James (2009), Belshaw et al. (2001), and Haynes (2007) have highlighted the institutional advantages of FBOs. That is, that they can reach donors of the same faith across the world.

2.4.3.4 Strategies and Models

Missionary work, one of the characteristics of a faith-based organisation, plays a distinctive role through social service. The key lies in how the organisations carry out the work and to what extent faith manifests itself in these social events. There are five general strategies for integrating a religious dimension, to varying degrees, into a social service programme. They have been identified by Unruh (2004) as *implicit, invitational, relational, integrated-optional,* and *integrated-mandatory* (see table 2-3).

Strategy:	Are explicitly religious program elements ...		
	Substantially present?	Part of the planned program design?	Mandatory?
Implicit	No	No	No
Invitational	No, except invitations to outside religious activities	No in the service provision; Yes in religious activities outside the program parameters	No
Relational	No, except in informal interactions with staff	No in the service provision; Yes in intentionally cultivated relationships	No
Integrated-Optional	Yes, unless beneficiaries decline to participate in religious activities	Yes	No
Integrated-Mandatory	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2- 3 Strategies for Integrating Religious Elements into a Social Service Program (Unruh, 2004)

According to Unruh (2004), the first strategy, *implicit,* means explicit religious programmatic elements are not significantly present in the programme. The organisation may have a religious name or activities taking place in a sacred space, with few or no explicitly religious activities or messages. In the second *invitational* strategy, church members are extended the opportunity to connect with religious resources or events outside the social service programme, including spiritual counselling, regular church activities (such as Sunday worship services), or religious activities offered in conjunction with the social service (such as a Bible study after-hour programmes). The third strategy is *relational*. It means that the receivers of social service encounter explicitly religious elements through informal interactions with staff or volunteers. Christians may then, for example, share their faith testimony, offer a religious perspective on social problems, discuss spiritual concerns, or encourage beneficiaries to make religious commitments. The fourth strategy is *integrated-optional*. There is clear Christian self-identification and a curriculum that includes optional religious content. The final type of strategy is *integrated-mandatory*. As in the *integrated-optional* type, significant religious elements form an integral part of the programme design requiring the participation of service receivers in religious activities. Conversion or a meaningful spiritual experience may be a central goal of the programme.

These strategies are not independent of each other. Different programs may combine various strategies to promote evangelistic relationships between church and community members (Unruh, 2004). In some programmes, they are synthesised and applied at different stages of mission work aimed at the same target groups. For instance, in the case of Chinese conversion to evangelical Protestantism, Chinese churches mixed the above strategies during the various stages, from reaching and welcoming the Chinese immigrants, to formal training through conferences, camps, and books (Zhang, 2006). The religious element was added step by step into the social events with the aim of conversion.

There are heated debates regarding the morality of FBOs evangelising to needy people by combining social events with religion. These organisations are able to directly raise moral

issues and tap into religious discourse, thereby fuelling a sense of moral duty, indignation, or outrage, which makes spiritual change possible (Berger, 2003). The most commonly found values in missionary work include charitable and sacrificial giving; respect for fellow humans and other living beings; compassion and assistance for the poor and needy in society; the pursuit of equity and justice; and care for the natural environment (Lunn, 2009). All of these values are considered to empower people, and through this to give people personal dignity, self-worth and contentedness, in turn to bring hope and vision (Tyndale, 1998). There is evidence to show that religion have a positive influence on the overall moral and social development of college students as it can imbue them with academic integrity (Sutton and Huba, 1995), and guide them into healthier patterns of social drinking (Lo and Globetti, 1993). College students are more likely to be involved in volunteer community service organisations (Gorman et al., 1994). On the other hand, Tinbergen (1989) wonders whether religious values may be too idealistic to be applied to practical development. Chima (2015) found that some FBOs in Africa operate with hybrid objectives or the dual intention of providing material assistance to the marginalised while also proselytising, which in Chima's perspective may foster foreign ideologies and ultimately be destabilizing by increasing political tension in African communities. As part of these FBOs' work in assisting with provision of healthcare services and education to underserved populations, all of which is perhaps based on the perceived moral, benevolent, and religious value of altruism, the religious worldview of Africans and their intense spirituality have often been exploited in an unethical manner (Chima, 2015).

This thesis does not take a moral position regarding missionary work with people in need, but instead pursues a neutral role and an neutral perspective, focusing purely on the phenomena of intercultural communication in the religious organisations. It employs the business model as the theoretical basis for understanding the whole process of church work with international students. The next section explains the relevance for this.

2.4.3.5 Business Models

The range of strategies described above is in essence spreading Christian values by means of the social support they offer. In a sense, the practices of organised religion could be regarded as a kind of business. Religion has become heavily institutionalised, involving giant multinational religious enterprises. In fact, Christianity has become the most successful organisation run like a business of any kind in the world in terms of its sheer size of staff and revenues (Berg, 2000, 383). As a kind of business, the religious organisation naturally contains a business model.

The business model is an abstract concept with many facets. It describes the implementation of a business concept and is used for multiple purposes by different users. It is fundamental to any organisation (Magretta, 2002). This is because the business model provides powerful ways to understand, analyse, communicate, and manage strategic-oriented choices (Pateli and Giaglis, 2004; Osterwalder et al., 2005; Shafer et al., 2005) among business and technology stakeholders (Gordijn and Akkermans, 2001).

Research into business models has produced a list of elements and 'ontologies' of models. Close examination of the research reveals that there is considerable overlap, in that many elements are common to several elements and 'ontologies' in the models. The nomenclature and the arrangement of the elements vary depending on the researcher's perspective. Osterwalder et al. (2005) provide a structured analysis of the elements of business models, and, drawing on this analysis along with reference to well-recognised management literature, develop a comprehensive collection of elements. This is referred to as the Business Model Ontology. Lambert (2008) proposed the basic and comprehensive business model, identifying its composite elements, including the value proposition, customer, and value in return, channel, value-adding process, supplier, and ally. In the value-adding process, the model contains resources, activity, capabilities, strategies and organisation structure. Although the business model is applied to maximise financial advantage, profit is not the only responsibility of business groups. They also have a social responsibility (Friedman, 2007). In the approach proposed by Schwartz and Carroll (2003),

there are three core domains to corporate social responsibility (CSR): economic, legal, and ethical responsibilities. However, Lambert's model does not take into account this social profit or social responsibility.

The application of strategies indicating the integration of religious elements is, in essence, to recruit potential Christians and spread Christian values by means of the social support being offered. Due to the parallels with the way in which firms use Lambert's business model to obtain economic profit, the practices of organised religion suggest that in one sense these organisations could also be regarded as a kind of business. There is arguably a business model that churches use for seeking out recruits of customers or faith 'profit'. Religion has become heavily institutionalised, involving giant multinational religious enterprises. Likewise, 'the non-profit economy of Christianity has become more like the for-profit world' (Berg, 2000, p.383). In this study, the churches did not seem to be purposefully operating with an economic motive since students were free to visit those places without charge. However, they provided social support to international students and did seek recruitment or faith profit. The potential application of the business model to religious organisations will be examined in Chapter 7 with reference to the corporate of social responsibility of economically orientated corporations.

2.5 Summary

International students with native students should create a diverse environment within UK higher education. We are seeing a significant increase in the numbers of Chinese students in UK universities, particularly in business schools. More and more Chinese international students from a background where Christianity is constrained are pursuing their overseas study in the UK. On the other hand, there are decreasing numbers of Christians in the UK and globally, and Christianity is looking for further development beyond the Western world. The Christian church, as a faith-based organisation, is providing social support strategically to attract immigrants and refugees. These social supports are integrated with different degrees of the faith element to assist people in need and offer them security, social capital, new forms of guidance, and protections. Besides the religious influences that

Li (2012) and Williams (1988) have explored, is there any other reason why international students participate in these faith-based organisations? In a sense, in a similar way to how businesses seek out economic profit, organised religions look for recruitment profit or faith profit. Is there a Christian business model that the churches apply in their approach towards these Chinese students for whom Christianity remains a sensitive topic and the majority of whom lack all basic knowledge about Christian culture? This thesis is situated within the social and cultural context explored in this chapter. The next chapter concentrates on the theoretical context of the study, that is, the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the concepts relevant to the study and develops the theoretical framework. Section 3.2 reviews the conceptualisation of intercultural encounters, the terms "intercultural" and "cross-cultural", and the meaning of "culture" in intercultural studies. Section 3.3 is devoted to the discussion of different forms of intercultural encounter, including intercultural contact and engagement. It reviews the approaches used in the field and the theory of positive intercultural contact or communication. Section 3.4 explores intercultural engagement for international students. It discusses locations of intercultural engagement and factors that play a role in the process, including internal factors and external factors. It also discusses intercultural engagement within the campus-based university, which is the most common encounter for international students. Lastly, it reviews intercultural transformation as an outcome of the engagement and Chinese international students.

3.2 Intercultural Encounter

What is an Intercultural Encounter?

Intercultural or cross-cultural encounters have taken place throughout history in all parts of the world. They involve contact and interactions of various types, whether peaceful or violent, and between people from different backgrounds. These types include overseas students studying at college level in a country other than the place that they received their elementary and secondary education (Gill, 2007), business people employed in multinational corporations (Jameson, 2007), tourists engaging in short-term stays in another culture (Mclntosh and Zahra, 2007) and military personnel assigned as advisers in other countries (Winslow and Soeters, 2006). Research on cultural encounters investigates questions concerning cultural translations, continuity and change, the meaning of borders, authenticity, hybridity and transcultural processes.

The term "cultural encounter" is used to refer to social relations, places and objects. The new experience, whether drastically new or very commonplace, that a newcomer meets in the new environment brings new learning and growth. And the ability to face challenges and acquire new knowledge and competence is one of the characteristics of the human mind. It contains profound and all-encompassing challenges for newcomers as it might change their previous assumptions and cognitions about such things as languages and social customs. They are separated from their accustomed habits and they experience a series of psychological crises caused by their lack of understanding of the symbols and activities in the new environment. Indeed, an encounter with the new culture brings about culture shock (Furnham, 2012) and pushes them to learn the new cultural system. Learning activities are the very essence of the acculturation (Kim, 2008) or "re-socialisation" process (Seweryn, 2007) they will need to undergo in order to comprehend the native cultural practices across a wide-ranging area. Therefore, it requires adjustment and learning, which seldom takes place without conflict. Intercultural encounters bring with them movement and change, whether as a result of tourism, migration, colonialism, or war. They challenge ideas about cultural homogeneity and the unchanging nature of traditions; at the same time, they are also indicators of change and innovation.

After a number of studies shifted the focus from psychopathology to moderate forms of psychological distress, where researchers went beyond mental health, researchers started to consider issues such as identity, values and acculturation strategies. The diversity of the studies gave rise to the research area of international education for the first time. After efforts to end the investigation without theories, there appeared theoretical models that were developed to guide research and account for the findings in a systematic and integrated way. Early theories tended to be more descriptive than explanatory and at a low level of conceptual sophistication (Ward et al, 2005). For instance, sojourner adjustment at that time was focused on the noxious aspects in the cross-cultural contact. From the clinical perspective to the dynamic nature of cross-cultural experience, the evolving theories assumed that it was the inabilities or weaknesses in individuals' characters that were responsible for the failures of sojourners. Later, there emerged a model from a

different perspective, which regarded the cross-cultural exposure as a learning experience (Zhou et al., 2008). It emphasised the preparation, orientation, and acquisition of culture-related skills. Besides the research into the experience of the intercultural interaction, another trend of investigation began to focus on the cultural issues among the cross-cultural encounters.

Intercultural or Cross-cultural Encounter?

The prefixes "inter-" and "cross-" have been applied frequently in the relevant research and are used interchangeably in the literature. Although they are not mutually exclusive, and, in a broader sense, these two terms could be interchanged, they do have different foci. There are subtle differences between the two prefixes. 'On the one hand, the notion of "cross-cultural" originally stresses boundary crossing, differences and diversity; 'intercultural', on the other hand, 'encompasses both domestic and international contexts and implies cultures interacting' (Landreman, 2003).

Although the term "cross-cultural" has been used very often in the literature, "intercultural" is the more powerful term in the context of this study because it indicates deeper relations than "cross-cultural". "Intercultural" emphasises a bidirectional relationship, with building and learning from one another; while a "cross-cultural" encounter happens when people reach across cultural boundaries, differences are understood and acknowledged, but a change might or might not take place. For these reasons, in this study, I prefer to use "intercultural" as the term to explore the deep interaction and communication between Chinese students and the local Christian community.

Culture in Intercultural Encounters

"Culture" as a term has been applied in various ways throughout different disciplines. One of the common understandings of "culture" as agreed by many anthropologists and major sociologists is that it is the way of life for a group of people. In the field of cross-cultural research, the most often cited definitions are from Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) and

Triandis (1977). According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), culture 'consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached value; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.' Triandis (1977), from the perspective of subjective culture, pointed out that culture is people's response to the 'man-made part of the environment, or to a group's characteristic way of perceiving its social environment.' In a given culture, a large number of everyday behaviours, personal traits, standards (e.g. of physical beauty, success, intelligence), and recommended norms for morality are regarded as proper, good or correct. Cultural differences due to the complex and nuanced nature of culture thus become more evident with the increasing levels of globalisation (Castles, 2002).

In the analysis of cross-cultural contact, culture could be conceptualised in two ways: 1) the unfamiliar people with whom an individual interacts, or 2) as a more abstract concept, focusing on people's characteristic behaviour, ideas, and values (Brinlis, 1981). The former definition means that people engaged in cross-cultural contact would meet people of different colour, language, heritage, or from a different government system. The latter definition is also helpful to understand intercultural contact as it attempts to see how the culture affects the behaviour of its members and how a different culture affects intercultural interactions.

In terms of identifying a specific meaning of culture for international students (it is reviewed in Section 3.4), the problem remains unsolved, no matter which approach is taken to operationalise the terms "intercultural" and "culture" for research purposes. There is not a universally satisfactory way to define it, and each approach contains drawbacks. Bennett and Bennett (1994) suggested, 'it is not an accident that most of the literature on the cultural differences on campuses glosses over precise definitions of its subjects.' The concept of "culture" is conceptualised according to students' nationalities in the majority of

studies on intercultural contact in higher education, including Bird and Holmes (2005), Gareis (2002) and Kashima and Loh (2006). It implies that intercultural contact refers to the contact between students of different nationalities. This passport approach is efficient but ignores the reality of cultural diversity within and outside the culture. This thesis applies the passport approach, as there is no comparison within the Chinese culture or within British culture.

3.3 Intercultural Contact and Interaction

With the growing recognition of culture and cultural differences, a core topic to explore in cross-cultural encounters is how to understand and facilitate a positive intercultural interaction. The intercultural encounter involves various forms of intercultural contact and interaction. In order to explain these contacts and interactions, a variety of concepts and theories emerge, each with different foci, ranging from intercultural communication and intercultural engagement to cross-cultural adaptation/acculturation and transformation. The following section reviews the theoretical approaches to cross-cultural adaptation, which involve a complicated process containing intercultural communication and engagement, as well as transformation. It then examines theories relating to "intercultural contact" in order to facilitate understanding of positive intercultural interaction and communication.

3.3.1 Theoretical Approaches to Cross-cultural Adaptation

Most of the existing research conceptions of cross-cultural adaptation can be categorised into two groups: macro level and micro level. The macro-level studies have viewed acculturation in the intercultural interaction as a group phenomenon and anthropological researchers have traditionally observed the dynamic changes in the different cultures (Kim and Gudykunst, 2005). Furthermore, they have examined the presence of kin, friends, and the ethnic community organisations in supporting immigrants' adaptation (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006; Kim, 2002). At the micro level, conversely, social psychological studies have dealt primarily with the intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of newcomers in unfamiliar contexts.

My study is concentrated on the individual experiences of international students (at the micro-level), although it is located within the community organisation. Over the last three decades, studies of sojourners, tourists, refugees, and immigrants have increased at the micro level. There are a variety of empirical investigations that have established theoretical approaches widely recognised to be the guiding force in this field to understand the meaning of cross-cultural contact and adaptation. The three relevant and representative approaches are: the cultural learning approach, the stress-coping approach, and the integrative approach.

The cultural learning approach

The cultural learning approach was developed for about thirty years ago and have been applied in intercultural training and related research. It is rooted in social and experimental psychology and is particularly influenced by Argyle's (1969) work on social skills and interpersonal behaviours. Generally, the intercultural encounter in this approach is a continual learning process where the host environment resembles an educational place and newcomers learn new skills and improve their intercultural competence. It is assumed that they have cross-cultural problems because of the difficulties that newcomers meet in the host countries, being able to deal with the problems therefore requires specific skills to negotiate complicated situations. Researchers using this approach emphasise a wide range of variables in the adaptation and integration process, such as knowledge about a new culture (Pruitt, 1978; Ward and Searle, 1991), length of residence in the host culture (Ward et al., 1998), language or communication competence (Furnham, 1993), quantity and quality of contact with host nationals (Bochner, 1982), friendship networks (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham, 2004; Ward et al., 2001), previous experience abroad (Klineberg and Hull, 1979), cultural distance (Furnham, 1993; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Ward and Kennedy, 1993, 1999), cultural identity (Berry et al., 2006; Berry, 1992; Ward and Searle, 1991), acculturation modes (Sullivan and Kashubeck, 2015; Segev et al., 2015; Ramdhonee and Bhowon, 2012; Ward and Kennedy, 1994), temporary versus permanent residence in a new country (Bell and Ward, 2000; Ward and Kennedy, 1993c), and cross-cultural training

(Forster, 2000; Yamazaki and Kayes, 2004; Brislin et al., 1983; Deshpande and Viswesvaran, 1992). These variables are closely related to the competence of interaction and are believed to be significant for a smooth adaptation process. From the social learning perspective, the cultural learning approach tends to focus on the ability and skills needed in the process. The learning content from the host environment is more about socio-cultural issues such as intercultural communication and national and conational friendship. However, the issue of psychological state in the adaptation process seems to have received less attention. In addition to having to acquire skills during adaptation, sojourners also struggled with the pressure of unfamiliarity and uncertainty in the new environment. The following section presents the stress and coping approach related in the cross-cultural process.

The stress and coping approach

Contrary to the cultural learning and growth perspective, the stress and coping approach conceptualises the cross-cultural transition as a stressful life change that requires adjusted resources and coping methods. The approach originated from Folkman's (2013) work on stress, appraisal, and coping, as well as earlier theory and research on life events (Holmes and Richard, 1967), which examined characteristics of individuals and the environment that play a role in the adjustment. This approach underlies a passive mechanism when faced with adaptation problems. Many factors have been examined with regard to stress and coping. These include life changes (Berry, 2006; Masuda et al., 1980; Lin et al., 1979), personality factors, such as locus of control (Tomich et al., 2003), extraversion and tolerance of ambiguity (Ward et al., 2004; Cort and King, 1979; Ward and Chang, 1997; Ward and Kennedy, 1992), cognitive appraisals of change (Jobson and O'Kearney, 2009; Chataway and Berry, 1989), coping styles (Yeh and Inose, 2002; Shisana and Celentano, 1987; Ward et al., 1998; Ward, 1997), and social support (Adelman, 1988), along with related constructs such as loneliness (Neto, 1992; Wang and Sun, 2009; Ye, 2006), homesickness (Pruitt, 1978; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Ward et al., 1998; Ward and Kenney, 2001), marital satisfaction (Naidoo, 1985; Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Sweatman,

1999), and quality of relationships with both home and host nationals (Furnham and Alibhai, 1985; Ward and Kennedy, 1993 b, c; Hendrickson et al., 2011). Personal and demographic characteristics such as gender (Dion and Dion, 2001), ethnicity, and employment status (MacCarthy and Craissati, 1989; Nwadiora and McAdoo, 1996) have also been explored. Cultural distance and acculturation status (Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Demes and Greeraert, 2014; Hsu, 2010) are also popular issues in the population of sojourners, immigrants, and refugees (Babiker et al., 1980). From a cognitive perspective, Gudykunst and Hammer (1988) focused on the avoidance of uncertainty. In the prediction of uncertainty reduction and intercultural adaptation, they highlighted changes, strangeness, and unfamiliarity as the significant characteristics and variables such as knowledge of the host culture (Gudykunst and Kim, 1984), attitudes toward hosts and hosts' attitudes towards sojourners (Gudykunst, 1983a), cultural similarity (Gudykunst, 1983b), cultural identity (Gudykunst et al., 1987), and language competence (Gudykunst, 1985). This approach pays more attention to the individuals' characteristics, the state of an individual, and their influence on the intercultural interaction and adaptation.

Both the cultural learning approach and the stress and coping approach provide complementary perspectives to understand cross-cultural encounters. Combining the two approaches, Ward and Kennedy (1993, p. 222) suggest that there are two major types of reactions to intercultural stress: psychological adjustment and sociocultural adaptation (see also Leung et al., 2006; Li and Gasser, 2005; Mori, 2000; Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1999). Psychological aspects refer to acculturation and can be understood within a stress and coping model. Specifically, it is about the feelings of wellbeing or satisfaction with transitions, although it is commonly evaluated through negative effect, using measures of depression or mood disturbance (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999). Sociocultural aspects can be understood within the social learning paradigm and refer to how well an acculturating individual manages day-to-day life in the new cultural context. Psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation are interrelated but conceptually and empirically distinct. The former is predicted by personality variables, life changes, and social support, while the latter by cultural distance (Redmond, 2000), cultural identity

(Chapdelaine and Alexitch, 2004; Leong and Ward, 2000), language ability, and cultural knowledge (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). In addition, these two approaches provide an essential understanding of the cross-cultural encounter process and explicitly demonstrate the skills and strategies that newcomers use in the interacting process. Many variables are examined as mediating or moderating effects on the stressors and coping methods. Personal and setting factors range from personal resources, such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) and cultural knowledge (Ward and Searle, 1991), to situational variables, such as host culture relations (Bochner, 1982) and social support (Harari et al., 1988; Yang et al., 2006; Lee and Ciftci, 2014; Squassoni and Matsukura, 2014).

Although the above studies are valuable as a means of identifying key issues in intercultural education, disadvantages in these approaches become clear. For example, there is a tendency for models to become more and more complex, and the high number of possible factors included in the models may make it difficult to test in empirical research. The most useful theories will be those that discriminate between core and peripheral influences and include only those predictive, mediating, and moderating variables that are crucial to the argument, and for which there exist valid and reliable empirical measures (Ward et al., 2005). A more focused approach is therefore required, rather than exploring the factors in an unsystematic way. In addition, most of these studies are predominantly quantitative and 'objectivistic in nature' (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 25), and whilst they attempt to predict patterns of adaptation and relevant factors, they fail to explain and present the 'richness and fragmentation' of intercultural adaptation processes (Kim, 2005b, p. 376), processes in which international students are engaged in continuous negotiation and mediation in the interaction. It thus suggests a more detailed understanding in terms of the intercultural experiences.

Associated with the advantages and disadvantages in the two approaches of learning and stress perspectives, there is an integrative approach which comprehensively contributes to the understanding of cross-cultural transition.

Kim's Integrative Approach

Cross-cultural adaptation has been defined by Kim (2001, p. 31) as 'the dynamic process by which an individual, upon relocating to a new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environment, establishes (or re-establishes) and maintains relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments.' Kim (1988) integrated the learning, and the stress and coping approaches and defined intercultural interaction and communication as a dynamic socialisation process by which individuals interact with a new and unfamiliar environment. The goal of the process is to achieve an overall "fit" of an individual to its environment for maximisation of one's social life chances. Kim and Ward and her colleagues' research provided more comprehensive and systematic frameworks to demonstrate the dynamic unfolding of the natural tendency to struggle for an internal equilibrium in the face of new environmental conditions. In her integrative cross-cultural adaptation theory, Kim (2001) explained how different factors influence individual adaptation, and proposed intercultural transformation as the outcome of cross-cultural adaptation. The three main factors are: functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity development. Central to the adaptation process is host communication competence, the capacity to communicate with the host culture according to host norms and practices, as well as active engagement in social communication. Successful adaptation is believed to depend on the openness, strength, and positivity of an individual's personality to overcome the adverse environment. In some cases, however, there are less adaptive changes as their ethnic community offers almost complete support to face the cultural challenges (Kim, 2001). Environmental conditions are also identified in the theory, including the receptivity of the host environment towards newcomers, the conformity pressure from the host environment, and the strength of the ethnic group within the new environment.

Environmental factors identified in the theory provide scope for further investigation into the different layers of communication construction on the basis that the environment has the potential and the willingness to transform individuals. To understand these

environmental factors requires a comprehensive examination of the context to explain how people react to exposure to intercultural interaction (Kim, 2001). However, acceptance and willingness to facilitate integration with the host environment does not happen automatically and 'the willingness' to some extent is an ideal state for newcomers. The extent to which the host environment plays a role in an individual's adaptation depends on the individual situation in the intercultural interaction. Although, according to Kim's theory, personal adaptation behaviours are of primary importance，they may not be of sole significance. The three aspects that the theory proposes were inadequate to cover all potential situations arising in practice, and more concrete analysis of the complicated personal and situational issues is required in order to better understand the overall adaptation experience. For instance, the nature of the host context is assumed to be neutral (which is in contradiction with a religious environment, for example). This seems to imply an ideal state in terms of environmental conditions. Conversely, and practically, the nature of the specific environment in which intercultural interaction takes place varies considerably and is assumed to affect the transformation of individuals. However, the nature of context was ignored in the research and requires more examination.

Nonetheless, the conceptualisation of intercultural transformation can be considered integrative and theoretically sound even though the concept remains difficult to operationalise in empirical testing situations. This is partly because intercultural identity development, one of the three adaptive outcomes, is based on postmodern thinking. In Kim's (1990) own study of Asian refugees' cross-cultural adaptation, she only measured two outcome variables: functional fitness and psychological health.

Regardless of the divergence between previous studies on those (long-term) immigrants and refugees in the new environment and the (short-term) temporary sojourners, Kim considered that there were many similarities in long- and short-term adaptation and she questioned the meaning of the differences. Therefore, her theory does not clearly differentiate between the adaptation of immigrants and sojourners and mainly concentrates on immigrants and refugees who are experiencing long-term adaptation. Taking into

consideration both the period newcomers would spend in the host country and their identities in the new environment, it is reasonable to ask whether there are likely to be differences in their specific adaptation processes. In the case of the short-term intercultural encounters of sojourners, such as international students, business people, and foreign workers, who usually spend a short time in the host country, their situations and their needs from the host environment are likely to be different when compared with those of long-term groups.

3.3.2 Positive Intercultural Contact or Communication

Moving on now to issues relating to the facilitation of intercultural interaction, Allport's (1954) "contact hypothesis", also known as "intergroup contact theory", sought to identify the most significant aspects of contact situations in determining whether positive intergroup relations develop. The theory highlighted four prerequisite conditions said to be necessary for healthy intergroup interaction: cooperation across groups, equal status, common goals, and support of authorities. These have been tested and further developed by other scholars, such as Amir (1969, 1976), Hewstone and Brown (1986), Pettigrew (1998 and 2008), Pettigrew et al. (2011), Stephan (1985) and Stephan et al. (2000). Other conditions which have been found to be essential include equal status contact (e.g. Cohen, 1972; Hewstone and Brown, 1986; Watson, 1950), the opportunity to get to know out-group members and disconfirm negative stereotypes (e.g. Amir and Ben-Ari, 1985; Desforges et al., 1991), co-operative versus competitive task interaction (e.g. Bettencourt et al., 1992; Johnson and Johnson, 1985), explicit support of relevant authority figures (Schofield, 1995), and situations with equalitarian social norms (e.g. Hewstone and Brown, 1986). More importantly, although not suggested as one of Allport's original conditions, the idea that contact should be voluntary, rather than forced, has more recently been identified as a further desirable condition (Pettigrew, 2008; Pettigrew et al., 2011; Stephan, 1985).

While the theory initially contributed to positive contact, when the hypothesis was examined in other research, it received little support (Barnard and Benn, 1987; Desforges et al., 1991; Jackman and Crane, 1986). One major limitation is that there is little evidence that

intergroup contact promotes positive attitudes that could be generalised beyond group members in the contact setting to unacquainted out-group members (Amir, 1976; Brown, 1995; Cook, 1978; Hewstone and Brown, 1986). A number of studies have failed to support the hypothesis, even when all conditions have been met. Some studies have demonstrated the ineffectiveness of intergroup contact in schools, particularly when it involves co-operative learning groups (Johnson et al., 1984; Miller and Davidson-Podgorny, 1987), while some findings have supported reverse contact effects (Amir, 1976; Butler and Wilson, 1978; O'Driscoll et al., 1983; Ray, 1980, 1983; Schaefer, 1975).

One possibility for the ineffectiveness or reverse effectiveness is assumed to be the incomprehensiveness of the theory itself, which requires further development in order to clarify the preconditions of positive intercultural contact. In addition, although some studies, which have reported a generalisation effect, have typically been based on artificial, short-term, laboratory interaction (e.g. Bettencourt et al., 1992; Desforges et al, 1991), much of the supportive research has limited external validity because researchers have experimentally manipulated the group membership of subjects (in terms of 'race' and gender), rather than using members of existing social groups (Bettencourt et al., 1992; Gaertner et al., 1990). Moreover, actual contact with natives has often lacked practical access and been very brief (Bettencourt et al., 1992; Damico and Sparks, 1986; Desforges et al., 1991; Gaertner et al., 1990; Johnson and Johnson, 1984; Katz and Zalk, 1978; Masson and Verkuyten, 1993; Werth and Lord, 1992).

The qualifications and limitations of the contact theory suggest that there is a need for research that assesses the contact hypothesis in an everyday real-world environment, and that the degree of contact between the natives and non-natives should be controlled, but not experimentally manipulated. The contact should last and be studied over a period of time. More significantly, it seems that the effect of the contact needs to be assessed in comparison with the other members in the target group, but without the same contact. As for the conditions in the contact hypothesis, more consideration needs to be given to look beyond

the factors of cooperation across groups, equal status, common goals, support of authorities, and the situation.

3.4 Intercultural Engagement for International Students

Due to the large number of international students all over the world, studies relating to international students and their experiences have been the subject of a significant body of research in the West (Berry et al., 2006; Masgoret and Ward, 2006), especially in North America, Australia, and, to a lesser extent, Europe (Berry, 1997). International students inevitably engage in cultural learning in parallel with their intellectual endeavours.

3.4.1 Factors related to Intercultural Engagement

A study abroad experience is 'a significant transitional event that brings with it a considerable amount of accompanying stress, involving both confrontation and adaptation to unfamiliar physical and psychological experiences and changes' (Cushner and Karim, 2004, p. 292). Many studies in the migration literature highlight the negative psychological aspects of exposure to a new culture, and this is mirrored in much of the student-sojourner literature (Zhou et al., 2008). Church (1982) argued that international students experience difficulties in the new culture on top of the problems they share with domestic students. Tseng and Newton (2002) summarised the key adjustment problems faced by international students into four categories: (a) general living adjustment, (b) socio-cultural adjustment, (c) personal psychological adjustment, and (d) academic adjustment. Zhai (2004) reported that international students found adjusting to academic stress, cultural differences, and language challenges within the US higher education system were their three most significant challenges.

In comparison with problematic approaches, there is less research from the learning and skills perspective. The process of adapting to a culturally new life and to a culturally new teaching and learning environment is, to some extent, the chance to explore a different culture, learn new ways of thinking and behaving, make new friends, and improve

cross-cultural knowledge and skills (Andrade, 2006; McClure, 2007). At the same time, it is a process of developing problem-coping and management skills to deal with a series of psychological stresses and social interaction problems that arise from different cultural traditions. According to the complexity and the interrelated nature of the factors that influence students' intercultural engagements, these factors could be combined in two groups and described as 'personal' and 'environmental' types of factors related to the students' intercultural engagement. "Personal" factors relate to an individual's qualities, skills, and ability to fit in, and "environmental" factors are environmental conditions.

3.4.1.1 Personal Factors

Motivation and Expectation

Researchers, practitioners, and parents, in both native and host countries, have long been clear that motivation is an essential factor for successful intercultural interaction (Noels et al., 2001). In personal psychological adjustment, motivation and expectation have been shown to play a significant role in students' adaptation processes (Pitts, 2005; Goldstein and Kim, 2006; Kim and Goldstein, 2005). They are also the aspects that require exploration in order to gain better knowledge of the communication and adaptation process. Most people make pragmatic choices according to the nature of their relationships with the community around them (Kim, 2001). They do so in accordance with what they find useful in pursing their own self-interests at a given time (Blalock, 1982). Previous research has examined the vital role expectations play in the decision to study abroad, the adaptation process, and the outcome of the overseas study experience. They also influence cultural learning (Horare, 2013) and social cultural communication (Masgoret and Ward, 2006). Moreover, the degree of motivation was associated with high levels of intercultural contact (Masgoret and Gardner, 1999).

Motivation and expectation form a complex of attitudinal, goal-directed, and motivational attributes. It is believed that expectations gaps, whether between students and teachers or between previous ideas and later practical experience, influence the overall cultural

experience (Pitts, 2009). When expectations are unmet or violated, particularly in the first intercultural encounters, individuals become demotivated. Expectations of international students are mainly related to pre-departure concerns (Zhou and Todman, 2009) and to characteristics such as gender, previous travel experience, and destination abroad (Campbell, 2015). Generally, with positive expectations and previous experience abroad, sojourners enjoy greater adaptation, higher satisfaction, and less stress than those without these traits. Although there has been some research in the area of expectations, gaps and overlaps between reality and expectation are not well documented. The relation between expectation gaps and negotiation in the adaptation process has been virtually unexplored. It suggests further examination is required of the changes in motivations along with expectation gaps and their role in cross-cultural adaptation.

Language

Language proficiency has been evidenced as the basis of successful communication and adaptation in the new context. Studies have found that language fluency bears a straightforward relationship to socio-cultural adjustment, and is associated with increased interaction with members of the host culture and a reduction in adaptation problems (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Primarily, the core components of an international student's socio-cultural adaptation were language proficiency and communication competence, supplemented by effective intercultural interaction (Yu and Shen, 2012). In turn, participation in the host community leads to improved proficiency in the host language (Church, 1982; Clement et al., 2001; Yu, 2010). Some studies suggest that the target language skills contribute to the establishment of social support and interpersonal relations, and, in turn, facilitate adaptation (Ward, 2004). Meanwhile, language barriers play a role in academic adjustment (Liu et al., 2009). Andrade (2006) confirms that English language and culture were the primary factors that affect academic and socio-cultural adaptation. The development of language fluency facilitates other communicative competencies as well as the ability to participate in various intercultural experiences. It provides the students with the means to establish interpersonal relations and receive social support in

their cultural learning and socio-cultural adjustment (Ward, 2004).

Interpersonal and Intergroup Relations

Interpersonal and intergroup relations vary in terms of size and strength. Size means the total number of relations with others including friends and other sojourners. A large number of relations is shown to have a positive influence on mental health and wellbeing among sojourners (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002; Church, 1982; Galchenko and van de Vijver, 2007; Wang and Kanungo, 2004; Wang, 2002; Ward et al., 2005) because it offers students a number of avenues of support to reduce the pressure and anxiety of living in the host environment (Wang, 2002; Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). 'Strength' in personal relations refers to the extent of connection that one feels with others. It could be measured by the frequency of interaction and the relation type (Granovetter, 1983; Wang and Kanungo, 2004). Strong ties are found to be more intimate and involve more self-disclosure and more varied forms of resource exchange (Ye, 2006), while weak ties are associated with less maintenance as they involve fewer exchanges and are free of the pressures and dynamics of closer relations (Adelman et al., 1987). Regardless of whether the relation is strong or weak, both kinds are noted for providing different benefits (Granvotter, 1983). Strong ties offer essential social support but also result in impaired mobility and restriction of crucial information. Weak ties, on the contrary, provide greater mobility and progression with various groups, which increase the access to outside information and resources (Adelman et al., 1987; Granovetter, 1983). In the studies on sojourners, newcomers are found to benefit a lot from weak ties and face drawbacks from having strong ties (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kim, 2001; Wang and Kanungo, 2004; Ye, 2006).

According to studies of friendship issues, among the types of intergroup relations, there are three distinct social networks to which international students tend to belong (Bochner et al., 1977; Hendrickson et al., 2011). The first one is the bond with host nationals, which could be used to meet the academic and professional needs of international students. The second one is the relation with co-nationals, in which students rehearse, express, and confirm their

original culture. The third one is the link with other foreign students from different countries. Their shared position as foreigners provides the basis for mutual understanding. According to the functional model of Bochner et al. (1977), international students make use of the networks in different ways based on their own needs.

Host national students provide international students with informational support, for instance when dealing with language and academic difficulties (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham and Alibhai, 1985; Sam, 2001). Relevant studies illustrate that the networks that international students form with friends from the host country (i.e. bi-cultural networks) have an instrumental function for students, such as support for language or academic work. The advantages of cultural learning from the host national contact are evidenced in many research studies. The interaction with host nationals has been associated with the alleviation of psychological stress and the provision of informational, instrumental, and feedback support (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002; Kashima and Loh, 2006; Kim, 2005; Wang, 2002; Ye, 2006). In addition, interacting with local students has also been shown to improve communication competency and to facilitate general adaptation to life overseas (Ward and Kennedy, 1993b; Zimmerman, 1995, Poyrazli et al., 2004). Furthermore, related research notes that the emotional benefits of the interaction with host nationals are significant. Social interaction and having local friends have been associated with lower levels of stress (Redmond and Bunyi, 1993). Positive attitudes towards the experience with host nationals have been shown to contribute to positive mood states (Furnham and Erdmann, 1995). Satisfaction with host national relations predicts better psychological adjustment among international students (Searle and Ward, 1990). Many studies also confirm academic benefits from connections with host nationals, including higher grades, retention rates, and overall satisfaction in comparison with students without these relations (Perrucci and Hu, 1995; Westwood and Barker, 1990; Williams and Johnson, 2011). Ward and Searle (1991), in the study of international students in New Zealand, found that the frequency of interaction with host students is significantly related to psychological adjustment problems.

Co-national friendship is used for companionship and emotional support, which were found to be significant in enhancing self-esteem and cultural identity. Ward and Kennedy reveal that frequent co-national interaction is associated with stronger cultural identity (Ward and Kennedy, 1993b; Ward and Searle, 1991). In addition, the amount of co-national interaction and the satisfaction with co-national contact are related to students' psychological wellbeing (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Searle, 1991). Bochner and his colleagues (1977) found that the function of the networks that international students formed with co-national friends (i.e. mono-cultural networks) was to rehearse and affirm cultural identity and national loyalties through activities such as cooking and shopping. Co-national friends are also selected when international students need to talk about their personal problems.

Interactions with other foreign students are also considered to be important. Bochner et al. (1977) postulate that the function of international students' networks with other international students, (i.e., multi-cultural networks), is more recreational than other networks. For example, international students may go to cultural events and picnics with friends from this type of network, which may additionally function to provide social support. Bochner and his colleagues' argument is consistent with Kennedy's (1999) study, which found that the quantity of interactions with non-compatriot foreign students was associated with the perceived quality of social support. However, the amount of interaction with these students was not found to be related to psychological and sociocultural adjustment. In contrast, in an earlier investigation by Pruitt (1978) in the US, the frequency of interactions between African students and their non-compatriot African peers was significantly, though weakly, related to greater psychological adjustment problems. The evidence suggests that more empirical work needs to be carried out on the patterns and outcomes for multicultural interaction with other international students.

Intercultural knowledge

Intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes are the basic components that contribute to intercultural communicative competency (Bennett, 1993, 2008; Gertsen, 1990; Gudykunst

et al., 1991). Among these components, intercultural knowledge broadly encompasses knowledge of Big C culture, which is sociocultural data, such as gender, class, 'race', major values, and small c culture, such as daily life, politeness conventions (Lussier, 2007). It includes the specific knowledge of history, language, non-verbal behaviour, worldview, values, norms, habits, and customs. Byram (1997), from another perspective, regarded intercultural knowledge as knowing about 'social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and the general process of societal and individual interaction.' Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) described this knowledge as the host and home countries' historical and socio-political situations, their day-to-day norms and ways of being, and the knowledge of cross-cultural learning and adjustment trends. Although these definitions share some common elements, together they expand the concept of intercultural knowledge, providing comparative perspectives and knowledge of cross-cultural adaptation along with information, processes, and practices associated with social groups and individuals.

Intercultural knowledge contributes to the effective and appropriate interaction with people in a given culture. Hullett and Witte (2001) found that knowledge of a host culture positively influences adaptation for the student abroad, while Lussier (2007) claimed that intercultural knowledge is required for developing intercultural skills and attitudes. As intercultural knowledge provides important information with which the behaviour of people from the other culture can be understood, Wiseman (2002) proposed increasing the intercultural communicator's understanding of others and the self in order to facilitate the making of accurate predictions and attributions. Such knowledge also provides important insights into the development of intercultural knowledge during study abroad. Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) found that students regard the knowledge and appreciation of another country or culture of utmost significance in their study. Likewise, in Elola and Oskoz's (2008) investigation, students stated the importance of possessing knowledge about living in another country, and about how people engage in conversation with people from another country, as well as the differences and similarities between countries. Students who took part in summer study abroad demonstrated a significant increase in intercultural knowledge

(Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004; Elola and Oskoz, 2008; Williams, 2009).

Academic Adjustment

Among sojourners, academic adjustment is an issue that is unique to international students. Academic performance is therefore a significant component of cross-cultural adaptation. Academic adjustment refers to the degree of a student's success in coping with various educational demands, such as motivation, application, performance, and satisfaction with the academic environment (Rienties et al., 2012).

Academic adaptation is influenced by a number of factors. Gatwiri (2015) regarded limited language skills as the most significant source of academic problems among international students, and language proficiency is related to academic performance. Other factors such as learning styles and academic achievement, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the level of field dependence and independence, the preference for cooperative, competitive, or individualistic learning styles, and even perceptions of intelligence have been discussed in the intercultural educational literature (Shade and New, 1993; Wong, 2004; Ramburuth and McCormick, 2001). Unsatisfactory academic performance is noted to increase stress in the overseas study experience and to be closely related to other problems of adaptation.

3.4.2.2 Environmental Factors

The intercultural encounters and interaction in the new environment cannot be fully understood without consideration of environmental conditions. Environment influences people who participate in social and cultural contact (Kim, 2001). Different environmental elements evoke different responses in newcomers by serving as the cultural, social, and political forces in accordance with which they must strive to increase their chances of meeting personal and social goals (Murray et al., 1987). There are three environmental conditions that have been identified in Kim's theory, which are believed to be the most significant to the cross-cultural adaptation process. They are the receptivity of the host environment, the conformity pressure exerted by the environment on people, and the

strength of the newcomers' ethnic group in the host environment. Besides that, student diversity is noted to be an essential force, particularly for international students.

Host Acceptance and Social Support

Host receptivity refers to the natives' openness towards newcomers and the willingness to accommodate newcomers with opportunities to participate in local social communication processes (Kim, 2001). This concept can be understood at both public and personal levels. It is expressed largely in the public and private attitudes of the natives towards newcomers. At a public level, the government develops a variety of policies and programmes to provide foreign-born individuals with opportunities for participation in the mainstream social process (Siraj, 2007). At an interpersonal level, private expressions of host receptivity are differentiated by associative and dissociative behaviour (Kim, 1994, 1997). Associative behaviour facilitates the communication process by increasing the likelihood of understanding, acceptance, cooperation, support, and inclusion in the daily interaction with natives. These associative behaviours range from simple expression of interest and goodwill to more active expressions, like offering support and help. Dissociative behaviours, on the other hand, display attitudes of rejection and discrimination. Goffman (1966; 1979) has described a wide range of subtle forms of psychological non-engagement through the concepts of "involvement offenses", "pseudo-conversation", and "unfocused interaction". This psychological non-engagement stems from indifference, avoidance, or disparagement. For international students, the most representative dissociative behaviour might be prejudice and discrimination. It is noted that perceptions of discrimination are stronger in the sojourners compared with immigrant students (Sodowsky and Plake, 1992; Hanassab, 2006). The correlates of perceived discrimination which students experience is negatively related (Zhang and Goodson, 2011). The more discrimination international students perceive, the more stress they face, the more identity conflict they have to deal with, and the greater the psychological and sociocultural adjustment problems they have to tackle (Berno and Ward, 1998; Leong and Ward, 2000; Pak et al., 1991).

Whether at a public or interpersonal level, we find that host acceptance is practised through

social support from the host environment to show its openness to newcomers and provide them with opportunities for cultural learning and adaptation. Without the social support, it is hard to identify the extent of host acceptance for and attitudes towards the newcomers.

Social support originates within the stress and coping framework, and has been found to be an important predictor of psychological adaptation during cross-cultural transitions (Adelman, 1988; Church, 1982; Safdar et al., 2003; Safdar et al., 2009; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Yeh and Inose, 2003). Social support emphasises the quality and quantity of support from hosts and co-nationals. For example, a perception of limited social support is a predictor of depression in graduate Taiwanese international students (Dao et al., 2007). Satisfaction with social support is negatively correlated with perceived stress among domestic American undergraduate psychology students (Wohlgemuth and Betz, 1991) and with increased use of a health specialist (psychological help-seeking attitudes and behaviours) among Mexican-American college students (Miville and Constantine, 2006). In addition, dissatisfaction with social support is related negatively to mental and physical health among Japanese students (Jou and Fukada, 1996). In most research on social support, investigators consider this personal resource as an independent variable that affects people's mental and physical health. However, it can also be posited as a dependant variable with its own set of determinants (Sarason et al., 1986). Some places, such as colleges, schools, civic organisations, and churches, provide opportunities for sojourners and natives to interact and engage in interpersonal relationships (Kim, 2001).

However, these places were not originally designed for the intercultural interaction of international students. The existence of groups and institutions was not primarily intended to support international students. Rather, each organisation has its own goals and missions that explain the reasons why the institution exists. An organisation's goals and missions provide the framework for planning, enable evaluation of the organisation, give a feeling of belonging and motivation, and offer a means of justifying the organisation to its public (Cameron, 2010). Therefore, each institution exists with its meanings and values, but it

remains unknown in the current research how these organisational goals and missions (i.e. the nature of organisations) would play a role in intercultural interaction and engagement.

Host Conformity Pressure and Ethnic Group Strength

In the section on intergroup relations, it reviews the three forms of network that are closely related to international students. International students could make use of any or all of these for their different needs. Nevertheless, international students are under pressure to interact with any group of people in their relations with host nationals, co-nationals, or foreign students from other countries. Sojourners such as international students are subject to some degree of pressure from the host environment to conform as they develop positive relationships with local people in their daily interaction. In addition to the effect of host acceptance in the community and society, the host environment also exerts conscious and unconscious pressure on the newcomers to change their patterns of behaviour. These pressures include language, culture, and the environment of assimilation. International students need to practise the language and learn the culture, as important internal factors in the adaptation process.

Some newcomers, who encounter conformity pressure that they are not able to deal with, tend to resort to seeking out interaction within the ethnic group with co-nationals. The ethnic group serves as a force to increase the acceptance of individual newcomers, "softening" the host conformity pressure (Leslie, 1992). Meanwhile, newcomers are faced with strong in-group pressure that discourages them from learning the host language and culture (Kim, 2001).

Student Diversity

The three conditions that Kim identified in her research exclude consideration of the specific situation of international students. For international students, their main access to different types of friends is via their peers. It thus requires student diversity in international education. Interaction with culturally diverse peers can enhance the overall educational

experience of the students and foster positive learning outcomes. The exposure to the interaction with diverse perspectives could create more engaged, interculturally competent, globally aware graduates who possess the tools required to successfully 'negotiate the richness of a world miniaturised by globalisation' (Sexton, 2012, p. 5). As Conklin (2004, p. 38) contends: 'we learn when shaken by new facts, beliefs, experiences and viewpoints', an argument echoed by Bollinger (2003, 433), who considered that 'encountering differences rather than one's mirror image is an essential part of a good education'. Besides the advantage of diverse peer support, students from different cultures - international or domestic - are 'cultural carriers', who bring diverse ideas, values, experience, and behaviours to the learning environment (Segll et al., 1990).

Despite the benefits of diverse peer support, a significant number of scholars also highlight the challenges of student diversity and the potential for negative outcomes, both for the students and for the institution. For instance, there may be increased stereotyping, a hardening of prejudicial attitudes towards other groups, and intergroup hostility (Asmar, 2005; Henderson-King and Kaleta, 2000; Lerner and Nagai, 2001; Rothman et al., 2003; Wood and Sherman, 2001). As Harris (1995, 77) comments: 'Unless universities take seriously the implications of having overseas students, which include organisation and staff development issues as well as the proper adaptation of teaching methods and techniques, there is serious potential for things to go wrong.'

While some scholars are open to the potential of student diversity, others caution against the assumption that bringing diverse students together will generate benefits (Bennett and Salonen, 2007; Dunstan, 2003; Ujitani, 2006; Volet and Wosnitza, 2004; Ward, 2001). Otten (2003, 13), for example, considered that 'the opportunities offered by a diverse educational context are not self-evident and self-fulfilling.' This implies the need for careful management of such diversity.

A compelling argument can be advanced which recognises the potential of student diversity as an educational resource, but, simultaneously, there is a vital need for meaningful contact in order for such benefits to be achieved. It is insufficient to secure the desired potential

outcomes through the mere presence of students from diverse backgrounds, based on nationality, 'race', ethnicity, age, socioeconomic class, or some other variable. Instead, it requires positive intercultural contact as 'students studying on multicultural campuses cannot experience these benefits unless meaningful interactions between international and local students are facilitated' (Ujitani, 2006, 6). According to Graneras et al. (2006, 486–487), promoting intercultural education implies taking a stance on how to deal with cultural diversity. The key word should be "interaction"; different cultures should 'intertwine on a level playing field' as a process of enrichment for everyone.

It is necessary to recognise the significance of the host environment, as it is an integral part in sojourners' new lives, from neighbours to public institutions. The environment that the newcomers inhabit directly and indirectly influences each facet of their new life. It is a joint, collaborative partnership between personal wellbeing and the host sociocultural system (Kim, 2001) where sojourners seek out elements that are most useful in the adaptation process. Each facet of the new life is directly or indirectly affected by external factors. The cross-cultural adaptation process, on the one hand, is about personal wellbeing, and, on the other hand, is also in the interests of the social-cultural system. The interdependence of the individuals and their environment requires cooperation between them in order for the newcomers to benefit according to their adaptive self-interest. Otherwise, individuals may blame the environmental factors for all the predicaments met in the cross-cultural adaptation.

This interdependence does not imply that newcomers have to "go native" or blindly accommodate the local cultural norms and practices (Kim, 2001). Instead, it is to recognise that there are differences that are incompatible with the core values, social customs, and norms of newcomers. There is a reason for these differences between local people and newcomers. The acceptance of the differences enables the newcomers to understand the natural human prejudices as Kim described that exist in all peoples. More importantly, newcomers could make use of the host environment to help their adaptation through seeking out the positive elements within the environment that are most receptive to them

(Kim, 2001). They are encouraged to reach out and look for the places, groups, and individuals that are open and accessible in the host environment. There may be concrete programmes for them in the local colleges, schools, businesses, civic organisations, churches, or other public and private entities that provide opportunities for new arrivals to interact and engage in interpersonal relationships. For the newcomers, their responsibility might be to initiate the conversations with these potential channels, and start the cultural engagement and social contact.

3.4.2 Intercultural Engagement around the University

Engagement in extracurricular activities is known to be a valuable means of making contact with host nationals and becoming involved in local culture. Besides the academic-related goals that international students emphasised (Yang et al., 1994), in terms of their reasons for being in the host country, non-academic motivations and interests such as exploring the new culture and society, or making friends are also significant for them (Toyokawa et al., 1998). Findings show that international students spend a lot of time engaging in various types of activities outside the classroom, for example, taking part in cultural events, sports, socialising with friends, and dining out (Toyokawa and Toyokawa, 2002). Through these activities they have the opportunity to expand their social network, and learn social skills, customs and values in the host culture. Furthermore, these activities facilitate the development of international students' social support and social competence (Hayes and Lin, 1994). There are studies that have evidenced the positive influence of the off-campus experience on students' adjustment and development in college student populations (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1995; Whitt et al., 1999; Kuh et al., 1991; Terenzini et al., 1996).

However, these studies are focused on full-time college students. Only a few studies examine groups of international students' life and activities off-campus. For instance, Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002) found associations among various out-of-class activities for international students. Their findings suggest that the different needs of international students are met through various activities with friends from different social networks. A

few other studies also provide support for the assumption that the engagement in out-of-class activities for international students has a positive effect on their adjustment (Barratt and Huba, 1994). In addition, Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002) found that the extracurricular activities were positively related to students' general life satisfaction as well as academic involvement. Li (2012) confirmed that the experience of Chinese postgraduates in the local Christian volunteer group (LVG) in the university to some extent met students' needs and influenced their cultural and linguistic experience, while at the same time affected their values, religious beliefs, and identities. In contrast, Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) challenged the extent universities nurture interculturality for international students and questioned the superficial intercultural contact that international students have in the international university, drawing attention to the need to make efforts to facilitate practical intercultural communication and interaction. Gu et al. (2010) insisted that the extent and nature of successful change and development of international students can be restricted by the availability of support and the academic and social conditions of contact within the environments in which they are engaged.

3.4.3 Intercultural Transformation

Kim's (2008) integrative theory asserts that adaptation occurs through communication and the establishment of social networks, and that cultural immersion is generally positively related with fluency in the language of the host culture. Along with interaction with the host environment, adaptive changes occur gradually. Intercultural personhood is an important factor in the framework; one of the outcomes of adaptation, intercultural identity, involves the identity transformation of the sojourner in order to assimilate. Within the intercultural identity, there is individualisation and universalisation. In order to reclaim a sense of subjective wellbeing during intercultural adjustment, it has been noted that a strong sense of self must be maintained and nurtured to retain continuity (Diener et al., 1995). Otherwise, increases in uncertainty can lead to internal attributed errors that can result in feelings of incompetence and vulnerability (Adelman, 1988; Gudykunst, 2005). Ward and Kennedy (1994, p.330) explained that 'there are two primary dimensions of acculturation:

maintenance of original cultural identity and maintenance of relations with other groups.'
The positive sense of cultural identity and the integration of cultural identity with the new
alternative identity determine psychological health, whilst rigid adherence to the original
ethnic identity is detrimental to psychological health. Cultural identity links a person to a
specific culture, and a further intercultural identity links a person to more than one culture.

Intense cross-cultural experience can give participants the opportunity to develop the
capacity to face challenges, learn from them, and grow into a greater self - a state in which
personal changes cohere in harmony and readiness for further changes to come (Kim, 2001).
With an increasing level of host communicative competence and integration into the host
social interaction process, sojourners are believed to be better able to manage the dynamic
interaction between their original culture and the new culture. They are also more confident
in making free choices and being positive about facing the host environment

3.4.4 Chinese International students

As they represent such a large proportion of the international student population, large
volumes of studies have been conducted on Chinese students. It is critical for universities
to understand the challenges facing this group of students and to assist them in coping with
the demands of their host country. Research on the intercultural experiences of Chinese
students focuses primarily on the social-cultural, psychological, and educational aspects.
Besides having to deal with a new educational system, it has been observed that Chinese
students share other experiences with international students from other countries, as
mentioned in the sections above. For example, they are faced with a new social-cultural
environment, culture shock, a language barrier, discrimination, homesickness, limited
social support, all of which could potentially trigger psychological disorders (Mori, 2000;
Ward et al., 2004; Hyu et al., 2007). It may be that all of these psychological symptoms,
which are more intensely experienced by international students than by domestic students,
are more prevalent among students from Asian regions. In addition to these issues, there
are also some specifically "Chinese" factors that might be major contributors to the
psychological pressure Chinese students are subjected to. Chinese traditional culture places

great emphasis on academic success (Han et al., 2013). Due to the implementation of family planning policy in the 1970s, most students are from one-child families. Such a situation creates extra pressure for the one child growing up in a family with high expectations from their parents to achieve academic success. Such high expectation regarding their academic performance combined with strong family ties means that Chinese students studying overseas have difficulties establishing independence from their parents and family (Settles et al., 2012). Therefore, when faced with their host environment, Chinese students might face a greater struggle to live and study independently.

In addition to their learning and socio-cultural-psychological experiences, another related line of research into Chinese international students is their sense of identity. What is particularly relevant to this study is the sociological research on proselytisation – the conversion of Chinese students to Christianity by American Evangelical churches (Abel, 2006; Hall, 2006; Wang and Yang, 2006; Yang 1998; Yang and Tamney, 2006; Zhang, 2006). These researchers examined the religious experience and the high rate of conversion (about one in three) of Chinese students in the US. Various factors were found to account for this phenomenon of mass conversion including macro-, meso- and micro-level social factors (Abel 2006; Yang and Tamney 2006). Macro-social and cultural factors range from the religious void in China (lack of strong religious beliefs), to social problems in China (for instance, the dissatisfaction with materialism), to the value of certain Chinese cultural features that are believed to be consonant with Christian principles. Meso-contextual or organisational factors refer to 'the religious organisational ecology', i.e. local religious groups and institutions (Wang and Yang 2006, p.180). Micro-level social processes consist of 'sociological interaction rituals' (Li, 20120), including the favours and help offered by religious organisations. "Favour-fishing rituals" are examples of these (Abel 2006, p.176). This sociological framework explains the social processes implicated in the conversion of Chinese students to Evangelical Protestantism in the United States. With reference to the UK context, do Chinese international students share the similar religious experience as those in the US? Is their church participation in the UK an intercultural or religious encounter for Chinese students?

3.5 Summary

The theoretical framework in this chapter provides the conceptual guidelines for the data analysis in the study. Interrelations among the concepts serve to theoretically interpret the process of church participation of Chinese students in their cross-cultural engagement. The study is situated in the broader field of cross-cultural encounters and interactions. The terms relating to the area of cross-cultural encounters have been expanded and analysed. From critical reviews of the various approaches to cross-cultural adaptation in the intercultural contact, this chapter presents the understanding of intercultural experience and the contact that international students' process in the same way that other groups of sojourners do. The focus then shifts to the intercultural engagement of international students. The chapter also systematically reviews factors of both a personal nature (motivation and expectation, language, interpersonal and intergroup relations, intercultural knowledge, academic adjustment) and of an environmental nature (host acceptance and social support, host conformity pressure and ethnic group strength, student diversity) in relation to international students. These interrelated factors affect the students' intercultural contact and adaptation. Intercultural engagement around the university is set up as the example for observing how these relevant factors work together as it is the most common kind of such encounters for international students. After intercultural interaction, the chapter presents different degrees of intercultural transformations in the aspects of personal identity and intercultural competency. Associated with conversion phenomena of Chinese students in the US, this study shifts the context from US to the UK and enquiries the church participation of Chinese student in the UK. The next chapter demonstrates the research methodology.

Overall, although superficially, the theories reviewed in both Chapter 2 and 3 are not in the same field, and separately belong to different framework. However, the whole process of encounter between Christian community and international students could be regarded as kind of mutual adaptation towards each other. Chapter 2 from the perspective of Christian churches examines the theories concentrated on the organizational development when

meeting migrant people, and proposes the application of business model to explore the Christian interaction with Chinese international students to understand their adaptive transformation when faced with those students. Chapter 3 from the perspective of Chinese international students reviews the theories on the intercultural engagement in host context and constructs the conceptual framework to understand the adaptation process in students' overseas experience. Therefore, theories in chapter 2 and 3 construct a coherent conceptual framework in terms of the overall design of research.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the research methodology and methods used to answer the research questions. It includes discussion of the research design, the issues of reliability and validity, data analysis, and practical problems I encountered during the fieldwork. The research methods used in the study are: survey, interview, participant observation, and document analysis. Section 4.2 presents the interpretative approach in the study. Then, Section 4.3 4 includes the description of the population, sample selection criteria, and the recruitment of participants. Section 4introduces the methods in terms of the reasons for their selection, their process, and their reliability. Section 4.5 introduces the location of the study fieldwork. After that, Section 4.6 explains the data analysis process. Lastly, Section 4.7 discusses related ethical issues.

4.2 Paradigm and Mixed-method Approach

Philosophically, there are two main dimensions described in epistemology: positivism and anti-positivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Of these two different approaches to social science, positivism is an objectivist approach and the other is a subjectivist approach. In terms of educational research, Scott and Morrison (2005) developed four categories of paradigm, namely:

(1) positivism / empiricism;

(2) phenomenology as a form of interpretivism;

(3) critical theory;

(4) post modernism.

However, there has been constant debate over the division of positivism and interpretivism.

Scholars have expressed their doubt about whether the differences between qualitative and quantitative research can indicate the differences in methodological approaches of a particular study. In fact, to begin a research study, there is a need first to select a research paradigm and a plan for pursuing the methodology within the chosen research paradigm (Creswell, 2012; Morse, 2003).

Positivism

Positivism is most commonly related to natural sciences research, such as mathematics and physics. 'A positivist approach would follow the methods of the natural sciences and, by way of allegedly value-free, detached observation, seek to identify universal features of human hood, society and history that offer explanation and hence control and predictability' (Crotty, 1998, 67). Some scholars suggest adapting quantitative methods in the field of social science, that is, the application of positivist approaches to social science research (Bryman, 2004). Nevertheless, such adaptation is widely criticised in social science literature, as it separates itself from a political and social context in which the research operates (Sprague and Zimmerman, 2004, 40-44). Durkheim (1996) also argues that social facts would be seen just as the objects of natural science research if positivism is brought into social science. It means that the explanation of human behaviours would only be examined in facts, structures or forms that transcend individuals' consciousness. Guba and Lincoln (2004) continue the argument and consider that numbers and percentages in a positivist paradigm are not enough to reflect and explain human behaviours because human behaviours are not physical objects, but full of potential intention and purposes that lie behind human actions.

Interpretivism

The interpretivist paradigm serves as an alternative to positivism in research with the main proposition that interpretivism tends to reflect the distinctiveness of humans within the natural order (Bryman, 2004, 13). The interpretivist approach 'looks for culturally derived

and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world' (Crotty, 1998, 67). The generally applied methodology therefore is mainly focused on inquiry using qualitative research methods, including interviews, focus groups and observations, which aim to reveal most from people's personal experiences. The interpretivist paradigm is frequently used to answer research questions in social research, such as citizenship research studies attempting to understand how young people are involved in social life (Hall et al., 1999). Morrison (2007, 26) points out that 'all educational research needs to be grounded in people's experience and interpretivists explore the meaning of events and phenomena from the subjects' perspectives'. Cohen et al. (2013, 17) also supported the idea that the 'interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience.' Research should therefore strive to understand the inside of the individual.

Mixed methods research

Scholars proposed that factors of "explanation" and "exploration" could provide a standard which can be employed for deciding whether a quantitative or qualitative study is suitable for research questions (Crewell, 2010). Scholars during the 1970s and the 1980s in which some theorists saw quantitative and qualitative as separate paradigms, while others saw the potential in combining the two techniques (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Later, mixed methods research has subsequently developed to be a separate paradigm, which is a consistent procedure for collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or a series of studies to understand a research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

In this study, I am taking a clear intermediate position between the more strongly positivist and interpretivist ends of ontological thought. On the one hand, the conducting of a questionnaire indicates the positivist end of ontology, which aims to test the proposed relations and discover general information from the research sample. In addition, conducting a questionnaire will make sure that the relation between the researcher and the respondents is not interrelated, thereby helping me to separate my own perspectives from

the respondents and make more objective judgments about the contents. On the other hand, the interview, participant observation, document analysis is the interpretivist end of ontology, for it tries to get more individualised information and reflect personal perspectives. The researcher tends to have an interactive relationship with interviewees in order to understand their situation.

The underlying assumption of conducting mixed research is that a 'combination of quantitative and qualitative approach provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, 9). Quantitative and qualitative methods in combination complement each other and can provide a more complete picture of the research problem (Greene et al., 1989), and then a very powerful mix is obtained (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 42). A mixed methods study 'gathers more information in different modes about a phenomenon' and the breadth of findings highlights shortcomings in individual methods (Giddings and Grant, 2006, 6). Greene (1989) further argues that mixed methods research can help expand the basic research focus to develop wider implications. The research problems are so complicated, which requires answers that are beyond 'simply numbers in quantitative sense or words in qualitative sense' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, 13). My research is just the case.

This study is focused on the cultural experiences of Chinese international students in Christian institutions. Based on a review of research paradigms for conducting research and consideration on research questions as well as the conceptual framework in this research, I argue that both quantitative and qualitative methods are useful to achieve my research aims. Therefore, the mixed-method research is applied in my study.

The proposed mixed method strategy serves as a useful guideline for my study. The specific position of phenomenology in this study was based on Schutz's ideas related to the issues of sociology and to the scientific study of human behaviour, that is, to apprehend and understand in the lived context where people live through the situation (Wilson, 2002). This study explored the phenomenon of cultural interaction between international students

and the host environment. Data collected by a combination of methods, such as survey, participant observation, interview and document analysis, provided the point of view to deeply explore the purposes, the processes, and the outcomes of intercultural engagement between Chinese students and the international Christian community. Observation was conducted and had the research purpose of exploring the interaction process of churches and Chinese international students. Quantitative methods (survey) followed to find out the general situation of church participation of Chinese international students. Interviews and document analysis combining observation then elaborated and refined results from the quantitative data through more detailed and specific information related to the research questions in greater depth.

4.3 Sample

4.3.1 Sample Selection Criteria

The study contained both quantitative and qualitative parts in its different phases. The target population was selected according to different criteria. Purposeful sampling was applied in the qualitative part of the study. The nature of this part reflects the intention to provide an in-depth analysis of the church experience of Chinese students and its effect on their cross-cultural adaptation. The aim of purposive sampling is to recruit participants in a strategic way so that those sampled are highly relevant to the research and thus allow the core phenomenon to be understood (Bryman, 2008, 694; Miles and Huberman, 1994, 27). The power of the sampling method lies in its ability to select 'information-rich cases' for the analysis to be in-depth; such cases are those of central importance to the research objectives (Patton, 1987). The key to purposive sampling in the study is the variation of participants in terms of certain assumptions. Firstly, number of times of church going was considered to be important for their adaptation. Secondly, the motivation of Chinese students to participate in the church varied and led to different outcomes. The third consideration related to the diversity of participants in the interview. Convenience sampling (Fink, 2003, p.18) was selected with the following criteria: (1) Chinese students;

(2) Master students; (3) had studied in the UK for more than six months. In addition, church members had different perspectives on Chinese students' participation in the church when compared with those of the Chinese students themselves. Therefore, church representatives' opinions and discussions were of importance to the supportive analysis into the intercultural engagement between Chinese students and the Christian community.

4.3.2 Nature of the Sample

The target population in this study consisted of two parts. One part was constituted by the Chinese students in the main UK university, both church participants and non-church participants. The other group in the sample was made up of the Christian church representatives. The whole sample includes 506 participants, of which there were 1) 501 Chinese students, 2) 5 church representatives. The Chinese students were selected mainly for the quantitative part of the study (N=501) of whom 15 students who were frequent church participants are invited to the interviews. The 5 church representatives were recruited for another set of interviews.

Taking into account of the confidence level and confidence intervals, I calculated the sample size for the quantitative study according to the instructions of probability sample in random sample in the book Research Methods in Education (Cohen et al., 2013). As for the qualitative part, theoretically, 20% of the target group may suffice for the researcher to obtain additional corroborative data (Cohen et al., 2013). In terms of the staff in the two churches, the number required for interviews was at least four (from a total staff number of about 20). Therefore, in accordance with the requirements in the research, the number of participants in the study was with statistical meaning.

4.4 Methods

In this study, I applied a mixed method research approach by combining survey, participant observation, interview, and document analysis. A mixed method research is a

procedure for collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or a series of studies to understand a research problem (Creswell and Clark, 2007, p.5-17). It consists of merging, integrating, linking, or embedding two "strands"- quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2012，p.5), quantitative and qualitative methods in combination complement each other and can provide a more complete picture of the research problem (Greene et al., 1989). When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis (Green et al., 1989; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). This study selected the approaches, variables, and units of analysis that are most appropriate for addressing the research questions (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1988).

The nature of the data collected in this study focuses on facts, responses, understandings, and attitudes regarding the church participation of Chinese international students in their intercultural interactions and engagements. The source of data in the study was based on primary data consisting of survey (with 501 Chinese students), participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews (with 15 Chinese students and 5 church representatives), and document analysis based on online resources (Table 4-1). This "qualitatively driven" approach provided sufficient richness of data to draw a comprehensive picture of cultural interaction and adaptation of Chinese students in the religious organisations, which 'offers enormous potential for generating new ways of understanding the complexities and contexts of social experience, and for enhancing our capacities for social explanation and generalization' (Mason, 2006). The following sections demonstrate four methods respectively.

Mixed Methods			
Survey (N=501)	Participant Observation	Interview (N=20)	Document Analysis

Table 4- 1 Research Methods

4.4.1 Survey

In order to find out how widespread church participation is among Chinese students in the UK and its influence on their intercultural interaction and cross-cultural adaptation, a survey was employed in the study, which is widely the case in data collection, especially in the social sciences. By making a comparison with non-church participants, the results from analysing the survey data may contribute to addressing questions regarding the influence of church participation in a general sense, and to identifying other potential relations.

Construction of the Survey

The questionnaire in the present study contained five sections (see Appendix 1). The first was an introduction to the questionnaire, which illustrated the goals and significance of the study, participants' rights, and instructions on how to answer the questions. The next section collected demographic and other information about participants, including gender, length of stay in the UK, and degree specialisations. The third section was concerned with psychological adaptation and experience. The fourth section focused on the church experience, and the last section was about the socio-cultural experience.

Independent Variables

The independent variables in the study included the participants' basic information, such as gender, age, majors, and the period of time that participants have been in the host country. They were not only demographic measures for understanding the students' general

situation but also key factors that influence cross-cultural adaptation, as has demonstrated by previous researches (Sim and Schraeder, 2004).

Other independent variables included participants' experience in local churches, such as their religious beliefs, number of times of going to the churches, types of churches they attend, and reasons for their church participation. This was recorded with participants' responses to the items 'Have you been to church since you came to the UK?' and 'How many times have you been to church in the last six months (Ward et al., 1998)?' There were automatically two separate answers to the first item: 'have been to' and 'have not been to'. As for the second item, there were four answers: 'once-twice', 'three-four times', 'five-six times', and 'seven-eight times'.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables were divided into two sections based on the dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation that Ward and Kennedy proposed (1999), that is, social cultural adaptation and psychological adaptation. The socio-cultural adaptation scale in the study was adopted from the Revised Sociocultural Adaptation (SCAS-R). As a unidimensional measure, the scale has demonstrated good reliability and validity with a wide variety of cross-cultural samples. According to Ward and Kennedy, the socio-cultural adaptation scale (SCAS) is a flexible instrument and can be easily modified based on the characteristics of the sojourning sample. There are many versions of the scale, which have been applied in a variety of studies. This research used the Revised Sociocultural Adaptation (SCAS-R) version. The SCAS-R is suitable for a study with international students as it consists of five subscales, namely: interpersonal communication, academic performance, personal interests and community involvement, ecological adaptation, and language proficiency. These different sub-scales also constitute the factors for analysis. For instance, in the Appendix 1, Questions 21, 23, 26, 31, 33, 36 and 41 refer to outcomes of interpersonal relationships; Questions 30 and 40 refer to language competency; Question 12, 27, 32 and 37 refer to academic experience. Question 25, 29, 35 and 39 refer to

ecological adaptation; Question 24, 28, 34 and 38 refer to personal interests and community involvement.

The Psychological Adaptation Scale assesses psychological adaptation. The scale was adopted from the Brief Psychological Adaptation Scale, which was non-general but specific to cultural relocation. The validity and reliability of the scale have been tested and item-total correlations are high (αBPAS = .79). There were eight items concerning participants' psychological feelings about life in the UK, including positive and negative feelings, and feelings related to the home and to the host country. Through responding on a scale ranging from 1 = never to 7 = always, participants can demonstrate their feelings in different situations.

Translation of the Survey

As subjects in the study were Chinese students, I translated the questionnaire into Chinese so that they could understand it well and give accurate answers. The Chinese version (see Appendix 2) also raised their interest in doing the survey as most other surveys they had encountered in the UK were in English. In order to ensure the quality of translation and so that it exactly reflected the meaning in English, a professor who was specialised in translation in both languages was asked to revise it.

Administration of the Survey

Quantitative research relies on numerical data (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, 2003). To ensure the collection of completed questionnaires and to cover as many Chinese students as possible, the survey was distributed around the university campus randomly. Students were invited to fill in the survey and by submitting their responses they were implicitly agreeing to take part voluntarily in the project.

Participants in the Survey

508 Chinese students took part in the survey, seven of whose questionnaires were discarded, as they were incomplete. Of the remaining 501 questionnaires, 384 of the student respondents were female (accounting for 76.6% of the overall total) and 117 were male (23.4%). All the participants in the survey's sample population were pursuing a Master's degree in the same selected, established UK university. The majority of respondents in the sample came from the Business School (83.2%), followed by 5.8% from the School of Social Media and 5.4% from the School of Education. There were fewer students representing other subjects such as Engineering, Law, Sociology, and Medical Science. In terms of the length of time that students had been in the new city, 97.6% of them had been living there over six months, the others less than six months. 84.8% of the participants in the sample were of no religion (N=421), with a total number of 64 with religious beliefs. Among these, 46 students identified as Buddhist, 14 were Christians, and four were Muslims. All of them had their faith before they came to the UK.

The total adaptation includes social-cultural adaptation and psychological adaptation as shown in Table 4-2. The full score of psychological adaptation for one participant is 56 and for social-cultural adaptation is 100, and the total adaptation is 156. Therefore, the average level of total adaptation 101.996/156=65%, which has reached a medium level, within which, the social-cultural adaptation reached the level of 64% (63.65/100), and the average psychological adaptation reached 68% (38.33/56). Generally, Chinese students had a medium level of adaptation but the personal difference varied widely.

	N.	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Psychological Adaptation	501	16.00	56.00	38.3393	5.70514
Social-cultural Adaptation	501	34.00	91.00	63.6567	9.11734
Cross-cultural Adaptation	501	57.00	144.00	101.9960	12.33191

Table 4- 2 Cross-cultural Adaptations of Chinese Students

In terms of the students' frequency of church participation and type of church, among all the subjects in the questionnaires, 178 students (35.5% of the total population) had been to church in the previous six months, that is, over a third of Chinese students in the survey sample had had a church experience. Among these church participants, 62.4% (N=111) had been to church once or twice, and about 37.6% (N=67) had been three or more times. In terms of the typology of churches, 163 students had been to local Christian churches, 26 students had been to Chinese Christian churches, and 8 had been to non-Christian churches. 19 students had been to more than one type of church, which indicates that there was no fixed selection of church for some Chinese students. They were free to choose whether or not to attend the church and which kind of church.

4.4.2 Qualitative Methods

After exploring the general relationships between church participation and cross-cultural adaptation statistically, the study attempted to capture the church experience of individuals to find out the specific process of intercultural interaction around English Christian

churches. The questions were designed to explore the process of cross-cultural adaptation of international students based on church engagement and included: What do Chinese students get from the church? Why did they choose English Christian churches as the place for cultural engagement? Was their church participation a coincidental choice or a required selection? How do church representatives and Chinese students connect with each other since superficially there seemed to be no direct relation between the two groups? How do Chinese students think about the influence of churches in their intercultural contact? In addition, church and church members, as the host side in this cross-cultural interaction, were encouraged to discuss their purposes and the organisation of Christian events in providing support for international students.

These detailed enquiries could be best understood by analysing qualitative data in the form of the words of participants which in turn could enrich the quantitative results. Qualitative studies could gather more detailed views of the selected participants to help explain the quantitative results (Creswell and Clark, 2007, p.210). Qualitative methodologies therefore were employed to supplement the data collected in the quantitative part of the study. This method allows individuals or small groups to offer a deeper understanding about the circumstances of students' life. It is 'an inquiry process of understanding,' where the researcher develops a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 2012, p. 300). From the constructivist (Guba and Lincoln, 1982) or advocacy/participatory (Mertens, 2003) perspectives, it 'produces an understanding of the problem based on multiple contextual factors' (Miller, 2000). Therefore, qualitative methods are 'unique' in the social sciences as Patton stated in 1985:

> Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there, this understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting - and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others

who are interested in that setting… The analysis strives for depth of understanding (Patton, 1985, p. 1).

According to the criteria that Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined for the trustworthiness of a research study (i.e. credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability) and the relevant techniques they described in the qualitative study, I specifically used participant observation, interviews, and document analysis in the study, and combined the proposed techniques, such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, thick description, reflexivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) together with the fieldwork and data analysis. The strength of mixed qualitative methods lie in the knowledge it could provide of the dynamics of interaction process and in its ability to answer 'how' and 'why' questions in these domains. Qualitative methods offer enormous potential for exploring new dimensions of experience and intersections between these domains. The application of these methods also encourages researchers to see differently, or to think 'outside the box' (Mason, 2006). Participation observation and interviews in the study were aimed at the investigation of individual experience and opinions about the church experience. Document analysis was focused on the official website of international Christian church communities.

4.4.3 Participant Observation

Observation as a flexible instrument is a good way for the researcher to gather live information and data. Participant observation as a way of data collection is applied to a wide range of scholarly problems pertinent to human existence. Focusing on human interaction and meaning viewed from the insider's point of view in everyday life situations and settings, it aims to generate practical and theoretical truths formulated as interpretative theories, and is practised as a form of case study that concentrates on the in-depth description and analysis of some phenomenon or set of phenomena (Jorgensen, 1989, p.16). Direct observation is the primary way of gathering information, and other methods are applied at the same time. Direct observation depends on the nature and extent of participant involvement and the experience of the researcher. Through participation, it is

possible to describe what goes on, who and what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and why - at least from the standpoint of participants - things happen as they do in particular situations. For the study, I took part in church events with the Chinese students. As an observer, I continued to see the interaction between the church people and the Chinese students. Informal conversation and records of the behaviours of students as well as church members depict the vivid process of intercultural contact.

There are arguments against this method because of the potential disadvantages. For instance, there is too much reliance on the subjectivity of the researcher as its practice fundamentally depends on the ability of the researcher to adjust and adapt skilfully to concrete conditions of daily life (Walsham, 2006). The ability of the researcher influences his or her relations to the environment as well as the depth of description and interpretation. However, all forms of scientific enquiry inevitably involve a wide variety of non-rational, extra-scientific factors, and depend on artful judgements, decisions, and skills (Kuukkanen, 2012). The perspective of the researcher also determines the content of observation. Each phenomenon looks different when viewed from different angles. What is observed depends on the sight, sound, taste, smell, and the combination of the researcher's senses, as well as on their own position in the study. Essentially, there is no perfect or ideal perspective for one phenomenon. The adequacy of a participant role perspective depends on the problem being studied. Every perspective contains inherent, built-in limitations, and even biases. There is no absolute guarantee against inaccurate findings due to limited sight or experience. I need to seek different angles and perspectives, and constantly search for information and evidence to critically examine emergent findings. The more information I have from multiple standpoints and sources, the less likely I would misconstrue the findings. Observation in the study was mainly located in the Christian churches. The following section explains the process of my participant observation.

Observation Process

1) Building trust and rapport

The significance of the establishment of trust and rapport with participants is recognised in the fieldwork literature (Emmel et al., 2007). Therefore, the first step in the observation or interview is to establish trust with participants. In order to become involved in the unfamiliar environment of Christian churches, I took part in the churches' events every week along with those new Chinese students from the September 2014 intake. Every Thursday night I went to Church A, and on Friday nights and Sunday I went to Church B. If they had outdoor events such as hiking or hospitality on Saturdays, I went to the churches with them, especially at the beginning of that semester. Besides participating in the interactive activities with students, I also volunteered to help organise the events when church members were looking for assistants for large gatherings, such as Christmas lunch and Sunday service lunch. The work in the kitchen or in the hall was not difficult. All the volunteers shared stories with each other and established a good relationship. The more I engaged with the churches, the more those Chinese students and church members became familiar, and, subsequently more open with me. It increased our communication, mutual understanding and trust and gradually I became part of the international groups.

In informal interactions, I did not hide my identity as a researcher; rather I introduced myself different to Chinese students compared to church members. If students enquired, I was clear that I was a PhD student exploring the interaction between Chinese students and churches. Students did not show any hesitation or negative attitudes toward my research role. Rather, they were curious about my PhD experience, and this provided an issue to discuss with them. The ice-breaking period was short and the relationship with the Chinese students was easy to establish through demonstration of friendliness. However, when faced with church members, I indicated I was exploring how churches helped Chinese students. The differences in the wording were not planned before I met people in the church. It stemmed from my reflections after my initial informal conversations with church members, when I had found that Christians seemed to be offended if I directly and objectively demonstrated my identity as a researcher. Their sensitivity and uncomfortable facial expressions cautioned me to explain my presence in a less obvious and more acceptable

way. For example, when I drew attention to the way their churches were providing a social support to help students like me and I expressed positive attitudes towards their work, this proved to be effective as they were then pleased to share their experiences and give me access to their organisations. I continually showed my positive attitude in response to their willingness to share church stories. I believe that this resulted in the church members feeling less of a sense of distance from me and we were able to establish comfortable relations. Church members were interested in my enquiries when I concealed my real position in the study.

After about three months of active participation in different church events alongside the Chinese students, I became part of the international groups in both sample churches. Before the Christmas holiday that year, I was still uncertain about Chinese students and church members' acceptance of me because of my researcher identity and thought it may be to some extent superficial and out of personal politeness. However, when I returned from holiday and continued my fieldwork, students and church members showed they had missed me and indicated their sadness because they thought I might have finished my degree and left. Some students even invited me to their private dinners or gatherings. Their welcome on my return to their group gave me confidence and took away my previous concerns. I was moved by that moment and regarded it as a sign of the trust and good rapport I had with them.

2) Documents and leaflets

In addition to engagement with the international groups, in the course of observation, I also collected a wide range of communication documents from the churches, including leaflets and events schedules (for the team building of church members), and were used for analysis. As products of human activities such documents potentially provide rich sources of secondary and, in some cases, even primary research material (Jorgensen, 1989). The class texts and timetables I collected represent naturally occurring phenomena and served

as a distinctive basis for inquiry in and of themselves, not only as a source of support to other findings.

3) Informal unstructured interview

I gathered data through informal unstructured interviews in the process of observation. Informal interviews are like casual conversations (Elliott and Jankel-Elliott, 2003). Through discussions about matters of interest to the insiders, I could gather information systematically from different respondents who shared their opinions about the same issues. These discussions inspired the general ideas for the interviews and confirmed my desire, to some extent, to be an insider, which is a useful strategy for discerning different viewpoints. The data collected from the informal interviews provided the direction for questions in the formal interviews.

4) Data records

Data records are another significant aspect of participant observation. I did not audio-record these interviews. Instead, I took notes and kept a diary by way of transcription. In order to remain objective, the notes or diaries differentiate the facts that I observed from the feelings, thoughts, and concerns that I had after the participation (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). All records were kept in designated files and folders.

4.4.4 Semi-structured in-depth Interviews

Interviews are commonly employed to obtain information and understand the issues relevant to the general aims and specific questions of a research project (Gillham, 2000), such as the reasons for interaction for both students and church members. Semi-structured interview is a kind of in-depth interview where the interviewer knows the area he or she wants to cover with the interviewee. It is open and allows new ideas to be brought up during the interview. Generally, there is a framework of themes to be explored by the interviewer. According to the specific responses I received from the interviewee, I was

required to adjust the questions in terms of the use of words, the sequence of the listed questions, as well as the breadth and depth of any specific topic under discussion (Patton, 1987, pp.48-49). All questions for interviewees were asked consistently throughout all the interviews, and with a similar wording (Bryman, 2008, p.468).

Based on the outcomes of the questionnaire, participants in the survey who were also frequent church participants were invited to a semi-structured in-depth interview. Through the interviews, the researcher could uncover the perceptions and reflections of the individual participant with regard to the individual church experience and the reasons. The interviews provided more detailed and richer information to allow for further interpretation of the survey results. Both frequent church participants and the church representatives were invited to the interviews in the churches. The main topic for Chinese students was their church experience and attitudes. The topics for church representatives concerned the activities for the international students and their reflections on the students' adaptation. The specific questions are listed in the appendix. The following section explains the interview process.

Participants in the Interviews

There were four male students and eleven female students invited to the interviews (see Table 4-3). Four interviewees were non-Business Schools, namely: the School of Education (N=2), the School of Engineering (N=1), and the School of Biology (N=1). Eleven interviewees were from the School of Business. All students had been in the UK for over six months and had been to the Christian churches over six times in the six months before the interviews. All the names of participants in the interviews are pseudonym.

Name	Gender	Area of Study	Length of stay in the UK	Number of times of church participation in the last six	Christian or non-Christian
Hao	F	Business	13 months	Once a week	C
Yu	M	Business	24 months	Over 10 times	NC
Chen	M	Business	9 months	Over 10 times	NC
Xixi	F	Business	12 months	Once a week	C
Fang	F	Business	10 months	Over 10 times	NC
Mao	F	Business	10 months	7-8 times	NC
Zhou	F	Business	10 months	5 times	NC
Wu	F	Business	10 months	6 times	NC
Wen	F	Business	10 months	6 times	NC
Qing	F	Business	11 months	7-8 times	NC
Xue	M	Business	11 months	5 times	NC
Huo	F	Education	10 months	Once a week	NC
Tang	M	Engineering	10 months	Once a week	NC
Bai	F	Education	11 months	Once a week	NC
Zhang	F	Biology	10 months	6 times	NC

Table 4- 3 Student Participants in the Interviews

Church representatives were recruited in the churches. These interviews were carried out in two churches. In order to comprehensively understand the church behaviour, the selection of church representatives was carried out to include church members at different levels of the organisational structure, particularly within the international group. There were five interviewees selected from the Christian church representatives (see Table 4-4), including group leaders, workers, and volunteers, who were responsible for different duties in the international groups. There were four females and one male in the sample of church members. Two of them were from church A and the rest were from church B. Juna, Flora, and Steve were aged in their 20s and 30s, and Katy and Ella were retired or close to retirement age. Katy, and Ella had each been to China once. Flora was Chinese and became a Christian during her time studying in the UK. Now she is a volunteer in the church with a Tier 5 visa.

Name	Gender	Church	Duty
Katy	F	A	Group leader
Juna	F	B	Student worker (paid)
Flora	F	B	Volunteer (Chinese)
Ella	F	B	Volunteer
Steve	M	A	Helper (outdoor activities)

Table 4- 4 Church Representatives in the Interviews

Accessing Participants

I invited Chinese students who were frequent church participants and some church representatives to be interviewed. If they showed a willingness to participate, I sent them

the plain language statement (Appendix 3), consent form (Appendix 4) and the possible questions so that they had enough time to understand my research, and at the same time, I negotiated the interview time with each of them. In addition, I assured them that they had the right to stop the interviews at any time they preferred, and they could refuse to consent to my tape recording or note taking.

Due to the positive relations I had developed with the students and church members, it was not difficult to encourage them to be interviewees. Most of the Chinese students and church members were happy to participate in my research. I was only rejected directly by one church member, Davis. He insisted that he not be interviewed due to his concerns about the sensitivity of the topic, which might have negative consequences for him (for example, if the Chinese government identifies him in spite of the study's anonymity). Davis was familiar with the risk of discussing Christian issues in Mainland China as he had been there many times. He was concerned with his security should the Chinese government read my research. Even though he was assured he would remain anonymous, he did not feel safe sharing his opinions with me as a researcher in case the Chinese government were to read this later. The group leader in church A also had similar concerns before our interview. She had been in China for many years and knew the Christian situation there. Although she did not refuse my request for an interview, she asked about my sponsorship and about the potential readers of my thesis before we formally started the interview. After my reassurances that she was pseudonymous, she expressed her hesitation and concerns about the sensitivity of the topic of my research. In order to put her at ease, I reiterated the independence of my research from Chinese religious policy and her anonymity in the study.

Interview Process

All participants in this sample were interviewed individually. In the interviews with the Chinese students, they could choose the language they felt comfortable to use, either Mandarin Chinese or English. All the students chose Chinese as they thought they could

express themselves more clearly and deeply without the worries of being misleading or misunderstood. Interviews with church members were conducted in English. The first time I held an interview with a church member, I felt a little concerned about my language skills as English is my second language. The intense conversation in the interview and reciprocal communication might not have been as smooth as I had hoped. However, my interviewee's positive attitude and tolerance encouraged me to ask freely about anything that I was interested in but could not understand clearly. It decreased my anxiety after the first interview, and I became more confident in later interviews having had an opportunity for reflection.

Each interview lasted from one hour to one and a half hours. At the beginning of the interviews with students, I started with the questions relating to their study or life experience as a warm-up. The Chinese students tended to become quickly engaged in the interviews.

I think that their comfort in speaking with me was firstly due to my previous efforts with them, as we were not strangers to each other. Secondly, I shared some similar experiences with them so that they could feel a close but temporary relationship in the interview. Their positive mood carried through the interviews. After the interviews, some students also asked me about my PhD experience and the life of a researcher in the UK. In return for their participation, I was willing to share my experiences with them. As for the interviews with church members, it did not take long to engage them in the interviews either. I usually started with topics familiar to them, such as the history of their churches, and then they freely moved on to the core points of the interview they wanted to share.

During the interviews, particularly with the Chinese students, the more the participants knew about the researcher, the more they tried to please me in their responses (Reinharz and Chase, 2002, p, 221-238). They attempted to enquire about the points that I was looking into for the study. They warm-heartedly provided the information and even double-checked their answers after the interviews to make sure they were helpful to me.

There were some students who already knew my topic, and they even started directly from their church experience in the UK. In these interviews, I had to emphasise questions about their general experience around campus. I used my research interview skills to guide them back to the focus of the interview and encouraged them to describe their experience as freely as possible, regardless of my possible feelings.

Compared with my research skills in the interviews with students, I felt a reduction of skill and power as a researcher with church members. The unbalanced power flow was due to my limited knowledge and experience of Christianity. Sometimes, it was hard to take a leading part in the interviews, as church members were sophisticated in their discussion of Christianity. If I could not understand some terms or phrases, I had to go back to them and ask them to explain afterwards. Fortunately, all church members were happy to explain again, but I felt that to some extent this affected the communication between us.

The interviews were audio recorded, and as soon as I finished each interview, I wrote down some reflections. In the interview with the group leader in Church A, who before the interview had been concerned about the risk of her involvement in my research, she requested I stop the recording when we talked about the Chinese government and religious issues in China. She did not want to leave any oral evidence of her opinions towards the Chinese government, the development of Christianity, and her experience in China. Instead, I took notes after the conversation. Her cautiousness implied awareness of the sensitivity of religious issues in China, particularly relating to the Chinese government. The concerns and doubts of participants raised some thoughts about the extent to which their words reflected the reality. I reflect on this later in the section of the ethical considerations.

Language Issues in the Interview

Student participants were free to choose the language they preferred. Understandably, all of them chose to share their personal experience in Chinese. After all, they were more comfortable and could discuss issues in greater depth in Chinese. Pressuring the

participants to use their second language, English, might have impeded their expression of details. Meanwhile, language competency varies a lot between participants, which may result in misunderstandings in the interviews.

In cross-language research, there are debates regarding the use of translation and interpretation in studies, and, specifically, whether they affect the integration of the contexts in which the data are produced, and with regard to the potential limits of the particular researcher's language skills (Temple et al., 2006). However, there is also a growing consensus that as long as the translation and interpretation are "objective", the language context issue is irrelevant. Language as 'an important part of conceptualization, incorporating values and belief carries accumulated and particular cultural, social, and political meanings that cannot simply be read off through the process of translation' (Temple and Edward, 2002, p.5). Translation from one language to another does not solely mean the skill of transferring words. It also involves an understanding of cultural, social, and political meanings. In addition, apart from knowing the concepts, an understanding of and feeling for the sensitivities in different contexts is also necessary (Filep, 2009). These understanding and feeling in the translation and transcription are significant because the word could influence the atmosphere in the interview. Relying on the interpreter might be risky as a translator 'brings their own assumption and concern to the interview and the research process' (Temple and Edward, 2002).

For these reasons, I carried out the translation work myself. In the data production, I was the author of new text, instead of using a technician who reproduces the original meaning in other languages (Overing, 1987; Simon, 1996; Venuti, 2012; Wadensjo, 1998). In this study, I was not only translating people's stories from Chinese to English, but, at the same time I was interpreting, analysing, and presenting participants' experiences and perspectives concerning their religious experience. This process could happen in either cross-language or non-cross-language studies. Therefore, being objective as much as possible and taking into account the context in which language was used were the two guidelines in my translations and transcription, to ensure that all text is close to its original meanings.

Leaving the Fieldwork

The fieldwork came to an end the following September when most student participants finished their study and left the university. I kept in contact with some of them, especially those who intended to apply for further study. The church members invited me to the church events in the next semester, and I would go when I was free, but much less frequently than at the time of the fieldwork. One church member kept in contact with me, and invited me to afternoon tea one year after I had left my fieldwork. She was curious about my research outcomes and thought that she might make use of them in her work with Chinese students in the future. However, I have not shared my results with her so far.

4.4.5 Document Analysis

Document analysis focused on one official website of an international Christian community. This was to uncover the details about church organisations on the other side in the intercultural interaction. I had not considered using document analysis as a research method until I discovered the website during my fieldwork. The analysis was designed to demonstrate the organisation of the international Christian community for international students. Analysis of the material from the website provided information about the work carried out and the approaches used within the international Christian community.

There is a set of techniques for the systemic analysis of many kinds of texts, addressing not only manifest content but also the themes and core ideas found in the texts as primary content (Mayring, 2010). It is usually applied for both exploratory and descriptive purposes, and it qualitatively tests the merits of specific analytical constructs. As an ideal approach to descriptive qualitative research (Sandelowski, 2014), it is more focused on description than on conceptual development. Furthermore, as it is based on the interpretation of texts and focuses on the chosen questions, it seeks to develop carefully specified categories that are revised and refined in an interactive, feedback-loop process to ensure credibility and usefulness (Mayring, 2000). This is similar to thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1988) for coding

descriptive content in texts. However, any form of categorisation will arguably involve some degree of abstraction. It may make the analysis too superficial to uncover the meaning of the research. Both Kracauer (1952) and Ritsert (1972) highlighted several aspects of the content analysis process, such as coding difficulties when in-depth analysis is conducted outside the context of the original content. In this study, qualitative content analysis was significant in that it provided the approach for analysing the official website of the international Christian community. Although the method was to some extent descriptive and literal, it helped in understanding the organisation of religious institutions as supplemental information for the intercultural interaction between Chinese students and Christian churches.

The charity and the volunteers according to the website are like the supervisors of the churches with international groups (including contact skills, hospitality issues, etc.) to make sure the individual churches behave properly in their interactions with international students. The website information for churches is categorised into four core aspects: preparation of international events, group team building in the churches, establishment of friendship with students, and skills for communicating the gospel cross-culturally. The training and resources provided relate mainly to recognition of God, Bible teaching, and establishing and maintaining relations with international students. Practical guidelines range from the organisation of Bible studies classes and social events to the skills of communicating with students. They present a wealth of experience from previous interactions or relevant literature, so that churches can make themselves more accessible to international students.

In addition to the training for churches and group members, the Christian charity also provides some tools for international students to better help them get used to their new life, including an app and a search engine. The app named LIFE-UK is aimed at new international students. It contains information about living in Britain and facts about British people, so that students are able to settle into their new life. They contain useful information for students about everything from their arrival to their leaving the UK. For

the return home of international students, the website contains ideas for preparing for their first month back, such as connecting with a church or Christian group. There is also some literature aimed at supporting them during the phase of reverse culture shock as they transition back to life in their home country. An online community named 'Clan' links up students when they are back home with the aim of helping those international students who are involved in Christianity. It emphasises making links with friends, mentors, or a church when students return to their home country.

4.5 Location of the Fieldwork

The fieldwork in the study was launched in two places, with one being the education institution (the university), and the other being the Christian churches near the university. The university in the project is one of the oldest universities in the English-speaking world. With an excellent reputation, it had 19,160 undergraduates and 7,655 postgraduate students in the year 2014-2015. As the top university for international students in 2013 (among universities participating in the International Student Barometer), it has attracted a large number of students from over 120 countries. The English language requirement for the university's international students is an IELTS score of 6.5 in the College of Sciences and Engineering and a score of 7 in the College of Social Sciences and the College of Arts. This implies already possessing a certain level of skill and competency in English communication when international students are admitted to the university. The questionnaire, aimed randomly at Chinese Master's students, was distributed and collected on the campus.

The study was aimed at investigating the intercultural contact of Chinese students within the Christian churches. Christian churches located near the education institution were selected for participant observation and to find subjects to take part in the in-depth interviews. Christian churches as religious organisations are open to the public and welcome people to come into their congregations. The study identified two churches as suitable cases from the whole international Christian community of the UK in that they attracted a good number of Chinese international students due to their location near the

university. One church was close to the campus and the other was near the student accommodation. Both churches are Christian churches belonging to the Church of England or the Church of Scotland. More information about the two churches is provided in Chapter 7.

Interviews with church representatives were conducted mainly in the churches. If interviewees so required, some interviews took place in a café or in my office. Interviews with students were conducted in the café or common rooms of the university. Participants chose their preferred places for convenience and comfort.

4.6 Data Analysis

4.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Data from the survey was analysed using SPSS software to explore the potential relations among variables. There were 508 questionnaires collected in total. With 7 questionnaires deleted from the sample due to their incompleteness or mistakes, 501 questionnaires were put into SPSS. I firstly analysed the demographic information of participants (gender, majors, times of church participations etc.) and then found out their adaptation outcomes according to the scales with different dimensions, such as sociocultural adaptation, psychological adaptation etc. Based on the outcomes of independent variables and dependent variables, I used correlation analysis to explore the relation between times of church participation and adaptation. Other relations between factors such as gender, major, period of staying in the UK etc. and adaptation were also included in the analysis.

4.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

For the qualitative part of the data analysis, I conducted thematic analysis of the data from the participant observation and interviews. The content analysis of the website of the international Christian community was also based on thematic analysis. This method of analysis as an independent qualitative descriptive approach is described as 'a method for

identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). As a flexible and useful research tool, it provides a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.104).

In addition, the specific analysing process contained both inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive thematic analysis is used in cases where there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon, and therefore the coded categories are derived directly from the text data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The deductive approach is used to test a previous theory in a different situation, or to compare categories in different periods (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Elo and Kyngäs, 2008), and tends to provide a less rich description of the overall data but a more detailed analysis of some specific aspect of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In terms of the study's research questions and the theoretical framework, the church participation of international students is a relatively new phenomenon in the field of intercultural encounter and experience. Therefore, some code categories related to the students' religious experience came directly from the interviewees. Meanwhile, the code categories related to cross-cultural adaptation and interaction came from theories and literature, but required detailed analysis within the religious context.

The qualitative data in the study came from two different groups: Chinese international students and Christian church members. Interview data was reported alongside the data from observation and website content analysis.

Interview data

I first translated the recordings from Chinese to English and then transcribed it accordingly. The transcription process gave me the chance to read the stories and retrieve memories. This experience was a little different from what I felt when I was actually conducting the interviews. During the interviews, there was not much time to consider the meaning behind the stories, whereas during the transcribing process, I felt as if I were inside the original story.

After transcribing the recorded interview, I firstly coded the data into three main categories according to the analytical framework of the intercultural interaction: 1) the reasons for the church-based intercultural interaction, including students' intentions and the motivations of church members and the Christian community. It was coded as the 'intention' category; 2) organisation of international Christian events and social interaction through direct encounters. This was coded as the 'interaction process'; and 3) the influences, the feelings, the changes in ideas, knowledge, and behaviour resulting from the church-based experiences were coded as the 'outcome' category.

The interview schedules used in the study allowed interviewees to identify and develop their own categories that were important to them, rather than fitting in with specific themes from the theoretical framework. After identifying specific themes in the analysis, I compared them with the corresponding ones from the theoretical framework and found new categories or themes. Individual texts under the same themes were further analysed to uncover the personal differences in the intercultural interactions and to develop typologies that best described the two groups of people.

Data from Participant Observation

As stated in Section 4.4.3, I kept notes and diaries in the process of observation and divided them into two parts when I expanded my notes into descriptive narratives. One part focused on the facts that I observed and the other part was about my considerations, reflections, and suspicions. The analysis of the observation data followed the main themes that emerged from my notes and diaries about facts and considerations. The participant observation recorded the process of interaction between Chinese students and Christian church members, and my reflections regarding the participants in informal conversation. The consistency or discrepancy between words and deeds provided a perspective for exploring the phenomena in greater depth.

Document Analysis

I identified codes according to the content of the website. Firstly, I confirmed the textual information, including the nature and informational dimensions of the website. The analysis raised several questions:

Q1: Based on the analysis of its website, What is the character of the charity?

Q2: What is highlighted in the website that relates to international students or church representatives?

The next step in the content analysis was to identify the representative sample from the population. In this study, I aimed to synthesise the data from website in order to obtain a glimpse of the organisation of Christian institutions.

After collating the sample content, the next stage was to develop a codebook. This is 'a comprehensive document which contains all necessary instructions to encoders to successfully complete the work of analysis' (Igartua Perosanz, 2006), and 'the development of the codebook tries to ensure consistency and reliability of the codes managed by analysts involved in research' (Frutos, 2008). The codebook was used for analysis work and is an instruction guide or a protocol that must be followed to get coherent results.

The codebook in the website study mainly related to the content of the website and was created on the basis of previous studies and the exploring questions laid out above. It included the following categories of analysis with various variables. The website offers information about: 1) General content; 2) Introduction content; 3) Support content for students; 4) Support content for volunteers and churches.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Before carrying out the fieldwork, I followed the official university procedures for obtaining ethical approval. The application for ethical approval requires an explanation of

the objectives of the research, the targeted sample, and the recruitment procedures for the sample. Different sections of the study included questionnaires and interview guides, and issues of sensitivity, anonymity, and confidentiality were indicated. These issues were addressed and explained to potential participants during recruitment and repeated to the final participants before the survey and interviews in the form of an oral statement at the beginning and then with a signed consent form. Information revealed in the questionnaire and interviews remained confidential and pseudonyms were adopted in the writing of the thesis. The interviews were all recorded with the consent of participants. Transcripts are provided for participants if required.

Sensitivity

Issues of sensitivity in this study could be broadly divided into two parts: one related to the Chinese Christian students and the other to Christian representatives. My interview discussions of the church events were sharp different from what some Chinese Christians and local church representatives told me. The latter seemed to be concealing something, either consciously or unconsciously. On the one hand, the experiences the Chinese students related to me were negative at times. Topics such as religious beliefs, personal experiences of frustration, and so on, were rather sensitive and private, and sharp differences were observed between the attitudes of the Chinese and those of the Westerners. In particular, the Chinese Christian students and church members with experience in China had concerns about talking with me as a researcher because they felt that my research might gain the attention of the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party. In response to their concerns, I reassured them about their anonymity in the study and highlighted the right to the freedom of opinions in the Western context.

On the other hand, local Christians, especially those who were familiar with the Christian situation in China, were found to be sensitive to my investigation. They were alert to my enquiries and tended to respond in a perceptibly safe way. At the same time, they asked about my position in the research and my funding source to make sure that my research

was not politically oriented or that the Chinese government would not take some negative measures after my findings were made public. When asked about these issues, I usually chose to explain the potential outcomes they were concerned about, and pointed out that there was so much new research every year that the Chinese government would not really care much about the findings or pay much attention to my study. Faced with this response, different church representatives had different attitudes. Some rejected my invitation to be interviewed because of risk considerations. Others were happy to be interviewed, but I could feel their restraint when answering my questions. The techniques I applied in the interview process were intended to get closer to the 'truth'. Whether or not it was successful depended on my interviewees' perceptions and trust of me.

To what extent were the interviewees concealing their true feelings and opinions in the face of my enquiries? The side they were deliberately or accidentally hiding from me seems not to be the point, as I could recognise that they were concealing something. Instead, the main point here is how far their answers strayed from the complete story. Two experiences with the interviewees indirectly justified my concerns about the extent of restricted responses. As I mentioned in the data recording section, when asked about their understanding of Chinese Christianity and the Chinese government, one interviewee requested that I stop recording. In the conversation without the recording, she shared her views frankly about her Chinese experience and talked about the ultimate aims of church services for Chinese students from a political perspective. She was the only one that associated the missionary work with Christian ambitions in China. Considering her special background, her role in Friends International, and her personal experience, I was sure her answer was quite close to an authentic response, especially for this non-recorded content. Another related experience was with new Chinese Christians. Instead of talking about the social services in the churches, those students were more willing to talk about their feelings and experiences of being a Christian in the Christian community, and their knowledge of missionary work with Chinese students in the church congregations.

I am not implying that the church representatives who talked more about church services and their social meanings for Chinese students were lying to me in the interviews. It is 'true' they have those social events and their Christian justifications made sense, but it was not the whole story. Missionary work is understandable from the perspective of church branding and for the global development of Christianity. However, the point is that some Christians were strategically hiding the intentions of the provision of social support.

Another critical ethical issue in the research regards the deception I used to get close to those church members to make myself more acceptable to them. I hid my real (neutral) position in the study and pretended to be showing a positive attitude and appreciation for these social services provided by the churches, especially at the beginning of my fieldwork. In the interviews, it seemed more important for church representatives to be assured about my intentions in the study. They welcomed the research, but more significantly they were looking forward to receiving positive feedback for their efforts. I did not remind the students to hide my real position and opinions from church members because the students themselves shared with me their critical attitudes towards certain church behaviour. Not all of their opinions about the church were negative. Therefore, my neutral position in the study made sense to the students.

4.8 Summary

This chapter describes the process of fieldwork in the study. The fieldwork started in September 2014 in the UK. Before the survey and formal interviews, I conducted participant observation as an insider in intercultural interactions around churches and to develop relations with my potential interviewees in the churches. Observations also guided the direction of questions in the interviews through the understanding of students' experience. The document analysis using the official website of Friends International allowed a systematic examination of the organisation of the Christian community for international students. In the survey, participants were selected randomly from Chinese Master's students. Frequent church participants were invited to take part in the interviews.

My subjectivity as a PhD student in the UK and my identity as non-Christian Chinese were identified as each playing a role in the data collection and analysis process. My perceived identity and the language I used were noted as important factors in the fieldwork. I reflected my research identity in Chapter 9. Due to ethical considerations, all information about the participants in the research was kept confidential. In the following chapters, I present a picture of Chinese students' church participation in the international Christian community. It is divided into four sections: the intentions of the Chinese student, the aims of Christian community, the international Christian community for Chinese students, and the influence of interaction in the churches.

Chapter 5 Expectation Gaps in Overseas Study and Intentions behind Christian Church Participation

5.1 Introduction

Church participation as a form of cultural engagement is a part of the social experience for many Chinese students in their overseas study. However, given they mostly come from a non-Christian background, it is not clear why they would select intercultural interaction which is related to religion. Why are they choosing Christian churches rather than organisations within the university or at least other secular (as opposed to religious) groups? Their reasons for choosing to attend churches cannot be separated from the international students' broader experience in the UK. For these reasons, I started from the Chinese students' wider environment and examined the individual experiences in their daily lives. These shed light on the potential reasons for church participation as they indirectly and potentially "push" Chinese students into the churches to look for resources and support.

This chapter attempts to address the first research question in the thesis: Why do non-Christian Chinese students choose to go to Christian churches after they arrive in the UK? and concentrates on the motivations behind church participation for Chinese students in their intercultural experience. By considering the expectations and expectation gaps Chinese students have before and after arriving in the UK, I investigate the adverse situation of Chinese students in their intercultural contact around the university that potentially motivated them to look for more opportunities for wider social contact, such as through Christian churches. I then attempt to explain the intentions behind these students' church participation. Compared with intercultural interaction in other public locations and given the cultural and religious background of Chinese students, Christian churches were found to be one of attractive places for these students to have positive cultural engagements.

5.2 Expectation Gaps and Overseas Experience

Expectations are believed to play a vital role in the adjustment process and the outcome of overseas study experiences (Pitts, 2005; Goldstein and Kim, 2006; Kim and Goldstein, 2005), and expectation gaps are thought to influence the overall learning experience (Kingston and Forland, 2008; Vande Berg, 2007). As the largest group of international students in UK universities (HESE, 2017), the majority of Chinese international students hold different expectations of the international experience, and arrive in the UK with individual goals ranging from cultural engagement (Dunne, 2013) to language improvement (Yu and Shen, 2012). Three-quarters of respondents in the sample for this study discussed their expectations of the international experience in the UK.

Some of the students described themselves as being disappointed with the experience, particularly those with high expectations. Practical issues after arrival brought culture shock (Brown and Holloway, 2008). There were a number of gaps that the Chinese students were faced with in the new milieu, which required special individual effort and negotiation in the process of their adaption to the host cultural environment. Although these gaps presented obstacles in the students' adaptation processes, the negotiation that was required to fill these gaps expanded their knowledge and worldview over the course of their journey in international education (Gu et al., 2010). This section focuses on specific expectation gaps in the overseas experience of Chinese students.

Before outlining some specific gaps, I firstly would like to discuss another group of students with low expectations, or even no expectations, of the overseas journey. This group of students might not have had any expectation gaps since they did not have any expectations to start with. Nevertheless, their reasons for not having or having few expectations shed light on some of the main ideas discussed in this chapter. In contrast to the students with high expectations, three respondents claimed to have had low or even no expectations of their new life in the UK. This was not because they did not have enthusiasm for the new experience, or they were not used to being mobile in new situations and new places, but because they were informed, by others who had already experienced it,

about the reality of the international learning experience in the UK. All of them had made some psychological preparation for their new life before they came to the UK. One student in the interview observed that her friends who had studied abroad had implied that student life was the same as in China and so there was not much of a cultural experience for international students. In addition, the student never expected she could make many non-Chinese friends. By preparing for the worst, studying abroad was nothing new for her. Another two respondents in the interview made it clear that life in the UK was very boring, and that they had been told this beforehand. However, they were keen to make friends in order to have a social life there. Such low or non-existent expectations were the outcome of understanding the reality rather than their initial intentions for their new life. It was the disappointing experiences of friends that had given them the pre-conditioned mind-set and resulted in their expectations being different from those students with high expectations.

5.2.1 English Language Competence and Barriers

The first expectation gap that emerged was the language issue. Improvement in English and academic excellence (Chen, Lee and Stevenson, 1996) were the dominant goals that Chinese students had for their intercultural communication. Good English communication was of vital importance to both life and study. In the period of overseas study, language issues related to academic study are common for Chinese international students as English is their second language. Because of the language barriers, studying in a second language in a new country is believed to negatively impact students' completion of assignments, understanding of lectures, and their ability to express personal ideas in classes (Chen, 1999 and Mori, 2000). Many respondents in the interview stated that their problems in both academic reading and writing were due to language barriers, especially in the first few months of study, or even throughout the first semester. Half of the student interviewees noted that they could understand the lecturers less than 50% of the time at the beginning of their studies. Some of them found that it was not easy to follow teachers' ideas because they could not get used to the accents and the speed of speech in class. As lecturers might come from countries like Greece or India, the students had to understand a

variety of different accents. Some of the native speakers had a Scottish accent, which was also very confusing for international students.

Language barriers not only affected the information received in class, they also affected communication in the students' daily surroundings. When referring to the Scottish accent in daily life, one of the students observed,

> I remember, I went to the bank and opened an account. I could not understand one word from his mouth. I found it so incredibly difficult to understand. I had to ask them to repeat it (Wu, Chinese student).

Accents make it more difficult to understand and communicate with natives. Although not all local people have a Scottish accent and Chinese students do not meet local people every day, to some extent it impedes them from getting along in the Scottish environment. Chinese international students with the anxiety of functioning in a second language thus suspend their interaction in both the academic and socio-cultural domains, including their making of friends with local people (Chen, 1999 and Mori, 2000).

5.2.2 Academic Pressure

Academic pressure was perceived to be one of most stressful aspects for Chinese international students' life due to the language barrier, the different educational system (Smith and Khawaja, 2011), and disappointing academic performance compared with other students. This negative experience left them with feelings of depression and anxiety.

Most Chinese students in the interviews expressed their hopes for their academic studies, including their oral English and academic performance. Some of them had set for themselves specific aims for their academic performance, like obtaining the most credits, or even achieving the highest grades in class.

> I think everyone who goes abroad for further study would have his or her own aims or expectations. Personally, I don't have any aims for improving my skills and preparing for my future career, but I do want to get as good marks as possible in my academic study. When I go back to China, I have to prove what

I have achieved here, for example, in terms of my English and academic performance. I did not expect to speak like a native speaker, but I want to be more fluent than before, and to improve my academic writing (Wen, Chinese student).

Overseas study in her eyes was a 'pure study' journey and she hoped to demonstrate good academic outcomes, especially when she went back to her home country. High grades are effective proof of her efforts and intelligence. Emphasis on academic excellence is not unusual as Chinese culture considers it important to evaluate the performance of students (Chen, Lee and Stevenson, 1996). Chinese students have expectations of good academic performance. Academic excellence is valued and is at the centre of a Chinese student's life (*Ibid.*). The socialisation of students in the Asian family requires success in education (Sue and Okazaki, 1990) because their school success is often conceived as being a product of family-related cultural factors and socialisation practices (Pang, 1990; Schnerider and Lee, 1990). Chinese international students regard their academic excellence as their personal goal and a way of making their family proud (Yan and Berliner, 2009). A mismatch between academic expectations and the realities of university life make it more stressful as it decreases their confidence in their new environment, and negatively impacts on their adaptation. The majority of Chinese students in the interviews emphasised this repeatedly and with disappointment. Two respondents clearly indicated their distress about their academic performance. One of them was very disappointed with the grade she had received for their first essay in her first month of study. However, she was also clear that it was difficult to improve her English writing in a short time, and, as a compromise, after several failed attempts she changed her goals.

The host country contained a different education system from that found in China. While Chinese education focuses on rote learning, education in the UK includes various modes of knowledge delivery and a critical thinking approach to learning (Aubery, 1991; Liberman, 1994). This places a great pressure on the Chinese students to get used to the new system. All the respondents in the interviews were deeply affected by the educational differences between China and the UK. Half of them stated that these differences made their academic study very difficult. They had underestimated the difficulties that the UK education system

would present. In contrast with the Chinese system, there were not many lectures in their UK postgraduate study, which left them with a lot of free time for self-study. Another respondent was concerned about the forms of classes. For instance, there were sometimes tutorials and workshops after a lecture, but he did not know about this before he came to the UK. It did not take a long time for him to adjust to it but it did confuse him for a period of time trying to figure out the main point of each session.

One student interviewee mentioned her adjustment to the mode of learning and indicated that volumes of literature with various dimensions disoriented her for a long time at the beginning of her studies, and she was worried from time to time.

> I did not know what to do and did not know whom to consult. I have so much to read and write. I'd never met these problems before, and friends around me were also new here so they did not know what to do, either... (Fang, Chinese student).

Another student commented about the learning mode as well, which she found puzzling at first. 'Courses were organised well, however, due to the limitation of time, they were too compressed and we just got very general knowledge about the subject, without deep study' (Qing, Chinese student).

In contrast with Fang, who was exhausted by the volumes of literature, Qing showed his concern from the opposite perspective, and found it hard to obtain in-depth knowledge. Although he assumed that he could use the general knowledge he was learning as a foundation and continue learning about it in the future, he still considered the knowledge to be too broad to absorb in one year.

Unlike local students, who were familiar with the system, Chinese students had to focus on acquiring knowledge as well as learning the new system with a second language. The learning pressures, the new educational system, and the language barriers made the learning process complicated and exhausting. Even though the Chinese students worked hard, they were disappointed with their academic performance. They were often plagued

by negative feelings such as nervousness, depression, and tiredness, and tended to fall into a vicious circle.

Academic writing is another issue that Chinese students were concerned about. It is an important practice in higher education and has a critical influence on students' academic success (Ly, 2011). International students have been found to experience a number of problems with writing (Andrade, 2006; Bailey, 2014). Two respondents emphasised the difficulties in academic writing in particular. One student in the interview found there were many factors that impeded the improvement of her writing, such as not knowing how to organise writing material, how to connect references in her own writing, and how to explain the background properly when teachers were not familiar with the specific context that was demonstrated in her writing. Other respondents stated that they were uncertain about words, language style, and structures in their writing. These problems appeared almost immediately when they started to write essays, which was quite stressful and affected the whole process of overseas study.

> Besides the language barrier, I have a lot of coursework, such as technical reports. Local students think it is normal to write such kinds of report. They know how to write them, how to organise them and what kind of language style to use, while for me, each report is like an essay. I have to adapt to it and I have changed a lot. It was not as easy as I'd thought it would be. I face many disadvantages. Study is not only about one book or one lecture. In China, I could just focus on the course and work hard on it and get high score. It is quite different here. I have to learn something from the very beginning. I never realised the importance of an educational system until I came here. It is very significant. Thinking patterns, writing patterns, and so on (Tang, Chinese student).

In addition to the language barriers related to academic work that were mentioned in the last section, what Tang noted clearly underlined that adapting to the new education system requires much effort and support in language and writing, as well as in understanding how the system worked.

5.2.3 Constrained Social Contact with Locals due to Overwhelming Numbers of Chinese Students

Students with high expectations were also looking forward to being absorbed into Western culture. They wished to have more social contact with the locals. One UKCOSA survey (2004) reported similar findings. Interviewees shared their ideas based on their personal experience but the most common expectation was in relation to the culture and exploration in their new life. One student, whose undergraduate degree was in English literature, said that to study overseas in the UK was her dream. Having imagined what an English-speaking country would be like, she was excited to experience a new life in the UK and see the culture up close rather than from textbooks. The following example of a student who was on an exchange programme clearly shows his hopes and excitement about experiencing a different life:

> I have high expectations of life here, a different life. I didn't know what kind of life would be here, I was just expecting something different. I like experiencing difference…I hope to improve my oral English. I also hope to study hard (Qing, Chinese student).

What he observed demonstrated his curiosity about and enthusiasm for the new environment, which later motivated him to become actively involved in local life. Although some students mentioned having some concerns about life before they came to the UK, such as the language barrier (Yu and Downing, 2012; Lowinger et al., 2014), they were still looking forward to the new experience. The culture and new life in the host country were great attractions.

Furthermore, problems with the language barrier and academic anxiety could perhaps be alleviated through intercultural engagements within the university, which would provide students with opportunities to communicate and learn in the intercultural context (Dunne, 2013; Guo, Li and Ito, 2014). Moreover, as the student population of universities in the UK is believed to be highly diverse (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009), there should be a great deal of contact between the different cultures there. According to Schweisfurth and Gu (*Ibid.*),

as youth culture is not broadly representative of the wider culture, students may have been isolated from an intercultural environment in the broader society outside the university. It is on the university campus where most students live and study.

However, expectations are just expectations. Understandings about the university environment also need to be updated. The multicultural environment has changed for the increasing number of Chinese students abroad. According to the newest HESA statistics (2017), China is the only country showing significant increases in international student numbers in the 2015-2016 academic year in the UK. The number of Chinese students far exceeds any other nationality at 91,215. What is worth noting is that, if we combine the data from HESA (2014) and FEFCE (2014), in the 2012-2013 academic year, we find that 52% of Master's students studying on business and administration courses were from China (FEFCE，2014). When we consider the overwhelming number of Chinese students at the university, we should ask to what extent contact between different cultural groups is actually taking place there. According to the respondents in the sample, there were a very large number of Chinese students in the School of Business, particularly. Such a situation creates disappointment for Chinese international students who had looked forward to an international learning environment in the UK. Two respondents complained that, although they knew there would be many Chinese students, especially in the Business School, they never expected there would be so many around them. One respondent even showed her regret in choosing the particular university and noted that:

> I never expected there to be so many Chinese students here, if I had known, I think I would not have chosen this university. I heard that at the University of Manchester, they control the rate of students from different countries (Mao, Chinese student).

An international education theoretically should have a diversified or multicultural environment with a lot of students from different cultures (Yusupova et al., 2015). The main point here is how far they really construct an intercultural environment to facilitate the intercultural interaction, whether intellectually or functionally. For political and economic reasons, the UK, at both national and regional levels, shows a high level of

interest in maintaining educational links with China (Fakunle et al., 2016). There is no doubt that universities want to recruit international students. This is a highly profitable market in the international educational market. Universities are at least superficially internationalising or multicultural (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009). However, the reality in the study was that the campus had become a UK environment in which there were large numbers of Chinese students. Half of the respondents felt that it was difficult to meet non-Chinese students in the schools where Chinese students constitute the majority. According to one student respondent, there were 30 students in his class but only two students were not from China. She compared the situation to the English lectures in a Chinese university with Chinese students seated around her. In one lecture in the Business School, Zhou (a Chinese student) found that the only non-Chinese students were seated at the back of a classroom, while the others, hundreds of Chinese students, sat together. Those non-Chinese students, to some extent, seemed to be isolated as the minority in the classroom.

The overwhelming number of Chinese students in some popular subject areas led to the reduced opportunities for cross-cultural communication. One student explained how there were so many Chinese students around him (in the School of Business) that they were 'practising' Mandarin instead of English most of the time, since it was not necessary to speak English with other Chinese students. Chinese students could have practised English with other Chinese students; however, one respondent implied that it was not necessary to speak English in the absence of any non-Chinese people. This was odd but reasonable to some extent. Furthermore, another respondent pointed out that he did not have many chances to talk in English in class due to the form of the lecture. In contrast with classes in Chinese universities, in the UK lecture, students had almost no oral interaction with lecturers. Thus, there were few opportunities to communicate with lecturers unless students made an appointment with them in office hours. Free discussion was supposed to take place in the tutorials and workshops, where students were encouraged to talk with classmates in English. However, because of the large number of Chinese students, Chinese groups continued to dominate in the tutorials or workshops in some subject areas.

This phenomenon of "Chinese Schools" in the UK universities is becoming increasingly evident, as Chinese international student numbers have increased rapidly in recent years. According to HESA data from 2015, Chinese student numbers of the first degree in the UK universities exceeded the total student number from all EU countries combined (excluding the UK) in the academic year 2013-2014. The lack of meaningful contact that international students have with domestic students continues to be an area of concern among international educators (Brandenburg and de Wit, 20011). A social context needs to be established that enables domestic students and international students to explore intercultural relationships (Neuliep, 2014, p. 247). The supposed opportunities that campus life offers Chinese students for making contact with the host country are to some extent constrained due to the Chinese students' overwhelming numbers, which, in turn, further affects their interaction with their new environment.

It not only deprives them of the opportunity to communicate in English, but also limits the potential for students to make friends with non-Chinese students. Most respondents in the study implied that they did not have any close non-Chinese friends. One student in the sample used the expression 'hi-bye friend' when he described those non-Chinese students in his class. Asian international students from a typically collective culture have found it more difficult to make friends with locals compared with their European counterparts (Mori, 2000; Yeh and Inose, 2003; Rienties et al., 2014), and the overwhelming number of Chinese students around makes it even harder for them to establish friendships with local people or other international counterparts.

Isolation from the host environment also results in limited access to the information and knowledge required to 'increase the intercultural communicator's understanding of other and self in order to facilitate making accurate predictions and attributions' (Wiseman, 2002). Cultural knowledge assists the efficacy and appreciation of communication relevant to the intercultural situation, cultural norms, and participation in the intercultural conversation. Although the majority of respondents confirmed that they had, more or less, been prepared for cultural differences, these gaps still shocked them and remained an issue

in their daily life. For those Chinese students who saw the cultural differences but did not have enough knowledge to understand or predict them, it decreased their appreciation of the host culture.

With limited cross-cultural communication and interaction, some Chinese students attempted to establish contact beyond the university, such as in bars and cafés. However, some attempts ended in disappointment. One student talked about such an experience.

> Even in cafés or in bars, I seldom communicate with local people. There are not many people who are willing to talk with me like a friend, I think. Most of them are just strangers (Huo, Chinese student).

Huo's experience was not an isolated example. Several other students shared similar feelings. Most respondents admitted that their social life was less diverse than it had been in China because of the shortage of social activities. The pubs, bars, or clubs are the usual places for local people to spend their free time. This is a different way of living that requires a change in lifestyle for most of the Chinese students. One respondent observed that the lifestyle differed a lot and that it was boring to live in the UK, as he did not like to go to pubs or parties. Three respondents reported that they did not have any social activities, and just stayed at home after class. Other students described their daily life as boring because university and home were the only places they ever went.

Students felt that opportunities to experience the host country life were limited. Within this environment, either by conscious and positive choice or because of discomfort with other forms of interaction, some international students ended up socialising and living with people from their own country or with similar cultural backgrounds, limiting the extent of their contact with other groups (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009). Although there were a good number of services to indirectly involve Chinese students in international life, it seemed they did not make good use of them.

5.2.4 Public Discrimination

Discrimination was another concern that Chinese students had about their life abroad. Although it does not happen every day, discrimination is believed to be a common source of stress for international students. Previous research has noted that discrimination is more of a potential source of stress for international students from Asian, African, and the Middle Eastern countries than for domestic students or European students (Chung and Epstein, 2014; Hanassab, 2006; Lee and Rice, 2007; Poyrazli and Lopez, 2007; Sam et al., 2015). Some respondents even showed concerns about their public safety. One student reported that some high school students had mocked her and her friends in the street, which had made her very unhappy. Despite not knowing why the high school students had behaved in this way, she had been made to feel uncomfortable and upset in that moment. Another respondent explained that a white man frightened her as she was waiting for someone in the street. The man shouted at her suddenly over her shoulder, and this shocked her so much that she immediately started crying. Another example was given in the interview where a policeman had unfairly treated two students who had been smoking in the street. He ignored a native person right next to him who had thrown his cigarette butt on the ground, but fined the Chinese students when they put cigarette butts in the wrong place in the bin. They argued for a while, but the policeman claimed that he had not seen the native person display any improper behaviour. Both of the students were angry and felt they had been subjected to racial discrimination.

These negative experiences depressed the Chinese students and intensified their feelings of anxiety and loneliness. The students interpreted these episodes as a lack of acceptance from the local community and tended to attribute them to discrimination. Misunderstanding, or at least miscommunication, brings a lot of uncomfortable feelings and negative impressions of the international experience, which is found to negatively impact on an international student's adaptation and links directly to psychological wellbeing and depression (Atri, Sharma, and Cottrell, 2006; Jung, Hecht, and Wadsworth, 2007; Wei et al., 2007), as well as to homesickness (Saha and Karpinski, 2016), and lack

of confidence in making friends with the locals (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000). Social discrimination in public life contributed to the sense of uncertainty and helplessness felt by the Chinese students, which, in turn, resulted in feelings of isolation. It became more difficult to communicate within the society, let alone integrate into it.

The above disappointments and unfulfilled expectations of the Chinese students at the beginning of their overseas study highlighted several practical obstacles for individuals to overcome in their interactions with the host environment. Academic pressure, the language barrier, lack of intercultural communication, a limited social network, and social isolation were all interrelated and resulted in pressures and anxieties in the Chinese students' daily lives, and reciprocally affected their intercultural interactions and engagement.

5.3 Intentions Behind Church Participation

The stressors and obstacles outlined in the last section were not always negative factors in the cross-cultural adaptation or interactions of the Chinese students. When their expectations are not met or are undermined, particularly during their first encounters (Burgoon and Ebesu Hubbard, 2005), students tend to be provoked into engaging in a response to the violation (Burgoon, 1993; Burgoon and Hale, 1988). These experiences are transformed into motivators and encourage individuals to react so that they can move forward and pursue a balanced state in their overseas study (Kim, 2001). Church participation is one of the responses that some students use to address the gaps in the reality during the adaptation period, as social contacts in the host country provide students with social support (Adelman, 1988) to get through the adjustment process in the foreign environment (Glanz et al., 2001; Johnson et al., 2003; Manev and Stevenson, 2001; Sobre-Denton and Hart, 2008; Bertram et al., 2014; Sullivan and Kashubeck-West, 2015). Then, why should it be Christian churches? What kind of intercultural communication could Chinese students experience from religious engagement?

According to the results of the survey, the top three reasons given for the Chinese students (N=178) taking part in the church activities were making friends (N=63), gaining cultural

knowledge (N=58), and learning the English language (N=40). Few students went to the churches for food (N=6), Bible study (N=12), or prayer (N=4). These top three reasons were also evidenced in the interviews with the Chinese students who were church participants. There were other significant factors mentioned in the interviews that played a role in the selection of churches as a location for cultural interaction. They corresponded with the expectation gaps that Chinese students faced in their intercultural encounters (see Table 5-1).

Table 5-5 Reasons for Participation in the English Christian Church

Reasons	Number of students
Friends	63
Cultural Knowledge	58
English Language	40
Bible Study	12
Food	6
Prayer	4

5.3.1 Social Network and Friendship

Wider social contact with the host culture is believed to be an effective and beneficial acculturation strategy (Berry, 1997; Johnson and Sandhu, 2007; Roysircar, 2004;

Sodowsky and Lai, 1997; Ward and Kennedy, 1994, 1996; Sullivan and Kashubeck-West, 2015), and one of the benefits is that students can make friends and get peer support. Motivations for their intercultural engagement through church participation include social network and friendships. All respondents in the interviews referred to the role of the social network in their church experience. Students were noted to have made friends in the churches with both Chinese and non-Chinese churchgoers.

> I don't have much social life in my free time, to be honest. And I don't want to limit my whole life to the university, or, in other words, confine myself to the society of the school. I do need some life that is not about study, classmates or campus. So church is a supplement. Church is an opportunity that offers me the chance to experience a different life, why not try? I tried it several times and it has become a habit now (Mao, Chinese student).

It is the motivation to search for another way of life outside the campus that encouraged Mao to have different experiences in her free time. Church life as a different experience made up her leisure time and enlarged her social circle. She established her social community with limited social resources.

5.3.2 Curiosity about Western Culture

The introduction to the cultural background of the Chinese students in Chapter 2 demonstrated how the lack of exposure to Christianity in China has resulted in a general curiosity among Chinese students about the symbols of Western culture. Two-thirds of respondents in the interviews admitted frankly that they were curious about churches, as Christianity was not well known in China. Some had never been to any churches before, as one of them explains below.

> I want to know more about the culture here. Originally, I thought churches were very mysterious places. I did not know anything about them when I was in China because there are not many churches there. Although there are churches in China, I never went there. I think the atmosphere in churches here is very different from in those of China. I heard that there are many churches here. When I went travelling in Europe, I found there was great architecture in church buildings (Chen, Chinese student).

The mystery of religion attracted Chen to visit churches. Through the comparison of churches in China and Europe, it is implied that churches in China are different from churches in the Western world because of the attitude towards religion.

Half of the interview respondents wanted to acquire cultural knowledge, including that relating to history and architecture. One respondent was interested in the Bible, and thought it had a deep influence on the whole of Western culture. Another respondent, who had majored in English Literature and had watched many Western films relating to Christianity, was interested in the Bible story because her lack of cultural knowledge had prevented her from understanding those films. Another student commented that it was helpful to know more about the differences between East and West, and, despite being an atheist, he considered the Bible to be a masterpiece and adored Jesus Christ.

> Language and Bible are the most important things for me. Teachers there are good. They know how to start a story with interesting questions. You can find teachers who tell the stories in different styles. I hoped they would say more about other things, too, for example, the characters of church buildings and their differences (Tang, Chinese student).

Tang showed a clear interest in the issues related to Christianity, such as Bible stories, architecture, and cultural differences. His personal interest in Christianity prompted him to return to the churches to learn more about religious culture. Tang's case was similar to two other respondents from a Buddhist family. Their intention was to compare the two different religions. One of them reported that he believed in Buddhism but wanted to know more about Western culture to see if there were any differences in terms of religion.

Curiosity about Western culture was one of the main motivations that attracted Chinese students to go to churches. Non-Christian students were predominantly acquiring Western cultural knowledge through the church experience. Regardless of whether it happened out of a pure appreciation of the material culture, like church architecture, or to gain knowledge about Christianity, or to compare different religions, it is certain that Chinese

students endeavoured to know more about the symbols of Western culture. Some of students related Christian culture directly to the British or Western culture.

However, the religion of Christianity is different from the Christian or Western culture students wanted to explore. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Christianity is no longer a popular religion for British people, especially young people, and church attendance is not a common practice. Chinese students believed that they could get close to the native culture through churches, but the fact is that, nowadays, most people are no longer churchgoers. Therefore, did these students really gain the Western cultural knowledge they wanted from the churches? This will be examined in Chapter 8.

5.3.3 Language Practice and Cultural Communication

English language practice was another main reason cited by all respondents in the interviews. Churches were considered to be learning places where students could go to practise their English. Different students chose different activities according to what they were interested in practising in the churches. One student in the sample commented that although there were many Chinese students in the church, especially in the international café, students were encouraged to talk with local people as much as possible. Another respondent even pointed out that practising English and communicating with people were her only motivation for attending the church. It was her only opportunity to talk with local people. Some students found it quite useful to learn English in the Bible study. The opportunities to speak English beyond lectures and workshops in university were very important, and they enjoyed their time at English language or cultural events.

For these church participants, there was no doubt that English practice and improvement were vitally important for them. Churches were regarded as a corner where they could freely communicate in English. One student clarified that her determination to improve her communication was strong and she preferred not to waste her free time during her overseas study.

I think I want to communicate with others as much as possible. It is wasting my time if I just stay in my flat. I would take part in as many of these activities as possible if I have time. Usually, I would go to a lot of them. If I were interested in it, I would go regularly (Wen, Chinese student).

Students cherished the opportunity for cultural communication with local Christians. Communication with church members helped them to learn about native people, for example, how they live, what habits they have, how they use the English language in their daily lives. One student depicted her experience at Christmas in a local family. She commented that it had been very interesting and that now she knew how people celebrated, which had been fascinating. As she noted, it was not just about a turkey on the table at Christmas, there were many games they played together.

> The reason why we would go to the churches is because we have few opportunities to meet local people, no matter what their culture, or their lifestyles. So if there were a family for two or three international students to have a chat with, or know more about local issues, we could choose to go and get involved (Zhou, Chinese student).

Church people shared their different points of view, and their attitudes towards life and work. It broadened the students' perspectives. Another respondent reported that churches helped them get involved in local culture and life.

> Church gave me a feeling that I could get involved. People in the church were very kind. If you are a Christian, I think you could get fully involved in a church, and, also in their culture. I think going to the church, I can feel the culture there. By getting involved in it, to some extent, I get involved in the local culture, too (Xue, Chinese student).

It was implied that interaction with local people helped students get close to the culture. To be welcomed and accepted and accompanied by the church people comforted the students.

Above all, it is noted that church-based cultural communication allowed the Chinese students to access cultural knowledge and be close to the native culture and people in the new environment. Churches were the cultural centres where students were made to feel welcome to communicate with local people.

5.3.4 Relaxation in the Social Community

It was out of curiosity that students entered the churches, and it was the desire for cultural communication that prompted the continuity of church participation. The church was considered to be a social place where students found relaxation. Three respondents referred to the atmosphere the church created. The solemn and warm atmosphere with music and serenity made them feel peaceful and calmed, especially when they did not feel well. One of the respondents in the interviews reported that they did not have Christian beliefs, but, instead, just sometimes wanted to find ways to feel at peace with themselves. Another respondent thought that the atmosphere around her in the church calmed her down and seemed to give her confidence to meet any difficulties.

In addition to looking for peace, there were four respondents who thought that the social activities in the churches helped alleviate the great pressure on them, and the church was the place they went to find relief. Another three students even referred to the church as a place just for fun. It is clear that they enjoyed themselves in these activities. Churches were more like a social venue for them.

> I feel comfortable staying with [the people in the church]. It feels very different from people in the work place, as there is competition among colleagues; it is very different from people in the church… they give to me... It is a social place for me. I like talking with them. Basically, we meet in the church and do some activities, we chat a lot. That is it (Chen, Chinese student).

As he noted, interaction and communication with people in the church was comfortable and enjoyable. The friendly atmosphere and social activities constituted an inclusive environment and allowed him to be free from competitive relations with colleagues and the work pressures of his part-time job. Another girl commented on her campus life and regarded her church life as a kind of supplement to her regular social life.

> It is a condiment in my life, for fun, for relaxing. I already had a few close friends. I did not get much from the church; it is a kind of place for having company, and playing. It is not an important part of my life; it coloured my life

here and made me happy. I enjoyed my time in the church. My social life is boring, I feel comfortable in my time now (Qing, Chinese student).

She indicated that the church was a place where she looked for some pleasure in her life. The fun or company she had in the church, to some extent, was not unique in her life as she had her own social network, but it made her feel relaxed.

The extent of relaxation experienced at church events varied according to the respondents' individual experiences and their attitudes towards the church's significance in their social life.

In addition, it was also found that churches were the places students could go to regularly. One student gave the example of her friend, and explained that if her friend found that week that she had not communicated with any local people, she would go to the church and have a chat. It was suggested that it was a kind of substitute for the campus where she had less cultural communication with those in her surroundings. Therefore, churches became a social point where students could experience an inclusive atmosphere.

5.3.5 Acceptance and Involvement

Students cited their acceptance within the churches as being one of the differences with other public places for cultural engagement. A number of respondents in the interviews felt welcomed and involved in the community around the churches. Unlike in the street or on campus, people in the churches were very welcoming of the students and provided assistance and support.

Practical assistance was significant for some church participants. One third of respondents revealed that they had looked for assistance from church people. One respondent commented that they were warm-hearted and nice people who helped students to adapt to the new environment, something which greatly impressed the student. For example, they spoke very slowly to students and took great care of them.

It was very comfortable and I did not need to think much. People were warm-hearted. They would initially ask us what our problems or difficulties were. And they would help us to deal with our problems (Wu, Chinese student).

Another student found a part-time job indirectly with the help of people in the church and spoke about the professional network he found there.

> I want to know more and more about the culture. People in the church have a variety of backgrounds. They are Christians and at same time they have different jobs in different fields. Talking with different people would give you a different understanding. For example, one is a lawyer, one is a businessman, and so on. They get together in the church (Chen, Chinese student).

It was useful for him to obtain some information about part-time work nearby, and at the same time, there were people of different backgrounds with various points of view, professional knowledge, thinking patterns, and personal experiences which he could make use of in work. For a few of them, church was the only the place that they could get access to information about particular living experiences. They reported that it was useful to exchange questions and answers in the churches. Contact with church people for the students was valuable as they could get some support to deal with practical issues.

In the process of giving and receiving, students felt they received care and attention. They were valued by the churches and did not seem to be lonely in the host environment. Church participation also gave students the type of belonging that they sought in the host environment. One respondent even regarded the church as a second home in the UK and she enjoyed the safety and closeness she felt in it.

> Church is like my family in Glasgow. I think people in the church are the best people that I know in Scotland. I trust them 100 per cent because I don't think they would do something to harm me if they are Christians. And now, going to the church is a habit. You know, it gradually becomes something that is part of my life. (Mao, Chinese student)

It could be inferred that there was interdependence between her and the church. She felt trust, involvement, and closeness with the church people, which further made her feel that

she belonged to the community or, as she referred to it, 'family.' The members of one group learn more about the cultural background of the other group as a consequence of feeling more positively towards them (Nesdale and Todd, 2000).

Unlike the relative isolation around the campus and in public places, Chinese students felt acceptance and received care from church members that made them feel at home. The churches created an inclusive atmosphere, which welcomed international students. Some respondents even felt that churches were their home and that church members were like family who stayed together. The Christians' warm hearts, catering, and company won the trust of the Chinese students and kept them free of loneliness and anxiety.

5.3.6 Other Priorities

Preaching Without Enforcement

Besides the warm-heartedness and sincere communication of the church people, the Christians' preaching without enforcement in the churches was another factor perceived by some students as a factor that encouraged them to go to church more regularly. One respondent in the interview commented on this.

> I often went there because they did not keep talking to me about Christianity, and did not make me feel brainwashed. If I were not interested in something, they would not say much about it (Qing, Chinese student).

Her experience was not unique among the students in my sample. Another respondent noted that because of the non-pushy style of Christians, Christianity was not offensive to her and she could also understand that church people hoped to share their faith with them. However, preaching without enforcement does not mean that church members are not trying to influence the students. Rather, they changed their strategy and made it more acceptable to the students, so that at least they could keep the students in their churches and indirectly achieve their aims. This point will be further investigated in the next chapter.

Priority of Location

The last reason, which should not be neglected, is the proximity of the churches that Chinese students mentioned many times as being central to why they would choose to go to those particular churches. Over half of respondents in the interviews mentioned the convenience of the church location as it is near the campus or student accommodation. One of them reported that:

> The location and the time are very convenient for students. It is the best place that I have been able to find around the university so far (Wen, Chinese student).

The student did not overtly refer to the importance of other social events, but she did emphasise the advantage of church in terms of location. Churches that attracted many Chinese students were usually found around the campus, which was convenient for them to access and pop into when they choose.

5.4 Individual Selection in Church Participation

Christian churches have attracted a number of Chinese students to take part in all kinds of social events. In terms of the students' number of times of church participation and type of church, among all the subjects in the questionnaires, 178 students (35.5% of the total population) had been to church in the previous six months, that is, over a third of Chinese students in the survey sample had had a church experience. Among these church participants, 62.4% (N=111) had been to church once or twice, and about 37.6% (N=67) had been three or more times. In terms of the typology of churches, 163 students had been to local Christian churches, 26 students had been to Chinese Christian churches, and 8 had been to non-Christian churches. 19 students had been to more than one type of church, which indicates that there was no fixed selection of church for some Chinese students. They were free to choose whether or not to attend the church and which kind of church.

Chinese international students also made their selection of church events in the process of church participation. Cultural contact and interaction around the Christian community was an outcome of individual exploration of intercultural resources, and their participation in specific church activities was selective depending on their particular purposes. The church environment also granted students the freedom of cultural exploration, as international groups in each church organised numerous events and opened the door to welcome international students without any pressure.

Based on personal interests and needs in the adaptation process, the Chinese students not only selected churches from those destinations of intercultural contact in their host environment, they also chose which specific church events to attend. Their participation could be generally categorised into four types, which understand their motivations with originality in the research. One type could be named s**ocial birds**, representing those who take part in the church events and socialise in church, make friends, exchange information, and so on. In the process, these students obtain relaxation and fun from the church community. **Cultural learners** are those students who are interested in cultural knowledge and want to broaden their horizons to include Christianity as well as other Western cultural symbols. A large number of students are **English practitioners** who seek to improve their oral English and academic writing if possible. The least represented category is the **explorers of Christianity** as a faith. These students are on their way to becoming Christians. These four types could intersect in one church participant as one student may have had more than one need to meet through the contact within the churches.

Social and language-related events were more popular than Bible study since the majority of church participants were not interested in religious issues. More than two-thirds of student respondents indicated that they preferred social and cultural communication around churches, as making friends and practising English were repeatedly mentioned in the interviews. Therefore, the international café, weekend-away activities, and the cultural evenings were welcomed among Chinese students.

Nonetheless, there were a few students who were quite interested in Christianity. Some of them even chose solely the Christian-related activities, although this did not necessarily mean that they were going to become a Christian.

> I only went to the Bible study on Thursdays to practise my oral English because I am not confident in that area. In the church, we talk with each other. I believe in Buddha but I am not strictly speaking a Buddhist. I want to see if there are any differences or similarities between the stories in the Bible and the Sutra (Xue, Chinese student).

He wanted to explore more about faith issues on the premise of his belief as a Buddhist, as well as practise his English language. His interest in the Bible stories rather than in becoming a Christian was not unique among the student respondents. The curiosity about Bible stories attracted several students to attend Bible study.

In a word, Chinese students selected their favoured activities in the churches to make the best use of the resources to meet their individual needs. Without any commitment to the churches, the Chinese students as the receivers of a service were free to select their preferred activities. Social events were noted to be more popular than Christianity-related training activities.

5.5 Summary

Consistent with the previous research, in this study, too, the expectations students had held before coming to the UK and the actual situation that they faced when they arrived resulted in expectation gaps in the areas of language, social connection, and cultural misunderstanding in their intercultural communication and experiences. One point that worth to note but less mentioned in previous studies is that, with the overwhelming number of Chinese students in popular subject areas like business studies, they experienced relative isolation from native speakers and this reduced the potential for them to expand their cultural engagement. However, the culture shock and expectation gaps did not impede their steps in cultural explorations, but indirectly motivated them to engage with the host surroundings. Church participation for Chinese students seem to be a mark of desperation

in looking for some way of interacting with natives outside of the university, since the courses and the university provide so little opportunity to this due to the numbers of students from China.

Church participation was a matter of individual selection among all forms of social contact available as students negotiated the obstacles in their challenging host society. The major factors that motivated the Chinese students to take part in the church events were language practice, social network, cultural knowledge, and the motivation to become involved in the local community. It is also suggested that churches were ideal places for Chinese students to release the pressure of their overseas life, while they also acted as a kind of information centre, providing practical assistance. The convenience of the churches' locations and the considerate care received from the church members made students feel accepted and included in the host environment. Gradually, students became 'social birds', 'cultural learners', 'English practitioners', and 'Christian explorers' through their church participation. These categories provide original knowledge to understand the church behaviour of Chinese students.

Nevertheless, cultural interaction could not rely solely on the subjective intentions of the Chinese students. It also required the objective conditions of the host environment to meet the students' needs. Efforts from the church community also contributed to the efficiency of interaction between the Chinese students and their hosts. The next chapter presents the perspective of the Christian community by analysing the motivations of Christians and churches in facilitating the intercultural interaction with Chinese students.

Chapter 6 Christian Community Motivations

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave an overview of the Chinese students' intercultural experience and their reasons for Christian church participation. Their engagement with the church could not take place without the coordinated services provided by Christian churches. Theoretically, the churches are without any duty towards international students, but, in reality, the churches are welcoming towards them. Why do Christian churches outside the universities or higher education system endeavour to provide social support to non-Christian students who are not related to any churches or to Christianity at all? Why particularly to Chinese students? This chapter explores the intentions of Christian churches in the interactions with Chinese students in order to explain the third research question raised in the thesis: what are the institutional motivations of the Christian communities to attract international students, especially Chinese students? Taking into account the current development of Christianity, both in British and Chinese contexts, it explains the reasons given by church members as well as Chinese Christian students in their interviews. Reasons such as empathy, friendship, and missionary work from church members are analysed critically based on the observations and interviews with the Chinese Christian students. Finally, the chapter looks at the situation in a broader sense and sheds light on the essential motivations of Christian groups.

6.2 Sympathy and Empathy

The meanings of "sympathy" and "empathy" as used in this study are from the perspectives of Christians and others around the Christian world. A sense of sympathy and empathy with the international students emerged as the first motive that the Christians gave. All respondents expressed feelings of empathy with the Chinese students, particularly those members who were in the international activities groups and who had had various international experiences. Some church members in the interviews described their own experiences in other countries and associated them with international students' situation in

the UK. They believed that being welcomed by people in the host country and getting to know more about local culture were greatly appreciated by sojourners away from their own country. They felt that the best way for them to learn about their new country was to meet local people, rather than just learning about its geography or history from books.

These similar international experiences and feelings allowed church members to understand the needs of Chinese students in Scotland. One of the church respondents in the interview thought it was quite hard for students who were far away from home. They found that these students often felt lonely, struggled with the language, struggled to fit in, and had difficulties in making British friends as local people were not always friendly to them or British students were not that open. The Christians liked helping and taking care of the Chinese students. They claimed to have their hearts in what they were doing it, and felt they had to do something given the large number of international students in the area.

In addition, some elders even looked after these international students like a mother or a father in a basic sense. One Chinese Christian volunteer explained that:

> [Christian people] have their own children, and if their children were in a foreign country, they could imagine the situation of the students. So it is a kind of pure caring and love for them (Florence, Chinese volunteer in Church A).

Another older respondent confirmed that, by being mum and dad, they could treat the students like their children and give them some help. To some extent, it was like the love and care given by the elder to the younger generation.

For Christians, empathy with and meticulous care for others is a kind of practice of the compassion and love of Christ. As the symbol of redemptive love and of suffering transmuted into sacrifice for the salvation of all humanity, Jesus, with boundless love, removed humans from their miserable state by freely accepting his sacrifice in order to rid the world of all the wilful moral evil (May, 2010). In the Bible, God is described as showing mercy or compassion to human beings and pardons offences out of merciful love and unfailing fidelity. Therefore, to follow in the steps of God, it is suggested that

Christians live with love in their hearts and show mercy towards others. The apostle Peter counselled Christians to have 'compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tender hearted, be courteous' (Peter 3:8, NKJV). The apostle Paul also encouraged empathy when he exhorted fellow Christians to 'rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn' (Romans, 12:15, NKJV). Consideration of the situation of Chinese students in the host context and their own personal international experiences gave church representatives empathy with the Chinese students and prompted them to share the love of God with them. Helping the students survive in their new context and taking care of them like parents take care of their children was a way for Christians to show universal love to common people. Their personal international living experiences made them more familiar with the similar situation of Chinese students in Scotland.

Furthermore, compassion or mercy became the new global programme of Christianity in the age of religious and cultural pluralism (Metz, 2000). Beyond the political and social ways of addressing missionary work, the core of this new approach is the gospel value of responsiveness to the suffering of others, which is the key to Christianity's universalism (Metz，2000). With sympathy and empathy, Christians are able to share their all-embracing love with the vulnerable international students. Their understanding of the possible negative situations faced by the Chinese students in the UK laid the foundations for their compassion and love for these sojourners. Sharing love and mercy as God did to humans expands the spirit of Christianity worldwide; at the same time, Christians develop their missionary work capabilities.

The above meanings of sympathy and empathy are just from the perspectives of Christians and others around the Christian world. However, through observation of the practical interactions with Chinese students, it seems that sympathy and empathy are also one of the ways that Christians follow their global programme of missionary work. Here, I observed that they used sympathy and empathy to get close to students. Their understanding of the situations and problems of international students aroused certain responses and facilitated the establishment of relations between students and church members. It created a

misunderstanding that the church members sincerely cared about the international students and their overseas studies. In turn, the students accepted their help in the host environment. Nevertheless, in reality, each Christian essentially kept an eye on the students' changing attitudes towards religious beliefs. Such sympathy and empathy provided the church representatives with the skills and means to identify those potential Christians among the international students after the warming-up stage of their missionary work. Superficially, church members showed sympathy and empathy for all vulnerable people, but I found from my observation that they looked for the opportunities to introduce Christian ideas when they were offering their sympathy and trying to understand the Chinese students. For instance, when one of the students asked church members about the reasons behind their work with international students, all their help and efforts were attributed to God. They came to help the students and they created the different interpretation of spiritual power in the name of love for God.

Behaviours such as looking after students portrayed being a Christian in a positive light and set an example for non-Christian students, with the implication that it was wonderful to be a Christian. As I recorded in my field notes, it left a positive impression on the Chinese students as the church members were referred to as nice people when they commented on their encounters in the churches. It even changed the original image that the students held of Christianity and religion and left the impression that church participation was, at least, not harmful to them. The words and deeds of the Christians surreptitiously gave the international student a positive impression of Christianity.

From another perspective, I observed that, it could also be inferred that church members made use of the vulnerable position of the Chinese students. Church members could get close to Chinese students in the name of sympathy and empathy. Their sympathy and empathy with the students not only left a positive impression on them, but also helped establish relations efficiently, which created the opportunity to bring the Christian world into the lives of those students. These are the preconditions for the socialisation of Christianity.

6.3 The Claimed Friendship

Friendship was seen to be one of the significant factors that emerged repeatedly in the interviews and informal conversations with the Christians. The Christian concept of a person is embodied as an individual self, but also one who is aware that the relationship with others opens up the possibilities of knowledge and love (May, 2010). It emphasises Christians' interaction and connection with their surroundings. Therefore, as church members observed from their daily experience and mentioned in the interview that, unlike most other local people, most of whom tended not to respond to the situation of the increasing number of Chinese students, the Christians wanted to offer friendship to the newcomers. Most of the church representatives in the sample indicated in the interviews that through these international events they met a lot of Chinese students and they were delighted to make friends with them. One of them noted that it was the friendship that gave them the freedom of communication and mutual understanding about different lifestyles. "Friendship" in this sense could be regarded as common interpersonal relations.

It was understood that it was in the name of friendship that Christian missionary work was carried out. Three church representatives (out of five) in the interviews pointed out that making friends with Chinese students was also part of their work, and they did it to meet the needs of the students. These perceived needs included the need to make friends with local people, as well as establish social connections through the friendships. One church volunteer, Ella, said that she encouraged the international students to get involved because she thought they wanted to mix with other people.

> Not everyone is mixing and we have found that international students want to mix with other people. It is great, because it gives us a role, which we want…. It is a link. They want us to be friends more than we want to be friends with them, we can be friends with everyone, including those who are not Christians. You know, people want to have continued friendship. Yeah, but it is just general friendship. We are offering. Yes. Haha. And we like it, and the response is friendship (Ella, volunteer in Church A).

From her perspective, this kind of friendship from church members was a response to the

needs of the international students, to meet the customers' requirements in their work. Church representatives wanted to be friendly and were required to be friendly when anyone came into the church. It is worth noting that the friendship at this level was a general kind of friendship, which meant that there was no close connection or deep-rooted relationship. Another church respondent shared a similar opinion regarding the nature of their friendship with the Chinese Students.

> I sometimes find it hilarious because you have somebody come (to church) for a few months and they just disappeared. You think that is funny. So he is not around anymore. I never followed up with people, say where have they gone? and…because that is their choice. They come and they go. It is his choice. Unless we become good friends, you know, in which case I want to know where you are, I'd love to see you again. They come to my house three times and become a friend, they suddenly disappear. Like any friend you want to… but if people just come to the café, what is funny sometimes is that, someone in another church I go to, oh yes he comes too …in the last months, and ah that is where he went! And so he left and we are happy for him to be with others for a while (Katy, group leader in Church B).

Her description sheds light on the unstable relations with Chinese students who come to the churches. With the flow of Chinese students coming and going among different churches, there is a temporary relationship between most of the church participants and the church representatives. Or, to put it more specifically, they are friends only when Chinese students come to the churches, as they do not care about these students after they have disappeared.

Such conditional friendship could be evidenced from the practical interaction process. It was found through my observation that few, if any, church members continued their friendship with Chinese students when the latter stopped going to the churches. The working relationship, rather than a friendship, was suspended once the students showed no interest in Christian events. Besides that, church members tended to have a stronger friendship or working relationship with students who indicated a greater interest in Christianity or Bible stories than those who did not. Students who had been to the formal Bible training several times were invited to the homes of church members. It was the way

that they strengthened relations with students. Those students who were perceived to be just having fun in the churches were not shortlisted as potential targets.

It is not difficult to understand the conditional friendship in the Christian world if we refer to the meaning of true friendship according to the Bible.

> Greater love has no one than this, which he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you (John 15:13-15, Neyrey, 2007).

This quotation suggests that the possibility of being a true friend is based on obeying God. In this regard, the meaning of friendship cannot just stop at the extent of common interpersonal relations. Unless the students were Christians, there was no friendship. Some church respondents claimed that, even if the Chinese students were not becoming Christians, it did not affect their mutual friendship. However, it was contrary to the definition of friendship in the gospel, where true friendship was based on belief in God. Since most of the Chinese students were not Christians, the relationship with them was based on the service that an organisation provided to its members. It could be argued that the meaning of friendship in the Bible to some extent affected the behaviours of Christians. As mentioned above, I observed that church members tended to have a strong relationship with students who are interested in Bible and have the potential to become Christians.

Although emphasised a lot by the church representatives in the sample, "friendship" proved to be an inaccurate attribution when the nature of their claims was uncovered. The claimed friendship, in essence, is the relationship that Christians use to connect and spread their missionary work worldwide. To establish relations with Chinese students is the content of their work. If there is no sign that the student shows the potential to become a Christian, understandably, it is not necessary for them to continue their working relationship anymore. Similar to sympathy and empathy, friendship was also found to be one of the ways that church members ingratiate themselves with non-Christians and

maintain temporary relations with them. They were also flexible and would develop further relations with some selected students who were perceived to be potential Christians. Once converted, their relations with those students could be transferred into close relations within the Christian community.

6.4 Evangelism and Missionary Work

Evangelising and missionary work worldwide are the most important tasks for every Christian, though there are a minority of Christians who object to it (Chryssides and Wilkins, 2014). Traditionally, Christians believe that their faith is their sole means of salvation. Christians should deliver their faith as widely as possible to change society, as they believe that the eternal destiny of the world's inhabitants depends on their accepting the gospel (Chryssides and Wilkins, 2014, pp.329). Thus, evangelising becomes a significant role for Christians. It transforms into passion and practical missionary work.

6.4.1 Passion and Commitment

For Christians, passion is believed to be the motivation for their communication with God, as well as for their self-improvement and self-satisfaction in their missionary work. Some Christian representatives in the sample noted that they enjoyed doing the missionary work. That was also the perception of some of the Chinese students. The Christians were delighted to share their faith with the Chinese students. One of the Christian respondents noted that:

> It is more like a passion, He loves guiding us, He loves driving cars, or whatever. Actually I think it is what God wants for me. I am happy doing it because it uses a lot of skills to do it, but I think deeper than that. I am always a foreigner in a far land and it allows me to kind of use that as a means of opening the possibility of faith to other people. So it is lovely to see how God is at work in that. We are always prepared by the passion, by what is pushing you (Katy, group leader in Church B).

Unlike passions that people have in other fields, Katy liked to do the missionary job not only because the requirement of her skills gave her self-satisfaction and self-improvement

during the work, but also because she looked forward to miracles happening, that is, to witness the existence of the Holy Spirit.

Besides having a passion for it, Christians make a commitment to carrying out missionary work. According to Matthew's Gospel, which describes Jesus' great commission to his disciples (Mt.28: 19-20, cited in Bosch, 2010), it was noted that God has concern for all nations, and not just for his chosen people, the Christians. The practice of spreading the gospel is with the intention of making a difference to individual faith. One of the church representatives believed that it was God who let her spend a lot of time in China and other countries, and as she understood a little bit about China, this was an advantage in her work as now she was with Chinese students. It was this experience that made her choose the missionary work with Chinese students instead of something else. With the help of God, she thought there was a commitment between God and her to do the missionary work with the Chinese. In her eyes, God encouraged them to offer help to international students or in a broader sense any people in need. In addition, missionary work is also connected with eschatology, and it is commonly accepted among Christians that preaching the gospel to all nations will herald Christ's Second Coming (Chryssides and Wilkins, 2014, pp.330). The process required to witness the miracle involves Christian passion and commitment, and this is what motivates Christians to perform missionary service.

The passion and commitment of Christians become the motivation and they transform into practical action. Church members believed that they had the required intelligence and working skills to make headway with the Chinese students. From my observation, it could be felt that there were strong intentions behind the provision of services for students. Some church members could relate any topic to God and Christianity when they were talking with the Chinese students. For example, when talking about the question of student mobility, Christians would associate it with the story about how Jesus left Jerusalem and survived in other places. I observed that, such enthusiasm discouraged the student from speaking, which implied their lack of acceptance of the ideas but tolerance of the excessive preaching. Fortunately, other church members revealed that people neither like to be

converted nor talk to too much about Christianity. Their passion for and commitment to their religious beliefs motivated them to well organise church congregations for students. They also probed students' interest in the Bible or in God, but in a very careful way, in case students were put off by it and disappeared from the church events. After all, maintaining the student numbers in the churches is the starting point for anything else the Christians intended to do. If there were no Chinese students, there would be no basis for continuing the missionary work.

6.4.2 Introduction to the Bible and Training

In addition to offering assistance to the international students, another means used for connecting God and non-Christians is to introduce them to the teachings of the Bible. Some church representatives in the interviews confirmed that their motivation for doing international activities was with the purpose of spreading the gospel. Teaching the Bible is also seen as a way to share the love and spirit of God, especially for those who have never heard about Christianity before. This kind of introduction is aimed at all church participants, rather than just at those Chinese students who are interested in Christianity. One Chinese Christian depicted their missionary work as non-target-oriented, which meant that they would talk with each student without focusing especially on those who are interested in Christianity. She and her colleagues were clear about the impossibility for non-Christians to realise and find the need for Jesus through their teaching in such a short time, but they hoped that the church participants could at least understand what Christian life was, how Christians were taking care of others, and, perhaps, gradually realise the importance of God and following the life of God. Although it would not be easy to convert the Chinese students, the introduction to the Bible was the means for testing the potential "market".

In addition to the introduction of Bible teachings to Chinese students and the sharing of the love of God, another of the Christian community's objectives is to find potential Christians and train them. It is an ecumenical task. Two respondents in the interviews explicitly indicated their motive was to convert. One of them thought that the churches wanted to

train volunteers for China and the other one expressed this openly:

> We do not do anything apart from teach people about God. That is the main
> objective, to convert people to God. That is why we are here (Stephen, helper
> in Church B).

From the standpoint of the churches and the Christians, it is reasonable to want to develop

people into Christians and enlarge the community. As Stephen pointed out, it was the

reason that they were there in the church. He developed the idea further:

> We are never going to convert you all in one year to become a Christian. Not
> everybody. It is not possible, right. You know, not all of them have got the
> brilliance [to understand the meaning of God in their life], not possible. What
> is possible is to show them the first seed, to say look what we will bite, this is
> what God bites. This is what we do and if you understood, you would take that
> forward. I would find it is very hard to convert someone in one year, because
> your first issue is getting over the language barrier and teaching the words we
> are using (Stephen, helper in Church B).

It could be inferred that the introduction of the Chinese students to the Christian

community was not the most important part for the church representatives; and it was clear

that the ambition behind it was to convert all of them into Christians. However, the

practical difficulties remain hard to overcome, as there are language barriers and time

limitations for the Christians. As for most of the Chinese students who went to the

churches, the church representatives would concentrate more on the introduction of

Christianity than on any attempts to convert them directly. The significance of the

introduction and training stages was emphasised a lot by the church representatives, while

fewer mentioned the issues in the missionary work relating to conversions. This is not only

because it constitutes the first stage and lays the foundation for the others that follow, but

also because it is almost impossible to convert Chinese students in just one year.

Regardless of the practical difficulties in converting the Chinese students, the Christian

community never actually gave up the hope of training as many new Christians as possible.

One Christian participant in the interview even pointed out the necessity of becoming a

Christian in the UK, as there were unpredictable factors that may affect the students'

decisions to be a Christian when they went back to China. She also indicated her concern about the unstable situation of Christians in China, which was different from that in the UK.

> If they show strong interest in Christian faith but seem to hold back [on receiving baptism], we think it is time for them to be a Christian. It is better they become a Christian here, because when they are back in China, there are so many other things, especially in the working hours, and that takes over (Ella, volunteer in Church A).

The comment on the situation of becoming Christian in China revealed the urgency of converting a Chinese student during their overseas study. Through a series of services, Chinese students were expected to make a difference to their faith and life, so that their Christian identity could be fixed and withstand any potential risks in China.

Briefly, besides being the approach that Christians use to express their personal faith, compassion, and solidarity (Carrins, Harris and Hutchison, 2005), social support for international students is regarded as an opportunity for churches and Christianity to develop new Christians and expand influence in the global market. Rather than being social actions that contribute to the development of local communities as a response to government policy and which may bring about funding for the churches, interaction with international students is an initiative of the Christian community that develops the church's brand image and helps recruit new Christians.

Although the sustained interest that local faith organisations have shown in international students in recent decades is relatively new, religious organisations in the UK, particularly the Christian churches, have a long history of providing social care, education, and healthcare (Harris, 1995). Christian churches have made a significant contribution to the field of community development and social inclusion (Faith Community Unit, 2004) as the government involves religious institutions in public policy implementation. Churches, according to my observation, make use of the opportunity and respond to the needs of policy and community creatively. For instance, they engage in formal community work

according to the local needs; they include a restaurant for homeless people, a gym in the church for drug addicts, a public library in the bell tower, and a fruit and vegetable cooperative, as well as youth work, cafés, food banks, debt counselling, and arts and music projects. With these social events, which attract different types of people and organisations, it is believed that Christian churches are using social actions to revive the church brand and grow churches (Hewitt, 2012). In addition to the worshipers that are drawn to churches, volunteers, donors, and supporters are all involved, too, and join in the activities or contribute financially. The establishment of hubs in the community also attracted organisations and funding. Although there is no increase in the number of worshippers, it has been documented that there is significant growth in the number of volunteers, levels of funding, and community profile and impact (Christian Research Constancy, 2012).

Social support aimed at international students is part of the work that churches have started to carry out since international students began flocking to the UK in recent decades. With the perception that Chinese international students are in a vulnerable position, Christians want to share their love of God out of Christian responsibility. They are committed to helping international students through friendship, empathy and practical support.

6.5 Preference for Chinese Students

The above exploration and analysis explained the reasons why churches and church representatives organised these activities for international students. This section concentrates on the reasons that, among international students in the UK, the churches regarded the Chinese students as the main target for their missionary work.

6.5.1 Fascinating but Difficult Development of Christianity in China

Though no one knows the precise number of Christians in China, it is acknowledged that Christianity has been growing there in recent times (Lee, 2012). At the same time that Christianity has been declining in Europe (Johnson et al., 2013), it has been rising in locations like Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Among these regions, it is believed that

China will experience particularly rapid growth (World Christian Database, 2013) since it has been of great importance to the development of Christianity in recent years. Many Christians in the study with experience of China shared similar ideas and noted that the Chinese are their potential market for the branding of Christianity. One of them confirmed in the interview that:

> I think China is fascinating because there is or there has been in the past, not long ago, there has just been a great deal of interest in Christianity in China. You know, over the last 20 years. It is definitely growing in China. It is not dying. More and more people there either are interested in it or becoming interested. I found it interesting. Maybe it is something about Chinese society (Katy, group leader in Church B).

As a Christian who had worked in China for a few years and had studied Christianity in modern China, Katy showed her confidence about the religion's development in the years ahead. In contrast with the situation in Europe, she thought, Christianity in China has seen an upward trend, with more and more Chinese interested, which is inspiring and fascinating for Christians. She went on to describe the changing relations between the Chinese government and Christians.

> I think there is dialogue with the government and there is…. so I think it is an evolving situation. And you know things were changing and moving to where the other side. And [Chinese students] do need to be aware of that before they go home. It may not be all plain sailing (Katy, group leader in Church B).

The prospects for Christianity in China are believed to be improving in terms of the political situation there since there is more and more dialogue with the Chinese government as the church strives to develop there. Whereas the importation of Christianity to China was impeded when the Communist Party came to power in 1949 and foreign missionaries were expelled from the country until the 1970s, today, unofficial churches thrive and flourish (Bellofatto and Johnson, 2013), although the Chinese government does not permit unregulated and unregistered churches to continue. In contrast with the period of strict sanctions, Christians are now becoming more accepted in China. What Katy perceived is arguably a particular representation of reality that is not supported on the

ground. There is a more open environment for the development of different religions (Lu, 2014). Although there is no accurate official figure for the number of Christians in China, a conservative estimate is 40 or 50 million in a population of 1.3 billion. The development of Christianity in China seems to have a promising future.

In addition to the political conditions, Christians perceived the necessity for their faith in China. One Chinese Christian who had taken part in the annual conference of Christianity shared the story in China.

> [At the annual conference] one woman who went to China, like Beijing, Shanghai… visited some churches in China. She took a lot of pictures and videos and also interviewed some local people. She also talked about the issues of faith in China, she was very concerned about the situation of people as they do not have faith and could not find meaning in life. She thought it was very difficult. There are so many people in China, but they do not have any faith. Everyone is so busy and doesn't think about the issues of faith. She worried a lot and thought it was a risk. People would lose their purpose if they lived in that way. God gave us the opportunity to do that (Xuan, a Christian Chinese student).

The Christian in the conference that Xuan mentioned in the interview had carried out a lot of research on Chinese people and churches in China. In her evidence, it was suggested that Chinese people needed faith to make their lives meaningful. She was concerned about the meaningless lives that she perceives Chinese people to be currently living. Another Christian referred to 'the moral vacuum' in terms of the suffering the Chinese had met during the social changes in the past 20 years, and she believed that Chinese people needed something like Daoism to fill the gap between their wealthier lifestyles and their absence of spiritual fulfilment. They claimed that these dilemmas facing the Chinese implied that there was a potential market for Christianity in China. This was certainly acknowledged by the Christians.

As an alien religion in a land of the East, even today there are a good number of cultural differences in terms of the preaching work of Christians in China. Most scholars and missionaries have approached the Chinese missionary work with the understanding that

one of the fundamental barriers to effective evangelism has always been a presumed disconnection between Christianity and Chinese culture (Harrison, 2013). Although in the eyes of Christians there is great potential for developing Christianity in China due to the people's 'meaningless lives' or their 'moral vacuums', the evolving situation of religion and missionary work in China has not actually been as smooth as had been expected. One Chinese Christian who once attended the annual Christian conference was informed that there are also great conflicts and differences between the cultures of East and West.

Another important difference between the development of China and that of the West is the political involvement of the church. China has been an atheist country since 1949, and, generally speaking, the government is still atheist. The development of Christianity has been monitored because of the sanctions by the Chinese government. The development of Catholicism was more affected by the attitude of the government than Protestantism as the latter is growing rapidly and attracts large numbers of educated young people. The government is concerned about these young people's allegiance to leaders outside China (Bellofatto and Johnson, 2013), which is the last thing that the Chinese government wants to see.

This more open Christian environment does not mean the Chinese government is giving religion a free hand to develop. The unregistered churches and registered churches grow freely as long as they abide by the government guidelines from the 1980s (Lee, 2012), and it is still difficult to do comprehensive missionary work in China. Christians have been discriminated against in many areas, especially in the political arena, where they are merely allowed to work in cultural and social affairs. At the same time, it is uncertain what the bottom line of the Chinese government is in terms of missionary work in China, which is a sensitive and risky undertaking for a foreign missionary. Katy implied that sometimes it was even brave to do something related to preaching or converting. Although some level of dialogue has begun between the government and Christianity in China, for example, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby was invited to China in 2013, the church remains far from the powerful influence that Christians had expected it to become in China. In

terms of church-government relations, it is impossible that Christianity in China could play a role in state affairs similar to the one Catholics play in the UK, as Chinese government watchers and collaborators exert a powerful influence on policies. The political environment in China is very different from that of the UK (Wenger, 2004).

Meanwhile, as is discussed in the history of Christianity in China in Section 2.3.2 of Chapter Two, the Chinese tend to hold negative views about Christian missionaries and their missionary work, especially the Protestants. From the historical factors to the cultural gaps and the current situational limitations, the missionary work of Christianity in China for Christians who were born in the western environment is fraught with difficulties and risks. In this regard, it would be ideal to find Chinese missionaries who are familiar with the Chinese situation and who have been professionally trained in the UK.

6.5.2 "Christian Bridges"- the Unique Advantages of Chinese Students

Chinese international students in the UK are perceived as the ideal members for carrying out missionary work and expanding the influence of Christianity to China. In one Christian congregation, Chinese students are seen as a good way to develop Christianity if they can be converted and receive Christian training in the UK, as they are aware of the native situation in China. Christians in the UK could help more and more international students to become Christians. Although these arguments were not evidenced directly by native church representatives in the interviews, two Chinese Christian students confirmed this intention in the interviews. One of them noted that:

> [One Christian speaker in the Christian congregation] found there were so many people in China, but they did not have any beliefs. Everyone was so busy and didn't think about the issues of faith. She worried a lot and thought it was a risk. People would lose their meaning if they live in that way. We think it is meaningless if we just work for money and die without any connection with God. She said that it was worrying, as the pace of life was very quick.….In the afternoon [of the congregation], they discussed some practical problems in conveying Christianity to China. And…yes, they think Chinese students are bridges, because they kept emphasising the importance of international students. God gave us the opportunity to [convert many international students

in the UK] (Xuan, a Christian Chinese student).

Christians want to train volunteers to evangelise in China when they go back, with the hope of spreading their influence in the social, cultural, and even political affairs of the country. It is easier for Chinese Christians to carry out missionary work in China. They could be bridges that connect the development of Christianity in China and the UK.

In short, churches intend to take advantage of having Chinese students in the UK to expand their influence in China. It is like planting the seeds for the future Chinese Christian market. Chinese international students who are familiar with Chinese culture and receive formal training in Christianity in the UK are the ideal bridges that could connect this western religion to the eastern world in modern China.

6.6 Types of Church Members

In the process of converting non-Christians to Christians, church members differ in the ways they practise their missionary work, depending on their individual perceptions of God. There are three categories of church members, which emerged from my data and provide the original knowledge. These three types are defined according to their attitudes and behaviour in their interactions with the Chinese international students. **Professional workers** were usually the group leaders or main organisers in the international groups. With professional training through Friends International, they regarded their contact with international students as the work of the church. Some of them were employed on a fixed term with an income. Their main task was to organise interesting events and attract as many international students as possible into church congregations. **Fanatical followers** were those church members who kept talking about their faith and Christianity to Chinese students whether at social events or in Bible studies. They focused on spreading the existence and significance of God and were intent on converting the students into Christians. As for the **interested followers**, their attitudes to international students were milder than those of the fanatical followers. They tended to talk about non-religious issues with students, such as cultural differences, and life experiences. Instead of imposing God

through endless discussion, they passed on the message of Christianity through their personality and behaviour influenced by God.

Compared to interested followers, both professional workers and fanatical followers were more disappointed when they were faced with the reality that students still did not believe in God after their full year of efforts. They repeatedly mentioned their disappointment, especially in those students who often came to the church and asked many questions and who were assumed to have great potential for believing in God, but who, eventually, did not show any inclination for God.

> It was disappointing, but at the same time, decisions are also important and it takes a long time. And many people need time to research things more and learn for themselves. And [the church people] are not going to change [a student's] mind completely to become a Christian in six months. A little bit, yeah, but I know that I cannot convince anybody to do anything. I know that. I need to ask God for help. Yes, I want to help them as much as possible, but I cannot force them. And I think people have to realise something for themselves (Ella, volunteer in Church A).

From the reflection, it was obvious that church people were disappointed when students did not show the signs of conversion, while they understood that it took time to change students' minds and in their view rely on the miracle of God. However, disappointment did not impede the church people; instead, they tended to keep going and wait for students to make the decision on their own, as they believed it took time for beliefs to become deeply rooted in people's minds.

The way church members communicated with Chinese students depended on their own personal preferences. And all church members kept an eye on the students' individual changes in the congregations, particularly in regard to attitudes towards Christians. They looked forward to seeing some progress in the Chinese students after all their efforts.

6.7 Summary

Although there is seemingly no direct responsibility for Christian churches to provide

social support for international students, nevertheless, the goals of evangelism and missionary work motivate them to attempt to access any non-Christians. It is believed that worldwide missionary work has become the most significant part of Christians' work, though most of the church representatives in the interviews did not immediately refer to it as their ultimate purpose. Perhaps, they concealed these intentions behind a façade of apparent sympathy or friendship, which could be flexibly adjusted to benefit their missionary work with Chinese students so that it became easier to establish effective relations with them. The caring and sharing from church members was to some extent ironic. Another factor, friendship, although emphasised by the church representatives in the sample, proved to be an inaccurate attribution when the nature of their claims was uncovered. It was a kind of working relationship as part of their missionary work. Good relationships with Chinese students contributed to the success of their missionary work; otherwise, the international group would cease to exist without many Chinese international students coming to the churches. The claimed or conditional friendship maintained the working relationship with the Chinese students.

The group of non-Christian Chinese international students is just a small part of their ambitious missionary work when compared to the larger market in China. However, these international students are perceived as having vital significance for the church's marketing in China, since western Christians face significant cultural gaps in their work. The fascinating but difficult situation of Christianity in China requires Christians to be familiar with native Chinese culture so that they can expand Christianity to that country. As a consequence, if Chinese international students could be converted to Christianity during their overseas study, their role would be indispensable. Chinese students with a background in western education and culture are the bridges across the cultures to connect the western and eastern Christian worlds. In the practical missionary work, not every church member was intent on converting the Chinese students. There are three categories of church members which emerged from my data and provide original knowledge: 'interested followers', 'fanatical followers' and 'professional workers'. The specific forms of organisation of the international Christian community around Chinese students and their

working strategies will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7 The International Christian Community and Strategies for Working with Chinese Students

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the institutional motivations for the international Christian community's efforts to welcome Chinese students. It identified evangelism and missionary work as their ultimate goals. International groups in the churches were turned into subjects of a business strategy that aimed to achieve their recruitment or "faith profit" through missionary work. I use the "business model" for churches in order to extend the critical analysis of the empathy, friendship, and missionary work the church members claim to offer. The "business" for church members is to convert non-Christians into Christians, and their "customers" or "market" in the study are Chinese international students. Based on their goals and the market approach, the churches organised a number of international activities and constructed an international community for the Chinese students in which to deliver the faith value of the missionary work.

In theory and in practice, a business model is a kind of rational description of how an organisation creates, delivers, and captures value (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010) in economic, social, cultural, or other contexts. It contains core aspects of a business, including purpose, business process, target customers, offerings, strategies, infrastructure, organisational structures, sourcing, trading practices, and operational processes and policies, as well as culture. To illustrate further, similar to Gordijn's Process Viewpoint (2002, p.33) that focuses on the 'economic value object creation, distribution and consumption', Lambert (2008) proposed the Comprehensive Business Model that depicts the components of the value proposition and the value-adding process (see Figure 7-1). The model abstracts the details and intricacies of the elements. Each element can be interrogated at various levels of detail. The connecting lines between elements do not show direction because the relationships are bidirectional. For instance, the value-adding process requires resources, and the resources at the disposal of an entity may determine the value-adding process. In

contrast with businesses whose goal is financial profit, churches are looking for recruitment or faith profit from their missionary work. As an alternative to the economic value-oriented business model, is there any kind of business model that can be used to focus on the faith value distribution and adoption within the international Christian community for Chinese students?
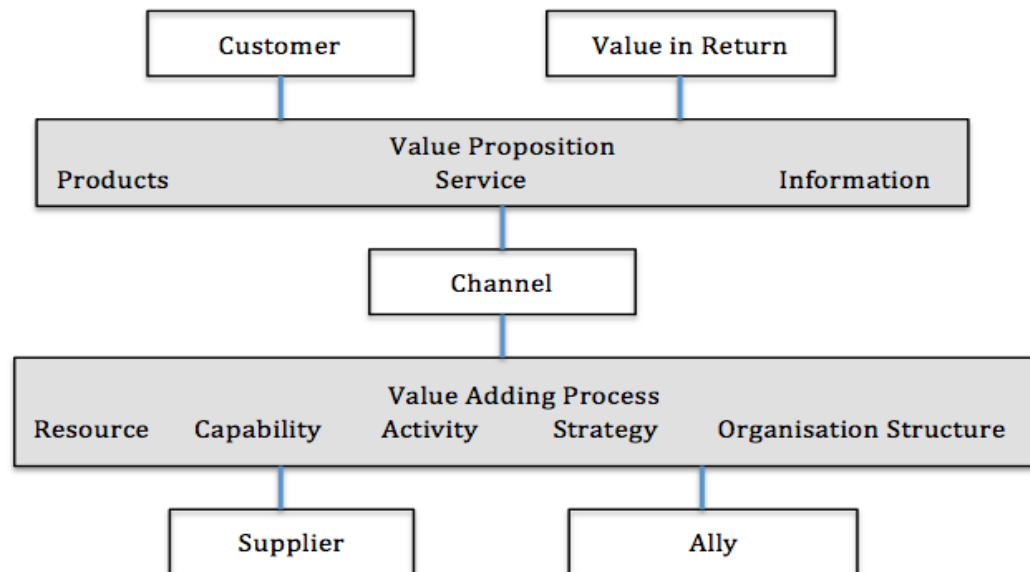
Figure 7- 1 Basic and Comprehensive Business Model (Lambert, 2008)

Companies apply the business model in order to obtain economic profit, yet economics is not the only issue business organisations must consider. They also have social responsibilities (Friedman, 2007). In the approach proposed by Schwartz and Carroll (2003), there are three core domains to corporate social responsibility (CSR), namely: economic, legal and ethical. In terms of the church context, what social responsibilities are born by religious organisations while they focus on recruitment or faith profit?

This chapter explores the missionary model of the international Christian community for Chinese students. This refers to the systematic work and organisation that is carried out in order to evangelise and convert their "customers", the Chinese international students. During the fieldwork and in informal conversations with the church members, it became clear that an international Christian community exists beyond the individual churches for international students. Taking a holistic perspective and using the analysis of the Christian

charity Friends International as its basis, this chapter starts with an introduction to the nature of the international Christian community in the UK, and examines the role of the Christian charity in question and its relations with churches within the community. Through two cases of Christian churches within the community, it analyses the organisation of events that the international Christian community hosts for international students. Then, it attempts to abstract a missionary work model of churches for Chinese international students according to the general common business model from the process viewpoint. In section 7.5, it summarises the work routine or model that Christians used to preach among non-Christian internationals, as well as approaches to identifying potential Christians among Chinese students. Lastly, it underlines the operational agency behind intercultural interaction between Christians and Chinese students.

7.2 Organisation of the International Christian Community

Social support for Chinese students in the international Christian group is not unique to one church; rather, they are offered by church organisations throughout the whole international Christian community in the UK, according to my observation in the field work and my analysis on the related website. The international Christian community, which is the subject of study, consists of one Christian charity called Friends International and two Christian churches in different regions of the UK (see Figure 7-2).

The Christian charity in question is a national charity with a board of trustees and a fundraising mission to welcome international students and assist Christians in the international groups. According to the introduction on its official website, it identifies itself as an organisation working with churches and Christian volunteers to support international students. The slogans 'We are Christians supporting international students in the UK' and 'We equip and envision churches and volunteers to befriend and assist international students' demonstrate their mission and approaches to the support they offer to international students. Friends International holds a leading position within the international Christian community, and has a series of churches - 'its branches' - located in

different regions (see Figure 7-2). The specific roles and functions of the charity and churches are outlined in the next sections。
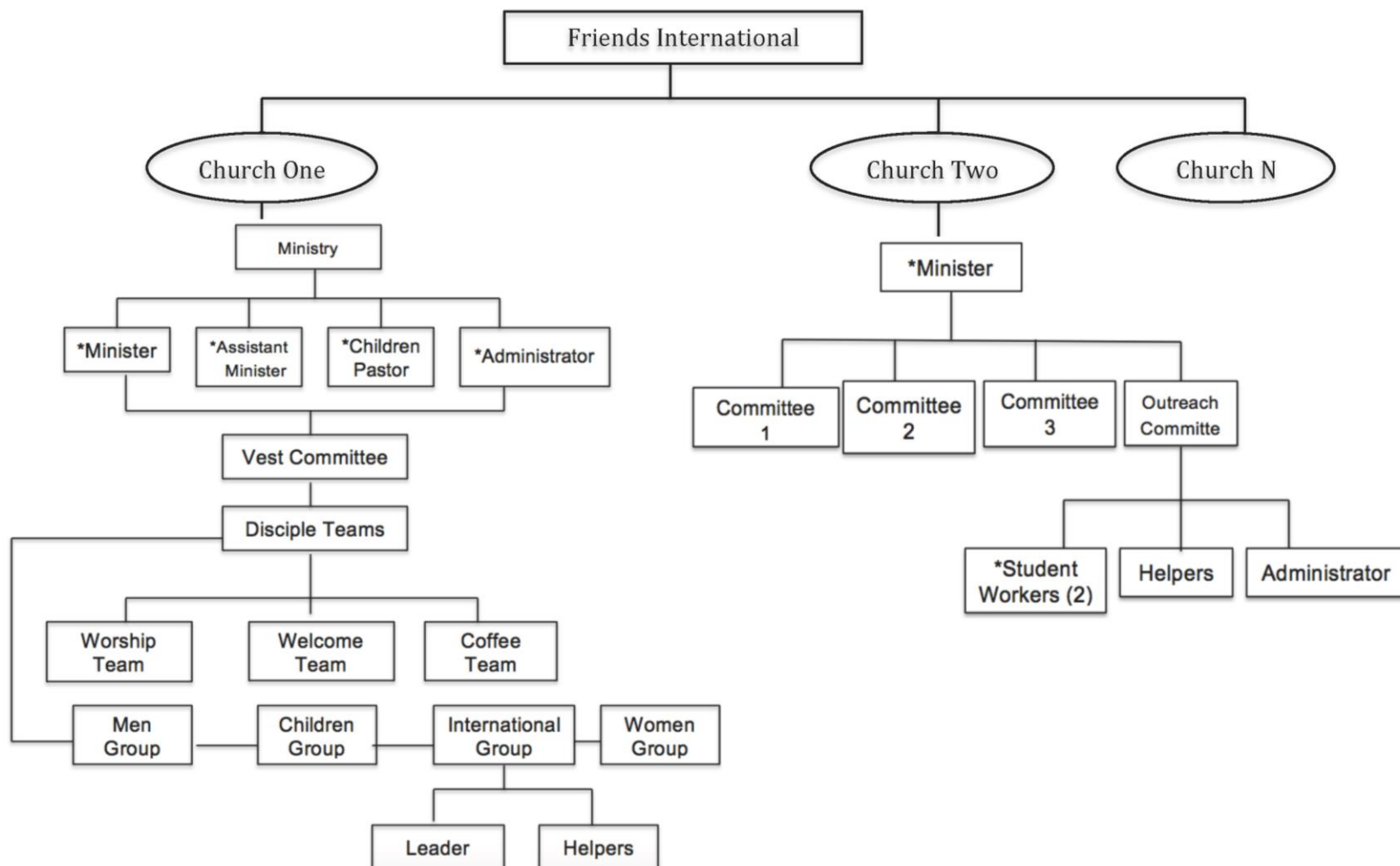
Figure 7- 2 Structure of the International Christian Community

Relations Between Churches

There is both cooperation and competition between churches. Interaction within churches is a way for them to compare their experiences of the Chinese students. Church members from different churches communicate with each other regularly and sometimes organise outdoor activities together. One group leader in the interview commented on the cooperative relations:

> It is not that one is better than the other. I will go to other people's outings; I will help with other things, and so on. We work together. We can stay together as churches; we all work together to organise a weekend for people from all different places. Yeah it is great. （Katy, group leader in Church B）

Besides cooperation, there is also competition between churches since each church strives to attract as many international students as possible:

> There is a degree of competition, a little. Maybe I felt it more this year than in the past, because when you run something, like the English class, you want people to come. We have spent many hours preparing for the students to come, and if very few come to the English class, we waste time, you know? And eventually, it stopped. So there is a small degree of competition, but not much. (Ella, volunteer in Church A)

Considering the continuity of international events in their own church, another church member indicated his hope of keeping students in their church.

> I don't think competition is the right word. A lot of churches like to keep their students. We don't like them to join the events because it figures that I am trying to steal some students or they might steal some of my students. I am not bothered. It would be better if the student would stay. But you cannot make students stay; students are not bound to stay. They turn up as friends. (Steve, helper in Church B)

What he described, therefore, is a kind of positive competition with no negative aspects like stealing students from other churches. Each church within the Christian community cooperates equally with the others. In addition, individually, each church learns from the

other churches to improve the service for international students and keep them in their church. This could be regarded as a kind of hidden competition for the development of the international group in their own churches.

7.3 Role of the International Christian Charity

The Christian charity shares networks and resources with churches and church members to enable them to provide better support for international students. With a history of around thirty years, the charity as introduced by some church members has developed the specialised cross-cultural knowledge required to welcome international students, including ways of avoiding mistakes, what constitutes offensive behaviour, and how to present themselves to international students in a positive light. This expertise and these skills are necessary for local churches when they are interacting with international students. According to the content of their official website, the charity and the volunteers are like the supervisors of the churches with international groups (including contact skills, hospitality issues, etc.) to make sure the individual churches behave properly in their interactions with international students (see Figure 7-3).

This leaflet is for you. We aim to give you some helpful suggestions and a little cultural information. Do see this as a fun learning experience for both sides! Warmth of welcome and genuine interest will more than compensate for any lack of cultural knowledge.

Contact

● Make contact quickly!

The newly arrived student is often very lonely and will feel unwanted if you delay making contact. Phone/ write/ visit and fix a date, even if it is a little way ahead. Don't wait till life is quieter or less complicated! If you have problems making contact, please tell the hospitality co-ordinator who can probably help.

● Keep in contact by phone, e-mail or visit

After a student's first visit, try to keep in touch by phone or e-mail and fix another date to suit you and your student.

● Give very clear information re date, time and place

Ask whether the day and time you have suggested suits the student. Some will agree to it even though it is very inconvenient or actually not possible. Make it clear how long the student will be expected to stay with you, and whether it will include a meal. If possible, collect your student and take them home, especially if it is dark.

Hospitality

● Make the student feel at home

Don't feel your home must be immaculate. Allow the student to help if they seem comfortable doing that, but remember that in some cultures men never enter the kitchen.

● Children will be children

Different cultures have different customs regarding discipline and the place of a child. Flexibility is the order of the day.

● Cook a good British meal

(Whatever that is!) Don't try and cook a curry for Indians or stir-fry for Chinese, unless you really know your spices. Let them try something typically British, but avoid the blandest of foods. Check for religious or personal food preferences. Muslims do not eat pork but will eat other meats such as chicken and lamb. Normally they will only eat halal meat, which you can buy at a halal butcher. (Reassure them it is halal). Alternatively cook them a vegetarian dish. No beef for Hindus.

● 'No' may mean several things

Be aware that in some cultures it is polite to refuse food, drink etc when first offered and you may need to offer a second or third time before the student (who really wants to eat or drink) feels able to accept.

● Show the way

Eating with a knife and fork may be unfamiliar. Provide an extra spoon, and by your example show them how to serve themselves and tackle certain foods.

● Raining cats and dogs

If you have a pet, check first that the student will not be scared or even offended by your friendly cat or dog (dogs are considered unclean by most Muslims). Walking in the rain or cold through muddy fields is a peculiarly British custom usually not enjoyed by others!

● Accept hospitality offered

Allow your student to reciprocate by offering you hospitality. In many cultures shoes off inside is the norm. They may even wish to cook a meal in your home if their kitchen/ dining facilities are limited.

Language & Culture

● Speak clearly, using 'standard' English

Avoid too much slang and difficult idioms. Be prepared to repeat or re-phrase to aid understanding. Don't speak more loudly to compensate!

● Give information about yourself

Don't just ask your student all the questions. Volunteer information about yourself and your family. Share photos and artefacts that tell about your life.

● Remember it's not wrong, it's just different

We all have different ways of doing things that can cause surprise or even shock on either side. Make allowances, be relaxed, but thoughtful, trying to avoid giving offence. Should the visit really not go well for whatever reason, don't hesitate to let the hospitality co-ordinator know, so another link can be made.

Figure 7- 3 Leaflet of Suggestions and Cultural Information for Church Members

The training and resources provided relate mainly to recognition of God, Bible teaching, and establishing and maintaining relations with international students. Practical guidelines range from the organisation of Bible studies classes and social events to the skills of communicating with students. They present a wealth of experience from previous interactions or relevant literature, so that churches can make themselves more accessible to international students. According to the content on the website, this information is categorised into four core aspects: preparation of international events, group team building in the churches, establishment of friendship with students, and skills for communicating the gospel cross-culturally.

7.3.1 Preparation of International Activities

Mental Preparation – 'It is a fascinating privilege'

The first step in the preparation of international activities is not about the organisation of events as the guidelines from the websites pointed out, but the mental preparation of each Christian who is involved in international events. It is to understand why the Bible studies themselves are so important for Chinese students. Missionary work with international students is presented as an opportunity or even a privilege for Christians to live with God's words in the Holy Spirit, which was mentioned as "a fascinating privilege" in the trainings for church members in the Friends International. Meanwhile, it is a Christian's responsibility to make the explanation as clear and memorable as possible for non-Christians. The aim of the Bible study is to introduce international students to the person and words of Christ. Bible study is not presented only as a time for chatting about God, but it is also a meeting in which international students would learn the truth about God and establish a relationship in order to change their lives and empower themselves.

Competence Preparation

With mental preparation, it is suggested that Christians involved in international activities

acquire knowledge and skills in the organisation and management of intercultural events. For instance, they are required to have the teaching ability to understand both the original meaning of a Bible passage and find the meaning in real life to make it understandable to potential Christians. Church members are encouraged to use their skills in introducing Christianity to international students with different subjects, such as Bringing Christ into our Conversations, Cross-cultural Friendship, Europeans and East Asians, and One-to-One Bible study.

In the first stage, there is a process called "testing the water". Its purpose is to get the conversation started with the international students according to the guidelines in the website. There is a list of questions with which team members can find out who has or does not have religious experience. It is suggested that questions like, *Do you have a religion? Have you been to church in the UK?* or *Do you have any Christian friends at home?* should be raised in a natural way. Then, there are questions which members are meant to use to lead people to think about deeper issues and also to have the opportunity to talk about Christ. These questions include: *What is the most important thing in your life? What are your hopes for the future? What are you afraid of? How do you make a big decision?* Whether or not to talk about Christ and how much to talk about Him depends on people's interest in Christianity, especially for those who are not interested in Christian things or those who are on the verge of becoming a Christian but are holding back. Speaking with these people is assumed to be a necessary part of making a difference to them.

Questions are important for guiding internationals to think about Christ. Likewise, it is also emphasised that the Christians respond to students' answers with attention. For the Christians, sharing themselves or their testimony is a way to respond to international students. It includes free talk about their daily life, and sharing their Christian experience, such as why and how they became a Christian, or how being a Christian changed their life. Relating stories about their fears, problems, struggles, and opinions in a Christian but natural way are also given importance. When people are curious about the Christian way

and see the differences between Christians and non-Christians, the next step is to press them towards a Christian life.

As I observed, over talking about Christianity is not encouraged; otherwise "customers" would feel threatened and manipulated. They could be "testing the water" to find the opportunity according to their understanding about students' acceptance to Christianity. Alternatively, members could pray for opportunities to mention Christianity. Flexible changes of topic during the free chatting activities are welcomed, especially when church members sense that international students are feeling uncomfortable or that conversations have lasted a long time.

There are other visible and invisible gaps among different cultures. Differences in food, dress, language, customs, and body language are easy to distinguish and to understand, whereas the invisible aspects, like values, beliefs, and taboo subjects are not easy to identify in internationals in a short time. In order to be able to achieve these aims, church members are encouraged to learn particular skills. Additionally, it is noted in the website that knowledge of cultural differences equips members with the confidence to contact internationals, as they are more familiar with the issues of cultural acceptance and offensiveness. A pure and genuine interest in other cultures means that there should be no criticising of these cultures. When it comes to being offended by international students, it is recommended that the Christian not take it to heart and to presume that the offensive behaviour is probably accepted in the students' own culture, even if it is not suitable in the host context.

7.3.2 Team Building and Training in the International Groups

The charity highlights the significance of team building in international groups within the churches in the website. It is suggested that working members in the international group have international knowledge or experience as they need to consider the specific needs of the international group, including personal experiences, competences, and personality. Members in a team are required to meet regularly and share reflections, training, and

planning.

7.3.3 Being Friends as a Medium Approach

One of the essential features of interaction with international students is to maintain good relations and show a genuine friendship according the guidelines in the website. The name of the charity 'Friends International' also implies their friend-oriented approach in the whole community. In order to begin this interaction well, team members are advised to make friends with international students before they begin speaking about the gospel. The training handouts contain definitions of friendship from both the perspectives of local culture and other cultures. The guidelines indicate the procedure for building friendship with internationals step by step. British culture is described as being 'bad at communication', 'reserved', and 'easily embarrassed', but training from the charity could give some confidence to the church members to overcome any difficulties. Moreover, people from other cultures tend to be more responsive than British people in interactions.

Bearing in mind these cultural differences, making friends with internationals in a practical way becomes a technical issue. It is suggested that group members ask questions boldly. The attitude of acceptance is also valued in the process. Through understanding the existence of cultural differences and the difficulties internationals face in the cross-cultural adaptation process, church members are required to be humble in order to engage with Chinese students in a real sense.

7.3.4 Skills of Communicating Gospel Cross-Culturally

The last and the most significant stage of the social event is communicating the gospel. In the content of the training booklets for church members, there are five main sections, including communication, culture, worldviews, how to lead an international student to Christ, and how to give testimonies without using 'Christian Jargon'. By comparing Christianity with other kinds of worldviews, it summarises some of the main ideas of Christian Theism, Naturalism, New Age Pantheism, and Postmodernism, and also

highlights the truth of Christianity. It is suggested that church members reflect on some of the Christian jargon and further think about how to give their testimonies without using this jargon. On the one hand, it makes Christianity easier to understand for international students, and on the other hand, the Christians seem to be hiding the intention of leading them to Christ and guiding them towards conversion.

One interesting part of the charity's training material even differentiates between people from different countries geographically, portraying them to church members through stereotypes. Slight differences between northern and southern Europeans are noted in the website. For instance, Swedes are described as being very reserved with regard to religion and also very philosophical and thoughtful, but suffering from a lot of depression and drunkenness. As a result, questions or topics suggested for the conversations with them refer to their life or attitudes towards death. They are also more willing to talk about significant things after midnight or when they are drunk. Italians are described as being more relaxed and easy-going. With their Catholic background, they have a sense of God, but tend to choose not to go to church. They welcome theological discussions. In the light of these cultural characteristics, it is suggested that members aim to understand the internationals' opinions firstly and then invite them to the Bible study. For East Asians, harmony and saving face are perceived to be the most important things in life. There are great differences noted in the way that people relate to each other, which is referred to as the relation-oriented East versus the task-oriented West. It implies that people in East Asia would agree to do things that someone suggested, even if they did want to do it, just to save face. They would not ask questions directly in case church members could not answer them and would lose face. Compared with the individualism of the West (Schwartz and Ros, 1995), it is suggested that in East Asian countries, people tend to be more group- or family-oriented. So it would be more acceptable if members could present the gospel in a relational way. Influenced by western culture as well, the younger generations in East Asia are more open to individualism and materialism, and are looking for personal satisfaction.

However, these impressions about people from different countries are to some extent

biased and stereotyped, and require updating. Moreover, due to individual differences, the claimed national characteristics might restrict opportunities for interactions with international students.

7.3.5 Essential Tools for Integration

In addition to the training for churches and group members, the Christian charity also provides some tools for international students to better help them get used to their new life, including an app and a search engine. Both of them contain useful information for students about everything from their arrival to their leaving the UK.

Living in the UK - a guide to life

The app named LIFE-UK is aimed at new international students. It contains information about living in Britain and facts about British people, so that students are able to settle into their new life (see Figure 7-4). Information in the app is comprehensive and students can find almost everything they need after they arrive in the new environment. For instance, in the section Life at University, students may find answers on urgent issues, such as opening a bank account, what to do if they have course problems, whether to register with the police station, and also some tips for seeing a doctor in case they get ill. The General Information section is concerned with non-urgent issues relating to daily life or social customs, like the weather, how to behave in public (touch, eye contact, time, gender equality, queues, and saying no). Other sections include British Food, Medical, Transportation and Accommodation. Currently, a booklet is available for sale as an alternative to the app.
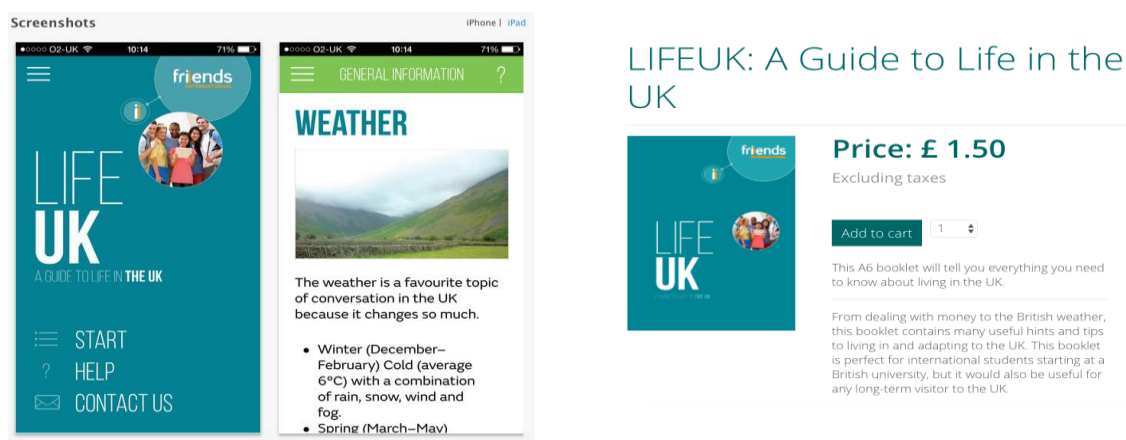
Figure 7- 4   Screenshots of App and Booklet[16]

Finding Friends in the UK - Search Engine

The search engine (see Figure 7-5) in the website that claims to help students to find friends is actually used to find events for international students within the Christian community. It is assumed that international students could indirectly find friends at these events. By inserting their postcode, students can find the location and schedules of church events in different local churches.
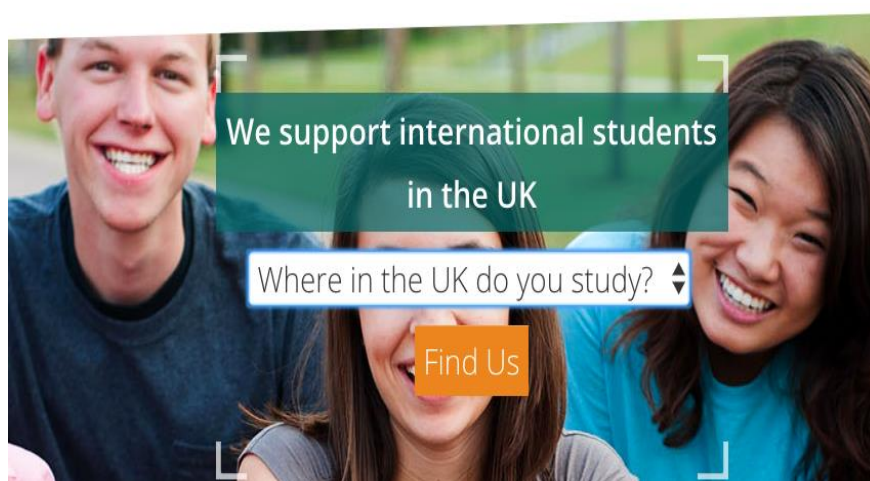
Figure 7- 5 Church Search Engine[17]

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[16] Source: website of Friends International 2016

Leaving the UK

For the return home of international students, the website contains ideas for preparing for their first month back, such as connecting with a church or Christian group. There is also some literature aimed at supporting them during the phase of reverse culture shock as they transition back to life in their home country. An online community named 'Clan' links up students when they are back home with the aim of helping those international students who are involved in Christianity. It emphasises making links with friends, mentors, or a church when students return to their home country.

In short, with information for new international students for everything from their arrival to their departure, the charity provides access for students to get involved in the Christian community. The information and access are attractive to these students as they are useful for helping students settle down in their new environment. This information provides a natural way to engage these new students in the Christian world, whether they are Christians or not.

7.4 Two Cases of Christian Churches

Following the guidelines and training of the charity, individual churches can administer their events with autonomy and innovation. This section analyses two cases of churches active around one major university campus area in the UK to examine how individual churches work with the international Chinese students. According to the basic and comprehensive business model, the 'customers' in the missionary work of church members are Chinese international students. Christians intend to deliver the Christian faith to those students. Hence, the counterpart 'product' in the value adding process is the faith of Christianity.

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[17] Source: website of Friends International 2016

7.4.1 Organisational Structure

Church A (see Church One in Figure 7-2) belongs to the Church of Scotland and is a member of the Presbytery. According to my observation, there is a Presbyterian organisation within the church. It comprises a ruling body of elders (kirk session), who makes decisions about how the church should be run. Besides that, there are several committees, which have to present their ideas to the kirk session. One of these committees is the outreach committee, which is responsible for practical preaching issues. It organises activities aimed at reaching out to people without a connection to the Christian church in order to introduce them to the teachings of the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ. These activities range from meals, Bible studies, and ceilidhs to hill walks and barbecues. Committee staff includes volunteers, as well as paid young workers; one is a student worker and the others an international student worker. This underlines the significance of students in their mission work as, without them, none of the workers, apart from the pastor or minister, are paid.

Church B (see Church Two in Figure 7-2) as I observed, on the other hand, is part of the Church of England. Founded in 1864, it is an independent Anglican congregation. It is made up of the ruling body of the ministry and the vestry committee with several disciple teams, such as the worship team, the welcome team, and the coffee team. Behind the teams, there are various groups which correspond to the different objectives of the disciple mission. For example, there is a men's group, a women's group, an international group, and a children's group. In each group, there is a leader and helpers who cooperate with each other to do the missionary work. All workers except people in the ruling body are volunteers. The group leader in the international group is from the Christian charity Friends International, has received professional training for working with international students, and has a wealth of international experience.

In terms of funding, the financial resources are donations from Christians. Students are free to participate without paying any administration fee. As most students do not have a job or an income, they are not encouraged to donate to the churches.

7.4.2 Resources

Location Priority

Both of the churches in the study are located near the major university campus and student accommodation. It is convenient for students to access the church events and vice versa, and churches are easily able to find their potential customers around the campus.

Organisational Support

Organisational support for the international groups includes their church ministry, committees, and the Christian charity. According to my field note, the church itself provides basic elements for the international groups such as the funding, a venue, and staff. The ministry in Church A also takes part in the management of international activities through training church members and planning specific events. Professional ideas and suggestions from Friends International are not ignored. In Church B, the group leader is responsible for the whole group and the minister did not interfere too much. The minister is just concerned with the content and progress of Bible study. The charity support consists of professional training and resource sharing for church members to organise the church events. Regular conferences and meetings also provide peer support for each church member who is doing missionary work with international students.

7.4.3 Capabilities

Church Members Selection and Team Building

According to the business model, team building is important. I observed that Volunteers and workers in the international groups were carefully selected for the teams with consideration of the Chinese international students. Most of them had international experience, had stayed in China for many years, or were even Chinese Christians. Some of them had a few years' English teaching experience in areas like Thailand, China, or Africa. Some were interested in Chinese culture and had travelled several times to China. These

workers who were chosen for the international groups were assumed to be familiar with the Chinese situation and to understand Chinese students as a group. It was easy for them to share stories and opinions about Chinese culture. In addition, it was believed that people with international experience could share the same viewpoint with international students and better understand those international students in the UK, especially if they had experience of China. I found some volunteers were Chinese Christians who had studied in the UK in the previous few years and now worked in the churches with a Tier 5 visa. These Christians could understand Chinese students very well without any cultural gaps compared with local church members.

> Flora, as a Chinese person, she can explain things better. From a Chinese background she knows why your mind is different from my mind. You know, though Christianity is not a western thing, while many people think it is western…. someone can communicate with you from the same background in a way that other people cannot. (Ella, volunteer in Church A)

Furthermore, young workers rather than older ones were preferred for interacting with the Chinese students, as there were generation gaps between the young Chinese students and the older Christians. Young workers were believed to be able to understand those students better than the older people. Therefore, as one church representative in the interview emphasised,

> We chose Juna because it is better to have someone in the same or similar age group as those international students. And Juna has all that university experience. She understands students. It is better to have someone like her. It is her job. And we will pay her accordingly. (Ella, volunteer in Church A)

A young worker with a fixed-term contract could have regular contact with international students. They could keep up with the new things that young people were interested in. With less of a generation gap than with the elders, these workers could communicate better with the Chinese students.

After the team building stage, there came the division of work and cooperation in the group, where each person with different skills takes different duties.

> Each person has the thing they do. [As a young person,] I am responsible for
> the activities, outings, Katy and Dick, the others are more responsible for the
> theology side, the prayers, what we're gonna preach. They are responsible for
> them. Each of them you would see they do a talk; I'll probably not do that help.
> Each one has the skill. Someone might be good at hospitality; somebody might
> be good at qualifying the preaching. Somebody might have a specific area of
> expertise, like Sara [a young person], you know, the medical side of things, and
> her husband [a young man] likes the music side of things. My skill is in social,
> getting young people to do things, organising, try to get people to do things
> within each group. Katy also works for Friends International, she is governed
> by the body in terms of what she can preach, what to teach. She's got the
> authority and the knowledge to do so. She's got skills. I do not have skills to
> preach. It would be wrong for me if I do it. (Steve, helper in Church B)

It indicates that the specific work around international students is divided into several parts,
and younger workers tend to be more responsible for the active events such as hiking,
outings, music, while older people are more focused on the Christian events, for example,
praying and preaching. They maintain a well-organised and systematic arrangement to
serve Chinese students through different Christian events.

In a word, group members were carefully selected with full consideration of the situation
of Chinese students. International experience, especially Chinese experience, a similar age
as international students, nationality, and individual skills were all included in the selection
criteria to ensure better communication and a good connection with the Chinese students.

7.4.4 Activities - Professional Training for Team Members

In addition to the careful selection of team members, there is some training for church
members in the international group. It mainly included two types: one is by Friends
International and includes training in the organisation of international activities and the
establishment of relations with international students. Members of the charity are
responsible for delivering the skills to other people in the groups. The other type of
training I recorded in my field note is from the ministers of the churches, who receive
lifelong training and know the Bible very well. It focused more on the teaching of the
Bible and techniques like arguing and responding to challenges or doubts from other

religious groups or non-Christian people. In each church, the minister trains the volunteers and church staff, thereby passing on his ideas to the church participants.

In Church B, the leader of the international group is responsible for arrangements from the planning of Bible teaching to the organisation of other social events, while the ministers pay attention to preaching and do not intervene in the specific procedures followed in the international group.

7.4.5 Christian Faith as a Product and its Distribution

Bible Studies and Discipleship

In terms of product distribution in the business model, Christian faith is the product that churches want to distribute to the non-Christians. Among all the church activities, there were two kinds of events that focused on the Bible. One was the 20-30s Bible study at every Thursday night, and the other was a themed talk after Sunday service. These two events as I observed were regarded as the most important events to enable international students to understand the Bible and Christianity as they could learn something about Christianity directly and without any distraction. Church representatives were quite clear that these activities were more important than the meetings in the student café, which were more like social gatherings. It was also suggested that the Bible studies and the themed talk after Sunday service should go into more depth about the Bib-le than the student café gatherings, or the English lessons that also included in-class studies of the Bible.

The 20s-30s Bible study

Student Bible study ran almost every Thursday night from the beginning of each semester. I observed that English classes could not be seen as formal classes for learning the Bible as they claimed to teach grammar and cultural knowledge, (though the text was based on Bible stories). However, the Bible study with students in the 20-30 age bracket was a formal course for learning about Christianity. Besides familiarising students with the Bible

stories, the classes concentrated on reflections on one's personal life and relations with God. By comparing God's behaviour and one's individual choices, students were encouraged to find out about the real Christian world and personal relations with the faith.

> On Thursday nights, we have students in their 20s to 30s to have dinner together first of all and then we break them into small groups for Bible studies, so the group I lead is those who do not have much background knowledge of Christianity. So it is kind of going from the beginning. (Juna, worker in Church A)

> I went to the Bible study on Thursday every week. We usually started with a dinner at 6:30, and have a wee chat firstly. And then we seated together and introduced ourselves to each other. Then we divided into different groups, a Chinese group and a non-Chinese group, doing Bible study. Juna taught us in our group. (Xue, Chinese student)

The above description by church representative and student participant in the interviews clarifies the process of attending Bible studies on a Thursday. Students who went to Bible studies usually had dinner together with church people to start with. During the dinner, as I observed, leaders of small groups listed some stories and asked students to choose one that they were interested in. After dinner, the students (from China and other countries) were divided into two groups. All the Chinese students were in one group and the others were in a different group. Some handouts were distributed to each student and it was suggested that they read them in turn, paragraph by paragraph. Topics in each Bible study about Jesus varied according to how much the students had understood. It started with the existence of God, and then answered the questions of who God and Jesus are in the subsequent studies. After that, some important extracts were selected for further study, such as Jesus the Supreme Lord in Ephesians. I observed that the group leader would then list some questions according to the story and encourage students to discuss them one by one. Students were free to express their own opinions on the text itself without limitations. Unless the discussion was about a Bible story or the students had some disagreements about God, the group leader tended not to get involved in students' conversations. Instead, he or she would rather listen and let students continue to talk freely. As for those questions

concerning the Bible, leaders would answer and give as much of an explanation as possible.

Besides the explanation and discussion based on the Bible stories, students were taught to pray like a Christian. Prayer is an important act that Christians perform to connect with God (Wade et al., 2007), thus, knowing how to pray is significant for these new learners. There were some Chinese Christians in the group who led the prayer every time since the new learners did not know what to do. It was suggested that non-Christian students write down the words that they wanted to say to God in prayer. Gradually, new learners learned how to pray and talk with God in a biblical way.

Themed Talk after Sunday Service

In the timetable of student events in Church A, there was a Church Lunch with a themed talk after Sunday Service. The themed talk was not as formal as the Bible studies on a Thursday, but was a moment for a direct and free sharing of feelings about the Bible. According to my field note, students took part in the Sunday Service and then had lunch together. One of the church representatives gave a presentation related to God, such as on the themes of *Money and God, Work and God,* or *Family and God*. International students were encouraged to talk and share personal experiences and opinions, and more importantly, to find the meaning of God in their life (see Figure 7-6). Christians naturally and actively share their stories about life's confusions and how God helps and influences them, however, non-Christians tend to talk more about their related experiences, problems, or difficulties in daily life. After the discussion, students were welcome to ask questions if they did not understand certain things.

Figure 7- 6 Sunday Lunch in Church A[18]

The classes or themed talks in the churches required church members to show some adaptability in terms of the multicultural teaching and cultural communication required. In the formal classes in the Christian churches, the mode of group work was found to be effective for students to become familiar with each other and learn the text provided. In their multicultural classroom, church representatives managed the multicultural learning based on the Bible and encouraged intergroup interaction.

The form of group learning in class was not the only factor that facilitated intercultural education and interaction. In the classes at the Christian churches, I observed that teachers in each group were selected and trained based on their suitability for trans-cultural education. For intergroup collaborative work to be meaningful for students' intercultural learning there is a need for sufficient preparation, guidance, management, and support (De Vita, 2005; Leask, 2009). Church representatives received training and support from other

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[18] Source: church group on Facebook

members of the Christian charity to achieve the aim of spreading the faith cross-culturally. They designed the pedagogical practices, (which were not always suitable for the students), with sensitivity to the cultural differences for Chinese students. Possessing skills in intercultural teaching and communicating constitute an advantage in delivering the internationalisation of Christianity and motivating the learning of potential Christians.

7.4.6 International Events in the Christian Churches

Along with the introduction to the faith that usually came before the faith education, the Chinese students were provided with support and a great deal of information to attract them to attend church. This support, on the one hand, played an important role in recruiting potential customers, as most of the Chinese students had no intention of exploring the Christian faith through their church participation. Their desire for friendship, cultural knowledge, and language practice were well acknowledged by the church members who were used to attract students to the church's activities. With regard to socialisation in a Christian environment, attending these services is seen to be necessary before formal training about Christianity can take place. On the other hand, churches share social responsibility and provide resources and information for students. The attractiveness and quality of international events were of vital significance as there was not the commitment between the non-Christian Chinese students and the Christian churches as there was with Christians. According to suggestions from the charity Friends International, activities in the international group are generally divided into three categories: social events, including the student café, hospitality, and some outdoor activities; language training or English classes; and Bible studies and discipleship. Church members designed specific events and launched them with schedules that ran from the beginning to the end of semesters (for instance, see the schedules of events in the Figure 7-7 and 7-8).

> Year by year, they developed events in line with the changes and needs of the Chinese students. It started with what was known as, "café" on Friday. That is what it started with. And I was not involved in those years ago. Slowly, slowly, more and more activities developed through the years…. Five years ago, we started the English class, English through the Bible. It was on Monday evening.

Then our involvement got more and more after that. (Ella, volunteer in Church A).

Figure 7- 7 Schedule of Events in December 2014 (Church A)

Figure 7- 8 Schedule of Events from September to December 2014 (Church B)

Social Events

Student café

Based on my observation, among all the activities for international students, the student café was the most popular event for Chinese students. Each church had the flexibility to decide on the content of this social event. Generally, the student café or international café in Church A was an event in which international students spent one night with people in the churches, chatting and playing games. Church staff and volunteers prepared some drinks and desserts. When there were some upcoming festivals like Christmas or New Year's Eve there would be some alternative celebrations.

> On Fridays, we have informal students' café, where sometimes we had special activities, like Chinese New Year, Ceilidh, and things like that. And other times, we just chat. So we try to do things every two weeks, fun things to get people more involved, to give students the chance to show their culture. (Juna, worker in Church A)

> Considering most students are international students, they prepared some activities for students from different countries, like Chinese spring festival, Brazil's national day, and so on. We made dumplings and played Majiang (one popular Chinese game) together. It was very interesting. (Wu, Chinese student)

From Juna's and Wu's descriptions, Friday nights were the free time that students spent together often doing special activities or celebrating festivals, such as a Ceilidh dance evening (see Figure 7-9), a Chinese Spring Festival celebration, or Brazil's national day. Students were encouraged to present their own countries' cultures.

Figure 7- 9 Ceilidh for New Students in Church A[19]

In terms of the topics covered in the free chats, there was no fixed subject matter in the café. Students were free to talk about whatever they wanted. I observed that common topics were family, friends, cultural issues, travelling, and problems that they met in their daily life. Issues around the Bible and Christianity were sometimes raised by Christians to see if the non-Christian students were interested in them. Church members particularly welcomed discussion of the Bible and Christianity, especially when students showed interest.

Unlike the student café event in Church A, the one in Church B was an event composed of social communication, English learning, and Bible study, all combined (see Figure 7-10). There was a theme each week, such as food, money idioms, or family. It usually started with a free dinner and talk, and was followed by a game related to the theme. The last part was Bible study, which was related to the same topic as the game. Taking the tasting evening at Church B as an example, with one or two native speakers in each small group, the international students (mainly Chinese students) were divided into groups to have free conversations. In my observation, after dinner together, people were invited to take part in the game of tasting food. Students were asked to taste the food displayed on the table and

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find its name in the handouts. Food like marmalade was typical and representative of food in Scotland and provided students with a vivid impression of Scottish food culture. After that, students were encouraged to find some stories about food in the Bible. With the help of church volunteers, students found the right story versions and generally understood the meaning in the Bible. This part was regarded as a kind of introduction to Bible study. Church staffs were encouraging of any students who showed an interest and wanted to explore more after that night.

Figure 7- 10 International Cafe in Church B[20]

Dealing with one theme at a time, the teaching around the Bible was mixed with the social activities. This made it more natural and acceptable to the students, as the Bible study did not take up the whole night. Some student respondents in the interview also indicated that it was understandable and could be tolerated when church representatives wished to talk about subjects related to Christianity.

> They had a theme every time and, accordingly, they found something in the Bible, and they talked about it. We did not mention the Bible when playing the game. It is not that biblical, and I think it is ok for me. Some staff introduced something [about the Bible] to read. It is ok. (Bai, Chinese student)

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[20] Source: church group on Facebook

Bai's observations shed light on the point that the event was not that biblical and that she could accept the contents. However, it was clear that, compared with the Bible study, she preferred the social games. It was also evident that because the event was solely an introduction to the Bible, such an arrangement from the perspective of the church was with the aim of attracting students in order to give them an introduction to Christianity, with further exploration later on. This made the mode of operating the student café was acceptable to both the students and Church B.

Outdoor Activities

There were several regular outdoor activities organised by the churches or the charity Friends International (see Figure 7-11). These activities range from hiking and cycling to day trips around the city where church is located. City events, like fireworks displays or Christmas open markets, were other choices for international students to get involved in local life. Church members were the organisers, the leaders of hiking and riding, and the tour guides on the trips. Students were invited to these outdoor activities by emails or messages sent by people in the church. Students were free to sign up by email or by simply telling the people in the churches. During the trips, they usually shared historical stories about the places they were travelling.

Figure 7- 11 Outing at Troop Beach[21]

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[21] Source: church group on Facebook

Hospitality

Another common event for Chinese students was being invited to local people's houses. The churches invited some Christian families to be hosts and enable the students to experience local family life. The international students were interested in these events as they were a good opportunity to get close to a local family. I observed that the churches were like the connector between the students and the Christian families, and they made the arrangements to place the students with different families. This group hospitality usually took place once or twice each semester. At other times, there were smaller gatherings, when some Christians personally invited students to their houses. Some Christian couples even invited students every week.

> I went to Margo's house once. I spent Christmas in Hanna's house. They invited me. We played some quiz and game together and share delicious food. In some way, they share the similar living style as China. Food and cooking are very different. We also went to the lakeside and attended the service at Christmas. (Bai, Chinese student)

As indicated, interactions with Christian families were supposed to be related to Christianity. The students experienced the lifestyle of the Christians and felt the atmosphere of Christianity, which is a kind of invisible way to influence non-Christian students.

At Christmas or on other special days, students spent enjoyable time with local people, freely chatting, tasting delicious food, sharing personal experiences, and understanding different lifestyles. These Christian families welcomed international students and were perceived as very nice by students. However, not all hospitality was a social event, since sometimes students were encouraged to study the Bible together, or attend services.

English Practice

There were two forms of English practice in the churches. The students underwent informal English practice whenever there was communication in English. Free talking with

local Christians in the churches could be considered a good opportunity for students to practise their oral English. Formal language practice was given by Church A in the form of English courses called English Through the Bible held on Monday evenings. International students were attracted to these events. These English classes had been running for around five years and had gradually established their own form and content as teachers gained experience in delivering the classes.

There were generally eight sessions in one semester. The main teaching texts were from the stories of the Bible (see Figure 7-12). According to Ella's description in the interview, there were ten passages, including five from the Old Testament and five from the New Testament. In the following semester, there were six stories from the Book of Acts and six from the stories about Jesus's death and Resurrection, which went into a deeper understanding of the Bible. As it was impossible to tell students everything in the Bible in just one hour, church people built their own outline so that they could choose some interesting and important stories as examples in the English classes to map the world of Christianity. Step by step, the church representatives introduced the students to Christianity. The students' current situations were also given consideration when selecting the Bible stories for the handouts. It made it easy for them to connect God with the individuals' lives and arouse sympathy from the students. The stories to some extent were guidelines that introduced God, and the main purpose of the classes was to discuss the Bible stories, or, to be more precise, talk about faith and God as much as possible. In addition, in each session some training was given on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation after the Bible stories.

In each English class, there were about ten teachers. I found they were professional teachers, which means that they were, or had been, teachers in schools. Some of them even had experience of teaching English as a second language (TESOL). With a great deal of experience in teaching, these teachers understood how to inculcate students with the meaning of the Bible stories.

On Monday evenings, students were divided into different groups according to their own preferences. The number of students was not fixed. In my observation, at the beginning of each semester, there were about 30 students, and then the number decreased as some students found it was not interesting for them and dropped out. In class, two teachers read through a whole passage as a warm-up. After that, each teacher in a group usually introduced some background to the context. And then students were asked to read the passage sentence by sentence in turn and find some words or phrases that they did not understand. As they became familiar with new words and phrases, students were encouraged to answer the questions about the passage. Teachers in each group led students to understand some difficult grammar issues. In some classes, students were encouraged to perform role-plays and read through the stories, or even act them out.

Lesson 2 - Joseph

Overview:

Joseph is a famous person from the bible who was prospered by God. Before this story shown below, Joseph had been unfairly sold into slavery by his brothers and taken to Egypt. There he became a rich man's slave and was eventually thrown into prison due to false accusations by the rich man's wife. Throughout these situations, God provided for Joseph and continued to look after him.

Pharaoh's Dreams – bible extract - Genesis 41 v 1 – 27 New International Version (NIV)

1 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, 2 when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. 3 After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. 4 And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

5 He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. 6 After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. 7 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

8 In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. 10 Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. 11 Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. 12 Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. 13 And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged."

14 So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, 18 when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. 19 After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. 20 The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. 21 But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up.

22 "In my dream I saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. 23 After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. 24 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none of them could explain it to me."

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. 27 The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine....

Genesis 41:39-42   New International Version (NIV)

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

41 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

Figure 7- 12 Text used in the class 'English through the Bible'

Discussion or comments on the key message was an important part after comprehension. Teachers would suggest students link stories to their own life experience to understand the meaning of the stories. Finally, teachers would point out the real message that the stories wanted to convey about God. The small group teaching ended with the teacher's summary in each group. After that, all the students were invited to join the session to learn about grammar, pronunciation, sentence structure, and other linguistic features. Some useful websites were also recommended to the students. The teaching styles as I observed varied a lot depending on the teacher. Some focused on the material provided and followed the tasks after the reading of the passage, while other teachers preferred to share their personal experiences when explaining the passage to students. After the eight classes of the semester had finished, students who were very interested in Bible studies were invited to a subsequent one-to-one Bible study.

From the description above, there is no doubt that the English class was in reality an introduction to Bible study. The texts used in class were Bible stories and all teaching and learning concerned the Bible. From the feedback of church participants, students enjoyed themselves in the English classes and even the pure Bible training classes. The form of group learning attracted them to seize the opportunity to take part in intercultural learning and communication. With experience of teaching English as a second language and personal experiences in China, each group leader was capable of organising Bible study in a multicultural context.

Information

In the process of social activities, students were free to ask any questions they want. Church members shared their useful living experience and resources with the students, such as accommodation information, career advice, basic living skills like cooking and washing, and so on. Knowledge relating to cultural and social issues was another important area of information passed on willingly by the church members to Chinese students. The students found these topics attractive as they could gain useful knowledge about social customs and cultural differences to broaden their understanding.

7.4.7 Publicity Channels for International Groups

With the establishment of international groups and the planning of international events, according to the business model, another step for the Christian community is to attract and keep as many international students as possible in the churches. As I observed, there are two main channels for connecting with international students. One is used for attracting students, and the other is used for keeping them attending the church activities continually, and for maintaining connect with them. The advertising or attracting stage is conducted in three ways: through leaflets, individual recommendations, and student initiative exploration. The process for maintaining contact with and among the students takes place mainly through social media or communication tools.

Advertisements

Leaflet advertisements are commonly used in missionary work. These leaflets I collected in the churches (see Figure 7-13) outline the main student events in the churches, including the places, times, and even the advantages of attending, to attract international students. By analysing the leaflets of Church B in 2016, one noted that they contain Chinese characters to attract Chinese students in particular. In the international marketing process, Christian volunteers also distributed leaflets in the street, especially at the beginning of a new study year. In the interviews, there were three student respondents who noted that they and their friends had received the leaflets while in the vicinity of the churches. Taking one of them as an example:

> I was coming back from a supermarket with my friends; people in the church were giving out some leaflets to us. The person who gave us leaflets had been to China many times. He knew a lot about China and talked to us, made us feel very nice. Later, we took part in the international café. (Wu, Chinese student)

As she describes it in the interview, the church people distributed leaflets to Chinese students as a way of attracting students, and these church people would share their personal experiences so that there was good communication with students from the beginning. It

was an effective way of leaving a good impression on the students. In turn, for the students, it seems that they had no reason not to go. Another respondent described his experience, which was different from the previous ones. He mentioned that it had been the barbecue event outside the church that had attracted him when he was passing by. One person was standing at the crossing of the street and the entrance introducing some activities to him through the leaflets. After that, he found the church was interesting, and he also had free time to go on a Friday night, so he later took part in the international café.

Street distribution is not the only way that the Christians conducted their marketing services. I found some volunteers even knocked at the doors of Chinese students one by one. Those who went to the houses preaching were usually Christians who could speak Mandarin well enough. And those houses were not chosen by accident, but rather they targeted the Chinese students. However, the point is how could they have known the precise addresses of the Chinese students, or in other words, how could this information have leaked out? After further exploration, it was discovered that it was through the network of Chinese Christian students that a list had been drawn up of the potential addresses and areas where Chinese students may live, and this made it possible for the volunteers to go to the houses one after another. Some Chinese Christian churches tended to use this method to supplement their street advertising.

Figure 7- 13 Advertising Leaflets

The student café was a place where church representatives spread information about other church activities, such as English courses or Bible study, to attract international students to come and get involved. To emphasise the significance of English classes through the Bible, church volunteers drew the students' attentions to the possibility of improving their English by implying that the English Bible courses were run with the intention of helping students to practise English as their second language.

Approaches to Maintain Connections with Students

Approaches that the churches used to connect with students included the use of emails, messages, and Facebook. Information about activities would usually be shared with as many students as possible, and this gradually created an international community on social media. If they wanted to connect with church people, they would follow the international events in the churches. To actively take part in the church events was viewed as the most effective way to connect students and churches. A few students connected with Christians from the church outside the Christian community.

7.4.8 Strategy - Preaching and Identification of Potential Christians

"Favour Fishing" and Evangelising with Targets

Evangelising Chinese international students is believed to be the central goal for the international Christian community. Through street distribution of leaflets or other forms of advertisement, church members introduced themselves to Chinese students and provided various forms of assistance and advice in terms of how to adjust to the new environment. Opening the door to welcome international students and help them as much as possible is the first step. It could be compared to the opening scene of a drama. The assistance offered to the new students varied in form. Church members organised a number of social events for the students to communicate with each other and build friendships and networks. The host environment around churches also helped students become more familiar with the local people and improve their English language competence. In addition, the Christian

members shared their cultural knowledge with Chinese students, informing them of the skills required for, and the norms of, daily life. In addition, the students appreciated the practical support they received with tasks such as finding a flat, proofreading, and job recommendations.

The introduction to faith could be regarded as the technique of the "appetiser", which is to finish the socialisation of Christianity and to identify converts using favours is named "favour fishing" (Abel, 2006). The socialisation process met the needs of the Chinese students at the adaptation stage by offering support, and this attracted the students to the churches. Although there was no direct force employed to make students believe in God, the church members' views and values on people and the world indirectly influenced students, particularly when they were confronted with difficulties and anxiety in their overseas study. That is the effect of "favour fishing". The favour does not have to be meaningful in a material sense, but, in the ritual sense, it could be quite meaningful (Abel, 2006). After participating a few times, some students found Christians to be very helpful and they felt accepted in their interactions with them. After that, they may have got used to the modes of interaction and might have felt obligated to take part in the activities, as Christians showed their expectations of seeing them again. Alternatively, some students may have become interested in the exploration of Christianity.

The next step in the process I observed was to deliver Christianity through communication with the international students. The Chinese students were invited to courses of Bible studies. However, there was no comprehensive or critical discussion of the Bible and Christianity in the Bible study class. It is worthy of note that the stories merely showed the positive image of God and Christianity, and any historical conflicts were intentionally ignored. The so-called education in Christianity for the Chinese students was more like a form of propaganda used to expand the idea that God is so good and people need to believe in Him.

Identification of Potential Christians

From the perspective of the business model, the identification of possible Christians is the most important task for Christians in the process of their intercultural interaction. There seemed to be no systematic approaches to the identification, yet the Christians were trained and informed by their previous experiences with students. It was believed by some Christians that students with a Christian background were more inclined to accept Christianity. As a result, many church volunteers liked to ask about the family background of the church participants, though these private issues were supposed to be avoided in common communication.

Besides family background, the times of church participation is another obvious way to gauge an individual's interest in Christianity. The more the students went to church, the more they were interested in the bible and wanted to explore further. "Exploration with interest" was regarded as being an indicator of great potential for becoming a Christian in the future, and Christians could offer further encouragement and training to them, such as Bible training, and related movies. After a period of training, the Christians could identify changes in a range of aspects, such as biblical communication style or thinking patterns to see if the non-Christians were on the way to becoming a Christian. The Christians were evangelising by targeting individuals. They tended to talk more with students who seemed interested in the Bible and God. Moreover, they paid more attention to new students. As for those older students who had been at the church for over a year and still did not show any potential for believing in God, they automatically paid less attention to them. This is the reason why some students felt that the Christians in the churches differentiated between them in several ways.

7.5 The General Pattern of International Missionary Work

A description of the missionary work allowed the abstraction of the faith value adding and the proposition process in the churches as per the model in Figure 7-14. This working model in the international group within churches provides the original knowledge to

understand the interaction with students from church side. Under the structure of the kirk session, the adding value process required resources from the churches and the charity, so the international groups were equipped with the necessary functional conditions, such as funding, and venue. Within the groups, the church members regularly held their internal meetings, training, or conferences with colleagues from other churches and charities to improve their skills in their interactions with Chinese students. The church representatives with international experience, particularly Chinese experience, were preferred in the selection and building of teams. As for the strategy aspect, the fishing favour method is applied in the Christianity socialisation process to identify potential Christians, and then focus on those students with continuing training and education.

The vision, strategy, and intention were practised in the organisation of international events for the Chinese international students. Through leaflet advertising and social media connections, churches made their services and products known to their target students. The distribution and adoption of the Christian faith usually followed a warming-up stage of providing social events and activities aimed at attracting a larger initial pool of students. Behind the services and information provided to students, churches required resources, capabilities, strategy, and activities to realise their preparation of the faith value proposition. The ultimate product of faith value was sometimes concealed, and the advantages of their information and service provision became the focus of their marketing and practice. This point was different from the usual business model that demonstrates their value directly. With consideration of their customers' background, acceptance, and preferences, the churches attempted to integrate their faith value through a series of services in the Christianity socialisation stage. Behind the working model that they used for the recruitment or faith profit, the churches also shared the responsibility for welcoming the international students through a series of social events.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Customers: Chinese International Students │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Product: Christian faith    Service: Social services and       │
│                             international activities            │
│ Information: Cultural knowledge or other basic information      │
└───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
              ┌───────────────────────────────┐
              │ Channels: Leaflets and Advertisement │
              └───────────────────────────────┘
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| Resources: Location priority; Church support | Capability: Teambuilding International experience or Chinese experience; Communication skills; Missionary work skills | Activities: Meetings; Professional trainings; Internal conferences | Strategy: Evangelism and conversion; Fishing favour | Organizations structure: Kirk session |

Allies: other Christian churches and Charity

Figure 7- 14 Missionary Work Model in International Christian Groups

The general business model lacks the social responsibility aspect, i.e. the services that a business group might provide to a society. This is not the case in the church-working model, as, besides attempting to recruit or make faith profit, churches demonstrate social responsibility. The social events and the efforts they make to welcome international students and meet their needs do, to some extent, help students.

7.6 Summary

This chapter investigates the missionary work model of the international Christian community for Chinese students, comparing it to the basic and comprehensive business model proposed by Lambert. The Christian churches in the study were on the other side of the intercultural contact as the providers of social support and assistance. Under the umbrella organisation, individual churches, with guidance from the international Christian charity Friends International, offered international cafes and outdoor events, formal Bible-based English language classes, and Bible study groups to help international students

in their acculturation process gain cultural knowledge, as well as language skills, but with the ultimate goal of conversion.

The international Christian community and the systematic organisation of the individual churches constructed a welcoming society for Chinese international students and performed strategic missionary work. What do Chinese students think about the churches as the medium for the intercultural encounter? What is the meaning of church participation for them? These follow up questions will be explored in the next chapter, which will demonstrate the role of intercultural interaction between Christian churches and Chinese international students.

Chapter 8 Church Participation as Students' Religious or Intercultural experience?

8.1 Introduction

Kim (2008) argues that by engaging in multiple intercultural encounters over time, sojourners are able to build a repertoire of cultural knowledge and experience that can lead to intercultural growth and identity transformation in their adaptation process. In a neutral or atheist environment, this argument has been evidenced in various forms of encounter. However, in a religious context, the effect on sojourners in the host country is still relatively unknown despite some research on the issues of converting Chinese immigrants in the US (Wang and Yang, 2006). What is the meaning of church participation in the intercultural experiences of Chinese students? Does the intercultural encounter within the religious context serve as an intercultural effect or religious influence on the Chinese students?

This chapter addresses the fifth research question in the study: What is the influence of church participation on Chinese students? What is more important for them: religious or intercultural experience? The chapter concentrates on the specific role intercultural interaction with the Christian churches plays for the Chinese international students when both sides have strong motivations and the international Christian community provides seemingly perfect services for Chinese students. The chapter firstly demonstrates the nature of intercultural interaction between the churches and the Chinese students. Section 8.3 discusses the influence of church participation on the cross-cultural adaptation of the Chinese students. It focuses on the general relationship between church participation and the students' cross-cultural adaptation. Next, close analysis is carried out with several factors abstracted from the intercultural contact. Section 8.5 focuses on the attitudes of the Chinese students towards Christianity. According to the students' characteristics, they were divided into four categories: recognisers of universal values, deniers, believers, and

hesitators. These categories provided original analysis for understanding the attitudes of the students towards Christianity after their encounter with the Christian churches.

8.2 Nature of Church-Based Interaction

8.2.1 Social Exchange in Intercultural Contact

Through analysing the intentions of the Chinese students and of the Christian churches, it was found that both made highly strategic decisions by choosing one other. The mutual selection of the Chinese students and the churches is consistent with the theory of social exchange in terms of the relationship between an individual's cost and reward in the social interaction, which argues that individuals seek to achieve the best results.

The Chinese students' participation in these church events came from their pursuit of adjustment after exploration and negotiation of the host environment. They were searching for 'the most rewarding, the least costly, and the best value related to other relationships' (Hoppe et al., 1996, p.65). These costs and rewards are socially determined and include intangible, emotional aspects (Cook and Rice, 2003). After making comparisons with other potential places where students could acquire the necessary resources, churches were regarded as the cultural pot where they could get access to the resources needed in the adaptation process. It was a place that provided students with company, friendship, language practice, information, and assistance. Even the students' interest in Bible stories and Christianity came from their curiosity about the religious culture in the UK rather than an exploration of faith. Their essential task at the adaptation stage of their intercultural experience was to achieve a balanced state with the new society (Kim, 2001), which required communication in the English language, peer support from host friends, cultural knowledge, and skills.

From the findings of this study, it has been found that the Christians' intentions were to share the love of God and convert the Chinese students to become part of the Christian world through a series of social events for them and other international students. Their

well-organised activities and parent-like caring were the approaches that they used in the missionary process. Their efforts to understand the Chinese students, to be friends with them, and even pray for them was with an expectation of the students' willingness to become Christians, though they could not force them to believe in God.

The place where the interests of either party intersected or the use value in the interaction for both sides was at these social events that the churches provided. This use value continued the contact between the churches and the Chinese students and allowed for mutual exploration of interest, though each party's ultimate goals were fundamentally inconsistent with the other's. Such inconsistency did not impede the continuity of the connection; instead, both sides maintained the interaction to achieve their own goals year after year. The social exchange process based on the perceived mutual benefits suggests the potentiality to develop effective interventions.

8.2.2 Mutual Understanding between the Chinese Students and the Church Members

In addition to the perceived benefits that prompted intercultural interaction between the Chinese students and the Christians, their mutual understanding also sustained the relationship. For the churches, their experience with international students over a few years had given them a wealth of information and understanding about the Chinese students' situation in the UK. In the interviews with church representatives, they implied that the accumulated experience with Chinese students over the years had made them familiar with their "customers'" needs, and they were fully aware of the possible role of churches for international students. Church members were tolerant towards the Chinese students when the latter's intentions were not related to religious belief in the same way as that of the local people who attended churches. Some students came to know more about Christianity. One of the church respondents reflected thoughtfully on his experience and noted that:

> There is an obvious [reason]. [The students] know Christians; we are looking
> after them, I think. They are told the Christians, Scottish churches, people will
> look after them, run the café, they are doing everything for you. Hmm…. they

want to take the hospitality, as we want to take care of people. They also know we run English classes. Most students know we teach English as a foreign language. But also from what we understand so far, Chinese students they love to understand the culture of the country they are coming into. And find one church they are coming into. It seems that they want to do some very Scottish things, or English things, or history, culture stuff are very interesting to them. I am not sure [*smile*], culture seems to be the main thing. They want to understand and we are quite good in giving them the information. Like we're also running events, meals, teaching Scottish things, taking them away at the weekends.（Steve, helper in Church B）

There are four key points in his reflection, which correspond to the factors the Chinese students referred to in the discussions of Chapter 5 about their expectations of churches: hospitality, foreign language, culture or Scottish things, and practical information. Several other church representatives in the sample shared their own ideas, particularly with relevant to English language practice. It was recognised that Chinese students were learning how to express themselves in English, and it was believed that the best way to learn was to talk to people who were brought up as English speakers rather than Chinese students. In terms of their cultural curiosity, some church members noted that this was very common among Chinese students. For example, one of them in the interview said that:

For a lot of people, it is curiosity, because, they have heard that a lot of the British go to church and follow some kind of religion and they want to see what it is, like church buildings, Christianity. (Juna, church worker in Church A)

In addition, friends are an important attraction, as was mentioned repeatedly. Churches were considered to be good places to visit since people in the churches were very friendly to the Chinese students. The students could make friends freely with local people, international students from other countries, and other Chinese students.

Therefore, church members were very aware of the essential needs of these Chinese international students, and, to some extent, they even understood more than the students themselves. It helped to improve their customer-orientated communication and service,

and furthermore, it could be assumed to positively establish a good brand image and increase their conversion success rate.

In addition to understanding the reasons why Chinese international students were attracted into the churches, the Christians in the churches, especially those who were responsible for these international events, were clearly aware of the possible changes that the Chinese students may undergo with regard to their relationship with the Christian faith after a period of time in the churches. Church members kept an eye on changes related to faith. One of the group leaders shared her observations based on a few years of experience.

> You find out one of them is atheist; there is no interest in Christianity, but really likes to come along because they enjoy the companionship and they like to be here. Now to me that shows, one side you see, oh no, they would not become Christians, and the other side goes, we do it right because they feel very comfortable coming here, sharing what they actually think and knowing we think quite differently, but that does not break a friendship. That is just people. That is just people getting together. We obviously know, when I happen to find out what is going on, I still have no interest in it at all, but I really like your café. And I really enjoy you guys, you are going to have fun and so on. Ok, we are not forcing them to do anything because they are very honest and saying that we just don't [believe in it]. But for others, it suddenly turns around and goes, this makes sense. And that is great as well. But actually I can feel very confident because there are loads of people coming and really enjoy the café, go home, and are still part of our Facebook group. (Katy, Group Leader in Church B)

According to her extensive experience, she categorised Chinese students in the churches into different types. Besides those who were interested in the religious faith and Christianity, there were atheists who were not interested in Christianity. As for those who were not interested, some of them enjoyed their time in the churches, sharing friendship and companionship with each other. However, the others stopped attending the church events. Compared with the categories I identified in the Chapter 5, Katy's categorization about the types of Chinese students in the church was based on the faith dimension, that is, interested in Christianity or not.

Experience with and feedback from the Chinese students informed the Christian community of the outcomes of the Chinese students' church participation. On the one hand, I observed that the Christians were disappointed about the few changes that had taken place in the Chinese students but on the other hand, as the international activities were so welcomed by the Chinese participants, this also encouraged the church members. Although most of the students did not show any interest in being a Christian, this did not mean the end of the international Christian community since a group of the Chinese students still liked to go to their churches. It was better to have some students in their churches than none at all.

As the other party in the interaction, Chinese students were not ignorant about the churches and the church representatives. The students perceived the sympathy from the churches and Christians for the Chinese students' situation in their new country. Moreover, all the students in the interviews indicated they were aware that the churches' motivation was to evangelise since they were religious organisations. Two-thirds of students indicated that the missionary work was understandable but was none of their business as they were not interested in it. Students also understood that Christians were preaching to them, which was tolerated because their way of preaching was acceptable and there was no enforcement to believe in God or threats made. This was particularly evidenced by the following comment:

> We respected their religion, but we don't believe in it. I think if you are interested in it and asked them some questions, they talked more. The reason that I often went there is because they did not keep talking about Christianity with me, and did not make me feel brainwashed. If I were not interested in it, they would not say much about it. (Qing, Chinese student)

The students' understanding and tolerance of the preaching was a way of showing respect towards the religion and culture. It was acceptable so long as Christians did not force them to believe in it.

Another factor mentioned by the Chinese church participants was less expected. One-third of the respondents considered that it might be a kind of lifestyle choice for older people in the UK to spend their free time with other people in the churches, as most of the church representatives were elders who had been retired for a few years. For instance:

> I think it may be because they are very lonely at home, and in the church, many students could talk with them. We keep each other company. They are old and very lonely and want people to talk to, I think." (Fang, Chinese student)

The students observed that older Christian people prefer going to the churches and spending time with others. They had nothing to do or felt lonely staying at home. Thanks to the international activities, there were many students in the churches who could talk with them, and both groups could keep each other company. Another student compared the different lifestyles in the East and West, and described the lifestyle around churches. Spending time in the churches was the choice of the elderly in their post-retirement. Unlike older people in China, people here could freely choose what to do (though many would rather choose to be with their families) and have no responsibility for their children. It was a way to spend their time and do something they thought was meaningful. One more student understood it in terms of community life. She noted that churches were similar to some communities in China, where both older men and women could spend time together.

Therefore, in their mutual interaction, the churches and the non-Christian Chinese students shared common ground but divergent ultimate goals. By showing mutual understanding and tolerance towards each other, both sides worked together and actively communicated in the Christian community. In terms of their divergent ultimate goals and mutual understanding of each other, the needs of Chinese students in their adaptation process became the breach through which the churches could process their missionary work. Meanwhile, most of the Chinese student participants tended to be indifferent to the mission orientation of the churches and concentrated on the social events that were helpful to them.

8.3 Impact on Cross-cultural Adaptation

8.3.1 General Impact

The Chinese students gained social support and a social network from the host environment through church participation. The international students came into contact with people from various cultural groups, including nationals in the host country (host nationals), home country (co-nationals), and from countries other than these (other nationals, e.g., other sojourners). This social contact is one of the driving influences of adjustment to the host environment (Ellison et al., 2007; Young et al., 2013). Moreover, perceptions of different cultural groups (Allport, 1954) play a critical role in the adjustment to foreign environments (Farh et al., 2010; Glanz et al., 2001; Johnson and De Pater, 2003; Manev and Stevenson, 2001; Sobre-Denton and Hart, 2008). However, it does not mean that all contact in the host environment is effective for cross-cultural adaptation and engagement at any time. Factors which must be considered are the quality and the nature of meaningful contact in different contexts.

Impact on Church Participants

Generally speaking, according to the data from survey, there was no significant relation between their number of times of church participation and their adaptation. Table 8-1 shows that there is no significant relation between the social-cultural adaptation and the times of church participation (P=0.000, P>0.01), and there is no significant relation between psychological adaptation and their times of church participations (P=0.038, P>0.01).

		Number of times	Psychological	Socio－cultural
Number of times	Pearson Correlation	1	.038	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.392	.998
	N	501	501	501
Psycho－	Pearson Correlation	.038	1	.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.392		.000
	N	501	501	501
Social－	Pearson Correlation	.000	.350**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.998	.000	1
	N	501	501	501
Adaptation （Total）	Pearson Correlation	.018	.721**	.901**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.693	.000	.000
	N	501	501	501

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

Table 8- 1 Correlations among the variables for church participants

Impact on Frequent Church Participants

Among the church participants, it was found from the survey data that frequent church participation (over three times in six months) was an impact on cross-cultural adaptation, which includes socio-cultural and psychological adaptation. Frequent church participation was significantly and positively related to cross-cultural adaptation for church participants (p=3.78, p<0.001). That is, the more frequently (minimum three times) Chinese students went to church, the better their cross-cultural adaptation tended to be compared with those who went to church less frequently. (The R-square of this model is 0.39. The hypothesis is supported and the association is significant at p<0.001). (See, Table 8-2)

In terms of their socio-cultural adaptation, it was seen that frequent church participation (minimum three times) was significantly related to socio-cultural adaptation (p=2.99, p<0.05). The more times Chinese students went to church, the better their social-cultural adaptation tended to be. Interaction within the international Christian community is noted to particularly contribute to interpersonal relationships in the adaptation process (P=3.06, p<0.05). We could see that the social support that students got from the church interaction provided a powerful resource in the form of a social network. As for other factors, such as language improvement, academic performance, and ecological adaptation, there was no significant influence but the effect was positive, which means that church participation contributed to these factors to some extent.

Furthermore, there was a relation between frequent church participation (minimum 3 times) and psychological adaptation (p=2.49, p<0.05) (see Table 8-2). It means the more they went to the churches, the better they have psychological adaptation. Support from the Christian community helped students to maintain good mental health and subjective wellbeing in general (Copeland and Norell, 2002; Adelman, 1988), to avoid depression and feelings of hopelessness (Zhang and Goodson, 2011). Emotional support and practical support from co-nationals and host compatriots helped to maintain a sense of belonging and compensate for the grief of leaving places of origin (Copel and Norell, 2002). Acceptance and involvement in the Christian community left students with the feeling of

belonging in the host environment, which was perceived as an important source of emotional support for the Chinese students in their host environment.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Demographics								
Gender	0.39	-0.37	0.89	0.14	0.63	0.01	2.00	1.23
(Male and female)								
Length of Staying	0.97	0.57	0.84	-0.03	0.56	-0.23	2.45*	1.60
Major								
Business	1.19	1.35	0.41	0.45	0.87	0.95	1.04	0.44
Education	1.59	1.11	1.20	0.59	0.84	0.12	1.40	1.2
Engineering	0.01	1.13	-1.03	0.35	1.49	-1.19	1.22	-0.5
Social Media	-0.51	2.12*	1.24	-0.29	0.61	0.43	1.09	2.86*
Mathematics	-0.32	-0.46	-0.02	0.49	0.07	1.59	1.62	-0.41
Psychology	3.71	2.01*	3.33*	3.96*	1.46	1.97	0.45	1.15
Church participation 3 or more times	3.78**	2.49*	2.99*	3.06*	1.10	1.90	1.69+	0.47
R-square	0.39	0.33	0.32	0.43	0.14	0.17	0.25	0.20
N	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67

Table 8- 2 Frequent church participation and cross-cultural adaptation[22]

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[22] 1=cross-cultural adaptation, 2= psychological adaptation, 3=social-cultural adaptation, 4= interpersonal relations, 5= language, 6=academic, 7=ecological, 8=personal relations and frequent church participation (three or more times).

8.3.2 Language Improvement

The majority of respondents in the interviews repeatedly mentioned language practice as one of the main aims of the Chinese students in the churches, yet the extent of their language improvement remains blurry when analysing data from the survey. Half of respondents reported that they felt more confident in speaking English. Church participation provided students with the opportunity to practise oral English with locals and gave students confidence to use it in their daily life, which is consistent with the finding that confirmed that international students from Scandinavian countries who engaged in social interactions with the hosts were more likely to improve their English language capacities (Sewell and Davidson, 1956), and report overall satisfaction and less frustration with their sojourns than those without similar host contact (Peirce, 1995). However, their language improvement was not as significant as expected, or at least statistics did not show any significant correlations. One reason was the inadequate amount of time spent on English practice, as students only went to the churches for about two hours once or twice a week. The English-speaking environment only existed for the Chinese students when they were in the churches. Upon leaving the churches, the students went back to their normal situations in which they had few opportunities to speak English, especially for students in Business School.

In addition, Chinese students found the English class was of little use in terms of language development. One student commented on the content taught in the class, such as grammar, and she thought this was not helpful:

> I think the content of the English class is not very useful as they are mainly concerned with grammar in the teaching of language. Honestly, Chinese students are good at the grammar. In terms of oral English, I think it is helpful. The grammar part is too easy for us. It is not an essential part of the class. (Wen, Chinese students)

The class was English taught through the Bible in Church A. English practice was expected to be a significant part of the class, but the content focused on the Bible instead

of English as a second language. It was found that, rather than learning language, learning the Bible was the main part of the class. The churches claimed to be providing students with the opportunity to practise English, but in reality they were teaching students about the Bible under the guise of an English class in order to attract students. It was impossible for students to improve their academic writing skills and language knowledge in this class. The divergent aims for churches and students constrained the progress of English teaching and learning.

In their encounters with church members, Chinese students were noted to be more confident in English communication. The value they did indeed gain from the interaction for their language was a speaking environment and the encouragement that church members gave them to speak. However, this confidence, environment, and encouragement did not mean actual improvement in the language. Due to the limited time spent in the churches each time and the fake language training classes, it is understandable that there was not much improvement in their English competency. Being a religious place, it was different from the regular English classes in universities. What purported to be English classes were actually Bible study classes because the teaching focused on understanding the Bible story itself rather than on the language knowledge or writing skills those students needed in their intercultural engagement. As a religious institution, the Christian churches concentrated on the teaching education of Christianity through the introduction of Christianity to non-Christians, while the Chinese students intended to acquire cultural resources in the process of their cross-cultural adaptation. Therefore, the quality of intercultural contact for Chinese students around the churches was less effective than they had expected, as the ultimate goals and common interests for the two groups were inconsistent.

8.3.3 Acceptance and Involvement in the Local Community

It is suggested that the churches focused primarily on providing students with a greater feeling of acceptance than was available from the social activities offered around the campus-based university. A number of students felt more accepted and involved in the community around the churches than other places. Unlike local people they met in the street or on the campus, people in the church welcomed international students with enthusiasm. One respondent commented on how impressed he had been with how warm-hearted the church members had been in helping students to adapt to their new environment. For example, the Christians spoke very slowly in consideration of the language barrier faced by the Chinese students. Other students reported that churches had helped them to get involved in the local culture and life. One of them noted in the interview that:

> Church gave me a feeling that I could get involved. People in the church were very kind. If you are a Christian, I think you could get well involved in the church. And, also their culture. I think going to the church, I can feel the culture there. Getting involved in it to some extent I get involved in the local culture. (Xue, Chinese student)

It is implied that interaction with local people helped students feel part of the culture. Being welcomed and accepted by the church people made students feel that they belonged in the community. Another respondent in the interviews even regarded the church as a second home in the UK and she enjoyed the security and closeness there. The experience was described as comfortable:

> Church is like my family in Glasgow. I think people in the church are the best people that I know in Scotland. I trusted them one hundred per cent because I don't think they would do something to harm me if they are Christians. And now going to the church is my habit. You know, it gradually becomes something that is part of my life. (Mao, Chinese students)

The trust, involvement, and closeness she felt with church members gave her the feeling of belonging, as well as the sense of "family".

Another student compared the experience of social events with other organisations and indicated that:

> I think people in the church are very nice and patient, warm-hearted. If you asked them something, it seemed that they would tell you all they know. Friends I met in the parties tend to like playing, young people; they are crazy. I don't like it. I prefer to stay with people in the church, chatting with them. Parties are very important social activities. In terms of classmates, we worked together in one case or finish essays before deadline and celebrated together. That is different socialising. (Bai, Chinese students)

With a lot of other social events that she could take part in with different groups of friends, church was the place that she most liked to visit and she enjoyed her time being with people there. The feeling with people in the church was attractive to her and made her feel accepted or involved in the community, while social events in other places were not her style and they could not be a regular part of her daily life.

The feeling of acceptance or even belonging was found to be uncommon in other social events around the campus. The perceived loneliness is one issue in social interaction and social acceptance that is believed to relate to psychological adaptation (Neto, 1992; Leung, 2001). Social support for the relationship between loneliness and psychological adaptation demonstrates a relationship between satisfaction with social relations or popularity (indicators or perceived social acceptance) and psychological adaptation (Leung, 2001). Church representatives offered endless care, and they accompanied and helped the students. All of this alleviated the loneliness felt by the Chinese students and contrasted with the treatment they encountered with the people they met in other places. Church members with professional training and knowledge of the situation of Chinese students were able to provide understanding for their service objects. Their rich experience with students also gave them advantages with international students. Therefore, they were able to provide a satisfactory service and show their acceptance to Chinese students in the intercultural interaction.

8.3.4 Friendship

Church participation was shown to play a positive role in friendship formation for frequent church participants. The meaning of friendship in churches differed among individual Chinese students. It could be categorised into three modes of friendship, with different meanings.

One type of friendship could be named **friendship beyond the churches**. Some students demonstrated in the interview that they had contact or a connection outside the churches in their daily life with those friends they knew from church. This group of students did not just meet church friends in the church, but also kept connections with each other outside. Gradually, they established a social network beyond the churches. Another two respondents reported that they had been travelling together and enjoyed a good time. One student claimed that she often contacted church friends (mainly students) and they accompanied each other in daily life and helped each other. Other respondents reported similar experiences. Another two students said they went out with church representatives and felt involved in local life when they were with some local friends.

Some students as I observed even left the church behind after they had made friends with people from the church. It implied the role of churches was a medium in the establishment of the social network. Originating in the churches, the relation may develop into a relatively close friendship through mutual communication and interaction based on and beyond the churches. Their friendship gradually develops into the strong tie that Wellman (1998) conceptualised. Such a form of friendship has the following characteristics: (1) a sense of the relationship being intimate and special, with a voluntary investment in the tie and a desire for companionship with the tie partner; (2) an interest in being together as much as possible through interactions in multiple social contexts over a long period; and (3) a sense of mutuality in the relationship, with the partner's needs known and supported. Kim (2001) posits that international students who have developed stronger ties with host nationals will be more advanced in the cross-cultural adaptation process.

The second type of friendship mode in the churches could be named **the circle of old friends**. Churches become the place where students come to meet their old friends rather than to make new friends. One student described this as follows:

> It was a place where you could meet your own friends [not church friends]. As everyone was very busy in the week time, we did not have so much time to catch up. It was a good opportunity to meet friends there. (Yu, Chinese student)

As he noted, to some extent, the church became a place where he could communicate with his friends from outside the churches. Churches were like cafés, or pubs, i.e. the locations for meeting old friends and catching up with each other. It strengthened the ties among friends.

The third type of friendship is **the church-limited friendship**. It is a kind of friendship that is constructed in the churches and the connection is kept solely within the churches. Some respondents pointed out that, beyond the church events, there was not much of a connection or contact with friends they met in the churches. For example, one student commented in the interview that:

> In terms of friend connections, we don't have any. There is no influence on our daily life outside the church. I have close friends outside the church. (Chen, Chinese student)

As Chen had his own network outside the church, church participation for him was a part of his life circle that was independent from his personal friend circle. Another respondent in the interview shared the same opinion and thought that, since everyone had his or her close friends before going to church, friends in the churches were just peers. It was more of an activity-oriented relationship with temporary partners and without further development. It was just maintained within the churches. For church members, it was a kind of work relationship with their "customers". Once students left the churches, the temporary relationship disappeared. It was a kind of weak tie.

The weak tie, or temporary relationship within the churches, was still important for the

students as the church members assisted them and provided a lot of information to help them settle down in the new place. Kim (2001) asserts that weak ties with host nationals are significant for the adaptation process of international students due to their function as a source of information about the host culture's communication patterns. Granovetter (1983) asserts that weak ties are important in moving forward in social settings and give individuals the ability to be recruited into other groups. It allows members to bridge contacts between networks (Granovetter, 1983) while their absence restricts information to only that from the close circle. Therefore, even if the working relationship with the Christians was not a close relationship, the support from the weak tie between students and church members was valued.

The three friendship modes demonstrate the variant circumstances behind the same intentions in terms of friendship and social networks through church engagement. Churches were the destinations that connected different people and played different roles for different groups of students. They enlarged or maintained students' social networks and were beneficial to their adaptation process.

8.3.5 Christian Cultural Knowledge

Church participation broadens the cultural knowledge of Chinese students who are not familiar with British culture, such as Bible stories, social customs, traditional festivals, and so on. Although Britain is becoming less religious, as the numbers who affiliate with a religion or attend religious services are experiencing a long-term decline (Lee, 2012), in a broader sense, Christianity has made a significant contribution to British and Western culture. Christianity is the foundation of modern European culture and this is more apparent to the people coming from outside of European or Christian societies. Many Christian customs or festivals are still part of British culture, although many British people, especially young people, belong to many other culture groups that are not connected with the church. It was commented that the church provided a platform where students could experience the culture vividly. Seeing church participation as an important way to learn about local culture, of which Christianity was perceived as being an important symbol,

most students in the interviews were attracted to the cultural interactions and enjoyed the cultural atmosphere around Christian churches. Moreover, informal communication with Christians and engagement in the cultural activities deepened the students' intercultural experience and knowledge of British culture. Isolation from the host environment and limited access to intercultural encounters results in a shortage of intercultural knowledge to 'increase the intercultural communicator's understanding of other and self in order to facilitate making accurate predictions and attributions' (Wiseman, 2002). Churches provided the opportunity to acquire the cultural knowledge, which contributed to the efficacy and appreciation of communication relevant to the intercultural situation, cultural norms, and participation in the conversation.

Contact with Christian churches seemed to offer the students a distorted view of Christianity as a religion and as an element of Western culture. Compared with the religious significance of Christianity throughout history, nowadays, it is no longer the popular religion for British people, especially for young people, and church attendance is not a usual practice any more. Nevertheless, the influence of Christianity on British culture is still far-reaching, but the students were unaware of the transformation of Christianity as a religion to Christianity as a culture in modern-day Britain as I observed. Several Chinese students misunderstood the significance of Christianity as a religion and thought it was the same as Christian or Western culture. However, the fact is that, nowadays, most people are no longer churchgoers and there are significant differences between the religion of Christianity and the Christian culture.

In addition to learning about Christian culture, international students from other countries in the churches also shared their own cultures with each other, including Brazilian and Malaysian cultures. In this observed "melting pot", Chinese students communicated without boundaries and obtained a sense of global culture in the international Christian community. Encountering different cultures developed tolerance of differences in those church participants. One student indicated that she experienced a different lifestyle. It taught her tolerance to the differences she met in her life.

8.3.6 Wider Social Contact

Overall, Chinese students believed that the wider contact with the Christian community provided them with a good platform to become familiar with the local culture and people. There were multiple benefits of church participation. Activities in the churches created opportunities for students to socialise and consisted of recreation as well as relaxation, but, more importantly, they helped remove the students' feelings of isolation from the host environment. Chinese students in the interviews also appreciated the feelings of acceptance and integration around the community. Opportunities for social interaction, such as one-to-one English communication with local people and other international students, improved their confidence in speaking the second language to some extent. In addition, all students agreed on the broad cultural benefits that enriched their cultural experience and broadened their perspectives. Moreover, the churches offered a motivating way for the Chinese students to develop their language skills and intercultural competency, which is important as they generally had difficulty coping with communication in daily life in the UK. They felt gratitude for the hospitality and kindness of the Christian community. The perceived needs such as language improvement, contact with local people in real situations, and exposure to British culture are largely met through the church interaction, although the actual effect is not as ideal as expected.

The process international students follow to try to engage with local culture is a continuous negotiation and mediation with the host environment, where students analyse their own competence, culture, and orient themselves to fit in with the new environment (Kim, 2005). Both formal and informal learning environments in the host environment provide a number of opportunities for international students to learn through reflection on their own experience or by observing others engaged in cross-cultural encounters (Cox et al., 1999). The Chinese students in the study regarded the interaction with church members as a useful means to accumulate the relevant cultural and language skills and knowledge in the adaptation process, and, more importantly, to transform themselves and achieve their self-formation in the new environment. Various extra-curricular activities in which the

international students were engaged were recognised as being significant as a means of formal learning (Leask and Carroll, 2011). The church participants were a group of culturally active, engaged students, who had the confidence and willingness to participate in interactions with the host society. Their desire for interactions echoed their needs in cross-cultural adaptation and international education, such as cultural enrichment, social transformation, and academic development (Marginson, 2014; Tran, 2011; Tran and Nyland, 2011).

Construction of meaningful intercultural contact for the international students required the efforts of those who shared more common goals. Although it was not in the nature of the Christian churches, as religious organisations, to facilitate the positive and all-round intercultural encounter for the Chinese students, they did provide a possible example of integration of international students. The Chinese students enjoyed the contact with the churches regardless of the evangelism. It also drew comparisons with the social support offered by universities or educational organisations. The concluding chapter will delve deeper into this point.

8.3.7 Limited Effect of Church Participation on Cross-cultural Adaptation

Although to some extent church participation plays the role on the development of Chinese students in the overseas study, the impact was limited in two senses: 1) generally there was no significant influence of infrequent church participation on adaptation, and only when church participation was three or more times did it have a positive effect on the adaptation process, both socio-cultural and psychological; and 2) the other limitation was that its significant role was constrained to interpersonal relations and psychological adaptation. There was no significant effect on other factors. For instance, the extent of language improvement remained limited, as there was no formal practice in the churches, despite the claims otherwise. Cultural knowledge from the church members is proved a distorted demonstration and students do not have an updated and comprehensive acquisition. Given the intentions of Chinese students in their selection of churches, church participation should have contributed to their adaptation, as churches seemed to be an ideal destination

with all-round resources that they needed in the adaptation process. However, there was generally no significant influence of church participation on students' adaptation. Even for students who had been to church over three times in the previous six months, the positive effect was limited for the aspects of friendship and psychological adaptation. The seemingly perfect intercultural contact for the international students was therefore not as ideal as it was supposed to be.

I found several explanations from intercultural contact theory to understand the limited effect of intercultural contact around Christian churches. According to the "contact hypothesis" (Allport, 1954), which is the most influential socio-psychological approach to facilitating intercultural relations (Schofield, 1995), the essential facilitators for improving intergroup relations include equal status among the groups within the contact situation (e.g. Cohen, 1972; Hewstone and Brown, 1986; Watson, 1950), a shared pursuit of common goals, in-group cooperation, and institutional support for the contact (Schofield, 1995). In this study, there were no common goals for the intercultural interaction between Chinese students and Christian churches. Besides the Chinese students' motivations for interacting around churches, the churches also had their reasons for welcoming international students. The divergent aims of both sides in the interaction deviate from the conditions required for having positive contact, (i.e. common goals and equal status in the contact). These aims determine the nature of contact along with other conditions. The church environment and the organisational support were consistent with the five conditions that were identified in previous research as being necessary for promoting positive contact, yet the environment and support all related to Christian evangelism rather than to intercultural communication for international students.

Furthermore, other researchers identified aspects of the contact situation that are most important in determining whether positive intergroup relations develop. These aspects include the opportunity to get to know out-group members and disconfirm negative stereotypes (e.g. Amir and Ben-Ari, 1985; Desforges et al., 1991), co-operative versus competitive task interaction (e.g. Bettencourt et al., 1992; Johnson and Johnson, 1984), and

situations with equalitarian social norms (e.g. Hewstone and Brown, 1986). In addition, Pettigrew (1998) believed that long-term intergroup friendship drives the previous four mediations and that the contact situation can be differentiated into essential and facilitating situational factors in developing different contact mechanisms. Two-thirds of church participants who had been to church less than three times did not have enough time to establish relations with the churches. Hence, it was not easy to construct the long-term intergroup relation, and that was why there is a positive influence only for frequent church participants, which was consistent with the potent effect of long-term friendship on the quality of contact that was mentioned in the contact theory (Amir, 1976).

8.4 Attitudes towards Christianity

In addition to the language practice, friendship, and cultural knowledge that were proved to be the acquisition through church participation, Chinese students also learned the manners and values that Christians practised through the intercultural interaction. Student participants could be categorised into four groups according to the extent of religious influence, that is, recogniser of universal values, deniers, believers, and hesitators.

8.4.1 Recognisers of Universal Values

In several students, the church experience aroused reflections on the meaning of life. It was the exploration of life that made students realise the significance of God in their life. Church members raised issues like the meaning of living, and the students' relationship with their surroundings. This exploration confused students at the beginning because they might not have thought about it before. After exploration, one of the students became enlightened and found the meaning of life correspondingly. She changed her previous ideas in the interview and noted that:

> For me, I don't want to make God happy like Christians said, but I could have a big aim to lead me to go further. I want to contribute my efforts to my professional area or make my family better. It is not about religion but something I figure out in the learning process. (Mao, Chinese student)

She was inspired by the creeds of the Bible from which she abstracted meaning to apply to her own life; a life in the non-Christian world. Agreeing with Christianity did not imply the acceptance of it as a faith for some students.

> I think there are some good points in the Bible from which I could learn. For example, I should do good things and look for peace and happiness. I would accept something that I could accept. I learn it partly because I am curious about the culture, and when they tell me something, I would analyse it in my mind. When I think something is impossible, they would think it is holy and natural. (Wen, Chinese student)

Some common values were discussed during the interaction with the Christians which changed the students' previous attitudes and influenced their personal ideas and behaviour. For example, one student figured out that she should be a good human and look for peace and happiness in her life. Although she could not understand it comprehensively through the Bible, she accepted some values as long as they made sense to her. Another respondent also agreed with some creeds in the Bible though he did not regard it as his faith. He commented that:

> I do agree with some creeds in it. Like helping others. In the world, if people do as the doctrines say, they won't be value-oriented in China. It is wonderful. But I don't think it would come true, especially in China. Many people in China are profit-oriented as China is in the highly developing stage. The whole society is profit-oriented. The doctrine goes against the reality. (Chen, Chinese student)

With regard to the reality of China, Chen suggested that these creeds in the Bible were necessary and could even contribute to the development of China in the future. He thought people in China were in reality lacking values (or in a 'moral vacuum', as some Christians found in China), so he was pessimistic about the practice of these creeds as there seemed to be no approaches to transfer these values to the public. People were encouraged to develop the characteristics that Christianity proposed. Another student noted that she also wanted to be *like* a Christian person, being kind and helping others sincerely, but not to *be* a Christian.

From the above comments, it was found that Chinese students learned something through critical analysis and reflection on the stories from the Bible. This was believed to be meaningful for their individual lives. They recognised the values that may be helpful in their own lives. In a word, Christianity for these Chinese students, is not religious faith or belief, but rather a symbol of culture, and contains knowledge and universal values that even speak to atheists.

8.4.2 Deniers

Deniers are those students who did not believe in the existence of God. Recognisers of universal values could be included in this category. Whether or not to convert into a Christian is the most significant issue for the international Christian community, while for Chinese students, they automatically differentiated between religious Christianity and cultural Christianity in their church participation. One-third of students in the interviews commented that they were interested in the stories and the cultural knowledge, but that, as a belief, it was unconvincing. Apparently, they did not believe in the existence of God, so they did not make the choice to become a Christian. One student commented:

> Personally, I think it is good to have a belief in your mind, however, I myself could not believe in it. I don't think God exists. I know it is good to have a faith, but I think it is a story that people made up about Jesus. I think it is a human creation. I respected their religion, but I don't believe in it. (Qing, Chinese student)

Although he felt it was positive to have beliefs, Qing regarded the Bible as a storybook that people had made up and so he did not believe in the existence of God. His opinion was not unique in the sample. Other respondents also gave the same opinions. Christianity for them was more a cultural than a religious issue. In addition, looking at his own situation, one student found that there was not much inspiration that motivated him in life, in contrast with Christians who had the spirit of God that guided them. And it influenced the living style and behaviour of Christians. Besides spiritual influence, he demonstrated his respect

for Christians after he discovered the influence of Christianity on Western culture and he referred to the Bible as a masterpiece.

> God existed. Jesus is human. If he did not exist, these stories could not be so humane. His stories and his words are full of wisdom; many writers or philosophers cannot compare with it. However, I do not believe in it. Like the tales or stories in China, I believe it is true, but I don't think the characters in the book existed. Though the stories objectively exist, in logic or in reality, it is impossible for these to be true events that happened authentically. Jesus is just like that, He cannot be true. The stories were amazing but if asked it is true or not, it cannot be true. The writing is fascinating. It does not matter it is really true or not. (Tang, Chinese student)

He differentiated between the existence of stories and real events. It is certain that these stories in the Bible objectively exist as works that we could read in the book. However, he denied the existence of such events in history. For him, they cannot have happened because they did not make logical or historical sense. Nonetheless, the writing and creation of the stories were so attractive to him, regardless of their authenticity.

One student, who was an atheist, went to church nearly every week. Drawing on her experience and observations over a long time, she offered her critical commentary and compared Christianity to a type of charisma.

> I think it is like charisma. They believe God is a being, and one-hundred percent believe this. I think it is a little blind, but I can't tell them, 'you are blind', it is offensive. It might be because I am an atheist, I believe in humanity. I think humans can do anything if they want to. Some supernatural things could happen, but ninety-nine percent of things, humans have to do them on their own. However, they think God leads their life. It is not critical, I think. So I don't believe in it. It might be true in ten percent, but not over sixty percent. I don't want to be a Christian and I don't want to follow God. (Bai, Chinese student)

Faced with the discrepancy of their worldviews with Christians, Bai showed her position of not believing in God because she was not persuaded in a logical sense.

There was one student who claimed that the church experience had reinforced her idea that Christianity was brainwashing humans, while at the same time, she did not think students were easily brainwashed. She suggested that if someone believes in the process of church participation, it might be because they really need it in that moment, for example, to seek comfort. However, once they are back in China, it would be hard to say whether they would continue to believe in it.

The diversity of attitudes towards Christianity demonstrated the non-Christian Chinese students' varying personal preferences and the different experiences they had undergone with this Western symbol.. Individual reflections on values and faith indicated the changes that had happened to each student. The most frequent church participants formed their own ideas about the religious issues and universal values in their personal lives. Whether or not it concerned religion, the process broadened their worldview and deepened their self-awareness through the reflection on what they had experienced in the churches.

8.4.3 Believers

While the majority of church participants held the position of deniers, there were three students who claimed to be on the way to becoming Christian through active participation in the congregations. One student took the Bible classes regularly and found that God was changing her, including her mind, her way of doing things, her thinking about the world, and her ideas about and attitude towards life. She stated that God made all these changes in the interview. It was a great relief for her to talk with God as she could pray to Him when she was not happy. As a result, she believed that God's miracles had happened to her, which developed her strong affiliation with the churches. Another girl, who was recommended to go to the church, found good friendship in the church, and was moved by the Christian spirit, the selfless support, and the care. She found that it was in contrast to the widespread utilitarian and materialist pursuits of modern China (Wang and Yang, 2006). She had a positive attitude towards life, and greater satisfaction and gratitude for living after she believed in God. Another student was moved by the behaviours of Christians and wanted to be like them. She definitely believed in the existence of God

because she accepted so much help from Christians. In her opinion, all this could have happened in a natural way in a human sense. Therefore, she believed that God must have done it and that miracles exist.

All three students embraced Christianity and accepted the inspiration from God to have the freedom of mind. Two of them thought they had received a response from God. The other one had not born witness to God's deeds, but confirmed her belief in Him as it gave her power and confidence.

8.4.4 Hesitators

Two students indicated their hesitation about being converted into a Christian, and were in the stage between believing and testing. One of them believed in Buddha and felt conflicted about adopting Western Christian beliefs.

> I am from a family of Buddhists. I have compared the two religions and felt lost sometimes. There are differences and I think some aspects are good in Christianity, but you know, I can't make up my mind to give up something that rooted in my mind. (Mao, Chinese student)

To be a Christian amounts to rejecting or betraying her Chinese culture, i.e. her Chinese traditional values and beliefs, and her own more "native" religious belief (Buddhism). At the same time, the acknowledgement of Christianity confused her and she implied that, at the very least, she did not hold her original belief as firmly as before.

Another student in the sample claimed to believe in Christianity but he had not undertaken the last step in the process. He explained:

> I listened to some explanations of the story; I think it might be true, because there seems no reason to say it is not true. Of course, there is no strong evidence to prove it is true, but… in my family, some of them believe in Buddhism. They would say… they would say they experienced something, but I did not. I can't say it is true or not. Because they are my family, I trust them. I think Christianity is closer to being true. If it cheated you to believe, it has to force you to be a Christian, but it does not. It is their aim. Instead, if you think

it is true, it is true. If you don't think it is true, you could say it is a fake, even if it is true. So from this point, I think it is true. (Chen, Chinese student)

Contradictions in his mind implied that he was waiting to see if some miracles would happen to him. The testament was of great significance. Regardless of his family beliefs or of the Christianity that he was more familiar with, it was the supernatural event that impeded his last step. It is the individual's perception that matters in the believing process.

In my study, the considerations on Christianity and God of the hesitators were different from those of the doubters that Li (2012) found in his research, who were noted to have experienced extreme pressure when students were not converted to Christianity. It might be because of the way that Christians in the churches conducted the missionary work in this study; it was not as confusing and anxiety-inducing to the Chinese students and it gave them the space to make their own choices. In the process, the students did not indicate any pressure to avoid the intercultural engagement.

8.5 Summary

Based on a mutual understanding and tolerance of one another, interaction between churches and non-Christian Chinese students was, in essence, communication based on use value but with divergent ultimate goals. Both parties were essentially making use of each other to achieve their separate aims. The dynamics behind the interaction were the estimation of the potentiality that each group could gain from the other group in the intercultural interaction. Churches were the medium of intercultural encounter for the Chinese students. Meanwhile, local Christians were looking for potential Chinese Christians.

The meaning of church participation for most Chinese students was more about the intercultural experience than the religious experience. According to Gu et al. (2010), the extent and nature of successful change and development of international students can be restricted by the availability of support and the academic and social conditions of contact within the environments in which they are engaged. To trace back to the ultimate intentions

of both sides, it could be inferred that their divergent aims, along with the contact environment, decrease the effect of interaction on students' intercultural contact. Church participation played a constrained role in students' intercultural interaction and adaptation due to the divergent aims in the interaction for both sides. Although church participation did not generally influence the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students, church participation played a positive role in the adaptation of frequent church participants (over three times in the previous six months), including socio-cultural and psychological adaptation, and particularly interpersonal communication which is consistent with the previous studies about the role of social support on social network. The extent of language improvement remained limited, as there was no formal English teaching and practice in the churches, despite the claims otherwise. However, one point that could be confirmed is that churches do provide the platform for Chinese students to speak English if compared with the environment in Schools of Business. Forms of friendship diversified based on personal situations. Three original types of friendship modes were identified as helping to understand personal church-based relationships: friendship beyond churches, the circle of old friends, and the church-limited friendship. Compared with previous studies, the modes of friendship formation are an original contribution to understand the role of intercultural church-based interaction on the social network for international students.

For a few Chinese students, learning and interaction in the churches also changed their common values about the meaning of life and attitudes towards Christianity. There are four types of attitudes that students held after encountering Christianity: recognisers of universal values, deniers, believers, and hesitators. This categorisation also provides the original knowledge to understand the religious influence on Chinese students. A few students demonstrated a strong interest in Christianity as a faith and were on their way to exploring or becoming a Christian in the adaptation process, while the majority of students were non-believers, some of whom may appreciate the universal values of the Christian creeds.

Chapter 9 Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesises the study's research aims, research questions, and main research findings. The possible implications for policy and practice are discussed. The last section presents the limitations of the thesis and personal reflections on the research process in the doctoral study.

9.2 Research Questions and Main Findings

This study focuses on intercultural encounters and engagement in the cross-cultural experience of international students. It investigates the cultural experience of Chinese students in and around religious organisations in the UK. At a general level, it explores the role of intercultural encounters and interaction in students' overseas experiences; at an individual level, it examines in detail the intentions, the processes, and the influences of church participation on Chinese international students; and at the organisational level, the study analyses the motivations and missionary model of faith-based organisations through the social support they offer to the international Christian community. The following part outlines the study's main findings with regard to the research questions proposed in Chapter One.

The main focus of the thesis is to explore the overarching research question: **What is the role of Christian Churches in the intercultural experience of Chinese international students in the UK?** Five sub-questions were developed to help achieve this:

(1) Why do non-Christian Chinese students choose to go to church after they arrive in the UK?

Church participation as a form of cultural engagement was not an accidental choice for the Chinese international students. Instead, it is related to the students' considerations of and

negotiations with the challenging host environment. Expectation gaps (such as the language barrier), constrained intercultural communication within universities, public discrimination, and loneliness, all occurred simultaneously at the beginning of their intercultural interaction in the campus-based university. The students' need for language practice, a social network, and cultural knowledge, together with their motivation to engage with the local community pushed them to seek broader social contact to obtain the resources required to complete the adaptation process. Church participation for Chinese students seemed to be a mark of desperation in their pursuit of interaction with natives outside of the university, since their courses and the university provided so little opportunity due to the high numbers of students there from China. Therefore, the cultural interactions around the Christian churches responded in a supportive way to fill the gaps and meet the needs of Chinese students.

Both internal and external factors facilitated the continuing engagement of Chinese students with religious organisations. It was suggested that churches were ideal places for the Chinese students to release the pressures of their overseas life, and they acted as an information centre, which provided practical assistance. Some students even regarded the church as a home in which they felt a sense of belonging. The convenient church location and the considerate care from the church representatives who clearly understood the situation of international students made students feel accepted and want to actively take part in church events.

The desire to establish wider cultural contact with Christian churches beyond the campus was prompted by the motivation to establish a new personal circle and achieve personal growth. Basic elements in the personal circle that helped to maintain the students' regular ecological system, such as peer support, communication, companionship, and knowledge, were all provided by attending the events run by the international Christian community.

 (2) Do Christian churches serve as a medium for intercultural encounters for Chinese international students? What do Chinese students do in the churches?

The study found that, based on the business model of their missionary work, Christian churches do indeed serve as a medium for intercultural encounters for Chinese international students, providing a series of intercultural activities including social events, like cafés, hospitality, and several outdoor activities; language training and English classes; and Bible studies and discipleship. In this model, the vision, strategy, and intention are practised in the organisation of international events for the Chinese international students. Church members designed a specific calendar of events covering the entire duration of each semester. During social activities, students were free to enquire about anything they wanted to know. Church members shared their useful living tips and resources with students, such as accommodation information, career advice, and basic living skills such as cooking and washing, and so on. Another significant aspect is cultural knowledge, where the church members usually volunteered to introduce social and cultural issues to the Chinese students. These topics appealed to the students as they could gain knowledge of social customs and cultural differences to broaden their understandings. In a word, the Chinese international students experienced a good number of intercultural encounters through the Christian churches and their needs in the cross-cultural adaptation process were met.

(3) What are the institutional motivations of the Christian community to attract international students, especially Chinese students?

Although there is seemingly no direct responsibility for Christian churches to provide social support to international students, their intentions to evangelise and perform missionary work motivate them to attract any non-Christian people and look for potential new Christians. Chinese international students who are perceived as potential Christians become the bridges that from the business model perspective connect the Chinese and UK markets of Christianity. Christianity's ambition to expand into the Chinese market is not

new but new approaches are now being adopted. Once we consider the ambitious aims of global evangelism and the difficult situation of spreading Christianity in China, it becomes clear that the role of Chinese international students is indispensable if they can be converted into Christians during their overseas study. Chinese students are nurtured by western education and culture, and could become the bridges that fill the cultural gaps in Chinese missionary work to connect the Western and Eastern worlds. It is through this cross-cultural nurturing using Christian knowledge and inspiration that the international Christian community endeavours to continue its missionary work with these short-term Chinese students. For them, the advantage of Chinese international students who go back to China after their studies is that they might then be prepared to spread the Christian spirit to China and influence the country at a cultural, economic, and even political level. Hence, the social services that the Christian churches offer to Chinese students become an essential part of the work they aim at their "special customers". However, the point here is to what extent this work has an impact.

(4) What are the Christian Churches' strategies in working with Chinese international students?

We can see that the work the churches do with Chinese students conforms to the general business mode. Through leaflet advertising and mass media connections, churches made their services and product known to target students. The distribution and adoption of the Christian faith usually followed the warming-up stage (the socialisation stage of Christianity), which took place through the provision of social events and activities in order to attract more students. Behind the services and information provided to students, churches required resources, capabilities, strategy, and activities to realise their preparation of the faith value proposition. The ultimate product of faith value was sometimes hidden, and the advantages offered by their information and services became the focus of their marketing and practice. In this point it differed from the usual business model that demonstrates the value of a product or service directly. In consideration of their customers' preferences, the churches attempted to spread their faith value through offering a series of

services. Meanwhile, church members sought to identify those potential Christians with whom they could continue their training and converting work. This strategy is called "favour fishing". As the working model that they used for the recruitment or faith profit, churches also shared the responsibility for welcoming the international students through a series of social events.

(5) What is the influence of church participation on Chinese students? What is more important for students: religious or intercultural experience?

The influence of church participation on the adaptation of the Chinese students was statistically more complicated than expected. Compared with non-church participants, church participation generally did not play a role in cross-cultural adaptation for those church participants. In a general sense, church participants did not show any advantage over non-church participants in the adaptation process. However, this does not imply the uselessness of church encounters for the Chinese students. On the contrary, it confirms this form of cultural engagement had a similar effect when compared with the influence of other intercultural contact on Chinese students, since there was no significant difference in the adaptation competency of church participants and non-church participants.

In terms of the frequent church participants (over three times in six months), the more times they went to the churches, the better their adaptation in comparison with those non-frequent participants. Their involvement in the church contributed to their socio-cultural and psychological adaptation, particularly in terms of their interpersonal communication and their social network. This argument was also evidenced by the interviews and informal conversations in which Chinese students described their personal growth thanks to frequent church participation. Also, the intercultural engagement within the churches was shown to have met their needs in the adaptation process. Wider social contact with the churches expanded the students' communication with the local community. It increased the students' cultural knowledge, improved their English language competence (albeit to a limited extent only), and established their social network (friendships) with

both nationals and co-nationals. In addition, the intercultural encounters and engagement with the Christian organisations provided the international Chinese students with the opportunities for cultural learning and communication. It also transformed their attitudes towards, and even faith identity regarding Christianity. The students were found to hold four types of attitude after encountering Christianity. A few students demonstrated a strong interest in Christianity as a faith. They were on their way to become Christians during the cross-cultural adaptation process. However, the majority of students were non-believers, with several showing appreciation of the universal values of the Christian creeds.

Interaction between the churches and the non-Christian Chinese students took place on common ground but with divergent ultimate goals. Showing mutual understanding of and tolerance towards each other, both sides worked together and actively communicated in the Christian community. In terms of their divergent ultimate goals yet clear mutual understanding, on the one hand, the needs of the Chinese students in the adaptation process made it possible for the churches to organise the social events in order to attract students. However, on the other hand, most Chinese students tended to be indifferent to the mission orientation of the churches and instead concentrated on the social support that was helpful to them. Therefore, for the Chinese students, church participation had more of an intercultural than a religious meaning. Nevertheless, although it was simply a kind of intercultural experience for the majority, for a few of them it brought religious transformation.

9.3 Implications

If considered from the students' non-Christian cultural background, wider contact with religious institutions for these Chinese international students does not entirely make sense, and yet Christian churches attract a large number of them to attend church events. It reminds us to pay attention to the nature and diversity of the context, as well as the background of participants in the practical intercultural experience. According to the above research findings, the following sections outline a series of reflections and considerations.

9.3.1 Intercultural Education and Diversity

The students' cross-cultural engagement around Christian churches has several implications for their intercultural education and interaction. The needs of Chinese students in their overseas study go beyond the academic and language realms. The popularity of church participation among some Chinese students indirectly suggested relatively low and infrequent interaction with those native speakers and cultural groups in the campus-based university. We often assume that cultural contact and engagement is positive for the intercultural experience. The reality, however, is that there is a lack of real integration between the host community and international students. These limited and often superficial interactions restrict opportunities for the personal growth of both international students and native students (Brown, 2009; De Vita, 2005; Dunstan, 2003; Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2007; Peacock and Harrison, 2008; Sánchez, 2004; Ward et al., 2005). Research has suggested several potential reasons why intergroup interaction is infrequent. Students may feel negative emotions (anxiety, discomfort, frustration, irritation) over intergroup contact due to innate cultural differences, and expect complicated interaction (Peacock and Harrison, 2008; Sánchez, 2004). International students may fear being inadvertently offended, embarrassed, or stereotyped, or being misunderstood or disliked, and vice-versa for host students (Dunne, 2009; Peacock and Harrison, 2008). Unlike previous research, this study finds that due to an environment containing overwhelming numbers of Chinese students in some schools in the university, the students' pursuit of intercultural contact is not adequately responded to, even as far as superficial interaction was concerned. This is the case for both international and domestic students. It automatically constrains intergroup communication and interaction. The lack of intergroup socialisation can suspend in-class interaction, create resentment, reinforce stereotypes and negative attitudes (Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2007), and undermine the very purpose for bringing the two groups together. Thus, a multicultural environment as the essential condition should incorporate multifaceted means for addressing issues and offering support. Unfortunately, this is not recognised in practice.

In contrast to what the university offered, the organisational activities and support from the international Christian community filled the gaps and made a difference to the experience of the Chinese students. Cultural engagement based around the churches made up for the shortage of informal learning environments where international students could actively take part in various extra-curricular activities and engage in meaningful intercultural interaction. Through regular participation in church events, students felt gratitude for the support with linguistic, social, cultural, and psychological aspects. This cultural exposure contributed to the students' growth in their international education in terms of, among other things, their confidence in intercultural communication.

From the perspective of the Christian churches, regardless of their missionary work, we may find some inspiration in terms of examples of meaningful cultural engagement and inclusion in intercultural interactions, and apply these to a neutral (non-religious) environment like a university. The following parts reflect on universities' policies of integration in terms of academic adaptability, informal activities after classes, and institutional support for practical intercultural contact.

Academic Adaptability

The intercultural teaching of Christianity in the churches underlines the issues of academic adaptability faced by international university students. The form of group learning in the churches attracted Chinese students to seize the opportunity to take part in intercultural learning and communication. The group learning in the churches encouraged the Chinese students to pursue a cross-cultural education with teachers and students from other countries. Students are believed to naturally gravitate towards work groups comprising mostly host members or international members (Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2007; Peacock and Harrison, 2008; Summers and Volet, 2008). As for the classes in the university, it is noted that the classroom, as a natural venue for intercultural interaction and internationalised processes (Chang, 2006; Crichton et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2003; Ryan and Hellmundt, 2003; Soeters and Recht, 2001), is often managed ineffectively, and lacks opportunities to employ intercultural collaborative work groups or encourage intergroup

interaction (Peacock and Harrison, 2008; Ward, 2001). Although there are tutorials or workshops for students in the university, some of the groups were made up solely of one nationality due to the overwhelming number of Chinese students in certain schools. Knowing how to construct effective group learning for international students requires additional multicultural consideration.

The role of teachers in the internationalised campus and particularly in the classroom cannot be underestimated. Teachers, as the vital link in students' internationalisation (Cushner, 2008), need to actively support students in managing conflict, addressing differences, and reflecting on experiences (Hurtado et al., 2002). They should reconsider their subject content and pedagogy, classroom structure, and cross-cultural expectations of learning styles and assessment so as to encourage student engagement in all aspects of the learning process and with their co-learners (Hurtado et al., 2002). Ideally teachers could be seen as "cultural translators and mediators" (Cushner, 2008, p.172), connecting course content to events and knowledge within global and local environments (Green, 2003). However, researchers (e.g. Stone, 2006; Ward, 2001) find little evidence that higher education teachers are adapting either their content or pedagogical methods when faced with international students, in particular to those from countries with a significant cultural distance. International education suggests an "engaged" pedagogy, but Madge et al. (2009) argue that such pedagogy is 'a complex form of interdependence and mutuality which challenges the idea of proximate and distant relations, and questions the centres (certain institutions and prevailing discourses in certain places).' The different forms of care and responsibility arising from the viewpoint of international students provide the space for the relevant policy makers and institutions to reflect and act upon their claims. University are suggested to think about the temporary or permanent measures in place for the integration if staffs and students and provide the training for staff in working in international environment including language or cultural issues, etc.

Cross-cultural Competencies

Besides the forms of learning offered and their teachers' preparation for intercultural education, another significant benefit provided by the churches was the opportunity for students to develop their cross-cultural competencies through English language practice and cultural knowledge input. In both the formal classes and informal international nights in the Christian community, Chinese students learned the skills and knowledge to communicate cross-culturally. In university education, some researchers suggest that curricula should provide foundational knowledge of cross-cultural communication to supplement the curriculum with such essential skills and knowledge as communication (intercultural, negotiation, conflict management), critical thinking, and learning-to-learn skills; observational, analytical, and reflection development; and fostering a pluralistic worldview, all of which would allow students to understand and connect with world events (Cooper, 2007; Volet, 2004; Yershova et al., 2000). Besides the professional knowledge that is required in major courses, it is suggested that the nurturing of international ability be included in international education so that the Chinese students' needs to develop cross-cultural skills and knowledge can be met accordingly.

Informal Integration - the significance of informal activities

Leask (2009) points out that internationalisation takes place within formal and informal (beyond the classroom) curricula; both are equally important in supporting and furthering the intercultural/internationalisation practices of the other. Activities outside the classroom (e.g. clubs, sports, workshops, festivals, study trips, internships) and residential arrangements (e.g. programmes and integration within residency halls, dining halls, commuting circumstances) offer multiple opportunities for engaging dissimilarity (Henderson, 2009). Unlike superficial classroom interactions, which can be fleeting, informal curricula activities offer opportunities for more in-depth interactions and the building of relationships. The church engagement in the study is an example that demonstrates the effects of activities outside the classroom that involve diversity and in-depth interaction within the multi-cultural context. The structured events around the

international Christian community extend the mutual communication in a meaningful way, leading to the sharing of resources and relationship establishment. In addition, Klak and Martin (2003) recommend that some elements of the informal curriculum, particularly extra-curricular activities, be included within the formal curriculum. The structured formal and informal curricular programmes may support intercultural friendships that could also benefit intergroup relations through the extended contact hypothesis (Pettigrew, 1998; Wright et a, 1997). This suggests, therefore, that the formal curriculum should be combined with the informal curriculum in the internationalisation process of higher education. To encourage students to take part in these informal activities, universities could make use of the credit system and leave students the space to select their own forms of intercultural engagement around the campus.

Institutional Support

The students' engagement and the efforts of teachers in the integration of internationalisation into formal and informal classes cannot be without the support of institutions. The organisations in each church institution contain comprehensive and systematic support ranging from member training, events design, and motivation, to public advertisement, and resource distribution. In recent years, the host institutions' willingness to contribute to the adaptation of international students has been increasing, and this enhances the quality of international education, including the academic, socio-cultural, and psychological aspects for international students. However, how to transform the willingness into practical and tangible support remains unclear. The work of the international Christian community could be used as an example of a way to help understand students of a different ethnic group and with different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values (ACER[23], 2009). Universities, including university unions and organisations, need to cater to the needs of international students to create an inclusive environment and learning space to engage all students in the international learning context practically. In addition, it shows the need to take strategic action to motivate university

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[23] ACER: Australian Council for Educational Research

students out of their comfort zone and into actively participating in diversified interaction around campus to achieve the ideal outcomes of the inclusion and engagement of both international students and national students in the international environment.

International student support is a complicated issue which requires consideration of various aspects. In order to promote engagement and inclusion in the international university campus, many universities organise orientation and induction programmes for international students in the first few weeks of the new academic year (Brown and Holloway, 2008). These programmes concentrate primarily on welcoming students and informing them of learning requirements. Most input in the early stage fails to assist students in making the required adjustments so that they can meet their expectations in the new educational context. The short-term programmes do not entirely meet the needs of international students. Sustained service to assist students is encouraged, with regular arrangement, richer content and consistency for international students.

In short, intercultural learning and diversity do not just happen. They require consideration from the perspectives of students, teachers, and institutions. Given the general support resources that currently focus on assistance with basic living issues and learning requirements, there is a need for the design and implementation of diversity both inside and outside the classroom in order to ensure meaningful cross-cultural engagement. Universities are suggested to control the number of students from one single country in some specific schools to make sure the quality of intercultural environment in the highly profitable educational market. Group work rather than individual work is required to modify both formal and informal learning environments. The admission of international students suggests that students should be as diversely mixed as possible. Moreover, the students in each learning group should be deliberately selected for diversity, and, likewise, the tutors and students should be deliberately mixed according to their diverse cultural backgrounds. As for extra-curricular activities, group activities should be encouraged to involve students from different cultures. For instance, in recreational places such as the gym and student clubs, as part of the informal curriculum, a collective form of events

could be designed with prizes or even credits to attract more students to participate. Furthermore, the other side of the coin is the corresponding lack of encouragement for native-born students to engage in intercultural communication with international students. Therefore, in order to motivate domestic students to engage into the intercultural interaction, possible approaches such as funding or credits are suggested to put into consideration.

9.3.2 Self-Formation in International Education

In the process of exploring potential cultural engagement, international students demonstrate freedom of agency and capability of self-formation. The adaptive stressors, such as having few native friends and relative isolation, the language barrier, and perceived discrimination in their interactions with the host environment, did not result in passive responses from the Chinese students, instead, they motivated the students to explore their new environment and select the resources around them to aid their individual growth. Faced with expectation gaps in their practical experience, the Chinese international students, on the one hand were curious about their new environment during this stage of cultural shock; on the other hand, they attempted to seek out the resources that may meet their needs and contribute to obtaining their goals. These stressors were the motivators that prompted the international students to negotiate purposefully with the new society.

The active agency of international students generally relates to their approaches towards stress and coping, with their ultimate goals being conformity and social harmony (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999). Although it is believed that communication competency is the necessary condition for decreasing the stresses of intercultural interaction, many students in the study who lacked proficiency in English or close contact with host nationals were noted to exercise a remarkable autonomous drive when faced with cultural conflict. The given social conditions may influence individuals in a way that makes them unable to be masters of their own fate, nevertheless, they also drive international students to deal with many challenges in the host society and make use of tools and resources to manage their selections and construct their living environment. To exercise individual agency for

meaningful interactions is interrelated with their interpretation of the surroundings. In the process of interactions, individuals interpret meanings and create new meanings for themselves (Geertz, 1973). Students draw on cultural knowledge in order to make sense of the new context around them.

The adjustment of international students in the educational journey is also a process of self-formation and reconstruction that entails significant transformation and disequilibrium in the host society (Marginson, 2014). Instead of being seen as habitually weak or disadvantaged, international students in the process of intercultural exploration are regarded as strong agents, piloting a new life in the host society. The new situation does, however, require international students to change dynamically to achieve equilibrium (Kim, 2001). The voluntary adventure of international students is followed by the necessity of surviving and coping. This at least extends to achieving English language proficiency, good academic performance, and some local friends, as these open the way for students to move from one comfort zone with close affective ties at home to a new comfort zone that they endeavour to build. The process entails educational, cultural, and social complexity, where international students explore with freedom, learn to fashion themselves, and consciously realise self-formation with their autonomy (Marginson, 2014).

The experience of self-directed agency in the adaptation process is one of excitement and also of anxiety in the making of a new self amid a range of selections. Agency is the sum of a person's capacity to act on her/his own behalf, that is to say 'someone who acts and brings about transformation and achievement can be judged in terms of their own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well' (Sen, 2000). It is suggested that responsible adults must be in charge of their own wellbeing and decide how to make use of their capabilities, guided by freedom of agency. It also requires a supportive environment that allows students to realise their aims. In terms of the brave choice of social contact in the Christian community, personal selections about specific events within the churches indicated self-formation in the foreign sojourn. The Chinese international students were free to select their favoured church social events

and neglect those that were religion-related, in accordance with their individual interests and needs. According to their preferences, the majority of church participants could be broadly categorised into groups of social birds, cultural learners, and English practitioners. Basic elements for adaptation in the self-formation process were provided by the interactions within the Christian community.

Self-formation requires specific capabilities for international students in the interaction process to fashion a new self that includes new values, intentions, actions, and identity. This highlights the approaches and resources the international students use in constructing environments and making proactive selections. The emphasis on individual agency is not to neglect the services provided for students' needs. It is to propose solutions for strengthening their capacity for intercultural learning and growth. It is also to suggest expanding the space where international students are free of the constraints of the host society, such as discrimination or the unbalanced admission of international students. In addition, church participation expands the approaches available and enhances the resources for facilitating agency in cross-cultural engagement and communication with self-confidence and ability.

Nevertheless, such self-selection and formation does not always indicate an "international experience" as some studies have observed the phenomenon of "sticking together" in a cultural "silo". For instance, Zhao et al. (2005) found that international students 'had a preference for making friends from the same country or with students from other nations over students from the host country. They had limited opportunities to interact with the multicultural environment outside the university. Although international students had hopes of meeting people from different countries, their self-selection still led them to those with the same language and nationality (Constant and Massey, 2003). Maundeni (2001) reported that students who socialised outside their cultural group felt that their own group discussed and disapproved of them. They did not feel that they were interacting on an equal basis with other students, particularly in the early stages of their studies, when they were experiencing culture and learning shock at their strongest. This explains the lack of

cross-cultural interaction in the formal and informal learning environments as a consequence of international students' behaviours, since a tiny proportion of them chose to move outside their cultural group. The comfort zone was hard to emerge from. The students who fared best in this study were those who manifested a clear interest, an emotional engagement, sustained action, and commitment to engagement. Without this 'engaged motivation', the difficulties in intergroup interaction could result in students backing away from the challenges, and leaving them without intercultural development and friendships.

9.3.3 Organisational Influence

Besides highlighting the transformation of individuals through individual agency and self-formation in interactions with the host environment, the study suggests not to ignore the possible organisational or environmental influences on students' adaptation and growth. On one level, organisational influence means that the host environment controls or impedes the actions of individuals, while on another level it promotes individuals to negotiate the environment. Due to the overwhelming number of Chinese international students, there is limited access to regular social events around the campus for their intercultural interaction. The three environmental conditions identified in Kim's theory (2001) that are believed to be the most significant in the cross-cultural adaptation process are the receptivity of the host environment, the conformity pressure exerted by the environment, and the strength of the newcomer's ethnic group in the host environment. In addition to these three conditions, the study found that the diversity of the cultural environment also plays a significant role in the adaptation and integration of international students. It is commonly assumed that in the host environment there is automatically a culturally diverse environment around those international students in the international universities. As the essential condition for an international institution, there would seem no doubt that, each student would encounter a multicultural environment. The reality, however, requires careful examination. As they typically attract students from Asia, it is inevitable that in some majors the number of international students exceeds the number of native

students. Among the former, Chinese students are the leading group in these popular international schools. The less diversified environment brings with it a relatively isolated context for the Chinese students. In addition, in terms of on-campus social interaction, some students were not used to social activities such as balls or parties as they found it was difficult to engage with the strangers around them. Cultural differences became an impediment and the accumulated unsatisfied experience often led Chinese students to refusing to continue their engagement in these events and to becoming isolated from the intercultural environment around campus. However, it also motivated Chinese students to seek out wider contact beyond the campus, such as in the pubs, clubs, and churches that they mentioned in the interviews. Pubs and clubs were perceived as being another symbol of cultural difference for the Chinese students; some students may find it is interesting to socialise there but others may not. Attempts to explore the host environment continued until individuals found their preferred approach to cultural involvement.

In this study, the international Christian community provided support to international students and helped them in terms of language, social network, companionship, and intercultural communication. The Christian community met the needs of the Chinese students for intercultural contact around the university campus, particularly during the adaptation period. For the group of Chinese international students who frequently took part in the Christian events, it is believed that church was their selection after exploration and comparison of different forms of other cultural contact. The negotiation that took place within the host environment strengthened the students' motivation to continue their engagement in the churches. In addition, in comparison with other available sources of social contact, the churches had the advantage of involving students in the community, while, at the same time, the students understood the religious intentions behind churches' deeds. It would appear that the churches provided the Chinese students with the opportunities to get close to local people and the local culture. International activities in the churches concentrated on international students and met their needs comprehensively. First of all, it was noted that the warm-hearted Christians welcomed the students. Volunteers and staff in the international events group for international students were trained and

understood the basic needs of international students. They established an inclusive environment, which allowed free communication and sharing of cultural knowledge. Attending social events not only reduced the pressure and anxiety that students experienced in their adaptation process; it also strengthened the friendship among students, as well as with local people. Besides that, the churches and the Christians were a source of help that the Chinese international students trusted and from whom they could obtain practical support and resources for their life or study.

On another level, the nature of organisations also plays a role in the students' intercultural contact. Although the total number of students in this study is not as many as it was found in the United States study (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000; Min, 1992; Warner and Wittner, 1998; Williams, 1988; Yang, 1999), the students' regular contact with the international Christian community was shown to impact on students' cultural values and religious beliefs. Some research from different sociological perspectives attempts to explain the phenomenon of religious conversion in church participation. The most significant factor is noted at the micro level, namely the 'sociological interaction rituals' or 'favour-fishing rituals' (Abel, 2006). A series of social events that provided practical benefits was offered to students, including language-learning classes and hospitality. These attracted Chinese students and simultaneously served their socialisation process as the preparation for possible religious conversion. This kind of favour fishing suggested a pro-active approach to religious conversion. The meso-level factors like the open religious encounters in the quasi-religious group surrounded by Christians as described in the study constituted 'the religious organisational ecology' (Wang and Yang, 2006) and are noted to be significant factors in conversion. Chinese students who were converted to Christianity were the products of a reactive response to the opportunities and the Christian context. Due to the limitations in the scope of the study, macro-level factors were not identified, such as the rapid social, economic, and cultural changes in China that encouraged students to adopt the 'alternate meaning systems' (Yang, 1998) available in the social and cultural context.

The factors emphasised in previous studies, such as acceptance, conformity, and ethnic pressure, are all based on the neutral environment without any political or religious inclination. However, in practice, these neutral environments do not always exist in an ideal form. Whether the organisation is for business or non-business, it has goals and reasons for its existence, and these both reveal its nature and guide the direction of its development. The religious context in the study highlights the role of organisational nature in the transformations of several Chinese students during their adaptation. Such social support is intended to spread the Christian missionary work rather than purely support international students to survive in the challenging host environment. We may find that it is not only environmental factors like acceptance, conformity, or ethnic pressure that play a role, but the nature of the organisations and the ultimate intentions of its group members also significantly influence the involvement of international students.

Recognising the potential impact of an organisation on international students is extremely important for all parties. Religious organisations are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the whole picture for international students in the host country. Strictly speaking, the organisational influence is everywhere, regardless of whether it is a religious organisation or non-religious organisation. One of the main points of the study is to be able to see the potential cultural impact of organisational interventions on Chinese students. As for what kind of influence this may be, or whether or not it is positive, individuals are free to choose as they have considerable agency to examine the various opportunities available for social contact. Meanwhile, it is suggested that universities should become more responsible for these interventions to promote neutral (rather than religious) intercultural engagement of international students. Students are not actually looking for religious transformation after all. Therefore, universities have the responsibility to find or construct a practical medium of intercultural encounter for all students. Intercultural interaction and engagement need to be consciously planned, encouraged, facilitated, and supported by teachers and staff, and students must be prepared for engagement when going to a dissimilar culture. Without some practical intervention, successful intergroup interaction and gains in intercultural knowledge

and skills will happen for only a very small, very motivated, minority of international students.

In summary, due to the typical cultural background of Chinese students, the study aimed to research the transcultural and trans-religious experience of Chinese students in Christian churches. It investigated the reasons behind intercultural interactions between the Christian community and Chinese student participants, and explored the factors that impacted both parties' choices of cultural engagement. It also examined the international Christian community for Chinese students, and the role of Christian church participation in the Chinese students' cross-cultural adaptation. On a theoretical level, this study establishes that the nature of the organisation in the host country has a profound influence on intercultural interaction and engagement for international students, and highlights the potential effects on behaviours and values after religious communication and interaction have taken place. It identifies the social connections with the host environment and organisational factors that play a significant role in the cross-cultural adaptation of international students. It contributes to an understanding about the diversity of intercultural encounters in a meaningful sense, and uncovers the essence of individual interactions and social integration in the cross-cultural interaction. On a practical level, the study reveals the problem of university involvement for international students. The findings emphasise the needs of international students particularly in terms of cultural engagement and involvement within the campus-based university and calls for UK universities to consider ways to establish an inclusive atmosphere in the international education they claim to be offering. It also emphasises how the acceptance of host nationals and inclusion in social activities bring a sense of belonging for international students in the host country. Meaningful intercultural contact and learning depends on a multicultural environment, the facilitation by institutions, and the students' motivation to engage. Facilitating intercultural communication requires considerable effort to nurture intercultural competency and provide sufficient and meaningful intercultural encounters.

9.4 Limitations of the Study

The present study explores the role of church in the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students. It primarily focuses on the outcome of the cultural experience through the examination of the feelings and behaviours of Master's students after a period of six months in the host country. It lacks the pre-test or the initial assessment of the participants' situation at the beginning of their overseas study that would be required to evaluate the extent of transformation over the period, or to compare the extent of adaptation in non-church and church participants. Further research design suggestions include adding the pre-test and post-test approach to find out the specific extent of the influence of church participation on Chinese students. It requires follow-up enquiries on students' experience at different stages.

Limitations also exist in terms of the sample. The study excludes international students from other countries who could provide their perspective on understanding the active involvement of Chinese non-Christians in the Christian churches. Neither does it include the situation of Chinese Christian Churches in the UK, which could be the comparative counterpart in the Christian community. Its inclusion would have allowed the researcher to find out more about the characteristics of organisations and their management from the church side, as well as to analyse the differences between Chinese and English Christian churches. Therefore, further exploration from different perspectives is recommended.

Although the survey aimed to generalise its findings to a certain population, the number of actual church participants, particularly frequent ones, was not sufficient. A larger sample is required to show the generalised correlations. Although attending church was not a highly popular choice for the whole population of Chinese students in the university under consideration, we could enlarge the sample to include more universities and geographical areas to evaluate whether or not the same outcome was obtained.

Another limitation regards the non-Christian identity of the researcher. This prevents me from stepping into the inner circle of the international Christian community, such as at the annual conferences or at the training camps for new Christians or potential Christians in the

UK. Moreover, this identity makes it impossible for me to immerse myself fully in the world of Christianity in order to comprehend the aspects of evangelism, missionary work, and students' changes of religious identity.

My skills as a researcher represented a further limitation when conducting the participant observation and interviews. It was my first experience of applying these research methods and requires improvement in terms of the use of probing questions, reflections on participants' responses, role changing, taking notes, managing time, and transcribing. In spite of this, these methods were a beneficial and powerful means of collecting meaningful data and enhanced my ability to conduct mixed-methods research.

The time limitation restricted attempts in the study to cover a range of theoretical and practical issues relating to cultural interaction in the religious context. These issues included church (organisational) adaptive behaviour or my own changes during the interaction with the Chinese students, similar situations found in different universities or regions, and cross-cultural interaction in other social institutions. Covering all these issues in one project might be at the expense of a deeper understanding of students' and church members' perceptions of their detailed interactive experience. Instead, these issues will be examined in further research.

9.5 Personal Reflection on the Research Process

9.5.1 Role of Researcher

The role of my identity in the process of quantitative data collection is theoretically non-existent (as if I were not there). The key to the quantitative method adopted in the study to explore the relationship between Christian church participation and the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese international students is to make the subjects act independently of the researcher. In the correlational study, the data is collected without regard to the person collecting the data or to the participants in order to attempt neutrality. Hence, in the distribution of questions, I simply introduced the aims of the study and the

general content in the survey attempting to neutrally present. Participants were encouraged to fill in the questionnaire alone.

In the qualitative part of the study, my role is quite different. The researcher is considered an instrument of data collection (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). It means that data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines. As a human instrument, the relevant aspects of self, including any biases and assumptions, any expectations, and experiences to qualify his or her ability to conduct the research (Greenbank, 2003) influence the data collection and analysis. Personal reflection and insights into the self and the research process are particularly useful.

The key to this method for investigating the intentions and experience both for Chinese students and church members is to establish close contact, build up trust, and create a relaxed environment for free discussion, informally and formally. Hence, a certain level of trust needs to be established with those subjects to remove any concerns and create a safe space for communication. As a Chinese PhD student in Britain, this identity along with the role of researcher gives me access to get up close to the Chinese students, which facilitates the establishment of relations with them in the churches and paves the way for the in-depth interviews. The same national identity equips me with empathy for the situation of those Chinese students due to a shared experience. To match the same frequency with which the students took part in the church events I attended the churches every week. People in the churches became gradually more familiar with me and regarded me as one of their temporary community. When I missed several events, some students even enquired about my recent situation and shared their feelings at those events that I missed. My other identity as a PhD student leads some students to enter into conversation with me because Chinese students tend to respect seniors and authority figures in the field of learning (Li, 2014). They came to ask about my experience of being a PhD student as most of the church participants were Master's students and some of them might have been planning to be doctoral students the following year. Their respect and my acceptable responses facilitated the establishment of trust. In addition, my identity as a PhD student allowed me

to keep a certain distance from those students and excused me from some invitations to their other private gatherings. At the same time, they also treated the interviews seriously despite the friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Some students even attempted to anticipate my expected answers and were concerned that their response or description might not exactly fit with what I was looking for. Thus, I purposely avoided involvement during the conversations so as to attempt to reduce my subjective influence and encouraged them to talk about any personal ideas that they had. As for the church members in the international Christian community, contact was initially set up through my church participation and volunteer work in the churches. I was welcomed to the international events as a Chinese student.

My identity as a non-Christian researcher, the outsider in the intercultural interaction, attempts to present a more distanced perspective in the interpretation of settings and stories. Yet my appearance was sensitive to Christians, especially for those who were familiar with the Christian situation in China. Both native Christians and Chinese Christians were alert to my enquiries. They tended to respond in a way perceived to be "safe". One issue that came up in the fieldwork was that the Christians often asked about my position in the research and my funding source. They wanted to make sure that my research was not politically oriented or that the Chinese government would not take some negative measures after the public knew my findings. From their attitudes, it confirmed that they were attentive to the influence of my research on the Chinese government, from which it could be assumed that they must have experienced or heard of something negative happening in China. It was acknowledged that open evangelism was illegal and, as such, forbidden by the Chinese government. One aged church member with much experience in China showed relief on hearing that my study was just academic research and that I was not conducting research for the Chinese government. Another church member who had been to China many times rejected my invitation of an in-depth interview for the reason that he wanted to conceal his opinions and experience, even though it would have been anonymous, in case the Chinese government learned of it. My explanations and assurances of his safety were futile and he insisted that he did not want to be involved in my study.

In addition, my inadequate knowledge of Christianity and Christian behaviour impedes my comprehensive apprehension of the organisation and its intentions from the church perspective, or, in other words, I cannot put myself in their shoes and to understand their behaviour since I am not a Christian. It also affected the conversations and relations with church members if I did not have this basic knowledge. To address this, in addition to the information that I collected directly from my observation, interviews, and survey, I consulted a series of documents about Christianity and Christians in an attempt to see the issues from the standpoint and using the logic of Christians to better understand their behaviour and words. Furthermore, my identity as a non-Christian for those church members who were not familiar with the Chinese situation was less sensitive than it was for those who were familiar with it. The former tended to draw attention to the help they provided the Chinese students with as it was the main part of their work in the socialisation of Christianity. They spoke much less about converting them . Even though I showed my neutral position in the study and the threat-less academic orientation, church members who were sensitive to my research tended to ignore the converting part and merely concentrated on their efforts in supporting Chinese students. The fact that they were partially holding back their attitudes from me just encouraged me to probe other perspectives or approaches to get to know Christian opinions in their essence.

The limitation of being a non-Christian researcher was obvious in the conversation with native Christians. However, the Chinese identity contributed to the investigation with Chinese Christian students. To some extent, they provided the breakthrough in the fieldwork when I felt that local Christians were hiding their religious intentions from me. The Chinese Christian students trusted me and explained frankly how the local Christian community conducted its missionary work in a real sense. Their Christian identity gave them access to the authentic Christian community where non-Christians could not be present. And it was in that internal Christian community that the Christians shared their real thoughts about the Chinese international students, which were not accessible to me through the interview situation. Their insider perspective was later noted to be significant in providing evidence.

In the qualitative study, my role was from an etic perspective, as the outsider, or an objective viewer. I started as an outsider in order to observe the interaction of the Chinese students with the Christians in the churches and be able to raise questions. Then I became a member of the group of Chinese students, and took full part in the activities to better understand the participants' ideas and behaviours. Lastly, stepping back from being the insider, I became an outsider again, being a more objective observer, after I had deeply immersed into church context. Especially in the stage of being an insider immersed in the church events, I was like a role player pretending to actively engaging in the international group in order to establish a relationship with my subjects. The dual identities of being both a PhD student in the UK and a non-Christian researcher were used flexibly according to the situation.

9.5.2 What have I learned as a doctoral researcher?

Reflecting on the journey on which I embarked four years ago, I can, in complete honesty, say that I have become a different person from the fresh-faced, naïve, twenty-something that came to the UK for the first time in 2013. I have experienced a new life in the UK, which was quite different from my study and living environment in China. I have learned to get used to it and have gradually become comfortable and confident in the research process.

The journey has not always been smooth sailing. The feeling of uncertainty has been with me at different stages throughout the whole process. My supervisors did not approve my research ideas and plans after several proposals in the first year. It took me over half a year to set my research topic and undertake my research design. In the fieldwork, due to administrative difficulties in some schools of the university, I met with timing issues in my distribution of questionnaires. In the participant observation, I kept alert to my improper words and behaviours because of my identity as a non-Christian. I also felt the differences between the Christians and me acutely. In those moments, I could not find any ways to uncover other information through my enquiries. I realised that I did not get it, or I felt that what I was hearing was not that close to the truth; while at the same time I could do nothing about it. I felt, to some extent lost, and powerless. Sometimes, even a very small issue would

get me down and make me doubt my ability to uncover the true story. However, I was fortunately able to solve these problems with the support of my supervisors. I learned a lot. The following are four of the lessons that I learned through the research process:

1) Be realistic and always have a plan B

There were many times that I would ask myself 'What is my ultimate goal?' It is very important to consider the likelihood of successfully achieving the goal. There might be many creative ways to conduct the research, but controlling it in practice is another story. For example, I planned to distribute my questionnaires around the campus but was initially refused by one school in the university. The reason they gave sounded official. I had to adapt my way of accessing my participants to comply with ethical guidelines. It was not to say that I could not flexibly incorporate my new ideas into the research, instead, I made the most of what was available to me and push myself to step out of my comfort zone and try something new. In addition, I learned to organise everything comprehensively and systematically. With a plan B or even C in mind, I became more secure and confident in my fieldwork. Although sometimes there were still surprises, I was more likely to overcome the difficulty without too much concern.

2) Be optimistic and confident

It was vitally important to stay optimistic and remain positive, however difficult it seemed at times, when the results were the opposite of what I had been expecting. Due to my lack of knowledge or skills, I felt unable to conduct the research better. I made mistakes and sometimes went in the wrong direction. However, each barrier was actually a learning curve that encouraged me to see the problem critically when I looked back on the process. Upon reflection, I was able to find the reasons for my mistakes, and the next time I would know what to do. In all truth, I am greatly appreciative of these barriers that were put in my way because they enabled me to develop both my research and my skills. Staying positive rather than dwelling on the problems made it easier to progress and for my research to evolve. Encouragement and support from my supervisors also gave me the confidence to believe I

could overcome any negative situation eventually. It is because of them that I understand there are more solutions than problems. A brave attempt is better than none at all. I needed to trust my research and myself.

3) Life is the origin of research and it is wonderful

It is easy to immerse ourselves in the literature and theories of the so-called academic world while ignoring the real lives taking place around us. Research is not only about studying the literature. Exploration can be carried out in any part of our daily lives, if we have the necessary curiosity and sensitivity. Life is the origin of inspiration. The topic of my doctoral research is not in fact taken completely from the literature. My personal experience gave me the inspiration for my enquiry into the phenomenon of church participation among Chinese students. After I went back to the literature, it was exciting to find that I needed further investigation of the phenomenon. Thus, if a person is sensitive to and curious about their surroundings, they can find the knowledge, the rules, and the reasons behind what they see superficially. That is the power of life and it is the power of research. It has endless potential for us to explore the truth and ourselves. Life is the root of research which leads us towards discovery of the unknown and lights up the darker side of the world.

(4) Enjoy it

When I first started my PhD, I couldn't imagine it would take as long as four years to complete the research. I thought I might well give up in the second or third year if I were faced with something I could not overcome. I did not think I could finish a thesis of 70,000 words. I thought I might even lose my passion for academic research. However, now, when I look back on it, four years has really flown by quickly, and it was not as terrible as I had expected. I have become a confident researcher. I am more confident in my networking and presenting skills, two areas in which I used to be very weak, but which I now know are such valuable assets within the research arena. I have exceeded my own expectations of what I can achieve and I am very proud of the work I have carried out and the skills I have developed and acquired as part of this journey. The most important point is that I have

gained more passion for research and have really enjoyed it. The encouragement from my supervisors and other colleagues has given me the confidence and inspiration to work in academia.

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Appendix 1- Questionnaire (English Version)

Understanding Cross-cultural Adaptation of Chinese Students in University of Glasgow

Survey Questionnaire Form

Please mark the bubble that corresponds with your response for each of the following questions. Please mark responses like this: • Not like this: ⊗   ∅

Part One: About You

1. Gender	
Male	1
Female	2

2. How long have you lived in Glasgow?	
1-2 months	1
3-4 months	2
5-6 months	3
7-8 months	4
More than 8 months	5

3. What is your Major?			
Business	A	Social Media	H
Sociology	B	Medicine	I
Drama	C	Math	J
Education	D	Physics	K
Law	E	Psychology	L
Engineering	G	Spanish	M

Part Two: **Psychological Adaptation**

The following questions are about your feelings about the UK. Choose the answer that you think best describes your situation: 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=sometimes; 5=frequently; 6=usually; 7=always.

4. I am excited about being in the UK.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I feel out of place, I don't fit into British culture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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6. I am sad to be away from China	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I am nervous about how to behave in certain situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I am lonely without my family and friends around me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I am homesick when I think of China	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I am frustrated by difficulties adapting to UK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I am happy with my day-to-day life in UK.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part Three: Church Participation

12. What is your religious belief?

Christian		Muslim	
Hindu?		Buddhist	
No religion (Go to 13)		Other	

12a. Did you practice this religion prior to coming to the UK?

Yes		No		Not Applicable	9

13. Have you been to the churches in UK excluding for the purpose of culture or tourism?

Yes (Go to 14)		No (Got to Part Four)	

14. What kind of Christian church do you usually go to? (Tick all that apply)*

English Christian		Chinese Christian		Non Christian	

15. How many times have you been to church in the last six months?

Once		Twice	
3 or 4 times		5 or 6 times	
7 or 8 times			

16. Why do you go to the *Scottish* church if you go? (**Tick all that apply**)

Appendix

To make friends		To eat		To practice English	
Cultural Knowledge		To pray		To learn about Bible	
Other:					

17.   Why do you go to the Chinese church? **(Tick all that apply)**

To make friends		To eat		To learn about Bible	
Cultural Knowledge		To pray			
Other:					

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

(1)= I am sure it is true, (2)= It might be true, (3)= I am not sure, (4)=It might not be true, (5)= I am sure it is not true.

18. All people are sinners; Jesus dies for our sins; was buried and resurrected.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Jesus was the son born of the Virgin Mary	1	2	3	4	5
20. Jesus died ("crucifixion"), but then a couple of days later rose from the dead ("resurrection"), and then later was lifted up into the sky to heaven ("ascension").	1	2	3	4	5

Part Four: Socio-cultural Adaptation

Living in a different culture often involves learning new skills and behaviours. Thinking about life in UK, please rate your competence in each of the following behaviours.

(1 = Not at all competent; 5 = Extremely competent)

21. Building and maintaining relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Managing my academic responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Interacting social events.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Maintaining my hobbies and interests.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Adapting to the noise level in my neighbourhood.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Accurately interpreting and responding to other people's gestures and facial expressions.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Working effectively with other students.	1	2	3	4	5

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28. Obtaining communities services I require	1	2	3	4	5
29. Adapting to the population density.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Understanding and speaking English.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Varying the rate of my speaking in a culturally appropriate manner.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Gaining feedback from other students to help improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Accurately interpreting and responding to other people's emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Attending or participating in community activities.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Finding my way around.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Interacting with members of the opposite sex.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Expressing my idea to other students in culturally appreciated manners.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Dealing with the bureaucracy.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Adapting to the peace of life.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Reading and writing in English.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 2-Questionnaire (Chinese Version)

关于格拉斯哥大学中国留学生跨文化适应调查问卷

尊敬的同学：

您好，欢迎参加关于格拉斯哥大学中国留学生跨文化适应的调查研究。本次问卷主要包含三个方面：留学生心理适应，社会文化适应以及教堂活动参与情况。如果您自愿回答本次问卷，请按要求认真填写，您的回答对本次研究十分重要。谢谢您的配合。

请在你的答案上涂黑 ●， 而非 ⊗ ∅。

第一部分:基本信息

1. 性别	
男	1
女	2

2. 您在格拉已经生活学习了多长时间？	
1-2 月	1
3-4 月	2
5-6 月	3
7-8 月	4
超过 8 个月	5

3.您所在的专业是什么?			
商科	A	传媒	H
社会学	B	药学	I
戏剧	C	数学	J
教育	D	物理学	K
法学	E	心理学	L
工程学	G	西班牙语	M

第二部分:心理适应

以下问题是关于你在英国生活的心里感受,请在最能描述你近况的选项中图黑●，

1)=从来没有，2)=几乎没有，3)=偶尔会有，4)=有时会有，5)=经常会有，6)=一直会有，7)= 每天会有)。

4. 待在英国我感觉很兴奋	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. 日常生活中,我感觉与英国文化格格不入。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. 离开中国我觉得伤心。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. 在一些场合我因不知道该如何表现而紧张。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. 我因身边没有朋友而感到孤单。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. 一想到中国我就想家。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. 在英国感到不适应的时候,我很沮丧。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. 我对英国的日常生活很满意。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

第三部分:教堂活动经历

下面是关于您个人信仰以及在英期间教堂活动的问题,请在最能描述你个人情况的选项涂黑。

12. 你的宗教信仰是什么?

基督教		伊斯兰教	
印度教		佛教	
我没有宗教信仰 (直接进入 13 题)		其他	

12a. 在来英国之前你是否有宗教信仰?

有		没有		无可奉告	9

13. 你在英国是否去过教堂(不以参观游览为目的)?

是 (进入 14 题)		否 (进入第四部分)	

14. 您经常会去下列哪种基督教堂？（可多选）

当地基督教会		华人基督教会		非基督教会	

15. 在过去的六个月里你去过教堂几次?

一次		两次	
三四次		五六次	
七八次			

16. 如果你去过当地教堂，你为什么回去当地教堂？(可多选)

认识并结交新朋友		吃免费食物		锻炼口语	
学习文化知识		祷告		学习圣经	
其他：					

17. 如果你去过华人教会，你为什么会去华人教会？（多选）

认识并结交新朋友		吃免费食物		学习圣经	
学习文化知识		祷告			
其他：					

下列关于基督教的表述中，您的看法是怎样的?请在您认为合适的选项下涂黑。

(1)=肯定是真的 2)=可能是真的 3)=不知道 4)可能不是真的 5)肯定不是真的

18. 所有人都是有罪的,耶稣为罪人而死,埋葬并复活。	1	2	3	4	5
19. 耶稣是处女玛丽圣灵感孕所生的儿子。	1	2	3	4	5
20. 耶稣为罪人钉死在十字架上,并三天后复活,最后回到天堂父神的身边。	1	2	3	4	5

第四部分:社会文化适应

仔细思考一下你在英国的生活,对下面罗列的行为能力做出自我评估。
(1)=一点也不擅长;   5)=非常擅长)

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21. 建立并维系人际关系	1	2	3	4	5
22. 完成学习任务。	1	2	3	4	5
23. 参与社交活动。	1	2	3	4	5
24. 有自己的兴趣爱好。	1	2	3	4	5
26. 准确理解并回应他人的肢体语言以及面部表情。	1	2	3	4	5
27. 能与其他同学有效合作。	1	2	3	4	5
29. 适应英国的人口密度。	1	2	3	4	5
30. 理解并会说英语。	1	2	3	4	5
31. 在不同文化环境里,有意识的改变说话语速	1	2	3	4	5
32. 从其他学生那里获得反馈来让自己表现得更好。	1	2	3	4	5
33. 能准确理解并回应他人的情感表达。	1	2	3	4	5
34. 参加社区活动。	1	2	3	4	5
35. 不迷路。	1	2	3	4	5
36. 与异性互动交流。	1	2	3	4	5
37. 在不同文化交流中能以合适的方式表达自己的想法。	1	2	3	4	5
38. 应对英国官方运作体系。	1	2	3	4	5
39. 适应英国生活节奏。	1	2	3	4	5
40. 英语阅读与写作	1	2	3	4	5
41. 为顺应英国本土的社会规范,规则与风俗习惯而改变自己的行为方式。	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 3- Plain Language Statement

Plain Language Statement

My name is Yun Yu. I am a PhD student in educational studies in the University of Glasgow, Scotland. Currently, I am doing research for my PhD thesis on the role of church participation on Cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students in UK.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

The purpose of the study is to explore the effect of church participation on the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students in the UK. As representative of western culture, church is regarded as a platform where students are promoted to exchange information, build networks and so on, and also as a comfort zone where they feel accepted. The study investigates how church plays a role on overseas students' intercultural communication, culture learning and self-improvement.

You have been chosen because you fall into the requirement for this study i.e. you are Chinese students at the University of Glasgow, or you are church members. Whether you want to participate in the research or not depends entirely on your own choice. There is absolutely no compulsion. And should you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time, and without giving a reason. If you take part in the study, you have to answer the questionnaire or take part in face-to-face interviews. All information, which is collected about you during the course of the research, will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name and address removed or replaced by pseudonyms so that you cannot be recognised from it.

The results will be used in the dissertation until the completion of the PhD project in 2017, after which all personal information will be deleted from the electronic files and shredded in paper documents. The research results will be provided upon your requests via the email address I have provided below. You will not be identified in any report or publication.

I am organising this as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is funded by China Scholarship Council and affiliated to no organization other than University of Glasgow.

It has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project, you can contact the following:

Yun Yu, Researcher, y.yu.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Professor Andy Furlong, Supervisor, Andy.Furlong@glasgow.ac.uk
Dr Gijsbert Stoet, Supervisor, Gijsbert.Stoet@glasgow.ac.uk
College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer by accessing the following   link, College of Social   Sciences   Ethics   Officer,
http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/info/students/ethics/committee/

Appendix 4 – Consent Form

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: The Role of Church Participation on the Cross-cultural Adaptation of Chinese Students in the UK

Name of Researcher: Yun Yu

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I consent to interviews being audio-taped.

4. I acknowledge that if any publications would arise from the research and if my data would be referred to specifically, a pseudonym would be used and I would be entirely unidentifiable.

5. I agree / disagree to take part in the above study. (Please circle as appropriate)

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

Appendix

Appendix 5 - Main interview questions for students

1 How was your experience in the UK?

2 Do you have any aims before you came to UK?

3 how do you know the churches? Why do you go to church for the first time?

4 What happened that impressed you a lot in the churches?

5 Do you think it is helpful to go to the church? Language?   Cultural knowledge? Study?

6 Do you have friends that met in the churches? How do you get along with them?

7 what do you think about Christianity? Do you believe it?

8 Why do you think other students go to the churches?

9 What do you think about the people in the churches? Why do you think they do in the church?

Appendix 6 - Main interview questions for church representatives

1 Could you please say something about your church? For example, what kind of church it is, people in the church？

2 what kind of activities that you offered to the international students?

3 why do you organize these activities?

4 How do you think the international students situation in general, just now you said you think they are lonely here?

5 why do you think Chinese students come to the church?

6 Who are the members in your working group?

7 what is the relation with charity and other churches? Is there any competition between churches? What do you think about that?

Appendix 7 - Example of Observation Records

Process Documentation (activities taken)	Journal writing (results, reflection, analysis, what you hope to do in the following week)
19/09/14 8 pm-10 pm **Church A** **International Café** There were 8 Chinese students in the café. Some of them took part in the BBQ on Tuesday or Thursday in that week. New students from other countries also were in the café. When I entered into the hall downstairs, Easter introduced me to some new students from China. It was a good start. Then, And then we took a seat around a table and talked for a while. As it was the day that the results of referendum come out, Ella explained the reasons the Scottish wanted to be independent from the history of Scotland and England to the current situation of Scotland. The deep or underlying reason comes to the economy, she thought. After that, Davis shared his experience in learning Chinese as he would go to China next week for two months. It was very funny experience. He had a tip that listed common greeting words in Chinese and English as well. One student beside him told Davis the handwriting must come from a girl. He was much supervised about it and discussed it with students. Besides, Ella and Davis introduced the English Bible courses on every Monday and welcomed students to go and practice their English as much as possible	**Reflections** (emotions, analysis, are these effective methods? Applicable to other situations?) I felt welcomed after Ella introduced me to the students. It was a good way to understand students' problems and feeling they got in the process of adaptation. As a method, I did not lead the topics of discussion. I am passive in the whole process of talking so that I observation could be objective and did not go as I interfered. **Difficulties and coping strategies** Difficulties in the observation go to the efficient of data collection. It is supposed to be patient to wait for the happening of story. After several times, I just feel it was the same and nothing seems to be new. Or maybe it was at the stage of participant observation, I could not do anything that has inclination to either possible results. Getting connection with church representatives was important as they would share their opinions on your research and would like to introduce the relations among churches and how thing goes on from their position. Facilities (features of community including church representatives and the community itself) As I mentioned just now, it was those

	church representatives that they
	Rapport with church representatives Ella was very warm heated. She told me a lot about church stories in Glasgow and connections among churches. There was completion between different churches, while Church A seemed to have advantages as it was closed to student accommodations. There are different styles among churches. Louis was very nice. As she was responsible for international students affairs, she was very experienced and professional. Changes about self-including perspectives, attitudes. Changes about my self is that I knew more new students. While as it was the first time I met them, it took time to get to know more with each other. I have to improve my communication skills so that I could take part in the conversations better even it was not led by myself.