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Understanding Chinese and Western Cultures: An Exploration of the Academic Working Environment in Internationalised Higher Education

By

Xiaozheng Zhang

A Doctoral Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements For the award of PhD Loughborough University

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the understanding of Chinese and Western cultures within the academic working environment of internationalised higher education, and the influence on their working relationships.

This research takes an interpretivist, qualitative approach. It is based on four different organisational contexts of internationalised higher education in Mainland China, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. The four organisational contexts include a Chinese case, a Collaborative case, a Colonialism case and a British case. Qualitative interview data were collected from seventy Chinese and Western academic staff. The research examines academic staff’s interpretation of Western (Hofstede’s cultural dimensions) and Chinese cultural values (Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony).

The key findings are Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony are closely related to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Particularly, with the support of the Chinese Yin-Yang theory, it demonstrates that Hofstede’s bipolar cultural dimensions are not sufficient to explain the Chinese culture. The findings also show that Western expatriate academics have stronger cultural sensitivity than the Chinese indigenous academics. Furthermore, the findings show that the organisational context has a stronger impact than the national one on employees’ cultural understanding and working relationships. Based on the findings, practical implications are discussed as well as limitations and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: national culture, Chinese culture, Confucianism, Yin-Yang, academic context, working relationships.
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DEDICATION

To Mommy
For your strength and faith in me
And
To Brother
For your love and understanding

献给妈妈
谢谢你的坚强和信任

献给哥哥
谢谢你的宠爱和理解
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Chapter 1  Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This first chapter of the thesis discusses the current research background of China's internationalised higher education. The research focus and rationale is then presented, as is the thesis outline.

1.2 Internationalised higher education and the academic environment

There has been an increasing trend of internationalisation in higher education, particularly since the late 1980s with the rise of foreign student number studying on campuses and foreign students studying for Western degrees on off-shore campuses (Healey, 2008). It has been regarded as following a similar pattern of internationalisation in business (Scott, 1998; Altbach, 2002, and Hira, 2003). Internationalisation of higher education is mainly reflected in providing university teaching not only to home students, but also towards a global consumer base (Healey, 2008).

The forms within universities vary, depending on the location of the education services provided, and also the format of universities' business operation. Traditionally, universities internationalise their education service by enrolling foreign students to study on universities' home campuses. According to the British Council (2004), universities from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States appeared to be the most popular for foreign students. For example, it was reported that 4,976 Chinese from China started higher education courses in British universities and colleges by Autumn, 2008, which was almost a 15% rise compared to the figure of 2007 (Telegraph, 2008). In 2010, the number of Chinese applicants applying for full-time higher education courses in the UK had increased 26.8%, compared to that of 2009 (UCAS, 2010). Apart from that, universities also expand their market by sending their education services ‘offshore’
to foreign countries (Altbach, 2004). Such ‘offshore’ services include offering part or all of the education in the host country. Moreover, some universities set up their own branch campuses either with a local partner or on their own in foreign countries (Healey, 2008). The volume of international cooperation between Higher Education Institutions from different nations and regions has been increasing in the last two decades, including in China (Wang, 2008; Huang, 2007). NZ Education (2009) pointed out that whether setting up a local campus in China, or having collaborative programmes with a Chinese partner, the leadership and management of new-born organisations are of vital importance for both parties. It concerns not only the direct effect on students’ academic performance and results, but also possibilities of sustainable business profit (NZ Education, 2009).

As a result of the internationalisation of higher education, universities are increasingly recruiting new academic talent on a global scale, and employ more and more academics from abroad in the recent years (Selmer and Lauring, 2009). It has also led to increases in Western academics working as expatriates in China (NZ Education, 2009), and also Chinese working in the Western context as well (Altbach, 2011; Cao, 2008). These two parties come from different cultural backgrounds. It has been claimed (e.g. Barkema et al, 1997) that bridging culture distance between different countries is the key challenge to international organisations. According to Luostarinen (1979, p.131-132), culture distance requires “a need for knowledge”, and in the meantime it facilitated “knowledge and other related factors to flow” between different country origins, such as China and the UK. Hence, it is essential to explore cross-cultural influence within such a working context.

Coming from different national culture backgrounds, academics may have various definitions and understanding about certain things, so that they present themselves and interpret others accordingly. For instance, when a Chinese colleague gives not much comment at a group meeting, a Western academic may interpret it as that the Chinese colleague has agreed with others, which could be quite the opposite of what the Chinese colleague actually thinks. This is because in the Chinese context, remaining silence in a meeting could mean that the Chinese colleague is not willing to express opinion in the public, and prefer to tell his or her opinion in a more private circumstance. In this way, such different interpretation of remaining silence
may cause rather different reactions at workplace, and as a result misunderstanding among colleagues. It has been pointed out that (e.g. (Bilbow, 1997; Selmer, 2006) that while two or more cultures responded and interacted on the same issue, one might misunderstand the other, or be misinterpreted by the other, due to not identifying relevant pieces of information, or overlooking their significance. Hence, proper understanding and interpretation of each other’s cultural background are of great significance to avoid confusion and conflict, so as to build healthy interpersonal relationships among each other.

Furthermore, the communication and involvement of employees are two of the main issues in terms of organisational management and change (Elving, 2005; Gollan, 2005; Hofstede, 1998a; and Thornhill et al, 1996). Hofstede’s (1980a, 1983, 1985) studies demonstrated that culture value systems existed in individuals, companies and national groups. According to him, employees’ communication and performance vary to a large extent depending on these systems. To smooth the collaboration process, and avoid misunderstanding in the academic working environment, it is important to investigate the cross-cultural interaction between academics and its influence on their working relationships.

As it has shown above, a large number of research have been conducted looking at Chinese and Western cultural differences. However, most of the previous research focused on the context of international business (e.g. Fang 2006b; Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Huang, 2007; Quer et al, 2007). There is still a gap of research on Chinese and Western cultural differences and the influences in the context of higher education, particularly in the academic working environment.

1.3 Research focus and rationale

The focus of the current research is to look at internationalised academics working context of higher education organisations, particularly academics from Western and Chinese cultural backgrounds. It aims to explore cultural interaction between Western and Chinese academics, and the influence of different cultural backgrounds on their communication and working relationships.
China has been opening up to the world following the Chinese government’s “opening door” policy in 1978. The importance of education in the country’s economic development was advocated by a number of leaders. Deng (1984) reckoned that science and technology were a kind of common wealth of all mankind, and he believed that international academic exchanges would bring great advantage to the economic development of China. However, the management methods in most public services organisations have not changed, and still remain highly centrally-controlled. Despres and Hiltrop (1995) suggested as information, resources and management styles varied according to leaders and managers’ personality, it was essential to have a set of more organised and agreed rituals for managing teams and staff to share information, and opinions, which would make it easy to commit responsibility and motivate both parties in communication. In the current research, managers and employees form a multinational team. Simply applying a Chinese managing style is obviously not enough for such organisations. It has been noted that culture distance causes “difficulty in transferring management skills” (Buckley and Casson, 1976; Vachani, 1991). Vice versa, foreign management cannot be accepted unconditionally in Chinese culture, either. It was found that the main reason for the failure of international joint ventures was corporations lacking managing skills in an unfamiliar foreign environment (Buckley and Casson, 1988). This implies that in the education industry, it is essential for teams to open up, to be more democratic, to integrate western teaching and managing philosophies into Chinese circumstances, and to strengthen the sustainability of organisations.

For those foreign universities which set up their services in China, their organisational cultural value systems will be carved with an extensive oriental character. However, due to the close involvement of Western employees and management, values are certainly considered to be much more internationalised. In the current study, it is a key issue in the staff management to create a friendly and positive working environment, and avoid the conflict caused by dissimilarities between Chinese and Western cultures. Therefore, it is essential and helpful that Western staff get to know and understand Chinese cultural values, certain ways of thinking, so that it will be easier to communicate with Chinese colleagues. On the other hand, it is important for Chinese staff to learn how to open up and
communicate with foreign staff as well, so that when organisational harmony is achieved, the management and operation of organisations will be smooth and successful.

1.4 Thesis outline

Following the research focus and rationale stated above, the rest of the thesis is structured in ten other chapters. Chapter 2-4 reviews previous literature in the area of culture studies, including national culture, Chinese culture, organisational and global culture. Additionally, Chapter 5 reviews the specific characteristics of the academic context.

Chapter 6 elaborates on the literature review to the current research project, and demonstrates the research gap between Chinese cultural studies and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions.

Chapter 7 outlines the methodological approach of the current research. This chapter justifies the choice of epistemology and describes the research design. Details of the pilot study, bilingual concerns, and ethical concerns are explained. It also provides discussion of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 present the results of data analysis. Chinese concepts of Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony are closely examined in relation to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. The findings are used to inform the discussion in the following chapter.

Chapter 10 presents detailed discussion of the findings. It examines the how Chinese cultural concepts of Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony are related to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions of Individualism/Collectivism, Power Distance, and Long-term/Short-term orientation. Then the chapter also looks at these cultural influences in the academic context.
Chapter 11 is the conclusion of the thesis. Both empirical and knowledge contributions of the current research are discussed, as well as limitations of the study. At the end, this chapter concludes with discussion of practical implications and recommendations for further research to further understand cross cultural interaction in this context.
Chapter 2  National Culture

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of a review from the perspectives of national culture. The literature review starts with definitions of culture and levels of culture. Relating national culture to management, this review elaborates various types of national culture and value dimensions. The advantages and disadvantages of each type are discussed, and the similarity and differences are compared and analysed.

2.2 The concept of culture

Based on the concept of values, culture is defined as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (Hofstede 1980a, 1980b, 1984, and 1991). Although the concept of culture has been defined in many different ways, generally speaking, one common idea that has been incorporated into these various definitions is values (e.g. Hickson and Pugh, 1995; Hill, 1997; Gooderham and Nordhaug, 2001; and Schein, 1992). Values are the core element in culture (Hofstede, 1999), and are considered to be fundamentally important in cultural research. Kluckhohn ([1951] 1962, p.398) stated that “values are clearly, for the most part, cultural products, though each group’s value is interpreted and understood privately to the group, which may even become personal at the individual level”. Singelis and Brown (1995) claimed that cultural values were collective ideas that were used as standards or criteria of people’s behaviour. Individuals are influenced by culture, which represents the similarities of the group. To study group behaviours related to culture, it is important to study, interpret and understand the group values.

According to Schwartz (1994a), values were regarded as trans-situational objectives that changed according to different circumstances, and guided individuals or groups in decision-making. In terms of cultural research, it was claimed (Williams, 1970; Williams, 1979; Markus and Kitayama 1991) that culture consisted of both explicit and implicit values about what was good, right, and
desirable in a society, which were built up in the societal members’ daily customs, laws, norms, scripts and organisational practices. In other words, culture is formed through people’s day-to-day life and it forms people’s judgement which can be applied back to their life.

Along with most researchers’ conceptualisation of culture as the shared interpretations of human behaviours, Smith et al (2002) further suggested that culture also interpreted the actual differences in behaviours, in which values acted as the mediator between culture and human behaviours. According to them, people’s behaviours were actions that were attached to a specific context, and through values people were able to explain these contextualised behaviours without referring to specific circumstances. In other words, values are the bridge that links the broad subjective concept of culture with the context-specified behaviours, and great sensitivity was emphasized while explaining national differences (Smith et al, 2002).

Sweeney and Hardaker (1994) stated that the ways that people thought consciously and subconsciously, made decisions, observed, felt and responded in different circumstances, within internal and external environments were all influenced by culture. The advantages of culture awareness are reflected in realising the existence of culture differences, and predicting people’s responses and behaviours as well. Tayeb (1994) claimed that the advantages of considering culture were not only based on the acknowledgment that cultural values and attitudes had differences in degrees, which might be from one society to another, but also that underlying values and attitudes might cause different behaviours in various cultural groups. Moreover, she emphasized that the strength of considering culture was its significant function in affecting organisations and institutions. In this sense, some extra considerations are necessary while distinguishing cultural differences between various groups. Tayeb (2003) suggested three aspects of culture and its scope. They were: 1) The degrees of cultural differences, instead of the kind, 2) cultural characteristics changed very slowly over time due to their deep roots in history, 3) there was no good or bad culture, but just different ones. Take Hofstede (2001)’s individualism as an example, some groups may have stronger individual characteristics, others may be less individual, but more collective. It shows the difference between the two groups. However, by saying this, it does not
mean that the one with strong individualism is better than the other, or vice versa. Besides, culture can only be changed over a long period of time, as it concerns people’s values, which are influenced by the group’s history, politics, economy and people’s daily life.

On the other hand, culture differences are reflected in people’s different behaviours, and they are carried by each individual. Having been aware of culture differences, it is significant to know how culture is formed and how it is constructed. Triandis (1995) pointed out that culture was caused by people’s interaction. According to him, the ways of people’s thinking, feeling, and behaving were transmitted to each other during their interaction, which automatically became certain ways of responding towards specific situations. Tayeb (2001) suggested that culture could be formed by simply two or more people maintaining certain relationships over a period of time, and it could be distinguished by people who were not involved in the relationships. Hence, Schwartz (1994c) claimed that the appropriate unit of analysis for measuring the validity of cultural dimensions was in the society or group, instead of the individual person. Chiang (2005) underlined that cultural differences were more obvious when different groups were compared. Hence, to identify the difference between each group, it is sensible to look at culture in group contexts, such as academics working in different contexts, locations, and different working orientations. That is to categorise culture into several levels, such as nations, regions, organisations, communities, or even universities. It is the difference of group size that constructs culture at various levels.

Researchers (such as Schwartz, 1994c; Sweeney and Hardaker, 1994; Tayeb, 2003; Chiang, 2005) have come across various problems in dealing with different levels of cultures. In each level of culture, people’s perceptions and behaviours vary according to the change of context. At a national level, people share certain common characteristics, which are different or even unique from other nations. When the context is narrowed to organisations, people are influenced by their national culture which is derived from the living environment, but also they carry certain specific characteristics tailored by the working environment. For example, in the context of higher education, apart from the national culture characteristics that come along with each individual’s life background, university employees, such as academic staff, share certain characteristics which are only related to the academic
working environment. These characteristics can be identified by people outside the academic context. Therefore, the concept of culture will be discussed from different levels, including national level of culture (Chapter 2 and 3), organisational and global culture (Chapter 4), and finally the research context of higher education (Chapter 5).

2.3 National Culture

2.3.1 The effects and measurement of national culture

National culture reflects the characteristics of certain groups of people, who share similar background, education and life experiences, rather than those of individuals or national states (Doney et al, 1998). It was said that national culture was the most common explanation for nation-level differences in terms of individual work behaviours, attitudes, and values (Bond and Smith, 1996; Aycan, 2000), and of great significance in explaining individual level differences as well (Smith, 2004).

As the organisational workforce becomes more diverse and multicultural, researchers have become increasingly aware of the influence of cultural differences on organisational performance and emphasize the understanding of such in organisational management (Nemetz and Christensen, 1996). Hofstede (1994) noted that management practices in various countries were culturally dependent. That is to say when certain management policy or strategy works in one country, it may not work in others. Triandis (1972) noticed that decision making based on available information would vary from one culture to another. As Smith (1992) pointed out, with the increasing importance of internationalisation in world business, the companies who cared and dealt with cultural variations were taking a better strategic stance. Based on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, some researchers examined the application of Western business models and theories to countries which had different cultures, and suggested the specific national context needed to be taken into consideration. Among them, Clark and Mallory (1997) studied applying American business models of human resource management in other countries, and found limited applicability and even failure if the adopting nations do not have close or similar cultures. Smith and Bond (1993) looked into researchers who applied American studies to other national cultures in social
psychological findings, and pointed out the frequent failure was about the validity of applying Western theories in cross-cultural studies, particularly applied in Eastern countries, such as Mainland China. Furthermore, Tayeb (2001) noticed that cultural studies had increasingly focused on the interface activities both between and inside companies, which were mainly addressed to the level of organisations, instead of at the individual level. That is to say, most of the cultural studies mainly focus on the cultural interface activities between companies cross-nationally, instead of the interface between individual relationships, which will be one of the main focuses of the current research.

Espinoza (1999) stated that culture was the most abstract construct influencing human behaviour. Although culture exits in groups and societies, and is carried out through individual behaviours, culture cannot be seen or touched because of its subjective form. One common approach in conducting cultural studies was to measure culture, particularly by researchers from a positivist paradigm, who are keen to see evidences in the real world (Tayeb, 2001). Due to culture’s intangible nature, it was suggested (Denny, 2003) to use behaviour observation, and questioning values and attitudes in national culture research, so that culture could exist as a research variable. This approach makes culture, a subjective form of existing concepts, available to researchers, so that it can be measured and tested through observing and questioning.

To make culture accessible, researchers try to break culture into several dimensions, which are more sensible in terms of measurement. A group of researchers (Leung and Bond, 1989; Schwartz, 1994b; Smith et al, 1996) stated that the main objective of cross-cultural psychology was to identify dimensions for cultural differences, so that culture, as a research object, could be more approachable for researchers. Hofstede (1984) stated that though cultural dimensions stood for useful conceptual distinctions, the dimensions should be based on two requirements: 1) the dimensions should be adapted to certain levels, such as nations, in order to be measured and observed; 2) there should be separate dimensions which leave the nations enough aspects/perspectives to be distinguished. Moreover, it was emphasized (Spini, 2003; Bond, 1988; Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) that in studying inter-individual and cross-cultural differences, the number and content of value dimensions needed careful selection.
Particularly, it is crucial while conducting cultural research in management, because the value dimensions that are used to test or identify cultures have to be context-specific. However, researchers need to bear in mind that the same cultural dimensions, which are successful in one study, may not be able to be fully replicated in different circumstances, due to the change of time, location and research samples.

Inkeles and Levinson (1969, p.447) suggested that in order to make data comparable, cultural studies needed to focus on a certain limited number of psychological issues based on two criteria, 'First, they should be found in adults universally -- second, the manner in which they are handled should have functional significance for the individual personality as well as for the social system'. Schwartz and Sagiv (1995) noticed that the problem of distinguishing the differences between the real cultural world and research samples was rarely addressed in cross-cultural research on values. That is to say most value-related cross-cultural researchers take their own research samples for granted as the image of the real world, so that they attempt to apply, or even generalise their research results into the real world without acknowledging the potential difference between the two contexts.

Among previous research on national culture, there are a few widely accepted and debated national culture dimensions, including Hofstede, Trompenaars and Schwartz. Among them, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are commonly utilised (Barkema and Vermeulen, 1997; Gomez-Mejia and Palich, 1997; Fang, 2003; Zhang et al, 2007; Blodgett et al, 2008). Therefore, the current research will discuss Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, present relevant reviews and critiques, and use it to compare with those from others.

2.3.2 Hofstede’s cultural dimensions

In early 1970s, Hofstede conducted an international employee attitude survey of the IBM Corporation in 20 different languages from 72 countries (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). Based on the comparative attitude surveys data collected from 1967 till 1973, Hofstede categorised culture into four, and in a later study, five
dimensions. These are Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, and Long-term/Short-term orientation. Each dimension is dichotomized into two poles to represent opposite characters.

Power Distance explains people's feelings towards their superiors, and extent of acceptance of equality in the society (Hofstede, 2001). For example, in some countries, a rigorous and disciplined management system is reckoned to be a more appropriate image that managers should give to their subordinates. However, in low Power Distance countries, employees require more equal rights and democracy in the management, where employees expect more participation in the organisations’ decision-making.

Uncertainty Avoidance demonstrates the extent of people’s tolerance when dealing with things that are unknown or not familiar (Hofstede, 2001). In high uncertainty avoidance countries, people cannot stand the existence of unknown situations, and they will work hard to find out the answers by themselves. In low Uncertainty Avoidance countries, people’s emotions are not affected by the uncertainty as much as those in high Uncertainty Avoidance countries.

Individualism/Collectivism shows the closeness of individuals' social attachments to others (Hofstede, 2001). In other words, this dimension shows people’s affiliation to others in their society. In individualistic countries, people are more independent in terms of their social relationship with others. They are only close to their directly related social circle, such as their families. However, in collective countries, people are bound into a bigger group. Besides their own families, they have a strong and close relationship with their relatives, their community, or even their working colleagues. The latter have stronger responsibility and feelings to protect the larger society, rather than being limited to themselves or their own families. Smith et al (1996) stated that Hofstede’s cultural dimensions were validated by establishing the important correlations with indicators from the aspects of geography, economy, and society. Particularly, strong evidence was found in respect of the Individualism/Collectivism dimension, where collectivist countries obviously had lower per capita gross domestic product than individualist countries.
Masculinity/Femininity deal with the way in which individuals behave or respond towards others in different circumstances (Hofstede, 2001). People in masculine countries are more affirmative, and are more concerned about achievement and success. On the other hand, people in feminine countries are softer in terms of their characters. They care more about other’s feelings and emotions.

Based on a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987), Hofstede categorised the fifth cultural dimension, Long-term/Short-term orientation, which was also called Confucian Dynamism. From this Chinese study, Hofstede found that Long-term oriented countries were characterised by thrift and perseverance, while Short-term oriented countries were more respectful to traditions, and protecting one’s “Face” was an important concern. More detailed explanations about this dimension will be discussed in Chapter 3, Chinese culture.

2.3.3 Critiques of Hofstede

There is no doubt that Hofstede’s cultural dimensions pushed cultural research a big step forward (Hofstede, 1991; Fang, 2003; Baskerville-Morley, 2005). At the same time, Hofstede’s dimensions are challenged by many other researchers, and encounter enormous criticism from different fields. In a large scale study of Hofstede’s citations between 1980 to September 1993 from Hofstede’s private library, Sondergaard (1994) revealed that researchers tried to analyse or validate Hofstede’s theory from different angles, but mainly in four ways, citations, reviews, empirical replications, and as a paradigm. Particularly, in the reviews, three major constraints were relating to Hofstede’s work (Sondergaard, 1994). The time effect was the first concern. Hofstede’s research was limited to a specific period, in the end of the 1960s. Secondly, Hofstede’s research samples were a particular work population in IBM, the marketing and sales departments of all countries. An additional concern was raised about Hofstede’s research instrument, the attitude-survey questionnaire. It was questioned whether this kind of research instrument was able to collect a holistic view about national culture. Tayeb (1996) agreed with this and suggested that this kind of attitude-survey questionnaire was not
appropriate for conducting cultural study at all, although it manifested high 
efficiency in terms of comparing data from many countries. Triandis (1982) 
suggested that Hofstede’s research was limited by the use of only one method of 
data collection, questionnaire survey, and suggested using a multimethod research 
design. Upon this, Sondergaard (1994) suggested a multitude of research 
instruments. In other words, various research methods should be considered and 
applied to achieve a more thorough approach in the study of cultural differences.

Aiming at determining the effects of national culture on various business 
phenomena with a quantitative approach, Sivakumar and Nakata (2001) used 
Hofstede’s framework and proposed a different way of selecting indexes to design 
better multi-country samples for international business studies. They assumed that 
Hofstede’s country selection ignored multiple and confounding culture effects, and 
proposed indexes to provide and enhance measures of hypothesis testing strength 
for country combination choices. In other words, more careful design of 
measurement of cultural differences needs to be considered when it comes to 
multi-country research.

On the other hand, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are also examined and tested. 
Some explore the relationships between dimensions and claim that some 
dimensions may represent similar meanings. Based on statistical regression 
analysis, and conceptual comparison and analysis, Yeh and Lawrence (1995) 
stated that two of Hofstede’s dimensions, individualism and Confucian dynamism 
appeared to be highly interrelated, and even represented similar concepts. 
Different from the bipolar types of Hofstede’s national culture dimensions, Fang 
(2006a) suggested that the dialectical and paradoxical nature of culture needed be 
considered, which was crucial for understanding the essence of cultural dynamics. 
He called on researchers to shift the simplified bipolar way to a more 
comprehensive dialectical way in national culture research. Dialectical perspectives 
take into account paradoxes and change, which were able to explain culture from a 
‘both/and’ point of view suggested by Yin-Yang (Fang, 2006a). According to Fang 
(2006a), cultural dimensions were not necessarily two-folded; instead, each side of 
the two could be switched to each other upon different circumstances.
Another important question facing many researchers is whether Hofstede’s theory should be accepted as the fundamental basis for cultural research. Some researchers choose to accept Hofstede’s theories and relate them to their own field. For example, Vitell et al (1993) integrated Hofstede’s four main cultural dimensions with the framework of marketing ethics decision-making, and generated thirteen propositions of the possible cultural effects on decision-making. On the other hand, some other researchers disagree with Hofstede’s theories, and challenge the validity of his conceptual framework and methodologies. McSweeney (2000) reviewed and critiqued the major methodological assumptions of Hofstede’s ‘identification’ research. That is the way that Hofstede claimed to have successfully identified the national culture. By exploring the implications of theorising culture as national, identifying and challenging six important assumptions of Hofstede’s methodology, and challenging the casual relationship between national culture and uniform national-level actions/institutions, McSweeney (2000) drew the conclusion that Hofstede’s work was flawed, and his depiction and characterisations of national cultures were wrong. Furthermore, McSweeney (2002) rejected Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, and argued that Hofstede’s analysis of culture only focused on a very limited level, ignoring the “macroscopic and microscopic” cultural levels and interaction between cultural and non-cultural factors. McSweeney assumed that culture needed to have a holistic and dynamic view to cope with complexity and variability of the subject. However, McSweeney did not manage to propose any plausible approach for the perfect cultural research. Nevertheless, Smith (2002) pointed out that McSweeney’s critique against Hofstede was not based on Hofstede’s own research pattern, but selectively critiqued a couple of contemporary failed cases. Based on Hofstede’s cultural definition, Smith agreed with Hofstede’s approach to data collection and assumed that research data needed to be aggregated to the culture-level, nation-wide, organisation-wide, or in groups, in order to achieve validity in cultural study.

The debate regarding the validity and applicability of Hofstede’s theory relates to an essential issue in culture research. That is researchers’ stance, the choice of the research paradigm between positivist and interpretivist. In each research paradigm, there are differences in terms of the understanding of knowledge, how things works, how the knowledge is produced and accumulated (e.g. Cooper, 1997). Based on the choice of each paradigm, different research methods are chosen, in order to achieve the goals of each particular paradigm. Baskerville (2003) examined
Hofstede’s assumption of equating nation with culture; the difficulties and limitations of the quantification of culture, and the observer’s status from outside the culture. He recommended that researchers’ stance should be taken into careful consideration in cultural research. If a researcher adopts a positivist paradigm, then his or her research methods will be designed to seek “objectivity” in the research, and the research methods will focus on a few key variables and hypotheses. On the other hand, if the interpretivist paradigm is chosen, then the research methods will seek to present comprehensive findings by in-depth analysis and explanation, which are involved with various factors that may not be in the context of cultures, such as taking consideration of time, economy and policy. That is the results from a positivist paradigm will be different from that of an interpretivist point of view. In other words, a theory may be valid in certain world views, but fail in another. Choosing a different paradigm in research determines that the researchers will have different, or even quite opposite world views about the object and the world that they study. Selvarajah (2006, p.143) noted that culture was “a complex phenomenon”. There’s no universally accepted means of measuring culture, nor has there been any satisfactory method to examine the interaction between cultural elements and other factors which may be at play. To avoid misconception or misinterpreting each others’ study, it is indispensable for researchers to acknowledge and be aware of each other’s paradigm.

Compared to the positivist paradigm, some studies (Bhimani, 1999; Harrison & McKinnon, 1999; Redding, 1994) stated that the interpretivist paradigm involved more dynamic interactions among various factors besides cultures, such as institutions, histories, economy, and social adaptation; hence it was able to obtain more comprehensive findings based on complex analysis and discussion. The disadvantages of changing from a positivist to interpretivist paradigm were “losing the objectivity, the precision of nomothetic methods, the credibility of large studies focusing on a few controlled variables, and the comparability of quantitative studies using positivist epistemology” (Williamson, 2002, p.1392). Williamson’s argument raised researchers’ awareness of the switch between different stand points in cultural research.

For example, Williamson (2002) objected to some of McSweeney’s argument and stated that the reason for his criticisms was that McSweeney analysed Hofstede’s
research from a positivist point of view. McSweeney argued that Hofstede’s research methods did not measure and represent the complete comprehensiveness of national culture, as he (2002, p.112) mentioned that ‘If the aim is understanding then we need to know more about the richness and diversity of national practices and institutions – rather than merely assuming their ‘uniformity’ and that they have an already known national cultural cause.’ Williamson (2002) acknowledged the benefit of McSweeney’s critique, which warned researchers about over-depending on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Meanwhile, Williamson (2002) pointed out that McSweeney did not realise the difference in researchers’ stance when dealing with culture study, and suggested a holistic view of culture study in terms of the choice of paradigm.

Additionally, Sondergaard (1994) revealed that in the fields of management and organisation, which deal with multicultural working conditions and human resource management, Hofstede’s dimensions were less frequently applied as a paradigm. In other words, multicultural working conditions are not limited to using Hofstede’s cultural dimensions as a paradigm. The reasons for this vary in different cases. Some may argue from the difference of research samples, some from the research design, and others may argue from the research time period and location. A few main concerns that are pertinent to the current research are to be discussed in Chapter 7, Methodology.

2.3.4 Other cultural dimensions

Apart from Hofstede’s cultural dimensions as the core theory in national culture research, there are two other types of cultural dimensions by Trompenaars and Schwartz. Focusing on country-level cultures, Trompenaars (1993) conducted questionnaire survey from 15,000 respondents, including participants in his cross-cultural training programs and other employees in 30 companies in 50 countries, among whom 75 percent were managers and the rest were general administrative staff. Based on the research data, Trompenaars (1993) suggested seven dimensions of national culture, universalism and particularism, individualism and communitarianism, neutral and emotional, specific and diffuse, achievement and ascription, attitudes to time and attitudes to environment.
Comparing with Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, Mead (1998) pointed out that Trompenaars’ research was less focused and clarified than that of Hofstede’s. Denny (2003) noted a few problems in Trompenaars’ research. Firstly, the participants of the research were not clearly defined. The samples include both managerial and administrative staff, which lost the homogeneity. As Tayeb (1994, p.442) emphasized “to examine the role of culture in employee behaviour and in work organisation, it is important to focus the study on a specific level of organisation and on the cultural characteristics which are assumed to influence that level of work organisation”. Secondly, Denny (2003) found that in Trompenaars’ neutral and emotional dimension, the analysis was based on the data collected from a smaller sample from 11 countries. Thirdly, the attitudes to time dimension was discussed based on literature only, without any actual data support from the research. At the end, another problem came across when researchers tried to compare the country rankings with Hofstede’s study. It was found that Trompenaars ranked the countries according to the answers to the case study questions, instead of the results of each cultural dimension that had been defined in the study. That is Trompenaars ranked the countries in the order of their responses to research questions, rather than according to the cultural dimensions that he identifies, which was Hofstede’s way to rank the countries. In this sense, it is difficult for other researchers who attempt to compare the research results of these two.

Schwartz (1999) assumed that cultural dimensions of values reflected the essential issues or problems that group or societies needed to face in terms of regulating members’ activity. Schwartz (1994c, 1999) surveyed the value preferences of 60,000 individuals in 63 countries at individual and country level respectively and identified seven country-level value orientations.

- **Conservatism or embeddedness**: emphasizes keeping what the traditions are;
- **Intellectual autonomy**: the desirability to pursue individual intellectual directions;
- **Affective autonomy**: the desirability to pursue individual affectively positive experience;
- **Hierarchy**: the legitimacy of unequal distribution of power, roles, and resources;
- **Egalitarianism**: the transcendence of individual interest in committing to promote others’ welfare;
- **Mastery**: improving through active self-assertion;
- **Harmony**: maintaining harmony in the environment.

Schwartz (1999) categorised these seven orientations into three dimensions: 1) embeddedness versus autonomy, 2) hierarchy versus egalitarianism, and 3) mastery versus harmony.

Compared to Hofstede’s and Trompenaars’ cultural dimensions, Schwartz used smallest space analysis to represent the patterns of intercorrelations between the rated values (Smith et al, 1996). However, the values and dimensions from his analysis of results reflected, to a certain extent, most of that found by the previous two researchers (Smith et al, 1996). Brett and Okumura (1998) claimed that Schwartz’s dimensions were more advanced than Hofstede’s in terms of conceptualization, sampling, techniques of measurement and analysis, and more updated data. Steenkamp (2001) pointed out that the theoretical foundations of Schwartz’s dimensions were very strong, though there was no proof of its validity in empirical applications. Drogenkijk and Slangen (2006) examined the effects of national culture on the choice of companies’ entry mode choices using both Hofstede’s and Schwartz’s cultural dimensions. They found that both measures were comparable, and suggested that Hofstede’s work should not be dismissed as outdated or misrepresenting national cultures, and that Schwartz’ framework was not superior to the former.

Due to the large amount of data and strong arguments in favour of culture dimensions, Hofstede’s culture theory has become one of the most popular in the study of national differences. However, before applying Hofstede’s model, researchers should bear in mind that Hofstede’s research is also bonded to a specific context and time. When the research context changes, findings may be different even with the same theories applied. Thus investigations may need to change and adapt the theory accordingly. This also applies to the way in which the theory is understood and interpreted in each study.
2.4 Summary

Analysing the main cultural theories which have originated from Western researchers, some dimensions appear to be commonly shared concepts, even though each researcher has his or her own understanding and interpretation. The shared concepts involve the aspects of people’s interaction with the environment (such as uncertainty avoidance, universalism/particularism, attitudes to the environment); attitude towards time (such as Confucian Dynamism, attitudes to time, achievement and ascription), and various relationships between each other (such as power distance, individualism/collectivism, the specific and diffuse dimension, hierarchy and harmony). However, related to the current research, whether these three concepts can be identified, and how they are applied and interpreted in the context of Chinese culture, requires a detailed explanation of Chinese fundamental cultural theories. Besides, the possible interpretations from the Western culture perspective will be presented to demonstrate the discrepancy from that of the Chinese.

Moreover, people’s values and attitudes are influenced by the major philosophies of their own cultural background. Chinese and Western cultures are represented with different thinking or philosophies. For instance, Confucianism is one of the main philosophies in Chinese thinking. On the other hand, Western thinking is dominated by Christian, Judaeo and Muslim concepts. This may result in considerably different responses to the research questions, which are considered with different priority. While analysing the communication style between the East and West, Kincaid (1987) pointed out that the Eastern thinking emphasized the wholeness and unity of all individual parts in the group. It means instead of taking a bipolar perspective, the eastern thinking regards all parts in the group in a dynamic form, who complement and define each other, and even swap roles when the conditions change. While in Western thinking, one character absolutely stands up against its opposite, and it does not consider the possible role swap between the two. Darwin (1996) claimed that Western thinking was dominated by a dichotomized either/or approach, and Eastern thinking, on the other hand, was opposite to the former by using a both/and approach. In this sense, Western thinking, very often, excludes or does not count one character when the other is
considered. The choice of a bipolar perception and a dialectical one make a significant difference in people’s opinions and decision making. Therefore, it is essential to look at a more detailed analysis upon the differences, particularly from the Chinese perspective.
Chapter 3  Chinese culture

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses recent research in Chinese culture. It then focuses on Confucianism, Yin-Yang theory, and time orientation. Particularly, the key concepts of Confucianism, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony are explained.

3.2 Recent Chinese culture studies

Tayeb (1994) emphasized the involvement of local cultures in designing research tools and questions, so that results would reflect people’s understandings of different concepts due to the specific cultural background. A large part of the current research on Chinese culture is focussed on Mainland China. Chinese culture undoubtedly has a great impact on the organisations operating in that context, in terms of human resources, finance or social relationships. Many researchers have shown interest in studying Chinese culture, and highlighted the significance of its local context in cultural research. Quer et al (2007) conducted a review of empirical research about business and management in China. The review covered 12 leading international journals between 2000 and 2005. They found that little attention was paid to the influence of contextual variables, as most of the research agenda were directed by theories developed in other national contexts. They called on more locally relevant research issues and developing theories which explained Chinese phenomena from Chinese management researchers. Meyer (2006) conducted a literature review to look at Asian management research and claimed that Asian researchers should take account of the local context while applying theories developed in other contexts, and encouraged more indigenous and innovative research in developing theories that explain Asian phenomena. In other words, it is essential to look at the local culture context where the research will be carried out. In this case, it is Chinese concepts and theories.
Concerning the influence of globalisation and modernisation, some researchers raise questions and explore changes caused among Chinese basic values. Reviewing numerous studies about modernisation effects, Yang (1986, 1988) noted that Chinese people became less socially and more individually oriented. However, conducting their research about the influence of relationships in Taiwan and Mainland China, Farh et al (1998) pointed out that some of the most important traditional attitudes, beliefs, and values, such as the concepts related to families and relationship orientation, remained the same and were not likely to be changed or replaced by modern ones. They (Farh et al, 1998) found that such important bases of Guanxi, meaning particularistic ties like kinship, still remained a key social norm in traditional China.

The previous research (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Hofstede and Bond, 1988) summarised a few core traditional Chinese cultural values as: 1) Confucian work dynamism, which demonstrated the contrast of respect for social hierarchy and future orientation against personal steadiness and tradition-orientation; 2) human-heartedness consisting of kindness, patience, forgiveness and courtesy; 3) the integration of tolerance, harmony and solidarity; and 4) moral discipline of moderation, keeping oneself disinterested and pure, and having less desires. Among them, Confucian work dynamism was identified as Hofstede’s long-term and short-term oriented cultural dimension. As shown in Table 3.1 below, persistence (perseverance), ordering relationships by status and observing this order, thrift and having a sense of shame are categorized as long-term orientation; personal steadiness and stability, protecting face, respect for tradition, and reciprocation of greetings, favours and gifts belong to short-term orientation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long-term orientation</th>
<th>Short-term orientation</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Persistence (perseverance)</td>
<td>1. Personal steadiness and stability</td>
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<td>2. Ordering relationships by status</td>
<td>2. Protecting your face</td>
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<td>and observing this order</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Thrift</td>
<td>3. Respect for tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Having a sense of shame</td>
<td>4. Reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts</td>
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</table>

Hofstede and Bond (1988) added this new dimension as the fifth cultural dimension to the previous four, and named it Confucian Dynamism. Robertson (2000) claimed that the existent Confucian Dynamism was to analyse at an individual level, and further extended Hofstede and Bond’s theory by placing Confucian Dynamism construct into sub-categories of future and past/present values, which found link between Uncertainty Avoidance and the Confucian Dynamism. Meanwhile, he acknowledged other factors in the research, such as race, religion, economic status and nationality, which presented a more holistic view upon individual response. Yu and Egri (2005) carried out an investigation on the influence of Chinese traditional values on employees’ satisfaction and organisational commitment in joint ventures and state-owned companies in China. They (Yu and Egri, 2005) found that human-heartedness was significant for employees’ emotional commitment (attachment and involvement with the organisation), and influenced employees’ satisfaction as well in some state-owned companies. In other words, human-heartedness values played a significant role in terms of employees’ emotional involvement towards their companies.

Looking at human resource management in China, De Man and Xiong (2005) proposed that traditional Chinese culture was mixed by a group of different philosophical thoughts, which were partially and mutually contradictory towards each other. Among them, the most important ones were Confucianism, Daoism (Taoism), and Buddhism. While developing a conceptual approach to Chinese negotiation style from personal interviews, Fang (2006b) pointed out that Chinese culture was mainly composed of three philosophical traditions, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, of which Confucianism dealt with human relationship, Taoism dealt with life in harmony with nature, and Buddhism with people’s immortal world. As De Man and Xiong (2005) explained that Confucianism emphasized community, harmony, hierarchy, and the education of people in the virtues of self-constraint, modesty, respect, hard work and loyalty; whereas Daoism stressed strategies and tactics for survival, by cultivating vital powers in harmony with nature. According to them, Confucianism concentrated on public life, institutions and planned intervention, and Daoism focused on the freedom of the individual, non-interference in the natural course of things, and personal perfection.
De Man and Xiong (2005) interpreted the co-existence of Confucianism and Daoism in Chinese culture as Yin (Daoism) and Yang (Confucianism), with the former stressing a collective order and stability of the society as individuals' priority concern, while the latter representing an individual and flexible way of life which emphasized individual well-being without external intervention and individual's compromising their own wishes. With these two sides of Chinese culture, it demonstrates the co-existence of strategic behaviour and ritual, individualism and collectivism, cultural refinement and vital energy. De Man and Xiong (2005) found that the flexible and strategic Daoist aspect was often overlooked by Western researchers, as most research focused on the Confucian side of Chinese culture. On the other hand, Buddhism was pointed out to be (De Man and Xiong, 2005) strongly religion rooted and emphasized concrete religious practice, which contributed to the pragmatic and contextual nature of the Chinese culture.

Cooke (2009) conducted a literature review about research studies on human resource management in China among 34 major business and management related journals published in English between 1998 and 2007. She claimed that in organisational behaviour research, Chinese culture was characterised by collectivism, Confucianism, Power Distance, Face and Guanxi. Furthermore, Cooke (2009) pointed out that among these characters, Guanxi was the key influencing element to smooth interpersonal relationships in the workplace, which explained to a large extent the differences between Chinese and Western behavioural patterns and workplace relationships dynamics.

Summarised from the above, Chinese culture seems to be typified by Confucianism and Yin-Yang. These two theories will be explained and discussed in more detail. Moreover, the key concepts of Confucianism include hierarchical structure, Guanxi, Mianzi, and sense of time. They are the core concepts that influence Chinese behaviours and ways of thinking. The corresponding equivalence of Western cultural concepts will be elaborated as well.
3.3 Confucianism

Moore (1967) claimed that in Confucianism, an individual was regarded as a social entity that interacted with others, rather than being isolated or separated from each other. That means Confucianism promotes a collectivistic perspective of individual behaviour and interpersonal relationships. Hofstede and Bond (1988) stated that Confucianism was a set of pragmatic rules, with four key principles: the hierarchical relationships between people maintain the stability of society; the family prototype in all social organisations; human benevolence of treating others with virtuous behaviour; and virtues in life to be educated, work hard, be thrifty, patient and persevere. Among these four principles, the first three are all related to people’s interpersonal relationships with others, in the aspects of social orders, organisations settings, and individual contact.

Flynn et al (2007) pointed out that Confucianism emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships, avoidance of conflict to maintain harmony, the idea of Mianzi (in Chinese Mandarin ‘面子’, meaning ‘Face’), and respect for age and hierarchy. That is to say Confucianism focuses on interpersonal relationships, Harmony, Mianzi, and respect for age and hierarchy. In Confucianism, individuals were expected to respect and follow tradition and social hierarchy, such as rules, status and authorities, in order to maintain the priority of social integration and stability, and harmonious relationships (Bond and Hwang, 1986; The Chinese Cultural Connection, 1987; Zhang et al, 2005).

Bond (1991) pointed out that Confucian values emphasized a strong sense of group orientation, respect for hierarchy, and expected commitment from the individual to others. Bond (1991) further suggested that the individual might have to compromise his or her own needs in order to contribute to the maintenance of harmony in relationships with others. Within this context, each individual self needed to be treated as part of particular sets of historical and cultural antecedents, rather as an independent entity (Kitayama and Markus, 1999). Looking into the models of the self and well-being, Kitayama and Markus (2003) noticed that in East Asian cultures, individuals’ happiness was regarded in a more subjective form, which could be achieved by not only taking a critical and disciplined stance to the personal self, but also engaging others’ sympathy. In other words, individuals with
East Asian background appear to emphasize the response from their society, and they are more prepared to compromise the personal self to the group. Therefore, the individual’s well-being depends largely on the society’s acceptance and recognition. In this way, individuals’ self well-being came mainly from his or her ability to actively respond to, and eliminate deficits for the socially shared, consensual standards of excellence (Kitayama and Markus, 2003). According to them, a positive evaluation of the individual did not count as much compared to the society. In other words, removing negative features and receiving approval from groups are of great significance for individual well-being, and for the purpose of maintaining the group’s harmony. Investigating self-views and well-being in Japanese and North American cultural contexts, Heine et al (1999) argued that compared to a North American, the individual in Japan are much more interdependent on the continual affirmation from and relationships with the society being involved, and more associated with interpersonal engagement in the society (Kitayama et al, 2000). Moreover, they (Heine et al, 1999, p.788) pointed out the concept of self was ‘both a social product and a social process’, and emphasized that each specific cultural context needed to be taken into consideration. This demonstrates that the individuals within such cultural context have a strong group orientation.

Serving as standards and rules for social interaction, Bond (1996) stressed that these values reflected essential principles of Confucianism and had great influence on Chinese’ attitude toward life. Wong, Shaw and Ng (2010, p.1109) pointed out that Confucianism was possibly the most influential, and that it provided moral guidelines for the Chinese ‘on how to behave, think, feel and act both in the private and in the public realm’. According to them, the essence of Confucian teaching in Chinese culture was maintaining harmony in interpersonal relationships, ranging from family members, to others in the clan, the community and society. In other words, harmony and relationships (Guanxi) are the foundations of Chinese social behaviour. Many researchers have found that Guanxi is related to Harmony and Mianzi (Hwang, 1987 and 1997-1998; Kirkbride et al, 1991; Knutson et al, 2000; Chen, 2002). Therefore, it is important to have a good understanding of the key values of Confucianism, Guanxi, hierarchy, Mianzi and Harmony.
3.3.1 Guanxi

Adler (1983) stated that deciding the extent of culture’s influence on an individual’s behaviour at work was one of the basic issues of cross-cultural management research. Though East Asian countries are reckoned to share Confucianism, the management strategies vary when being applied in each country. Leung (2006) pointed out that the management constructs varied in Asia, such as Japan used total quality management, Taiwan was famous for its paternalistic leadership, while Hong Kong had the interest in relational capitalism. In terms of Mainland China, he further suggested the prominent management constructs that were commonly applied were Guanxi and the relationships with management. Butterfield (1983) pointed out that the Chinese had a much stronger tendency to treat people differently by dividing them into different categories. Farh et al (1998) claimed that such tendency was based on people’s relationships, and that Guanxi played a significant role in choosing a relationship and consequently influencing the mutual trust between people in a relationship.

Fan (2002) pointed out that the meaning of Chinese characters varied when they were used as a noun or verb, and when they were used with another character to form a phrase. In terms of Guanxi (关系), the first character 关 (Guan) as a noun means ‘a pass’ or ‘barrier’, while it means ‘to close’ as a verb. The second character 系 (Xi) means ‘system’ as a noun, whereas ‘to tie up’ or ‘link’ as a verb (Fan, 2002). When these two characters were put together, 关系 (Guanxi), Lee and Dawes (2005) translated Guanxi as ‘pass the gate and get connected’. The concept of Guanxi referred to interpersonal relationships or connections, which existed in almost every aspect of life in Chinese culture, including kinship to friendship, and politics to business (Chan, 2006). Fan (2002) explained that such interpersonal relationships between people could be either in a group, or being related to a common person, which could be in frequent contact or little direct interaction at all.

In other words, Guanxi, in Chinese mandarin, means relationships. Jacobs (1979) defined Guanxi as a “particularistic tie” between people. According to him, Guanxi was the web of social connections where two or more people shared identification. Farh et al (1998) claimed that Guanxi referred to the existence of direct
particularistic ties between an individual and others. King (1991) described *Guanxi* as basically a type of personal connection, and further extended the meaning to a much broader community with an unlimited number of people connected together. King (1991) stated that *Guanxi* formed a more expanded group which allowed the individuals sufficient social and psychological space to build relationships with others based on real and fictive kinship. King (1991) used a Chinese phrase “*tian-xia yi-jia*” (天下一家) to describe this kind of relationship status, meaning the world was connected closely like one big family. That is to say Guanxi does not only exist between people who have a real kinship that connect them together as a family, but also applies between people who do not share any kinship at all.

Bell (2000) emphasized that Guanxi was built upon the basic relationships, which in Confusion logic are categorised as *Wulun* (五伦), and further developed other ties within the community, which surpassed the concept of simply connection among people. *Lun* (伦) stood for individuals’ proper positioning within a social and political hierarchy (Lin, 1939). According to Fei (1992, in Bell 2000), Chinese people were linked by two-way social ties, in Chinese called *gang* (纲), and that Guanxi was formed by these interpersonal ties which were based on three closest relationships (*Sangang*, 三纲) out of five (*Wulun*, 五伦), which will be explained further in 3.3.3 Harmony where the significance of social relationships will be discussed in more detail), the ties between father and son, emperor and official, and husband and wife. Based on the core hierarchical relationships, Mead (1990) claimed that in such collectivist cultural contexts with high power distance, the importance of people’s message depended a great deal on their status, especially in terms of age and social position, which requested respect and disarmed criticism.

Furthermore, Bell (2000) claimed that Guanxi implied the most profound type of relationship, which surpassed the commonly used English term as “relationship” only. He (Bell, 2000) further pointed out that the most basic form of Guanxi was the mutual assistance offered between people in the same community when needs arose. Namely, Guanxi is built up gradually through people’s daily contact and social interaction. When circumstances arise or favours are needed, people use Guanxi to approach their contacts and ask for favours. As it was defined, Guanxi is a more personal connection, which gives contacts a more personal touch when
they are approached. Tai (1989, in Lovett et al, 1999) stated that Confucius Wulun formed a very personal and particular ethics among Chinese, which required a specific individual relationship upon each circumstance. In this sense, Guanxi, an individual-dependent personal relationship, appears to function very well under such Confucius ethical precepts, and represents Confucius individual-emphasis concepts. By giving the favour, Guanxi brings people's relationship closer. Through Guanxi, people support and are supported in a big community. The more Guanxi one has, the bigger network one builds, hence more important his or her role is to others. Accordingly, Guanxi works as glue that brings people together.

Luo (1997) emphasized five key features of Guanxi as: transferable, reciprocal, intangible, essentially utilitarian rather than emotional, and personal. Being transferable means Guanxi can be transferred between individuals. For example, A may introduce his/her friend C to A's acquaintance B, when A feels comfortable enough about his/her relationship with B and C respectively. In this way, A's relationship with B is transferred to a new relationship between C and B. Being reciprocal means one follows the equity and returns the favour to others, who previously helped the former. The consequence of failing to follow the equity will cause the former losing Mianzi (Face) among friends, and thus trust as well. In terms of being intangible, it means that Guanxi is built up gradually through people's commitment to the others by exchanging favours, instead of committing with emotions, which make Guanxi utilitarian rather emotional. Finally, Guanxi is established personally at the beginning, even though later on it may be used at an organisational level.

Guanxi links people together, and builds up a network among individuals with a personal approach. Guanxi could be used to describe social networking (Yeung and Tung, 1996b). Park and Luo (2001) stated that Chinese society functioned as a clan-like network with the basic societal rules, values, and hierarchical structures of authority of Confucianism. Particularly, they claimed that the practice of Guanxi, which came from Confucianism, formed the networks of interpersonal relations and cultivated the cultural aspects of collectivism. Therefore, with a strong collective character, Chinese are used to and comfortable with being in a big group, and sharing a caring-of-others concept. To Chinese, it is easy to adapt to Guanxi, by sharing and expanding their own Guanxi. Westerners, who have a strong
individualistic value, are more used to being independent and appreciate their own privacy. They are not involved with others as close as Chinese, neither depend on others as much as the latter. To some extent, Western regarded Guanxi as 'using' others, and considered it to be unethical according to Western morality (Lovett et al, 1999; Vanhonacker, 2004). According Su and Littlefield (2001), Guanxi was enigma to Westerners, which required too much personal commitment. However, while living in China, Guanxi is a necessary way to engage in social activities. Some foreigners tend to maintain some Guanxi at a low level in case any crucial circumstances arise, which may require favours from others. In a collectivistic context, Guanxi is important to the group, and makes the members feel secure and supported by each other. While in an individualistic context, Guanxi is an excessive factor to the members, who may not need it at all, so that it may be hard for Guanxi to survive or expand. In this sense, the existence of Guanxi is related to the context.

Previous research has identified different views about Guanxi. Some considered Guanxi was the same as networking in the West (Wellman, Chen and Dong, 2002). Whereas some reckoned Guanxi was unique to Chinese culture (Hung, 2004; Lin, 2001). Redding et al (1993) noticed that Guanxi was a personally-defined network which was formed by reciprocal bonds, and that such relationships were connected through an intermediary. In other words, Guanxi is not simply just networking, although both concepts share the idea of building relationships with other people. This concept was agreed by Chan (2006), who pointed out that Guanxi differed from the Western concept of networking based on the fact that the latter was impersonal and, to a large extent, at the organisational level. To compare the differences between Guanxi and Western networking, Tung and Worm (2001) conducted face-to-face interviews based on Yeung and Tung (1996a)'s Guanxi questionnaire among European managers, regarding perception of Guanxi and its effects on the European companies business in China. Tung and Worm (2001) summarised three main differentiations: 1) Guanxi was more pervasive in terms of connecting the amount of people and the aspects of societal functioning; 2) compared to networking, Guanxi was a stronger depth and more time oriented relationship, which required people's commitment to maintain the relationship even when there was no favour needed; 3) Guanxi involved more personal nature. In Guanxi, people built up relationship based on personal trust, while the Western networking was more related to the organisational level communication. According to their research (Tung and Worm, 2001), it was found that although European
managers realised such differences between Guanxi and Western networking, and the significant effect of Guanxi in the Chinese context, they were not willing to adapt the policies and practices in China and build such kind of relationships, which to some extent restrained them from obtaining greater business success in China.

Davis et al (1995) conducted a survey among Hong Kong Chinese executives, investigating their perceptions of the benefits and importance of Guanxi in China. It was found that doing business in the Chinese market should be done in a way that Chinese could feel comfortably involved, which might include those who did not necessarily have direct involvement. Davis et al (1995) suggested Western managers adapt to such a kind of concept and approach, while doing business in China. Chua, Morris and Ingram (2009) investigated Chinese and American managers’ configuration of trusting relationships within their professional networks. They found that Chinese managers had stronger trusts for the third party-introduced relationships than the American ones. That is to say Chinese managers relied more on Guanxi than the American’s direct networking.

The importance of Guanxi in doing business in China or with Chinese is not only recognised by business people from Chinese origins, but also is more acknowledged among Western companies. Lovett et al (1999) looked at Guanxi from an ethical point of view, explored its advantages and disadvantages through a mathematical model, and claimed that Guanxi could be an efficient alternative to the Western market system under certain circumstances, especially when expanding international business into Confucianism dominated countries. As Li and Wright (2000) claimed that, expatriate managers felt the need to play the Guanxi game in the Chinese context. Tsang (1998) claimed that it was necessary for Western companies to build and protect Guanxi in China, in order to achieve success while doing business in China. Furthermore, Tsang (1998) pointed out that for the purpose of maintaining competitive advantages of doing business in China, Western managers’ understanding of Guanxi needed to be encouraged and enhanced. Conducting semi-structured interview research of Chinese and non-Chinese employees in Western companies in China, Bjorkman and Kock (1995) claimed that Guanxi was the prerequisite to achieve information and business exchange in marketing, and recommended different choices of operational mode to gain access into Chinese social network.
Besides Guanxi’s effect on organisations, some researchers look at its influence on expatriates who have to deal with social networking while working and living abroad. Wang and Nayir (2006) conducted a survey among European expatriates in both China and Turkey. They found that the expatriates’ social interaction patterns in China were closer and more often than those in Turkey. The researchers (Wang and Nayir, 2006) claimed that China was much further away for Western expatriates than Turkey, and it was more difficult for them to go back home and visit families and friends. Because of this, it was found that Western expatriates had to build their own network in China and were able to spend more time with the new network in China. Hence, Wang and Nayir (2006) found that European expatriates obtained closer support networks in China. Although Wang and Nayir (2006) focused their research on how far expatriates were away from their home country, it was suggested in their research implication that expatriates’ social networking difference might be formed by the local culture. Particularly, the social networking in China is dominated by Confucius Guanxi concept, a more personal approach which requires people to maintain contact as a group, no matter whether favours are required or not.

To examine and obtain a better understanding of Guanxi, researchers have also related and compared Guanxi to Hofstede’s well-developed culture study. Dunning and Kim (2007) pointed out that Confucianism emphasized highly harmony and hierarchy, and investigated relations between Hofstede’s well-developed cultural dimensions, particularly collectivism and power distance dimensions, on Chinese concepts of Guanxi, harmony and hierarchy. They (Dunning and Kim, 2007) found that Guanxi was deeply involved in Chinese cultural characteristics, Collectivism and Power Distance, and proposed that Guanxi was indigenous to Chinese culture with a strong emphasis on harmony and hierarchy. Apart from Dunning and Kim’s research, Guanxi can also be related to Hofstede’s other dimension, such as Uncertainty Avoidance. Though Guanxi emphasizes the individual contact within personal networking, which mainly links people together through personal trust, the result of Guanxi is to build individual contact and link people together and emphasize the community type of network, which expands individual networking from at least 2 persons, to as many as over 10 people, or even more when it is needed. This reflects the collective concept of Chinese community. In other words,
Chinese people feel more comfortable to communicate and exchange information in a collective way, through people who they know or their acquaintances know. When it comes to dealing with unknown people and situations, the uncertainty is adjusted and eventually replaced by mutual personal trust. On the other hand, Western networking focuses more on the organisational context. At the personal level, Westerners maintain individual contact, which is not that much beyond their own individual contact, such as linking themselves with other acquaintances, or maintaining relationships at a personal level or with people from other groups. Westerners’ high uncertainty avoidance about unknown people and situations enhances their individuality and independence in order to seek relationships and solutions by themselves, unlike Chinese who mainly count on friends or acquaintances’ help to solve problems.

Reflecting the differences between Guanxi and Western networking, the above research was conducted within the business context, where people work intensely to achieve organisational profit. However, within the academic work environment, both indigenous and expatriate employees focus on research and teaching. It is interesting to find out whether such significance of Guanxi and Western networking for business people would be the same for academics. In other words, the current research will look at whether academic staff share the same understanding about the differences between Guanxi and Western networking as business people, and the extent of emphasis on applying Guanxi during their intercultural contact. Particularly, in terms of academic expatriates, the question is whether in the Chinese context, academic expatriates are closer to local staff in China compared with Chinese expatriates working in Western universities. Moreover, the current research will illustrate the difference between Guanxi and Western networking. Hofstede’s Individualism/Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance will be used to analyse how people’s relationships are formed and operated in Guanxi and Western networking. It will seek to further demonstrate the different understanding and approach of Western versus Chinese personal relationships.

### 3.3.2 Mianzi

In Chinese Mandarin, Mianzi literally means people’s face, which is represented in an individual’s public self-image to others (Merkin, 2006). Mianzi refers to an
individual’s social position or prestige, which was gained by fulfilling one’s specific social roles recognised by others (Hu, 1944). Luo (2009, p.28) interpreted Mianzi as “an individual’s reputation or value in the eyes of others”. Buttery and Leung (1998) pointed out that Mianzi was ‘the Chinese concept of giving “face”’. It was claimed (Buttery and Leung, 1998) that Mianzi referred to showing respect to someone, recognising social status and moral reputation within Chinese society, and enhancing such status by whatever way possible. In this sense, Mianzi is related to status, ego or self-respect. Saving or losing Mianzi means whether one’s status is respected and recognised by others or not. Meanwhile, Mianzi involves an individual’s way of dealing with his or her relationships with others, which is represented as giving others face or losing others’ face. Giving others Face is to help support and praise others’ reputation in a society, whereas losing others’ Face, on the other hand, is to denounce others, in terms of status and reputation (Buttery and Leung, 1998). Particularly, making others lose Face implies the loss of confidence and lack of trust between people’s relationships (Brunner and Wang, 1988). Ho (1976) emphasized that the relationships with others was in his study the core element to make the Face concept meaningful. Luk, Fullgrabe, and Li (1999) emphasized the significance of Mianzi as a crucial component of Guanxi. Mianzi and Guanxi develop together, and nurture each other.

Apart from that, the causes of losing Face vary from personal issues to group ones upon different occasions. Mianzi has been one of the main themes in Chinese life. Its significance was obviously emphasized in a few popular Chinese proverbs, such as “Borrowed plumes”, “To undergo a terrible ordeal in order to save face” (Be more nice than wise), “people live on their face, trees live on their skin”, which all implied that “the normal lives of Chinese people, that is living for face” (Shi et al, 2010, p.1). To Westerners, the meaning of losing Face may not be easily or even properly understood. To Chinese, Mianzi can be identified at different levels. On the individual level, Face is considered as the Chinese individual ego. When losing Face, it indicates the personal ego being damaged. Chan (2006) claimed that losing Face meant a person did not deserve honour or glory. While from a collective point of view, Face is interpreted as traditional honour of a group or society. Hence, it is important to defend a group’s or society’s reputation. In this sense, the definition of losing face can be confusing, sometimes depending on individual and collective level. Yeung (2006) pointed out that caring-of-others was one of the key natures in Confucian principle. This claim agreed with Hofstede
(1980b)’s finding that one of the key characters of people in collective countries was having strong responsibilities and feelings to protect the larger society. Ho (1976) pointed out that Chinese would do their best not to offend, reveal or embarrass personal difficulties in order to protect Face, which was a common attribute of all Chinese. In the Chinese context, it is important not only to protect one’s own Face, but also to pay great attention to care for others’ Face, in order to maintain a harmonious relationship with others and within the group as well. Kelly et al (1987) assessed the effects of culture on managerial attitudes in China, Japan and Mexico, and noted that Chinese emphasis on saving Face, in fact, demonstrated a great concern for individuals. Furthermore, it emphasizes a harmonious way to work out or solve conflict. In this sense, losing Face can upset people and cause disgrace. Therefore, to maintain harmony of the society, Chinese tend to save each other’s Face and not to upset others, which often leads to avoiding issues, and not confronting directly at all.

3.3.3 Harmony

The concept of Harmony derived from Confucianism, and served as its cardinal principle (Wang and Juslin, 2009). Based on Confucius and Taoism teachings, Chinese believed that everything should be in harmony (Pitta et al, 1999). Discussing Confucianism from a critical point of view, Leung et al (2002) recapped that harmony was to maintain a mutually respectful relationship and to show concern for humanity and morality, so that commonly acceptable views were able to be maintained. While investigating Chinese cultural values’ influence on young Chinese students’ choice of overseas study destination and communication sources for university choice, Chung et al (2009) confirmed the significance of harmony for Chinese students to integrate into the host society and adapt their study and life overseas. According to Leung et al (2002), the purpose of harmony was not to avoid disagreement and confrontation, but to serve more advanced level of goals in the society, such as benevolence and righteousness.

As one of the key principles in Confucian teaching, Wulun, meaning five basic relationships, formed the society. As shown in Table 3.2 (Fan, 2000), Wulun were five relationships between ruler and subordinate, father and son, elder brother and
younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend as well (Buttery and Leung, 1998; Hofstede and Bond, 1988).

Table 3.2 Wulun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Human Relations</th>
<th>Principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sovereign and subject (or master and follower)</td>
<td>Loyalty and duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father and son</td>
<td>Love and obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and wife</td>
<td>Obligation and submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder and younger brothers</td>
<td>Seniority and modelling subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend and friend</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Fan, (2000), p.4

Each of these five core relationships represents different principles. There were mutual and complementary obligations in these relationships: the junior partner respected and obeyed the senior partner, and the senior were protective and considerate to the junior (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). Wang et al (2005) pointed out that apart from the last relationship between friends, all other ones in Wulun were in nature typical dominant-subservient relationships. Each individual member of the society was expected to comply with these unequal relationships and behave properly according to their own social status, so that the stability of the society was able to be maintained (Berling, 1982). That is to say five relationships share one common character, which is the significance of acknowledging status differences between different roles. In other words, hierarchy has been the key to guide people’s behaviour within these five basic relations.

Buttery and Leung (1998) pointed out that Confucianism was to create a harmonised society, where individuals were aware of his or her proper positions and followed the rules. Therefore, by following the order of Wulun, Confucianism aimed to achieve people’s self-cultivation and a harmonious society which maintained ethics and morality, and educated people to be self-motivated and self-controlled to take responsibilities (Murphy and Wang, 2006; Wang and Juslin, 2009).
Confucianism is one of the dominant concepts not only in China, but also among other East Asian countries. Conducting a conceptual analysis, Leung et al (2002) stated that harmony, one of the main Confucian constructs, played an important role in East Asian culture studies. However, looking at the culture similarities shared in Eastern countries, the researchers need to bear in mind the differences that vary from one country to another. Several studies (Yang and Cheng, 1987; Zhang and Harwood, 2004, and Zhang et al, 2005) suggested that modernisation and globalisation influenced the impact of traditional values in these countries, such as thrift and conservatism were not emphasized as much, while interpersonal harmony, the core and deep-rooted Confucian value, was more indigenous in the East Asian cultural context and might coexist with modernity. Particularly, Zhang et al (2005) explored similarities and differences of the fundamental East Asian cultural values, and suggested that East Asian cultures vary one country from another, and should not be treated as the same. They further pointed out that the development of Confucian characteristics varied in each East Asian country, and that China was the most traditional Confucian society of all in terms of harmony and social hierarchy.

Peng et al (2001) carried out a profound literature review about the cultural and institutional study of Greater China, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. Their research found some typical differences between Chinese and Western countries. For example, the social exchange, which emphasizes the idea of reciprocity, is more useful for improving the economy than in Western countries, where rational exchange applies. Recent research has placed increased emphasis on the link between Confucianism and economic growth. Leung (2006) suggested that certain sets of values were helpful to the East Asia’s rapid economic growth, and recommended researchers to focus attention on international management research in Asia by examining at both firms’ and individual levels of relationships between values and performance. Based on East Asian experience, Leung (2006) proposed a value-based hypothesis for economic growth that: if a nation’s value shifted to thrift, persistence, respect for social order based on status, and having a sense of shame among its people, it would foster the nation’s economy to rapid growth. Furthermore, Peng et al (2001) noted that disadvantages of Chinese cultural research were the ignorance of
differences among Chinese, and pointed out that current Chinese culture research lacked a dynamic view of changes and should not exaggerate the role of culture in terms of economic growth. Complying with the idea of identifying differences in Chinese culture in East Asian countries, Leung and White (2004) noted that it was not sufficient to define East Asian cultures into one category because of their similarities, and called on more comprehensive cultural frameworks to distinguish their similarities and differences. Leung (2006, p.237) stated that “culture is indeed multi-faceted, and while East Asian countries are similar in some dimensions, they differ in many other important dimensions”.

3.4 Yin-Yang theory

According to Chan (1963), Yin-Yang’s influence existed in every aspect of Chinese civilisation, including metaphysics, medicine, government, and art. In Yin-Yang philosophy, as shown in Figure 3.1, everything includes two parts, Yin (in Chinese Mandarin, ‘阴’, the dark) and Yang (in Chinese Mandarin, ‘阳’, the white). Literally, Yin refers to the dark side of the figure, which represents female elements, such as ‘the moon, night, water, weakness, darkness, mystery, softness, and passivity’; whereas Yang refers to the white side of the figure, representing male elements like ‘the sun, day, fire, strength, brightness, clearness, hardness, and activity’ (Fang, 2006, p. 70). In terms of structure, the core components within Yin-Yang are similarly categorised as those in the bipolar paradigm, which divides things into two extremes. However, in the dialectical paradigm, either Yin or Yang cannot exist merely on its own, as each contains the existence of the other. There was no complete delimitation between Yin and Yang, as each side contained the seed of the opposite, which was able to turn one side into its opposite when circumstances allowed (Chen, 2001). That is to say when conditions change, either internally or externally, Yin may transform into Yang, and vice versa, Yang may convert into Yin. Hence, such dynamics between Yin and Yang, with one side carrying the seeds of the opposite and possibly changing to the opposite, formed a changing unity (Chen, 2001). In this way, Yin-Yang theory provided a holistic and paradoxical worldview and methodology (Faure and Fang, 2008).
According to Fang (2006b), Yin-Yang represents the dualism of Taoist philosophical principles, which is taken as a cosmic symbol of primordial unity and harmony. Yin-Yang theory contains contradiction, paradox and change, and offers a dialectic worldview with both a paradoxical and balanced approach to life, based on which Chinese people were taught to react and behave differently due to the change of circumstances (Fang, 2006b). Compared to Western concepts of contradictions, Li (2011, p.18) pointed out that contradictions were not regarded as problems in Yin-Yang. Instead, they were regarded as ‘the natural and organic core of both existence (Ontology) and knowledge (epistemology)’, which regarded all contradictions as ‘permanent yet relative (contrary yet complementary)’. As Chinese philosophical principle of dualism and paradox in the manifest world, Yin-Yang exists in everything, including Confucianism (Chan, 1963; Fang, 2003) According to Fang (2003), each of the Confucian values involved both Yin and Yang, which had constructive and destructive qualities. Therefore, Fang (2003) pointed out that Chinese culture was difficult to understand for Westerners who were mainly used to a bilateral either-or thinking.

Furthermore, Faure and Fang (2008) stated that such ‘paradoxical values’ were seemingly contradictory, but also were true within the same society. They (Faure and Fang, 2008) suggested it was necessary to use the Yin-Yang perspective to study and capture the complexity of Chinese culture. Hence, it is essential to use Yin-Yang theory to analyse interpersonal relationships in the Chinese context.
The essential concept of Yin-Yang theory acknowledged paradoxes, and proposed opposite forces coexisting simultaneously, and exchanging their positions at a given time, which suggested a dialectical and paradoxical view of universal phenomena was necessary to research culture (Fang, 2006a). Based on the Chinese Yin-Yang concept, Fang (2003) reviewed Hofstede’s Confucian Dynamism, analysed the Chinese Value Survey from a Chinese’ understanding and interpreted the results into the Chinese context. The disadvantages of Hofstede’s positivist paradigm in analysing national culture are identified. For example, Fang’s (2003) analysis found that Hofstede’s Long-term and Short-term oriented dimensions were not opposite to each other. On the contrary, Hofstede’s Long-term and Short-term oriented dimensions appeared to be interrelated, and further argued that Hofstede’s fifth dimension was self-conflicted as the values labelled in either of the orientations might shift to the opposite one when conditions changed. He further pointed out that the common contrasted cultural measurement appeared to be obsolete in current diversified culture research. Fletcher and Fang (2006) emphasized the significance of ‘both/and’ character of Asian cultures, which was different from the ‘either/or’ bipolarised national culture studies. Compared to classical Western logical resolutions to social conflicts, Chinese preferred dialectical resolutions and arguments, and accepted both apparently contradictory propositions more comfortably when they were presented at the same time (Peng and Nisbett, 1999). It was claimed that in a complex cultural background like China, which was dominated by Yin-Yang, the culture interacted between two extremes (Nisbett, 2003). Although the clarity and consistency were acknowledged as the strength of the bipolar national culture paradigm in identifying cultural dimensions and facilitating cross-cultural comparisons, it was also pointed out that this approach might have missed the dialectical perspective as culture intrinsically consisted of paradoxes and change (Osland and Bird, 2000; Fang, 2006a).

Fang (2006a) stated that in each national culture, the internal Yin-Yang mechanism transformed a dynamic internal cultural change between Yin and Yang, sometimes even without the influence of external factors. Using Yin-Yang theory, Fang (2006a) emphasized external conditions which influence culture changes, including situation, context and time. That is to say Yin-Yang dynamics also depends on the circumstances of external influence. When situation, context and time change, Yin-Yang dynamics may change as well. Considering the external factors and internal change, the dialectical paradigm of national culture does not rely on the stability of
culture at the certain period of time only. Instead, it offers a more comprehensive approach to cultural research. It recognises the basic components of culture, which are the core elements in Hofstede’s bipolar paradigm. Moreover, it takes both external factors and internal dynamic into account in cultural changes, which enhances the explanation for cultural change and increases the entirety of cultural research. In order to employ various cultural dimensions to research more globalised societies, the bipolar paradigm is not sufficient to advance the knowledge of national culture and international cross-cultural management (Osland and Bird, 2000; Fang, 2006a).

3.5 Time orientation

Another concept in Confucianism is its contradictory time orientation (Wang et al, 2005). Hofstede (1991) claimed that Chinese culture was long-term oriented, and it focused on looking into the future. With a long history of 5,000 years, the Chinese are proud of and prone to traditions. To a great extent, Chinese mindset and behaviours are influenced by history. Wang et al (2005, p.318) pointed out that the Chinese “look upon each experience as unique and not accumulative in a linear fashion”, because Chinese took time as “a process of eternity” and highly evaluated the quality and enjoyment of life. In this way, Wang et al (2005) interpreted Chinese sense of time as appreciating the short length of life, and emphasizing enjoying life on each specific occasion. That is to say Chinese regards each specific occasion as a unique circumstance. Hence, it will be treated with great care and quality by compromising other matters, in order to achieve the best outcome from that specific occasion. This perspective of time was a distinguishing contrast from that of Westerners, who highly related time to efficient achievements and carefully planned to reach either personal or organisational goals (Wang et al, 2005).

However, the Chinese sense of time is not about enjoying life only. As influenced by Yin-Yang, the Chinese sense of time also has two facets. Apart from the concept of time being flexible and repeatable no matter how much pressure people would receive from their daily life and work, time was also precious to Chinese while they aimed to achieve goals in life, and was treasured by working hard and efficiently meeting goals (Fan, 1995; Xing, 1995; and Wang et al, 2005). In other words, when it comes to achieving goals, Chinese share the similar time orientation
as Westerners, and focus on working efficiently to complete tasks. Hence, Chinese
time orientation can be confusing depending on the individual's emphasis on each
specific circumstance, either achieving goals in life or treasuring the quality of life.

3.6 Summary

This chapter presented a discussion of the key concepts of Confucianism, including
Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony. In addition, Chinese culture also looked at Yin-Yang
theory and time orientation as well. The literature review suggested that Western
cultural dimensions might not be sufficient to explain the Chinese culture. It showed
that the bipolar approach of Western cultural dimensions did not seem to
comprehend the Chinese cultural concepts, which required a dialectical way of
thinking, such as Yin-Yang theory.

Leung (2006) stated that the key reason for international management research
was to generalise management theories and look for new breakthroughs at the
same time. In the context of East Asia, he further claimed that due to the big culture
differences compared to Western countries, some modification might be needed in
order to generalise management theories in East Asia, and that there would be
new theories which were specifically tailored for East Asia. Even though a lot of
studies had been done about Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, who were
Chinese majority countries and shared very similar culture with Mainland China,
Tse (1998) emphasized that culture recognition and awareness were necessary
and significant to distinguish different managerial system in Mainland China, in
order to have the most effective solutions. Having looked at Chinese culture
theories, the next chapter will discuss organisational and global culture.
Chapter 4  Organisational and global culture

4.1 Introduction

Following the previous chapters reviewing culture at national and Chinese contexts, this chapter provides explanation of organisational culture. Then the discussion will explore the influence of global culture.

4.2 Organisational culture

Chiang (2005, p.1546) claimed that “the effects of culture are witnessed or manifested in employee attitude and behaviour, such as communication, leadership, performance, motivation and satisfaction”. Hofstede (1994) pointed out the differences between national culture and organisational culture. According to him, national culture was mainly represented with people’s basic values, and its differences might lead to conflict when people worked with others from a different national background (Hofstede, 1984). In other words, national culture’s differences would cause conflict at workplace. In terms of organisational culture, Hofstede (1994) claimed that organisational culture differed at the level of organisational practices, which were represented by rituals, heroes and symbols (Figure 4.1: The “Onion Diagram”). Rituals were collective activities, which were regarded as socially essential. Heroes were people who were highly prized in the culture and thus served as models for others’ behaviour. Symbols were the most overt elements in a culture, which included gestures, pictures or objects shared by others in the same culture (Hofstede et al, 1990). As shown in Figure 4.1, values were the core of culture, which was acquired in people’s young age (Hofstede et al, 1990), whereas organisational practices were learned through workplace socialisation (Pascale, 1985). He further noted that organisation culture was comparatively more manageable and easier to change by altering the practices, compared to national culture.
Schein (2004) used level as a unit to identify the degree of cultural visibility to observers. He defined level as “the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer” (Schein, 2004, p.25). According to him, culture could be identified at three levels, artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions. Artefacts are presented as the visible products, such as the phenomena that people can see, hear and feel about the group. Espoused beliefs and values mainly predict the group’s behaviour that can be observed at the level of artefacts, which can be what people say or do. Basic underlying assumptions are the deeper level of understanding about the group’s culture. These assumptions cannot be confronted or debated, thus they are very difficult to change. Among these three levels, the concept of basic underlying assumptions is similar to Hofstede’s idea of basic values in culture. Applying these levels into organisational management, Schein (2004) emphasized the importance of leaders’ understanding about underlying assumptions of culture and evaluating the functionality of assumptions, both of which were highly related to dealing with the change of organisational culture. That is to say leaders’ understanding of culture plays an important role in dealing with organisational culture.
Organisational culture was defined as “the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1984, p.3). Schwartz (1999) suggested that cultural level value dimensions were more appropriately related to work, in terms of employees' perceptions towards work. Culture manifests itself in organisations by developing and adapting members’ way of thinking and behaving to fit in particular environments, so that it maintains the organisation’s operation. Schein (1996) claimed that culture was one of the most influential and stable forces for organisational operations, and that it was usually regarded as a taken-for-granted, shared, and tacit way for employees to perceive, think and react. Like national culture that exists in a subjective form, organisational culture is presented in different ways, some of which are obvious to be seen and interpreted, whereas others are embedded in organisations and more difficult to spot.

Schein (2004) stated that the characters of culture were determined by both culture and its relationship with the existing context. The context, where the specific culture is cultivated, plays an important role in forming how the culture is. When the context changes, the culture varies accordingly. In other words, culture is different when organisational context changes.

Analysing organisational culture from a different angle, Hofstede (1998b) assumed that, organisational culture differed in terms of practices (Figure 4.1, The “Onion Diagram), instead of values like national culture did. Hofstede et al (1990) divided organisational culture into 6 dimensions of practices: process and results oriented, employee and job oriented, parochial and professional, open and closed system, lose and tight control, and normative and pragmatic. To a large extent, organisational culture is derived from and focuses on the management practices of organisations.

Schein and Hofstede interpreted organisational culture from different angles. Schein explained organisational culture as how it was embedded in the
organisation, and how it was manifested. Hofstede analysed organisational culture from the perspective of organisational structure, and related organisational culture with organisational management. Nevertheless, both researchers emphasized the significance of values, or so called underlying assumptions, towards organisational culture, and acknowledged that both were difficult and time-consuming to change.

Focusing on industrial enterprises in the P.R. China, Lockett (1988) conducted research from a wide variety of sources. These included Chinese reports and articles on management in both China and overseas Chinese; the researcher’s own experience on Chinese trips and some tourists groups. He pointed out four main features of Chinese culture; respect for age and hierarchy, group orientation, face and the importance of relationships, and argued that these four features affected organisations by reinforcing the management problems in a planned economy and undermining the legitimacy of formal organisation. In this aspect, it was indicated (Lockett, 1988) that Chinese management was very distinctive from Western management. Martinson and Hempel (1995) claimed that Chinese management systems were affected by Chinese culture to a very high extent. According to them, the concepts of centralised authority, hierarchical structures, informal coordination and control mechanisms still very commonly existed in Chinese management, particularly in governmental organisations. Pun et al (2000) summarised three representative characteristics of Confucianism in Chinese management culture. They were people focus and relationship building, morality and organisational citizenship behaviour, and human ethnic and nature. Pun et al (2000) stated that human ethnic and nature were based on the idea of man being a reasonable person who had a capacity to compromise and maintain harmonious relationship with others. This concept was claimed as a consequence of relationship building, Guanxi and concern for face. Particularly, to maintain a harmonious relationship serves as the core of Confucian concepts.

Apart from culture’s effects on organisations, culture influences individuals’ behaviours and their relationships as well. Adler and Gundersen (2008) emphasized that employees in multinational or global organisations had their specific cultural ways of working. In Hong Kong, Bilbow (1997) conducted Cross-Cultural Impression Management (CCIM) distance model research and emphasized that culture backgrounds caused distortion and misunderstanding in
communication. Lok and Crawford (2004) claimed that people’s values, attitudes and beliefs varied in different national cultures, which had impact on personal values while fitting in each specific organisational culture, and it caused major differences between Western and Eastern management styles. For example, the dominant high power distance values and Confucian values of ethnic Chinese managers played a significant role in Hong Kong organisational culture (Lok and Crawford, 2004). Bilbow (1997, p.484) further stated that cultural values “affect the ways in which individuals set about projecting ‘positive’ impressions of themselves to others, and the ways in which they interpret the self-presentations of others”. People from different cultures behave and interpret differently. When people from different cultures use different ways to express or explain themselves, it may not be easily understood or accepted by those who are from another cultural background. Hence, understanding and communication can be received mistakenly. Conducting research on Asian and European student perceptions in New Zealand, Selvarajah (2006) claimed that culture was one of the main issues to serve for better communication and cross-cultural understanding, and provide an equitable and culturally sensitive platform for knowledge transfer. Ouchi and Wilkins (1988) emphasized that people needed to behave in certain standard manners that were acceptable to the members of the shared culture in terms of perceiving, believing and acting.

4.3 Global culture

Wolf (2005) pointed out that globalisation had been on-going for a long time in human history. Along with the global transmission of technology and economy, ideas and culture are part of the transmission as well. Global culture has increasingly attracted researchers’ attention with the development of globalisation. Nowadays, people communicate much more often and conveniently, due to electronic equipment and transportation linked with each other. It is common to have Westerners working in Asian companies, and students from all over the world studying in the same university. It is not surprising to purchase African or Asian food in a Western supermarket, or to dine in a Western restaurant opened in Japan or China. Globalisation brings people closer to each other in every aspect, such as fashion, food, and living concepts. During this process, various national cultures are brought together and mingled. Some local cultures may find it difficult to accept or accommodate, and have conflict with other cultures when differences are too big
to compromise. Some may absorb ideas from other cultures and adapt into something new based on their own culture characteristics. Nederveen Pieterse (2004) noted three different paradigms of global cultures enriched by globalisation. They are clash of civilisations, McDonaldisation, and hybridisation. The clash of civilisation maps out differences between each culture, which are distinguished by their own national culture. McDonaldisation stresses the increasingly standardised and uniform culture, which to a great extent, emerged from more global interconnectedness. Particularly, this paradigm mainly comes out of global consumerism, such as the U.S. fast food chain, McDonald. Hybridisation emphasizes the combination of culture. Based on intercultural interaction, this paradigm looks at a gradual cultural mixing in different locations across the nations.

Examining psychological effects of globalisation, Arnett (2002) claimed that people’s culture values were challenged by the increasing effects of global culture. According to Hofstede’s culture study (1980a, 2001), Japan and China both were categorised as highly collectivistic societies. However, Arnett (2002) noted that people were now stressing more the values of individualism in Japan and China, which was one of the global culture values led by Western nations. So the age of marriage, for instance, was postponed due to people’s interests in pursuing their own career, rather than getting married. Arnett (2002) further pointed out that during the collision of values between global culture and traditional culture, people had to face the challenge of adapting to both global culture and the traditional one, which was also part of the changing process. In this sense, it is important to distinguish between global culture and local culture. In the current research, the scenario is among national culture, organisational culture, and academic’s role culture, and interactions in between.

Erez and Gati (2004) claimed that individuals and their identity were affected by global culture, from both the mediating effects of national culture and employees’ exposure to the global working environment. For example, individuals working with colleagues from different culture backgrounds have more chances to interact and communicate with their foreign colleagues. That is they have more exposure to other cultures than those who work with colleagues from the same country. Although it may improve individuals’ cultural understanding and build up individuals’ cultural tolerance to some extent, it does not necessarily mean they are more
tolerant than those who are not exposed to other cultures. However, the former have more likelihood of understanding, accepting, and adapting those values from other cultures. When they accept foreign culture values, there will be a higher possibility for new cultures to be recognised along with their local culture. The process can be that either foreign values are fully accepted and become part of the local culture, or they are adapted into the local style and reformed into a new value that is adopted by the indigenous culture. On the other hand, there are also chances that indigenous people find it difficult to accept or tolerate such foreign culture values, so that they choose to resist.

Marien (1993) stated that global culture was emerging, with the U.S.A. as the leading actor in the process of globalisation, and called on researchers’ efforts to study this newly developing field. By saying this, Marien (1993) emphasized that it did not make global culture homogenous. In other words, culture development in this process is not a cultural imperialism that would be dominated by the U.S.A.’s culture. According to Featherstone and Lash (1999), globalisation was not just about converging of all cultures and making them all the same, but also giving more space for different cultures to have a chance to mix with each other, and have a more diverse view of them all. Huntington (1996) pointed out that although globalisation and modernisation were led by Western countries, the rest of the world was not Westernised by Western culture. Instead, he suggested that non-Western countries enhanced their own culture by importing Western culture through consumerism and modernisation, and adapting the Western one into their own local culture. In this sense, the world was not Westernised. Instead, each local culture enriches itself while mixing with other cultures, and global culture became diversified in a more dynamic way.

Erez and Gati (2004) proposed a structural model of culture in different levels, using the pattern of nesting the lower level within the higher one (see Figure 4.2, the Multi-Level Model of Culture, Erez and Gati, 2004).
The model starts from the lowest one of individual culture nested within its higher level, group culture, which is further nested within organisational culture. The sequence continues with organisational culture being nested within its external higher level of national culture, and then ends with global culture as the highest level of the model. They suggested that certain particular characteristics of national culture that are nested in global culture would affect global culture’s influence on other levels. For example, Erez and Gati (2004) pointed out the nations with high individualism, low power distance, and low uncertainty-avoidance would find it easier to adapt to a global work environment than their opposite. Applying this to the current research, the main concern will be to distinguish Chinese culture differences from those of the Westerners. Due to the cultural differences between Chinese and Western academics, it is expected that certain Chinese values will stand out and be the major problem during communication between Chinese and Western staff. Apart from that, the culture differences will also affect the confluence of Western culture into the organisational level of management, and individual academics’ perceptions.
4.4 Summary

This chapter discussed organisational culture, and explored the differences between organisational and national culture. The evidence indicated that organisational and national culture played significant roles at different times while inter-influencing on employees' cultural backgrounds, depending on each specific context. Furthermore, from a global culture point of view, the review further suggested a more detailed examination of cultural interaction cross various cultural levels. The next chapter provides a review in the academic context, where the current research will take place.
Chapter 5  Academic Context

5.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the unique characteristics of the academic context. It explores the foundation of Western and Chinese cultural theories and suggests the combination of both to conduct research into cultural interaction in the academic working environment, and its effects on organisational management.

Pothukuchi et al (2002) looked at national and organisational culture differences and international joint venture performance. They found that both national and organisational culture might contribute to the negative effect on organisation’s performance, which indicated the significant roles of both national and organisational culture. In internationalised organisations, organisational culture is the work context within certain national culture context. An organisational culture also has employees from different national culture backgrounds. The current research mainly focuses on examining employees’ cultural understanding and working relationships. Hence, not only the national culture context needs to be taken into consideration, but also employees’ national cultural backgrounds and the organisational culture context, which in this research, the academic context.

5.2 The university context

Birnbaum (1988) noted that the university environment was more complicated to be clearly assessed or controlled than other organisations in terms of its inputs, such as people, ideas, tangible resources, and involvement with other institutions or systems. This demonstrates the complex internal structure of universities. Dill (1982) assumed that universities were value-rational organisations. In other words, university members have their own strong belief in the values of the universities, which is distinguished from most other business organisations, which are mainly profit-driven. In the university context, managers, general staff, and particularly academic staff, were related to one common target, the pursuit of knowledge (Satow in Dill, 1982). Managers and general staff work to assist and support
teaching and researching, and ensure universities function effectively. Whereas academic staff teach and research to deliver knowledge to students and explore new unknown knowledge.

Bartell (2003, p.53) summarised the characteristics of universities as highly complex with “differentiation, multiplicity of units and standards, autonomy of professors, control and management philosophies and mechanisms, which increasingly do not operate effectively even in business organisations”. To fit into the internationalisation of universities, he further pointed out that a holistic view of universities was essential for such internationalising process. According to Bartell (2003), a good acknowledgement and understanding of the existing culture were essential. Besides, universities should also fully comprehend their mission, communication patterns, feasible outlooks and the world views of universities, so that they would be able to prepare well-guided strategic planning for developing an organisational culture to suit the circumstances. McCaffery (2004) held a similar view and emphasized the importance of good understanding of university culture in obtaining effective management in universities. That is to ensure the management style matches the characteristics of organisations. Hence, in order to further explore and research universities and academic staff, a good understanding of university characteristics and culture is a must.

From a theoretical point of view, Silver (2003) analysed the evidence of research projects from in 1977-1999, which focused on universities’ innovative teaching and learning in the UK by conducting research via both interviews and case studies, together with other sources on organisational culture among academic staff and university organisations. As a result, Silver (2003) stated that organisational culture did not exist for most academic staff due to its highly diversified features in each discipline and institutions. Taking a university as one organisation, it is obviously difficult to identify the similarities between departments, such as an engineering school and an arts school. Not only are problems and solutions in each department different, but also employees’ beliefs, values and behaviours vary a great deal, which were recognised as Schein’s (2004) espoused beliefs and values of the organisational culture. In this sense, there is hardly one commonly shared organisational culture within a university. However, this does not mean that culture does not exist in universities. The distinguished divergence between departments
can be identified as sub-cultures of a university. That is the culture of each department. In other words, there may not be one organisational culture for the whole university as Silver (2003) suggested, but sub-cultures may exist when departments become cultural units.

5.3 The academic role

Handy (1993) categorised four types of organisational cultures, power, role, task and person. Organisations with a power culture are described as a “web”, which are centrally controlled. In this type of culture, organisations are proud and strong, and are flexible to adapt to new challenges, depending to a large degree on the decisions and guidance given by the managing staff. Organisations with a role culture are more of a bureaucracy type, which mainly involves logic and rationality. Within a role culture, each employee has a clear job description. It emphasises more the individual’s position and organisation building, rather than the development of individual capacities (Dopson and McNay, 1996). The third type of organisational culture, task culture is pictured as a “net”, in which employees work as a team with mutual respect towards each other’s capacity. It mainly depends on expert power to influence organisations, instead of position or personal power. The task type of culture stresses the harmony of resources, projects and people, in order to gain the competence and adaptability in the changing market. Similar to the task culture, the influence of person culture mostly is based on expertise. However, person culture takes individuals as the central point. Individuals work on their own project, which can also benefit the organisation. There is no super-ordinate objective in such organisations.

According to Handy (1993), academic individuals are person-oriented employees working in a role culture. Stereotypical professors work on their individual teaching and research, to fulfil their contract with universities. Clark (1983) pointed out that academic staff mostly worked individually. Due to the expertise of their individual research area, academic staff generally focus on their individual subject. Though there are some cooperative teamwork programmes in both teaching and research, academic staff focus more on their own research topic. They work as the centre point in organisations and have their autonomy in terms of work responsibility and tasks due to their expertise. Mostly academics carry out the job out of their own
individual interest, though the results of their work may benefit organisations directly. For example, Liefner (2003, in Büttner 2005) analysed the resource allocation and the success of universities from US, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the UK. The results showed that the quality of academics depended, to a great deal, on individual motivation and scientific interests, and consequently had great impact on universities’ long-term success as well.

Reushle and McDonald (2000) claimed that academic work was very much individual autonomous task, including preparation of teaching materials, control of teaching and researching content and responsibility. Comparing with other industries, Coaldrake and Stedman (1999) pointed out that universities were distinguished mostly due to their strong individualistic culture and personal autonomy among academia. They suggested that such kind of academic working patterns along with that of non academic staff should be taken into account while universities needed to carry out any structural and policy change. However, it does not mean that academics work on completely individual basis. Such academic freedom had been limited to some extent (Coaldrake and Stedman, 1999). Due to more entrepreneurial styles of university operation, departments and schools started shifting authority and control away from individual academics, who increasingly worked in teams for both research and teaching (Lynton, 1998; Coaldrake and Stedman, 1999). In other words, academic staff are involved in the person type of culture while they carry out the academic aspect of job description, which is teaching and research. Whereas in terms of the administrative aspect of the job, academic staff find themselves in role culture organisations, working with non-academic staff and the management in universities. It means that academic staff have to follow the stereotyped bureaucracy, structure and policies when it comes to issues relating to authority, communication and dispute.

Meanwhile, differences between full-time academics and academic middle managers should be recognised, particularly with the fast changing feature of university management and structure. It was noticed that due to the increasing change happening in higher education, such as the external audit pressure, the head of department role had changed with increasing administrative responsibilities, and that academic staff’s autonomy was decreased under such changes as well, particularly in terms of resources allocation, and the change of the collegiate
system (Jackson, 1999). For example, Hellawell and Hancock (2001) conducted a case study of academic middle managers in a newer university about the significance of collegiality in the university’s internal decision-making process. They claimed that the person culture was operated in the management of full-time academic staff on permanent contract, while academic middle managers’ role was more regarded in terms of power culture, due to the more complex and demanding responsibilities in financial control and allocation.

Schwartzman (1994) suggested three types of academic professionalism, liberal professional, unionised skilled worker, and academic civil servant. The academic role, in this sense, was emphasized from the aspect of having autonomy over the governance and institutional direction of their teaching and researching, expertise in a specific area, and operational power while delivering their knowledge (Shelly, 1999). Though there would be the combination of three elements in one organisation, Schwartzman (1994, p.26) claimed that each type had its own advantage, ‘academic markets stimulate competitiveness and achievement; civil service guarantees stability, competence and prestige; and modern management assures effectiveness and good service’. He (Schwartzman, 1994) continued to emphasize the influence of each specific given context in terms of shaping the specific academic profession. According to Dill (1982, p.304), the common academic culture played a significant role in the academic context, which would have ‘destructive conflicts between faculties, loss of professional morale, and personal alienation’. Tierney (1988) further pointed out that such academic culture had positive impact on academic excellence and effectiveness.

Relating to the current research, the main focus lies on full-time academic staff. Apart from the cultural understanding’s influence on interpersonal relationships between Chinese and Western colleagues, the current research is interested in the management of academic staff as well. Particularly, with the shared nature of Chinese academics’ national culture background, it is worth exploring how academic staff deal with a rather individualistic nature of academic role in higher education.
5.4 Internationalised higher education

With the development of globalisation, universities have become more internationalised. Mazzarol et al (2003) pointed out three waves of globalization in the international education industry. The first wave was students travelling abroad and being educated in a foreign higher education institution. The second wave was through an alliance or coalition, where higher education institutions exported their education services and cooperated with a foreign institute, so that students were able to study a foreign degree without going abroad (Mazzarol et al, 2003). While researching four leading European technological universities (the IDEA League, i.e. Imperial College in UK, Delft University in the Netherlands, ETH Zurich in Switzerland, and RWTH Aachen University in Germany), Büttner (2005) pointed out that, under the effects of globalisation, the universities shared experience and expertise to educate students. Particularly, she claimed that international collaboration broadened university contexts and emphasized cultural differences, so that contextualisation would be common in the universities that dealt with alliance with others. The third wave involved opening branch campuses in foreign countries and developing on-line delivered courses through information and communication technologies (ICT) (Mazzarol et al, 2003). Among these three waves, it does not only involve the import and export of education programmes and degrees to expand the education market, but also increases demand for academic staff’s mobility to travel and work in a foreign institution.

5.4.1 The cross-cultural effects on universities

Van Damme (2001) pointed out that one of the significant influences of globalisation on higher education was to set up campuses in foreign countries and offer overseas education. Following that change, some researchers have focused on the quality of such internationalised education. Carnoy (2000, p.50) pointed out that “globalization enters the education sector on an ideological horse, and its effects in education are largely a product of that financially driven, free-market ideology, not a clear conception for improving education”. Conducting research about the educational quality of British universities in Israel, Leiven and Martin (2006) emphasized the significance of higher education for each nation’s social and economic development, particularly for developing countries with the desire of catching up in the knowledge economy. They noticed that quality was not regarded
as the priority of internationalised higher education in developing countries, and pointed out that more attention were needed for quality control in foreign universities’ campus in the host counties. They further suggested that governments should regulate provision of higher education before international standards were agreed.

Apart from that, some researchers have looked at the changes in universities’ management, organisational structure, human resources, and other issues. Vaira (2004) addressed and analysed higher education organisational change that might be caused by globalisation, and proposed five hypotheses of higher education's framework change in terms of institutional structure and dynamics, which were world polity and economy; organisational pressure and organisational effectiveness; efficiency and success. However, Vaira focused on organisational structure, rather than the influences on human resource management. The quality and procedure in human resource management have significant effects on educational quality. The recruitment of international academic staff, the assessment of their performance, and the cultural fit into new organisational management require more attention from researchers. As Chia et al (2007) stressed, organisations and individuals were able to create better cross-cultural workplace interactions with the understanding of values orientations and contextual implications, which became more important due to the accelerating globalisation emerging in all aspects of the business field.

Yeung (2006) conducted an empirical study about teachers’ cultural sensitivity. Comparing with the US pre-service studies, Yeung (2006) found that there was a strong Confucian impact on Hong Kong teachers’ learning and teaching styles, cultural sensitivity and teaching beliefs. The study confirmed that there were differences in cultural diversity awareness between Eastern and Western teachers, and that teachers’ macro world view influenced their acceptance of multicultural students. On the other hand, Lo (2006) carried out a cross-cultural study of art teacher education in Taiwan and England, and stated that cultural differences influenced art teachers’ attitudes and values. Lo (2006) further implied that art teacher education in Taiwan adapted to achieve a balance between localisation and globalisation. In other words, when academic staff’s working environment changes, the relevant working attitude and communication will follow as well.
5.4.2 The cross-cultural effects on academic staff

Van Damme (2001) noted that the academic profession became more mobile and the market for researchers became more competitive internationally, as a result of globalisation. Meanwhile, it was highlighted that while students and staff mobility increased due to technology transfer in globalisation, language differences, cultural sensitivity, and understanding of one’s own university became a more important issue (Denman, 2005). Though ICT (Information and Communication Technology) is another option to deliver courses, the traditional person-to-person academic teaching and learning are still the most popular way in international education. Particularly when programmes are set up in a host country, or courses are delivered in a foreign textbook or language, academic staff from the home country appear to have an advantage in delivering courses and attracting students.

Meanwhile, academic career experience changes under globalisation as well. In their conceptual framework for cross-cultural analysis of academic careers in Asia, in comparison to those in the United States, Leong and Leung (2004) claimed that the most likely successful way for Asian academics to achieve career success was to integrate both Asian and Western approaches. They emphasized the importance of considering both cultural and contextual factors in understanding academic careers. In the current research, the cultural and contextual factors are of primary concern, as the current research involves academics working relationships. Bloland (1999, in Denman 2005) highlighted the importance of academics joining the dynamic internationalized change in universities in aspects such as management and marketing, particularly when it concerned costs, methods and results. For instance, Huang (2006) noted that there were an increasing number of joint programmes in China, which were in cooperation with foreign higher education partners. According to Huang (2006), such change led to increasing demand for both local and foreign degrees and courses to be delivered in English, or sometimes bilingually in both English and Chinese. That is to say, the demand for academic staff’s language ability has increased as well. Investigating the role of the English language as part of institutionalised practices in management academe, Tietze and Dick (2009) suggested further examinations were necessary, in terms of the consequences of using the English language on knowledge generation, language/knowledge diversity, and accompanying academic practices as well.
Eisner (1992) stated that teachers' beliefs were presented and modified in the process of acculturation and professional socialisation, and that during this process, beliefs, curricula, and educational practices were inter-related. In the meantime, academic staff’s culture awareness and sensitivity need to adjust to the changing circumstances. Particularly, it is more difficult when academic staff have to deal with big differences between Western and Eastern cultures. Regarding people coming from different cultural backgrounds and seeking to adapt and resolve cultural differences between the host culture and minority culture, Cox (1991) pointed out three main types of acculturation in increasingly globalised business corporations. They were assimilation, pluralism, and cultural separatism. According to him, assimilation was about the minority cultural group adopting the norms and values of the majority; pluralism was allowing members to adapt into a multicultural environment by having their own choices of cultural adoption; and cultural separatism was that members remained in their own cultural backgrounds with little adoption from others. While analysing the management of multicultural organisations, Cox (1991) suggested that a pluralism type of multicultural organisation was to fully integrate employees' cultural backgrounds without prejudice and discrimination, either from the minority or majority, so that the minority group members would earn their own equal status in organisations, and inter-group conflict would be minimized. According to him, such pluralism-type of multicultural organisations had the advantage of encouraging employees to contribute their maximum potential and obtain diversified value co-existence.

5.4.3 Cross-cultural communication between academics

Another issue in internationalised universities is that staff need to confront and communicate with colleagues and students coming from different cultural backgrounds. Mead (1990) noted that misinterpretation was more likely to happen in the context where different cultures were mixed. He argued that when one culture’s priorities of importance and relevance were not shared by people from other cultures, the latter were more likely to respond or interact with ambiguous communication due to misinterpreting the former’s message. Such situations may lead to an unfriendly and negative working environment.
As stressed by Hofstede (1998a), a good communication climate within organisations played a significant role in facilitating employees’ satisfaction. Hence, it is important for managers to look into cross-cultural communication in order to obtain a pleasant working environment. While discussing how academics dealt with changes in contracts, appraisal, teaching observation, reward systems and performance-related pay, House and Watson (1995) emphasized the importance of communication and consultation. Particularly, they pointed out that people experiencing change were more likely to understand, accept and cooperate if they were informed well about the change and motives for change.

Gizir and Simsek (2005, p.197) emphasized that communication was the “lifeblood of every organisation”, and that communication was significant in organisational processes, as it increased people’s agreement on organisational ideas, norms, values, behaviours, and goals. Mead (1990) highlighted as well, that people experienced stresses and strains in cross-cultural relationships, but which at the same time, offered opportunities to get to know other cultures and broaden their experience. According to him, a successful cross-cultural relationship would help develop understanding and tolerance between each other. In other words, the quality of communication will lead to employees’ satisfaction at work, and eventually build good and healthy relationships, so that a harmonious working environment will be achieved.

Hall (1976) suggested two types of communication, high and low context communication. According to him, high context communication mainly used nonverbal indications and identification or understanding, and emphasized the physical or social context of communication; low context communication emphasized rules of law and procedures, and relied on opportunism which was more individually-oriented. Conducting research in developing cross-cultural competence from a Chinese perspective, Liu (2005) stated that apart from language differences, Chinese styles of communication were different from those of the United States. According to him, Chinese communication belonged to the high context, in which case speakers, to a large extent, did not express their opinions directly, and they expected others to understand the meanings by reading between the lines or interpreting through their body language. On the other hand, Liu (2005) found that American communication was more categorised into the low context
type. That is speakers tend to convey their opinions straight-forwardly, and leave others to make decisions. In low context communication, speakers’ meanings are expected to be understood mainly by relying on formal institutions, such as laws and regulations. Engholm (1994) claimed that generally, Chinese communicated in a less direct and explicit way, and left listeners and readers to figure out and understand the meanings based on each specific context, body language, facial expressions, eye contact, and other nonverbal signals. Thus to differentiate Chinese behaviour from the Western one and grasp a better understanding of the former, it is necessary to have an in-depth analysis and explanation of differences in concepts and basic values of Chinese philosophies.

Regarding cross-cultural communication, Johnson et al (2006) recommended cross-cultural competence in intercultural communications, which implied the ability to have appropriate and effective interactions between individuals from different national cultural backgrounds. According to Johnson et al (2006), living in a foreign environment or interacting with people from different national cultural backgrounds would have an impact on individuals and affect their capacity to adapt into the new environment effectively. Hofstede (2001) claimed that intercultural communication competence included awareness, knowledge and skills.

In the current research context, academics are expected to face the changing working environment with colleagues coming from different cultural backgrounds. Hence, if academics can be prepared with cultural differences between the indigenous and expatriates, their understanding and cooperation will be helped to adapt into new multicultural working environments. House and Watson (1995) noticed that successful change management relied on mutual understanding, and shared values and objectives between the managers and the managed. To achieve this, it requires the management of the multi-cultural organisation to assist and adjust their managing strategy, and help both indigenous and expatriate academic staff get familiar with each other’s culture. That is to say, organisational management plays an important role in the success of academics’ intercultural interaction by establishing mutual understanding and awareness of cultural differences between indigenous and expatriate academics.
Monthienvichienchai et al (2002) pointed out that understanding each other’s cultural background was essential in international communication. They conducted a case study of UK teachers’ cultural awareness, communication apprehension and communication competence in an international school in Thailand. They found that cultural awareness helped improve teachers’ communication competence, which in result enhanced classroom performance. Although this case study looked at cultural impact on teachers’ performance in teaching, it overlaps with the current research in that cultural awareness is essential in interpersonal intercultural communication. The difference is that the current research focuses on communication between academic staff from different cultural backgrounds. In other words, the effectiveness of international communication depends to a great extent on both parties’ cultural awareness, which facilitates communication by making better sense of the other party’s culture, so that the former can cooperate in a more sensible way. Neuliep (2000, in Monthienvichienchai et al 2002) highlighted the significance of thinking and acting cooperatively, and communicating assertively and responsively, in terms of achieving effective international communication.

5.5 Summary

This chapter looked at the literature of the university context and academic role. It provided theoretical arguments of the cross-cultural effects on internationalised higher education, and the important role of cross-cultural communication.

The analysis of literature from Chapter 2 to Chapter 5 has discussed the cultural influence from national, organisational and global levels, and the cultural effects in the academic context as well. The review found the gap of understanding Chinese and Western culture from each other’s perspectives, and the influence of such cultural differences on academics’ working relationships and environment in internationalised higher education. Therefore, the current research questions are: 1) How do Western cultural dimensions and Chinese cultural concepts relate to each other? 2) How do the Chinese concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony interact with each other? 3) How do these understandings of cultural differences influence the academic working environment? A detailed discussion about the aims of the
current research and the specific context of the current research is to be presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 6  The current research

This chapter develops ideas and issues identified in the literature review and outlines how they will be applied in the specific context of the current research. The current research will be conducted in internationalised higher education, where cultural interaction involves both Chinese and Western academic staff. It focuses on exploring how Western academics understand Chinese cultural values, and vice versa, how Chinese academics understand the Western ones. It aims to discover the main conflicts and their causes within the multicultural academic working environment. Particularly, the current research is to focus on how Chinese culture concepts are understood and adapted by academics including both Chinese and Westerners. Hence, the current research questions how Western and Chinese academics interpret Chinese culture and how it affects their attitudes at work. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions will be applied as the main Western culture theory to examine the interaction between Western culture and Chinese Confucianism concepts.

Goodstein and Hunt (1981) pointed out that although Hofstede’s cultural dimensions were a good framework to help managers work cross-culturally, they did not measure the daily interpersonal relationships among workers in organisations. Among Hofstede’s five cultural dimensions, power distance and individualism/collectivism dimensions deal with interpersonal relationships. Particularly, Kâğitçibaşi (1997) refined the definitions of Individualism and Collectivism, and categorised them into two main approaches to look at these two concepts, i.e. normative and relational Individualism/Collectivism. Normative Individualism/Collectivism emphasizes how people assume such individual-group relationships should be operated, which emphasizes people’s assumptions of how such relationships should be like. It does not relate to how people’s relationships are actually carried out. On the other hand, relational Individualism/Collectivism refers to interpersonal relations and connections of these two concepts. It looks at the detailed interactions between people, including behaviours and responses. As the current research mainly focuses on investigating academics' individual relationships with each other, Relational Individualism/Collectivism will be the focus of current research discussion.
The other three of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, uncertainty avoidance, femininity and masculinity, Confucian Dynamism, are mostly concerned with the description of people’s characteristics, which are used as the measurement of people’s inner values about themselves. In terms of interpersonal relationships, power distance is primarily to depict the prototype of working relationships between managerial and employee teams in organisations, although it can evaluate the distance of staff working relationships as well. In the current research, Chinese and Western staff are not necessarily in a manager-and-subordinate relationship, but it is useful to understand qualitatively both Chinese and Western academics’ perceptions of their status in the same university. Individualism and collectivism is another dimension that indicates the distance of interpersonal relationships. By examining the personal distance between individuals in their working environment, it is feasible to evaluate employees’ working relationships.

Though Hofstede researched organisations from a cultural perspective, he did not investigate the inter-relationships between the four dimensions in terms of work-related values and attitudes, and structures of organisations (Tayeb, 1994). Culture, used as the research variable to study people’s common characteristics in certain groups, is a complexity of collective values and attitudes. Some values and attitudes can be categorised together as a dimension to imply a particular feature. In this way, cultural dimensions construct a culture framework. Some cultures may have more dimensions than others. Some may need further study to identify more dimensions. Moreover, culture dimensions are not static. When circumstances or situations change, cultural dimensions vary accordingly. However, degrees of variation may differ in each dimension, such as Fang’s (2003) Yin-Yang interpretation of Hofstede’s long-term and short-term dimension. In this sense, it is sensible to explore the relationships between these dimensions and find out their influence on people’s values and attitudes.

Furthermore, with Chinese interpretation, some of the Western-developed cultural dimensions are found to be contradicted. In Hofstede’s (1980a) early cultural dimension research, Hong Kong and Singapore, who shared a lot of common cultural background with Mainland China especially in terms of Confucianism, were
ranked as having higher power distance and lower uncertainty avoidance compared to countries like the USA and Canada. When it comes to receiving orders in organisations, for example, Chinese can easily accept orders from management without further questioning. It shows that high power distance has an impact on low uncertainty avoidance. Whereas it can be difficult for Western people to understand and accept orders, due to their higher uncertainty avoidance, unless those orders come with a detailed reason and explanation. This aspect was reflected in Hofstede (1991)’s Confucian Dynamism analysis, where China was ranked as one of the top countries in respect of the long-term oriented dimension. According to Hofstede, Chinese operated interpersonal relationships by status and respect for hierarchy. They took orders from higher status as certainty, and showed weak uncertainty avoidance upon these kinds of issues. Cheng (1990) explained that the concepts of hierarchy, role obligation and codes of behaviour in Confucianism caused the problem of lacking of personality in East Asian countries. Gao et al (1996 and 1998) further supported this analysis, and suggested that Chinese people did not speak unless they were in certain senior positions, which entitled them to have the position and right to speak up. Hence while working in Chinese organisations, which are highly centrally controlled, Chinese do not question orders, which may be found unacceptable to Westerners. It is because they are not in a specific position which can equate with those who give orders. In this sense, ordering relationships by status of longer-term oriented Confucian Dynamism appears to be related with Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension. In other words, these two dimensions are not completely separated, which is quite opposite to what Hofstede and Bond (1988) claimed, i.e. that there was no link between Confucian Dynamism and the uncertainty avoidance dimension.

This can be developed further. Being given short notice and being used to receiving and accepting orders at the last minute, it demonstrates Chinese low uncertainty avoidance. Their emotions are not affected as much by unknown and uncertain conditions. In contrast Western ways of operating in organisations suggests they prefer a clear plan and notice in advance if any change is to be made. They tend to arrange things ahead and avoid uncertain situations as much as possible. Moreover, the individualism and collectivism cultural dimension is reflected as well through people’s attitudes towards accepting late notices. Out of collectivistic values, Chinese people are more obliged to group activities. When a change is made and notice is given at the last minute, Chinese people are more
tolerant to accept the situation and follow the procedure. To Westerners, they may find it uncomfortable and difficult to accept such kind of change as it affects their personal plan and arrangement (Walker et al, 1996). In this sense, people from collectivistic countries are more committed towards group changes, which help lower their uncertainty avoidance. People from individualistic countries are more concerned about personal arrangements. They require more time and space to adjust personal emotions and understandings to cope with changes. Hence, they require higher uncertainty avoidance. In this sense, the Individualism/Collectivism dimension influences people’s uncertainty avoidance tolerance. These two dimensions can be inter-related. Furthermore, Westerners’ emphasis on individualistic and uncertainty values leads to their personal steadiness and stability, which is one of the main characteristics in Hofstede and Bond’s (1988) short-term orientated dimension. Yeh and Lawrence (1995) claimed that Hofstede’s individualism was highly inter-related with Confucian Dynamism, and that the two dimensions even represented similar concepts. Based on the above analysis, it may be worthwhile to re-evaluate the link between uncertainty avoidance and the other dimensions.

The appropriateness of applying Hofstede’s cultural dimensions in the current research needs to be considered carefully. The first problem is to do with the research questions utilised and researchers involved. Hofstede’s research team, who carried out the IBM study, consisted of Europeans and Americans. Though the IBM study was conducted in many countries other than in Europe and America, their survey’s research questions remained the same. The purpose of doing this was to collect the same data, to allow comparison. However, there existed a high possibility that the survey might not typify some countries’ culture characteristics. This is because when people have different understanding about questions, their interpretation and responses will be affected as well, which eventually will not represent the true understanding about cultural values. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) claimed that cultural tendencies of each nation differed significantly, depending on questions that were raised to measure each dimension. In other words, the dominant cultural dimensions that are claimed by one researcher may not be universally applicable. From this point of view, Robers and Boyacigiller (1984) contended that Hofstede’s research was culturally biased. Hofstede (1991) acknowledged the shortcomings of the questions design, which might have neglected other important cultural factors.
There are some other issues regarding Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Williamson (2002) pointed out that Hofstede’s cultural dimensions were too simplistic, and the nomothetic approach was not appropriate to identify cultural dimensions. He argued that cultural dimensions were not necessarily bipolar; rather they might interact and be compatible. This point is in line with other researchers, who challenge the framework of cultural dimensions from the aspect of research measurement and design. Chapman (1992) noticed that there was no one comparator or one standard only in cultural research. Particularly, the measurement for different cultures may vary dramatically when fundamental philosophies and thinking are different. Therefore, when involving Hofstede’s cultural dimension with Confucianism, it is crucial to justify each concept clearly, and minimise respondents’ confusion and misunderstanding.

Considering Hofstede’s theory for the current research, time is another key point. Hofstede (1980b, 1999) defended himself with the argument that culture changed fairly slowly because it was deeply rooted in people’s values and attitudes. However, Mead (1994) criticised Hofstede’s research as being outdated and suggested that globalisation accelerated the converging of people’s interest and concepts into some common set of values. Sivakumar and Nakata (2001) stated that due to the global movement of people and products, and advanced communication technologies, countries had experienced great cultural changes in the last two decades. Hence, it is necessary to update Hofstede’s cultural scores. Along with international business booming in the last two decades, people’s lives have experienced enormous changes. It is believed that their values and attitudes have been affected one way or another. Internationalised higher education in China, which emerged as a very popular education style in the last ten years, was one of the products of China’s globalisation (Altbach and Knight, 2007). It requires academic staff, including both Chinese and their foreign colleagues, to adapt their values and perceptions in order to fit into the multicultural working environment. Hence, it is necessary to re-evaluate cultural dimensions in the Chinese academic context.
Moreover, the current research context involves both Chinese and foreign academics. Chinese cultural values are the core of the current research, in terms of interpreting and understanding Chinese staff's behaviours and response with their foreign colleagues. On the other hand, it is necessary to combine Western cultural theories, which are derived from Western philosophy and concepts, with Chinese Confucianism culture concepts, so that academic staff's cross-cultural interaction can be better investigated and understood. Therefore, the current research is to apply Chinese philosophies and thinking as the principle theory. The differences between Chinese and Western will be discussed and explained on this platform, and explored for further analysis. Spini (2003) noticed that choosing the most appropriate indicators of “latent variables”, to a large extent, formed a valid model for research, so that the validity of research measurement was strengthened as well. In the current research, choosing appropriate concepts is a key concern. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions will be applied as the key Western cultural theories, and combined with the key concepts of Confucianism and Yin-Yang theory. The concepts of Confucianism include hierarchical structure, Guanxi, Mianzi, and Harmony. This Chinese and Western combination will give the researcher a holistic lens to examine related factors. The similarities and differences of understandings between both parties, Chinese and Westerners, are important to seek understanding about cultural values and their understanding in the academic working environment. In terms of organisational management, the current research will explore different types of organisational structures, and assess the influence of organisational and national culture on employees’ working relationships.

The researcher conducting the current research has a Chinese cultural background. This is a strong advantage to obtain better understanding about the main theories. On the other hand, it can also become a disadvantage and potentially cause cultural bias or ignorance, which may take some behaviours and thinking for granted, and ignore their influence on cultural interaction, especially from the Westerners’ perspectives. Paisley and Reeves (2001) claimed that the researcher was the main instrument in a qualitative study. Researcher's personal biases or a priori assumptions, which the researcher was able to enclose, might cause researcher bias (Onwuegbuzie, 2003). Such researcher bias occurred throughout the research, including data collection, data analysis and data interpretation (Paisley and Reeves, 2001; Onwuegbuzie, 2003). It was suggested that researcher bias needed to be clarified (Creswell, 2003; Miles and Huberman, 1994).
Consequently, the researcher’s stance needs to be well balanced and borne in mind throughout the present research.

Above all, the current research is to compare Chinese cultural values with Western ones, explore the interaction between both and its effect on employees’ working relationships. The aim of the current research is to contribute to cross-cultural research theories involving Chinese philosophies.
Chapter 7  Methodology

7.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was chosen for the current research. It demonstrates details of the case study design. The pilot study, bilingual and ethical concerns are then discussed. After this, data collection, details of the sample and data analysis are presented.

7.2 Epistemology

Epistemology reflects different forms of knowledge which can be accepted in a discipline (Bryman, 2004). There are two main paradigms in epistemology, positivism and interpretivism. Positivist researchers believe in an external reality. Thomas (2004) claimed that positivism meant observable knowledge. Positivist researchers acknowledge the presence of the world existing in the form that can be touched and tested, which they believe is always the same and does not change due to people’s understanding and interpretation. In other words, positivists believe that knowledge lies beyond people’s understanding and remains the same regardless of people’s individual point of view or contextual change. As Bryman and Bell (2003) pointed out, positivists advocated natural science methods for exploring the field of social science.

On the other hand, interpretivist researchers look at the world in a more dynamic way. They believe the world can be understood and interpreted by people differently. Schwandt (2000) noted that the inherent meanings in human (social) action distinguished social action from the movement of physical objects. That is to say, to understand a particular social action, one needs to grasp the specific meanings that form the action. Vijver and Leung (1997) suggested that there was not only one reality for interpretivist researchers. According to them, interpretivist researchers respected people’s understanding, and reality, as a construct of the human mind, that might be perceived and interpreted accordingly.
Positivists claim that reality is objective and measurable. In their opinion, the real world can be known, and the researchers are separate from the world that they look at. The general approach to positivists’ research is abstract, reduction and hypothesis testing. On the other hand, interpretivists state that the social world is subjective, which can only be interpreted by the participants. In other words, the interpretivist researchers involve themselves in the research world. They mainly focus on understanding the world through participation, reflexivity and theory-generation, but not predicting the world.

Taking culture as the main research object, the current research adopts the stance of interpretivism, in order to examine the in-depth meanings of cultural influence on Western and Chinese academics, and their working relationships. According to Bryman and Bell (2003), interpretivism is capable of delivering an interpretive understanding of social action, so that a causal explanation of its causes and effects can be achieved. With the interpretivism stance, the researcher will evaluate the impact of research contexts and participants’ cultural backgrounds, and interpret the participants’ feedback regarding the research questions.

As elaborated in Chapter 2-5, the reviews of culture at different levels and academic context, culture exists in an intangible form. It involves people’s values and beliefs through their daily life. In the current research, culture is understood as the values of individuals, which is given different meanings when individuals’ context changes. For example, the concepts in the Western cultural theories originate from the Western context, which relates to the Western history, politics, religion and people’s living style. While seeking the understanding of these concepts from an Eastern background, China for instance, some of the concepts may not be common or necessary in Chinese people’s daily life, or interpreted and understood in a different, or even opposite way from its original Western meaning. Vice versa, the Chinese concepts, which may seem common and normal in China, can appear to be unfamiliar or even odd to Westerners. In this sense, the interpretive stance is more suitable for the current research. It allows more contextual space for people to make sense and explain each other’s culture, so that the original messages can be delivered to people from different cultural
backgrounds. By doing this, the hidden meanings of cultural concepts will be revealed and understood properly. Meanwhile, through analysing and interpreting people’s behaviours from different perspectives, the current research is expected to make more sense of the discrepancy between the Western and Chinese culture.

Nevertheless, the disadvantages of applying the interpretive stance in the current research should not be overlooked. Firstly, the majority of previous cross-cultural research took a positivist point of view, which is different from the interpretivist approach of the current research. Particularly, the ways of interpreting and presenting the findings are different between the two stances, which should be taken into account when comparing the research results. Apart from that, researchers using an interpretive stance to understand and interpret culture need to be careful not to cause bias, by imposing their own values and beliefs onto others’ views. Schwandt (2003) pointed out that one’s biases were engaged in understanding, which was not an attribute that an interpreter needed to get rid of to achieve a ‘clear’ understanding. Instead, such biases should be used to assist analysing the prejudices and prejudgements which were historically inherited and held, and modify the ones that prevent us from a better understanding (Garrison, 1996). It was suggested that the understanding of a social action or text was a temporal and gradual process, which was bound to each specific occasion (Aylesworth, 1991; Bernsstein, 1983). Hence, the researcher will pay attention to the specific context, including timing, location, environment, and people, in order to obtain a more comprehensive view of the findings.

### 7.3 The research approach

#### 7.3.1 The qualitative approach

Taking an interpretivist stance, the current research adopted a qualitative approach. The research aims to explore the cultural understandings between Westerners and Chinese. The content of the current research mainly focuses on people’s understanding of each other’s national values and sense making. Moreover, the interpretation will also involve the analysis of organisational contexts, which requires the research methodology to be flexible and dynamic due to the changing nature of national and organisational contexts. Bryman (2004) pointed out that a
A qualitative approach allowed researchers to interpret the social world and demonstrate their perspectives of social reality. That is to say researchers are able to present their knowledge of the society through their own interpretation. Hence, a qualitative approach is more suitable for the current research.

7.3.2 The researcher’s role

This thesis adopted the traditional way of writing about research, i.e. third person writing style. Due to the orientation of research, Oliver (2004) pointed out that the third person writing style tended to adopt perspective of the apparently objective researcher who was distanced from the research; the first person writing has become more accepted in the circumstances where research is influenced by phenomenological and interpretative perspectives, such as action research studies. However, using the first person might also run the risk of researchers appearing to be biased, with his or her own view taking over that of the participant’s (Oliver, 2004). That is to say although using the first person writing is acceptable, and may even more desirable in some qualitative research, it does not exempt from bringing potential bias while delivering the researchers’ interpretations or conclusions. Furthermore, it has been claimed (Oliver, 2004) that the more fundamentally important issue is to ensure the decisions made were based on clearly adduced evidence. Based on careful consideration, the researcher decided to use the traditional third person in writing. The researcher’s decisions are thoroughly reported throughout the thesis, so that it maintains the authenticity of articulating the grounds for the researcher’s decision-making. In this case, according to Oliver (2004), it made no difference whether the thesis was written in the third or first person.

7.3.3 Case study

The current research uses case study as the main strategy. Verschuren (2003, p. 137) defined case study as ‘A research strategy that can be qualified as holistic in nature, following an iterative-parallel way of proceeding, looking at only a few strategically selected cases, observed in their natural context in an open-ended way, explicitly avoiding (all variants of) tunnel vision, making use of analytical comparison of cases or sub-cases, and aimed at description and explanation of
complex and entangled group attributes, patterns, structures or processes.' In other words, a case study approach allows a more comprehensive investigation of the chosen topic, through more research time and efforts to seek in-depth information. Particularly, Yin (2003b, p. 4) stressed that case study was to study the phenomenon that was “not readily distinguishable from its context”. As a research strategy, Thomas (2004, p. 127) pointed out that case study “aims for intensive examination of one or a small number of instances of the units of interest”, which was of any kind, such as organisations or departments within organisations. Particularly, with the current research questions aiming to seek detailed understanding of academics and its influence on their working environment, which requires rich data collected in each specific context, case study research, therefore appear to a better choice (Hartley, 2004).

In terms of research purpose, there were two major types of case studies, descriptive case study and explanatory case study (Thomas, 2004). When little or nothing was known of a phenomenon, a descriptive case study was used to carry out an intensive study of one or a small number of cases, so as to generate a thorough description of certain specific cases (Thomas, 2004). While for explanatory purposes, a case study is used for theory-building and theory-testing. Especially, one of the advantages of case study was that it “entails detailed investigation of a complex entity or process, it can generate theoretical insights that are closely grounded in real experience, in contrast to more speculative ‘armchair’ theorizing” (Thomas 2004, p. 129). Eisenhardt (1989, in Thomas 2004, p. 129) claimed that “case studies can yield theories that are novel, utilizing concepts that are strongly validated by their close contact with empirical reality”.

Regarding the current research, cultural theories have been broadly studied, particularly among Western culture researchers. Most national and organisational cultural theories are oriented from a Western culture background, and then applied into the Chinese context. There is an increasing amount of Chinese culture research based in Chinese theories. Nevertheless, the majority of previous research looked at the cultural effects in a corporate environment (Farh et al, 1998; Pun et al, 2000; Wang et al, 2005). Conducting cultural case studies in the original context of the academic working environment is still an under-researched area. The current research was to explore cultural differences and conflicts between Western
and Chinese cultures. In this sense, the current research takes an explanatory approach to reveal the cultural theories in the context of academia. Yin (1981) pointed out that the distinguishing characteristic of case study research was to investigate contemporary phenomena in their original context, and the phenomena might not always be specifically and easily separated from their context. Considering the intangible nature of culture, case study is the suitable strategy for the current research.

Stake (2000) proposed three types of case study, intrinsic case study, instrumental case study, and collective case study. According to him, intrinsic case study was to look for better understanding of a particular case, which demonstrated a special trait or problem, and the case itself was of interest to the researcher. Instrumental case study was to examine one case and provide insight into an issue or to re-evaluate and seek its potential generalisation. In this type, the case itself is not the primary interest, but offering a context for the issues to facilitate people’s understanding. Collective case study extended the instrumental study to several cases, in which the researcher jointly examined a number of cases to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition. Creswell (2007) claimed that collective case study (or also called multiple case study) was to select several programmes to be studied from several research sites, or alternatively multiple programmes within a single site. Stake (2000) noted that, based on the understanding of cases that were chosen for the collective case study, the researcher was able to obtain better insight, or better theorising about a larger collection of cases. Relating to the current research design, there are 4 different cases. Each case varies in terms of organisational management and structure. The essential concern is to compare the similarities and differences in these cases, which are the cultural interaction between the Western and Chinese academics. Besides, organisational structure and management styles vary from case to case, which offer a number of contexts to allow the current research to compare the cultural interaction within.

Verschuren (2003) argued that the disadvantage of a single case over multi-cases lay in the analytical power and pervasiveness, and the generalisability of research results. The research results of a single case study can only be analysed within one single context, and it is difficult to find comparison with others. While using
multi-cases, the results can be compared across cases, which broaden the diversity of possible results, giving researchers a wider view over the results analysis. This enhances the generalisability of research’s analytical power. Verschuren and Doorewaard (1999) suggested that using multi-cases gave researchers a comparative approach, which enhanced the diversity of research objects. However, the choice of cases may vary from one researcher to another. Stake (1998) stated that researchers chose cases based on what could be learned during the research process, depending on the importance of each task to each researcher. In the current research, the significance of choosing each case depends on the different features of each organizational management and structure, which form various academic working environments, ranging from the Western, Sino-Western and Chinese styles. The current research opts to conduct multiple case studies, so as to distinguish the boundary and effects of such differences of organizational management and structure on academic staff. Hence, to obtain a comprehensive picture of culture differences, the current research is designed to be conducted in four different cases in both the Chinese and UK context (See Table 7.1 Research Cases).

7.3.4 The quality of the research

Although positivist and qualitative research do not share the same traditions, the principles of reliability and validity of positivist research have been translated and applied in qualitative studies, such as case study research, field research and anthropological research (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Bohnsack (2005, in Flick, 2007) pointed out that standards of qualitative research should be reconstructed from research practice. Taking an interpretivist qualitative research approach, the current research will assess its quality and case study method by using Lincoln and Guba (1999)’s interpretivist qualitative research criteria, including credibility, transferability, and dependability. According to Lincoln and Guba (1999), credibility has two folds. One is to enhance the probability of the findings to be found credible, and the other is to ensure that the findings are approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied. In the current research, the researcher reviewed a broad range and in-depth detailed literature, and the key findings of fellow researchers with interests in the
area of cross-cultural theories and Chinese cultural concepts. In this way, it aims to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Furthermore, it is suggested that interpretive researchers need to look for any cause-effect relationship which provides a plausible explanation of research phenomena (Andrade, 2009). This approach strengthens the credibility of the analysis and findings (Lincoln and Guba, 2005). In the current research, two different types of participants, expatriates and indigenous academics, provided the information for this study. Expatriate academics (including Western expatriates working in China and Chinese ones working in the UK) have at least one-year working and living experience in the host country, and so do the indigenous academics (including Western indigenous working in the UK and Chinese ones working in China) with at least one-year working or living experience abroad in a foreign country. Participants provided detailed descriptions about their experiences and cultural understanding, based on which the interpretations are drawn upon. Data analysis has also involved a large number of direct quotes from the interviews as examples, in order to enhance the researcher’s interpretation. With the support of rich descriptions, direct quotes and practitioner review of the interpretations, the researcher's insights can be validated (Lacity and Hirschheim, 1993). Hence, it helps to ensure that the findings are able to be approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied.

Transferability aims to make a transfer, by accumulating 'empirical evidence about contextual similarity' (Lincoln and Guba, 1999, p.404). In the current research, the researcher has fulfilled her responsibility to provide the details of four cases (see 7.4.1 The case design of the current research), so that the contexts are clear enough for future similarity judgement (Lincoln and Guba, 1999). Moreover, transferability of the current research can also be evaluated by looking into the application of its theoretical development and results onto other research contexts. Particularly, the theoretical development of using Yin-Yang theory to interpret Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, the dialectical and paradoxical perspective of understanding culture, can be applied to enhance the analytical transferability in the future cultural research.
It is pointed out that dependability is to examine both instability and phenomenal or design induced change (Lincoln and Guba, 1999). In order to enhance its dependability, the current research has carried out a rigorous systematic data analysis by using thematic analysis (see 7.10.2 Thematic analysis). With the support of NVivo 8, the coding frame was structured after two-stage codings, where themes were carefully finalised. This is to ensure that the coding frame can be as accurate as possible, so that similar results can to be achieved if tested by other researchers.

7.4 Research design

Vijver and Leung (1997) proposed that methodological considerations in cross-cultural research often focused on how to strengthen the interpretability of perceived cultural differences and avoid giving a high number of alternative explanations to those differences. In other words, it is important to have an enhanced interpretability of cultural differences and a minimised range of explanation, so as to generate clear and meaningful research results. Based upon this, Schaffer and Riordan (2003) suggested a combined emic-etic approach in making cross-cultural comparisons in organisational research. That is to say the researcher should obtain primary knowledge of each culture in the research (emic approach) and then make comparisons between different cultures (etic approach). According to them, emic approach helped the researcher reduce involving his or her own cultural bias and familiarise themselves with potential cultural differences in each background setting, so that the researcher was able to make cross-cultural comparisons fairly in a more appropriate way.

Hence, the current research design employed interviews in four chosen cases. Ideally, there would be about fifteen interviews, with half Chinese academics, and the other half Westerners. Then interview data would be both in-case compared based on the Western and Chinese cultural backgrounds of participants, and cross-case compared on the differences between two cultures, and between organisational management and structures.
7.4.1 The case design of the current research

With a collective case study approach, the current research was conducted in four cases in both the United Kingdom (UK) and China. From the result of Barkema et al (1997)’s research, it strongly recommended the necessity of involving studies of multinational organisations’ operation in both their home countries and host ones. According to the geographical location and organisational management and structure, the four cases are categorised as: Chinese case, collaborative case, colonialism case, and British case (See Table 7.1 Research Cases). These four cases shared a common feature. That is academic staff working in a multicultural team, which includes both Chinese and Western academic staff.

Table 7.1 Research Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chinese case. Context involves Chinese management style and governance</td>
<td>Case HK (in Hong Kong, China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Collaborative case. Context involves both Chinese and Western management style and governance</td>
<td>Case SH (in Shanghai, China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Colonialism case. Context involves British management style and governance</td>
<td>Case NB (in Ningbo, China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>British case. Context involves British management style and governance</td>
<td>Case UK (in England, U.K.)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Chinese case (Case HK) is where Chinese universities take the initiative and recruit foreign academic staff. By doing this, they integrate Western teaching and learning into Chinese university education, so as to connect education with international standards and improve teaching and learning quality. Nevertheless, the organisational management in this case remains Chinese style.

In Collaborative case (Case SH), Chinese universities set up collaborative degree programmes with Western universities. Such programmes allow Chinese students doing their degree partly or entirely in China. There can be two ways of recruiting foreign academic staff. One is that they are sent from the collaborative Western universities to work along with their Chinese colleagues. The other is that Chinese universities recruit foreign academics from China after both parties agree on course
design and module settings. In terms of organisational management, Chinese universities share organisational management, although sometimes Chinese might have more host advantage in terms of programmes being carried out in China, such as language, government policies, and education market demand.

Colonialism case (Case NB) means Western universities set up their own campuses in China, which allow students to complete their degree in China. For Colonialism case, foreign academic staff are mostly recruited by Western universities, and organisational management is operated in Western style. In this specific case, the university was set up by a British university in Ningbo, China.

While British case (Case UK) is where Western universities employ Chinese academic staff working in Western campuses. With Chinese academic staff working and living in the UK, the British culture context differs in this case compared to the others which are based in the Chinese cultural context.

Using four different cases, three in China and one in the UK, the current research explored Chinese and Western academic working relationships with each other, and similarities and differences within different working environments. Compared to a single case study, collective case study in the current research broadened the exploration of cultural interaction within different organisational contexts. It helps the researcher build a better insight from different angles, and strengthens explanations of cultural interaction phenomena.

**7.4.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Flick (2002) claimed that semi-structured interviews involved a series of open-ended questions of the topic area, covered by the interview outline, and responses were left open. In the current research, the interview outline was constructed based on the literature review. According to respondents’ individual intercultural experiences, the interview outline mainly inquired about respondents’ perspectives on organisational and cultural differences; working relationships and attitudes, and then questions were extended to more general views regarding national cultural
differences and global culture’s impact on the academic working environment. Bryman (2004) pointed out that an interview guide for semi-structured interviews was much less specific than a structured interview schedule, and mainly referred to a brief list of memory prompts of topics and issues that needed to be addressed. Furthermore, Bryman (2004) emphasized that the interview outline served as guidance to make sure that interviews followed a certain structure, which covered the topics that were essential in the research. This method provides opportunities to discuss the topics in detail, and opportunities for respondents to raise issues that are important to them, rather than just give specific brief answers. Besides, the interviewer can use prompts to encourage interviewees to consider the topic questions further, and probe them to expand on issues the interviewer thinks are important.

Roberts (1997) claimed that the face-to-face interview offered a greater degree of flexibility and was an important data gathering technique, which enabled verbal communication between the interviewer and informants. Comparing to other two types of interviews, structured and unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews appear to have more advantages in the current research. Firstly, with the assistance of the interview outline, the researcher will be able to navigate interviews, so that conversations are focused on the topics that are highly relevant to the current research. Meanwhile, unlike structured interviews, the interviewer and interviewees would not be limited to a tightly controlled schedule. Interviewees will be free to express their own views, whatever is considered to be relevant to the discussion, whereas the interviewer will be able to navigate the conversations back to the topic when necessary. Bryman and Bell (2003) pointed out researchers were prepared with an interview guide, while at the same time, it gave interviewees a great deal of leeway in how to reply.

In addition, semi-structured interviews allowed specific issues to be addressed, which gave the researcher a clear idea when it came to data analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2003). For example, the researcher would be able to guide respondents to recall examples of specific events to illustrate each theme, which strengthens the analytical power of interview data. Taking a multiple-case-study approach, the current research will be able to compare data across cases. As indicated by
Bryman and Bell (2003), the structured form of interview outline ensured cross-case comparability.

7.4.3 Demographic information of participants

Apart from collecting data through semi-structured interviews regarding respondents’ cultural perceptions, it is also important to collect other information. Goodenough (1980, p. 31) pointed out that “in the normal course of enculturation, people learn to anticipate the responses and to meet the expectations of others unself-consciously and without close attention to how they do it. The processes remain largely subjective.” That is to say people sometimes try to adapt themselves into a new cultural context without even realising the changes. Hence, additional relevant factors and information are worth noting when researching people’s cultural interaction, even though culture is the main research focus. In the current research, factors like each case’s working environment, staff recruitment, and the history of the university may be important for analysing organisational effect on academic staff. In terms of the individual level, relevant factors are staff working experience, education, national background, and motivation to work as an expatriate academic. To acquire such information, respondents were asked to fill in demographic questions at the end of interviews, which included information on age, gender, job title, and length of time they had worked in academia, and with colleagues from Western/Chinese cultural background.

7.4.4 Interview Guide

According to the literature review summarised in Chapter 2-5, the interview guide (See Appendix 3 Interview Guide in Chinese and Appendix 4 Interview Guide in English) in the current research consisted four main sections, including academics’ cultural fit, working environment, understanding of Western and Chinese culture, and perspectives of global culture. Among them, academics’ culture fit enquired about how participants fit into their current work context and general social context, and it further enquired about the details of how they getting over these cultural fit. In the working environment section, the interview questions asked about the participants’ opinions regarding their current organisation and comparisons to their previous work experience, too. Then the interview guide enquired about
participants’ understanding of Western and Chinese cultures. At the end, the interview guide dealt with the influence of global culture in academic working environment.

Apart from these, the interview guide started with asking participants' personal information. It helped break the ice with participants and make them feel more comfortable sharing their experiences and opinions. At the end, the interview guide enquired participants' future career plan, and also offered participants opportunities to add comments that they felt important relating to the interviews.

7.5 Sampling

Based on the literature review, the samples were confined to full-time Chinese and Western academics working in Business Schools in both China and the UK. In the four distinct cases for the current research, respondents shared the common characteristics of working in an intercultural environment in a Business School, and were selected on the basis of their nationality and employment.

In the British Case (Case UK), Chinese academics take the expatriate role. Their Western colleagues are indigenous. Vice versa, in the cases located in the Chinese context, Westerners take the expatriate role, and the Chinese are indigenous. Due to the limited number of expatriates working in Business Schools, it is easier to draw samples starting with expatriates. Particularly, the names and contact details of academics were all available on each university’s website. As Bryman and Bell (2003) claimed, such kind of sample was available by virtue of its accessibility, and was a convenience sample. For example, in the British case, the details of Chinese respondents were identified from academic staff lists of Business Schools. They were invited to participate in the current research by an email along with a research proposal, which briefly stated the purpose and methods of the current research. With their agreement to participate, names and contacts of their Western colleagues, who they worked closely together with, were obtained. After identifying and contacting expatriates, Western academics, who worked closely with the former, were contacted and invited to take part in the current research. Then the
head of each Business School was contacted directly with an inviting email and research proposal.

The sampling strategy varied when it came to the cases in China. A few difficulties came up when the researcher tried to make contact in the same way as in the UK. Firstly, the number of full-time Western academics working in China is different depending on the university’s feature. In Colonialism and Collaborative cases (Case NB and SH), the majority of teaching and research academic staff are Westerners, while Chinese are the minority. The details of their names and contacts are easily accessed on their websites. In Chinese case (Case HK), the university website did not give as much detailed information as others. This is partly because the internet application at work is still not as pervasive in China as it is used in the UK, and partly because the information on the website is not updated often. Another explanation to the problem was that Chinese universities do not employ as many Western academics to work on a full-time basis due to the issues of teaching language, the costly expense of employing expatriate academics compared to the limited funding provided by universities and government.

On the other hand, the access to the cases in China (Case HK, NB and SH) raised a cultural issue of how things operate in China. As elaborated in the literature review, “Guanxi”, the intangible personal connection, is widely operated in Chinese organisations. In the current research, it required personal connection inside universities to gain access to academic staff. Respondents were mainly contacted by snowball sampling. Bryman and Bell (2003) noted that a small group of people, who were relevant to the research topic, were firstly contacted, and then further contacts were introduced based on these. From a few failing attempts to obtain access and information of Western academics directly, identifying the “connection” inside universities appeared to be highly important. Therefore, in order to have a smooth access to universities, the sampling started with sending out emails to researchers, who had conducted research related to Chinese culture or higher education. It was to seek their help in obtaining contacts and access into Chinese university. Then relevant respondents were firstly referenced and introduced, then identified and approached regarding the current research. Snowball sampling is usually applied due to an unavailable sampling frame for sample population. However, in the current research, the approach was taken due to special cultural
context that required access through “Guanxi”. Coleman (1958, in Bryman and Bell 2003, p. 107) emphasized the advantage of using snowball sampling in qualitative research, where “the researcher needs to focus upon or to reflect relationships between people, tracing connections through snowball sampling may be a better approach than conventional probability sampling”.

7.6 Pilot study

Harpaz (2004) noted that many problems of questionnaire and interview development could be improved by a pilot study, which evaluated the applicability of questions and scales to population, as well as reliability and design characteristics, so that changes and adaptation could be carried out to improve the research. In the current research, two rounds of pilot studies were carried out to ensure the research questions reflected the real academic context, and to test the research instrument, the interview guide (See Appendix 5 Interview Guide in Chinese - Pilot and Appendix 6 Interview Guide in English - Pilot).

7.6.1 Pilot study in China

The first round of the pilot study was carried out in Mainland China. The purpose of the first round was to inspect the breadth of research questions, and the consistency of their application in the real context. Altogether, seven individual interviews and one group interview were conducted in Fuzhou, China. The respondents were Western teachers working in Chinese universities for at least a year. The age of respondents varied from late 20’s to over 60. Universities and colleges were under Chinese management style, which was most like the Chinese case among the four possible cases proposed in the research design.

At this stage, the pilot study mainly explored the research questions in two key themes. They were the main problems of Western expatriates’ cultural fit in Chinese universities, and the general cultural issues that Westerners came across while they worked and lived in China. The interviews found some links between cultural dimension theories, such as between Hofstede's Confucian Dynamism and Uncertainty avoidance, which was denied by Hofstede and Bond (1988). Moreover,
it also found that two other of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, individualism and uncertainty avoidance might be inter-related when they were interpreted in the Chinese context. Meanwhile, the pilot study enhanced the significance of cultural items in cultural interactions in universities, such as the key Confucianism concepts of Guanxi. On the other hand, the pilot study adjusted some of the original design of research questions. Rather than taking the research process of conducting questionnaires, individual interviews and focus groups, the pilot study demonstrated that semi-structured interviews with individuals were more appropriate for such kind of research, and suitable to explore more in-depth information from respondents. In other words, it proved that semi-structured interviews were most suitable for the current research, particularly while the research involved subjective forms of perceptions and values.

7.6.2 Pilot study in the UK

The second round of the pilot study was carried out in the UK. It was mainly to test the interview guide further in the UK context. Seven respondents in the UK were doctoral researchers from both Western and Chinese cultural backgrounds, who shared a similar working environment as academics in universities, though were less involved in other administrative, collaborative, and teaching tasks. The advantage of using doctoral researchers was that they were readily available, which made it easy to conduct the pilot study and follow-up as well if it was necessary. At the same time, three telephone interviews were conducted with Chinese academics working in China. The pilot study helped improve the interview guide in a few different aspects.

7.6.3 The results of the pilot study

The pilot study, firstly, helped improve the wording (See Appendix 5 Interview Guide in Chinese - Pilot and Appendix 6 Interview Guide in English - Pilot) to be more specific and easily understood by respondents. Respondents were asked to comment and point out problems right away if they could not understand or found questions unclear, so that the researcher could explain further, and seek more appropriate wording for questions. The purpose was to test participants’ response to questions in terms of the way questions were being asked, and identifying vague
wording and expressions, so as to improve the interview guide and make better sense to respondents. For example, in the interview guide, questions asking respondents’ opinion about organisational management, it was suggested to be more specific by listing each aspect of organisational management that were relevant to the current research, such as human resource management, recruiting, working hours, administrative support, funding and personal development. In this way, respondents found it easier to give feedback and detailed information. The term ‘power distance’ was to measure the closeness between superiors and employees. However, it was more often used in literature or theoretical contexts, and hardly used in a social context, which respondents found difficult to understand. Hence, in the pilot study, it was expanded into two separate questions by referring to the management style and the importance of work status between managers and subordinates respectively. Another example is the design of questions about the cultural dimension ‘femininity and masculinity’. These two words were to describe different characters of people’s rationality, assertiveness and competitiveness. When these values were put into one question, respondents found it difficult to answer, as each concept implied a different meaning, which should not be mixed with others. Hence, the question was divided into three, with the first two referring to the rationality and assertiveness in people’s decision making, and the third referring to people’s level of competitiveness with others. Moreover, the pilot study was very helpful in terms of checking the consistency of interview guide translation from English to Chinese. For instance, the term ‘hierarchy’ was to measure significance of social status. When it was literally translated into ‘层次, 阶级差别’ (in Chinese Mandarin, Cengci, Jieji Chabie), which meant the difference of social class and caste in Chinese, it changed the original meaning of the question. Therefore, it was suggested to replace it with ‘社会地位’ (in Chinese Mandarin, Shehui Diwei), which meant social status.

Secondly, the pilot study helped restructure the interview guide. Bryman and Bell (2003) noted that a certain amount of order on the topic areas should be created for the interview guide, which allowed questions to flow reasonably well, though the researcher should be prepared to change the order of questions during the actual interview as well. In designing the interview guide for the current research, originally some of the questions regarding respondents’ perspectives of organisational management and structure were to be asked at the beginning of interviews, after personal information. However, in the second round pilot study, it
was found that these questions involved more in-depth thinking compared to other ones. Respondents did not feel comfortable being questioned about such topics at the very beginning of interviews. It was suggested to leave such questions to a later stage of the interviews, such as after talking about individual cultural fit in organisations and about cultural differences in general. In this way, conversation about individual experience served as a catalyst for respondents to develop more thoughts from their personal experience and warm up the conversation regarding his or her organisation.

According to Schwab (1999), a pilot study helps the researcher identify errors in assumptions regarding participants’ frames of reference, and items that might cause confusion and difficult understanding. In the current research, both pilot studies enhanced the comprehension of data collection and ensured that interviews would cover not only the basic individual cultural values, but also general understandings of respondents’ cultural values, which may not be realised in their daily work and life. The researcher would be able to establish basic face or content credibility, which offered the chance to examine whether items were understood properly by respondents.

### 7.7 Bilingual concerns

The current research interviews were conducted in both Chinese and British contexts. Ungerson (1996) claimed that language influenced the understanding and interpretation of data, and suggested language should be closely contextualised, in order to obtain a more appropriate understanding within a specific culture. Hence, it is significant to carry out interviews in both English and Chinese, meaning Western academics being interviewed in English, and Chinese academics in both English and Chinese Mandarin, depending on the preference of respondents. By doing this, respondents felt more comfortable through the interviews. The interview guide was tailored for both languages as well. It was in both English and Chinese versions. The ones for Western respondents were in English, and others were in Chinese.
7.7.1 The translation of the interview guide

Based on the literature review, the final version of the interview guide was drafted in English, and then translated into Chinese. Temple and Young (2004, p.175) found that ‘translation itself has the power to reinforce or to subvert longstanding cross-cultural relationships but that power rests in how translation is executed and integrated into research design, not in the fact of translation per se’. Translation of the interview guide was done by the researcher. It gave the researcher an opportunity to inspect the matching of wordings and meanings between English and Chinese. As Temple and Young (2004) noticed, the researcher has great opportunities to give close attention to cross-cultural meanings and interpretations, which might also have brought up inspection of meaning equivalence during the research process. Nevertheless, they also pointed out that the social-cultural role of researcher/translator was inevitably bound to have influence on the researcher/translation’s interpretation of meanings, which was related to the validity or credibility of work. Alternatively, the meaning of data was potentially mis-interpreted through translations, if researchers did not have sufficient language knowledge to deal with translation or contextualising the data (Ungerson, 1996). Hence, to further ensure the equivalence of translation, it is essential to examine translation, particularly by the understanding of potential research samples.

Apart from that, the interview guide was sent by email to seven bilingual Chinese academics working in the UK and China to translate back in English. Then a further discussion was followed by telephone interviews, asking them to illustrate their understanding in more detail, particularly regarding different translations and wordings that were highlighted during their back-translation. Temple and Young (2004, p. 165) pointed out that ‘the reader produces an understanding of a text during the act of reading by reference to their own understanding of concepts and debates filtered through their own experiences’. Therefore, it was necessary to make sure that Chinese translation delivered the same, or at least similar meaning, as its English version. It allowed these seven pilot respondents acting as translating inspectors, to express their understanding, which decreased the chances of misunderstanding or confusion that occurred during translation. Edwards (1998) purported that back translation was used to achieve the agreement of a ‘correct’ version of a text. For example, while asking respondents’ understanding about Western culture, there was one question that referred to Hofstede’s individualism
and collectivism dimension. It was initially translated as ‘人与人之间的亲近程度’ (the closeness of interpersonal relationship) with the options of ‘个人主义感’ (individualism) and ‘集体主义感’ (collectivism). However, it was reported that the interpersonal relationship could be interpreted as people’s personal relationships as an individual, which emphasized the relationships at a personal level, rather than a group level, and might not involve individuals’ emotional affiliation with the community. In this sense, ‘人与人之间的亲近程度’ (the closeness of interpersonal relationship) did not necessarily relate to collectivism, which in Chinese meant an attitude or spirit toward the community or society. Hence, the question was modified and added on to the information regarding respondents’ response towards questions about responsibility and commitment.

7.7.2 The translation of the interview transcripts

Spilka (1968) noted that one of the difficulties for assessing translation was the lack of an ultimate standard of translation quality. Although there was no definite standard of translating quality, the current research combined pretesting technique with back-translation. Brislin (1970) recommended that translated materials should be pretested on target language-speaking people when no meaning mistakes were found, and that translation and/or original English should be revised based on the pretest feedback, and finally translation should be critically examined by a bilingual. In the current research, the pretest of translation formed the major part of the second round pilot study. It helped test the practicability of the translated interview guide, so as to strengthen the practical credibility of translation.

Another bilingual concern in the current research was data analysis. As nearly half of the interviews were conducted in Chinese Mandarin, data analysis involved translated transcription from Chinese to English. In this process, the interviewers’ background knowledge of Chinese culture needed to be taken into account, particularly because implied meanings could be quite different or even opposite due to such large cultural differences. Twinn (1998) noted that it would be a continuing problem throughout the translation process to find appropriate English words to explain the exact meaning of some Chinese data. While transcribing the Chinese interviews, the researcher paid more attention to the use of Chinese idioms and the discussion about some Chinese norms. For example, when
discussing about Chinese academics’ understanding about Chinese students' copy-paste writing problems, Chinese Expatriate 6.01 in Case UK explained this could be because Chinese students were used to the Chinese way of wiring, which does not require referencing while quoting from idioms. In the interview, Expatriate 6.01 mentioned a Chinese idiom ‘来而不往非礼也’ (Lai Er Bu Wang Fei Li Ye) and concept ‘自我检讨’ (Zi Wo Jian Tao). The Chinese idiom, ‘来而不往非礼也’ (Lai Er Bu Wang Fei Li Ye), originally comes from a famous Confucius teaching. It means it is not polite not to return the courtesy from one side of the party, which emphasizes the importance of reciprocity between friends. It further indicates that friendship cannot stand always on one side. Without a direct translation in English available, the researcher added a bracket after the phrase with a detailed explanation of the meaning. The concept ‘自我检讨’ (Zi Wo Jian Tao) literally means self-criticism. ‘自我’ means oneself. ‘检讨’ is formed by inspection and discussion two characters. Usually when a person makes a mistake, he or she is expected or even asked to review their wrong-doings in a written form, in order to prevent from making a similar mistake. This self-criticism statement will reflect on the mistakes, causes, and suggestions about how to change and improve in the future. ‘自我检讨’ is a common concept in Chinese society. By adding the explanation in bracket after the phrase, the research aimed to provide the exact meaning of Chinese data.

7.8 Ethical concerns

Christians (2005) summarised four main items in the codes of ethics, which were informed consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy. Each code was tackled from a different aspect. In the current research, universities and individuals were firstly approached by email invitations, with the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality in the current research. That means the identities of universities and respondents were kept anonymous. The information and interview details were used for the current research project only, and would not be revealed to any other person except the researcher. Interviews were then arranged based on their willingness and consent to take part in the current research.

Secondly, during semi-structured interviews, the researcher summarised and double-checked with respondents to make sure that their opinions and meanings
were understood and interpreted appropriately. By doing this, it avoided deception or misinterpreting, in the process of data analysis. A summary report of the current research results was offered as an incentive to encourage universities and individual academics’ cooperation. In terms of interviews conducted in Chinese Mandarin, a summary of the transcription report in English was sent to respondents. In the current research, all Chinese respondents were bilingual in Chinese and English. The English version of the summary report enhanced the accuracy of the researcher’s data translation.

### 7.9 Data collection

After samples were identified from each university’s website as outlined in the sampling section above, respondents were contacted by the researcher with an email invitation letter (See Appendix 1 Email Invitation Letter). The invitation letter was signed by one of the supervisors, giving an introduction about the current research project and aiming to improve the response rate from academics. Respondents who showed interests and agreed to participate in the current research were then contacted further to arrange specific time and location for interviews. The current research data were collected in Mainland China (for Collaborative case, Case SH and Colonialism case, Case NB), in Hong Kong (for Chinese case, Case HK) and in the UK (for British case, Case UK). Semi-structured interviews were carried out with every respondent, most of which were face-to-face interviews, and a few were telephone interviews due to respondents’ busy work schedules or clash with the researcher’s visiting schedule. In total, there were 70 respondents taking part in the current research. Table 7.2 shows the number of Chinese and Western academics in each case (See Table 7.2 Respondents).
Table 7.2 Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>HK</th>
<th>CN</th>
<th>WN</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chinese case (Case HK)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Collaborative case (Case SH)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Colonialism (Case NB)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. British case (Case UK)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Case HK, Case SH and Case UK, there were nearly half Chinese academics, and half Westerners (WN). Whereas in Case NB, the number of Chinese academics was nearly half of that of Westerners. This was mainly due to the Colonialism setting of Case NB, which required a dominant British standard of higher education, including academic recruitment. Hence, the requirement for Chinese academics was to have experienced British higher education, and recruitment was found quite low in terms of intake from the UK.

Respondents were invited to take part in the current research by emails initially, together with a statement of the purpose of the current research. The time and location of interviews were mutually agreed by both respondents and the researcher. At the beginning of interviews, the researcher thanked respondents for taking time and effort to take part in the current research. A consent form was signed before interviews started. Then respondents chose either English or Chinese to conduct interviews. Some Chinese respondents felt more comfortable to have the interview in English, although in between, they would use Chinese to elaborate or replace their English expression, in order to make better sense. Each interview took, on average, between one and two hours long. Some of the interviews lasted longer, as respondents were willing to discuss and share their own experience with the researcher.
Most of the 70 interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Every interview was recorded under the agreement with respondents, except two (one in Case NB and one in Case UK) preferred not to be recorded, though agreed on the researcher taking notes. Bryman (2004) pointed out audio recording interviews allowed the researcher to fully engage in interviews, without being distracted by note-taking. Apart from that, it gave the researcher a large amount of data (Kvale, 1996). The recording maximised the accuracy of data, and helped the researcher concentrate on the quality of interviews (Lee, 2007).

7.10 Data analysis

Tesch (1990) pointed out three approaches to qualitative data analysis, which were categorised into three sets. Firstly, language oriented approach is interested in using language and the meaning of words. Secondly, a descriptive/interpretive oriented approach involves not only descriptions and interpretations of circumstances in details, but also their meanings for the ones who experienced it. A theory-building oriented approach sought to identify connections between social phenomena (Tesch, 1990). Although the three approaches distinguish in terms of their focus, they share some common characteristics. Regardless of the type of approach, each set’s data were to be broken down, identified and classified to form into relevant themes, and then the researcher would be able to identify how the themes were connected (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

7.10.1 Transcription

Poland (1995) pointed out the interpretive nature of transcription work, and suggested it should be acknowledged by researchers who hired others to do the work. Furthermore, Tilley (2003) emphasized transcribers’ interpretive/analytical/theoretical lens potentially influenced the researcher’s analysis of data, and that it would be an advantage for researchers who transcribed their own tapes. In the current research, the researcher carried out all the transcription work. Through this process, the researcher went through interviews repetitively and listened to each detailed conversation over and over again. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) claimed that the act of transcribing developed analysis and deeper understanding of data. Palermo (2009) carried out her own
transcription work, and found that it allowed her to get to know data better, which assisted the analysis process, in terms of identifying issues and extracting themes.

7.10.2 Thematic analysis

Miles (1979) suggested that thematic analysis was difficult for qualitative data because of its richness and its complex analytical path. To deal with the richness of interview data, the current research used thematic analysis, which was based on an iterative coding process. It was claimed that thematic analysis is a way of seeing and a process to encode qualitative information (Boyatzis, 1998). Ritchie and Spencer (1994) pointed out thematic analysis involved both logical and intuitive thinking, through which the researcher interpreted meanings, identified key issues and linked ideas. Hence, to better interpret interview data from the current research, and find connections between respondents’ feedback, thematic analysis was chosen.

The transcriptions of the current research were imported into NVivo. It was claimed that NVivo gave researchers more flexibility to play with ideas, linking and comparing patterns within and across documents, and saving, printing, and undoing the results as well (Basit, 2003; Walsh, 2003). With the support of NVivo, transcriptions were categorised according to the interview guide, which was structured by topics and concepts that directly linked to the research questions. Themes were generated in two ways, including inductively deriving from raw data and deductively developed based on previous theory and research (Boyatzis, 1998; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In the current research data, themes were coded in two stages. Initially, a list of primary themes was developed according to the interview guide and theoretical concepts. Then working as a structure chart, these themes guided the researcher who sought other similar and different issues across transcriptions. During this process, some of the primary codes were found to be not as significant issues being discussed in interviews, and were replaced by the new themes that came out of analysis. In this way, a full list of themes was developed. As Miles and Huberman (1994) claim, data would be able to suggest useful and applicable themes and it was normal to redefine and discard certain codes in this process.
All transcriptions were thoroughly read through, classified, and categorised based on the fully developed themes. Due to the massive amount of data and the scale of the analysis, this thesis focuses on and analyses mainly three sets of codes. They are Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony. This is not only because of their significance demonstrated in literature review in Chapter 3 Chinese culture, but also because of the high frequency with which they appeared and the depth of the discussion throughout interviews.

### 7.11 Summary

The methodology chapter described and discussed the chosen research approach and methodology. Detailed design, sampling, data collection and analysis has been presented and explained. The outcomes of the pilot study were presented, demonstrating careful design of the research instrument. Furthermore, the researcher’s role, bilingual concern, and ethical issues were addressed, in order to reduce bias during the research process. The findings of the data analysis will be presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 8  Findings - Guanxi

8.1 Introduction

To compare Chinese and Western cultural values, explore their interaction, and their impact on employees’ working relationships, qualitative data were analysed in great detail. Through the analysis, the Chinese concepts of Guanxi and Mianzi have been able to act as the main themes in comparing to and interacting with Western cultural dimensions. Therefore, this chapter, Findings – Guanxi and Chapter 9, Findings – Mianzi and Harmony will present findings from across all 4 cases. The analysis found that the differences between cases were not as great as potentially expected. Chapter 10 Discussion will present details of cross-case analysis.

This chapter analyses academics’ understanding of Guanxi. From participants’ responses, the analysis mainly focuses on the link between Guanxi and Hofstede’s 4 cultural dimensions, i.e. Individualism / Collectivism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Long-term / Short-term Orientation. Then the analysis will move on to look at the influence of Guanxi, including its impact on individual academics, academic organisations, students, and its significance. The potential negative impact of Guanxi will be discussed as well.

8.2 Guanxi and Individualism / Collectivism

As one of the key Chinese concepts, Guanxi was reported by the participants to be highly relevant to Hofstede’s Individualism / Collectivism dimension. The analysis will look at the collectivistic and individualistic aspects of Guanxi respectively. In respect of the collectivistic aspect, Guanxi will be analysed in terms of relationships and connections, and compared to the British ‘old boys’ network’. In respect of the individualistic aspect, the analysis includes Guanxi as personal contacts, its comparison to Western networks, and being negative in Guanxi.
8.2.1 Collectivistic aspect of Guanxi

8.2.1.1 Relationship and connections

In all 4 cases, the academics defined Guanxi as a type of relationship, or connection between people. Expatriate 8.02 in Case SH mentioned that ‘it’s (Guanxi) not about money, but about people’s relationship’. Altogether, 6 Western expatriates in China (3 in Case SH and 3 in Case HK) and 1 Chinese indigenous in Case HK defined Guanxi as the relationships between people.

3 expatriates in Case NB pointed out that Guanxi was the contacts or connection that people had to help them solve problems. Expatriate 7.03 mentioned that Guanxi also ‘existed in England. Everything is about who you know and what kind of contact you’ve got’. On the other hand, Expatriate 7.09 elaborated his understanding of Guanxi in more detail. He stated,

*What is Guanxi? Some kind of shared connections. … There’re three types of connection. There’s family, the strongest connection; people who you share connection with, like you’ve been to school with, been to …shared same kind of work place, this kind of connections. The third type is the complete strangers. So I think the first and second types are the strongest in China, the family type and also the type who shared the same hometown, the same school, the same college. Very strong in China.*

In his opinion, the strength of Guanxi depended on the closeness of people’s connection. Moreover, Guanxi can even be developed with complete strangers, who may be introduced by other people, or known through other circumstances.

Indigenous 6.08 in Case UK pointed out that, ‘in my idea, Guanxi has something to do with communicational kind of social capital’. In his opinion, Guanxi was the collective friendship and relationships, which could be expended on exchanging favours or solving social problem activities. Indigenous 9.03 in Case UK referred to Guanxi as ‘networks of people working together which stretches to the social field’. In other words, he saw Guanxi as people’s working relationship being extended into social life. Both arguments acknowledged the fact that Guanxi was applied into
social activities. However, the former took on Guanxi from a broader connection, including friends, colleagues, and any other person involved.

Expatriate 2.03 in Case HK did not directly point out the relevance of Guanxi to relationships, she explained her view of Guanxi by looking at the inter-connection among people, by saying,

I think people are more inter-connected here (in Hong Kong). I think people having a more, if you want to be more fancy about it, I would say there’s a more diffused self. People are more kind of … meshed in with other people…. they were just all interconnecting with each other. And it makes them feel better.

Expatriate 2.03 emphasized the tight connection between people. In her description, people blended into each other by building embedded trust. In this sense, Guanxi worked like glue that links people together, and forms a large community.

Moreover, Chinese Expatriate 6.03 in Case UK explained that Guanxi in China was demonstrated as ‘more on brotherhood type of relationship, people are close to each other’. According to him, people who were involved in Guanxi, treated each other as brothers and sisters, taking care of each other by helping resolve the request or problem. In this sense, Guanxi links the individuals together as a big family.

From these definitions, it indicated the collectivistic character of Guanxi, which worked as relationships to connect people together into a big community. However, it does not mean that people share the same relationship within Guanxi. The strengths of people’s relationships vary. The more direct the Guanxi is, the closer the relationship.

8.2.1.2 The ‘old boys’ network’
2 academics (1 Indigenous in Case SH and 1 Expatriate in Case NB) compared Guanxi to the old boys’ network in the UK. The Chinese Indigenous 8.05 in Case SH used the comparison to indicate that Guanxi existed everywhere, both in China
and in the UK. In other words, there was no difference in people’s relationships across different locations. Similarly, the Western Expatriate 7.04 in Case NB related Guanxi to the concept of ‘the old boys’ network, by claiming that Guanxi was similar to ‘the old boys’ network’ in the UK. However, Expatriate 7.04 interpreted Guanxi from a different perspective.

*We have this in the UK to a certain extent. We have the old boys’ network. It’s a different variation here. The old boys’ network is like if your dad knows some other dad, who’s the director of… and his son gets the job. Same sort of thing. Just called different names. The main difference is here (in China), Chinese families, some of whom don’t have so much Guanxi, and they can buy Guanxi by giving gifts to people. They buy Guanxi. In the UK, you don’t… (in China) it’s not a bribe, they just see it as partly Guanxi building.*

This example implied a collectivistic character in Chinese context, where people were more comfortable to get involved and develop new relationships with each other. While due to the individualistic character in the Western society, people are more attached to the individual relationships that they have in networks for a certain specific time. When the circumstances are changed, the relationships in networks will terminate, and it is difficult to start up a new relationship without any legitimate reason. In contrast, Expatriate 7.04 pointed out that Guanxi was more accessible for Chinese. Even if a person does not have any direct contact of Guanxi, he or she can build Guanxi gradually by gifts giving, which is considered as a normal gesture to start Guanxi. It indicated a more open relationship building in the collectivistic community, where people have more chances to be part of Guanxi.

Comparing Guanxi to the old boys’ network, Western Expatriate 7.04 seemed to appreciate more of the differences of Guanxi from the Western concept of networking than Chinese Indigenous 8.05. The former recognised the minute difference between Guanxi and old boys’ network, and described Guanxi in more detail, rather like the latter who gave a generalised description that Guanxi or networking existed everywhere.

The reason for the difference in understanding could be because the Westerner experienced a more marked environment change when living and working China. Chinese Indigenous 8.05 in Case SH only worked in China for three years, and did
not have any working experience outside of China, although he used to study for his PhD in the UK. Compared to the Chinese academic, Western Expatriate 7.04 in NB seemed to have much more exposure to foreign cultures. Apart from three years’ working experience in China, the latter had much longer working experience, including over 8 years’ exposure to countries other than his own or China.

8.2.2 Individualistic aspect of Guanxi

Apart from the collectivistic character, Guanxi was revealed to have a strong individualistic character in the interviews. In particular, it was highly related with personal motives in the Chinese context.

8.2.2.1 Personal contacts

Firstly, it was found that Guanxi was mainly about the significance of people’s contacts and connections. In Case NB and HK, mostly it was the expatriates, (3 Expatriates in Case NB, 3 Expatriates and 1 Indigenous in Case HK) who drew attention to Guanxi and individual contacts and connections. Namely Guanxi was about what kind of important and crucial relationships that each individual possessed. In other words, each individual has different contacts and connections from each other. The significance of these contacts and connections depend on how efficiently they are able to help the individual to solve a problem. This concept shows that the relationships that individuals have are personal, rather than being shared with others. Apart from one of the expatriates from Case NB who only had working experience in China for over 7 years, the others had worked in China, their own country, and some even in a third country. Interestingly, this group of academics mostly were in senior positions in academia, such as Associate professor, and professors. This also indicated that senior academics emphasised the importance of Guanxi much more.

Sharing her own working experience in Malaysia, Expatriate 9.02 in Case UK reaffirmed that,

*In Malaysia, it seems to be a bit more of… 'I'm your friend. How can you do this for me?' they're more counting on you. It's a bit more personal. Here in*
the UK, they won’t count on you… or put the own-ness of the burden on you.
That’s how I feel. In Malaysia, sometimes it’s like ‘you will do this for me, because you’re my friend’. In the business school, in Malaysia, you also need to use Guanxi. You don’t escape from it. They obviously don’t see it as Guanxi. But I do see it.

In other words, Expatriate 9.02 assumed that Guanxi was more personal. It was regarded as a kind of personal possession, which people were able to count on if they were in need. According to her, people used Guanxi in academia even though some people might not acknowledge the fact.

8.2.2.2 Compared to Western networks

Through the interviews, Guanxi was compared with the Western concept of networks. It was noticed that one of the main differences between Guanxi and networks was that Guanxi occurred on a more personal level, which was not the case with networks. Indigenous 6.08 in Case UK claimed that,

*It’s similar. There’s difference at the same time. From my understanding of what Guanxi is, it’s based on networking, and developing networks with people and so on. But it seems to be more, I don’t know whether it’s personal, or colloquial? … For example, networks, I know there’re a couple of strategists in Cardiff, and I’m quite good friends with them, and do some research with them. I would feel there probably some Guanxi blossom, and someone in Aston as well. Whereas some other people I emailed in the US, to get some information about different research stuff. There I have a network. The people that I know, I can email. But on a personal level, friend level, no. It isn’t. I know that person, maybe I will email again in the future. I will send them a paper in the future. It’s not really a close network that I can rely on for the future, or friends or so on. Not on a personal level. That’s the difference between a network and Guanxi. I think a network, is more distant. You have people you know that you can contact, for specific information, while here you have people who you can contact for information, and also talk with them in general, and rely on perhaps things outside of the work.*

In his opinion, networks were used for information exchange to a large extent, and people involved in networks were more distant. He assumed that Guanxi was dealt with on a much more personal level. According to him, based on networks, Guanxi
developed further, which demanded more interaction between people, including information sharing and socialising, which normally led to a friendship type of close relationship.

Apart from that, in terms of the need for Guanxi, 2 Indigenous and 1 Expatriate in Case UK looked at the differences between Guanxi and Networks from a more stereotype point of view, based on the conventional assumption that Westerners were more individualistic and Chinese were more collectivistic. They pointed out that this was another way to differentiate Guanxi and Western networks. For instance, Expatriate 6.03 observed the difference in respect of physical spaces by saying,

*In China, it may not be necessarily distinguished, people having Guanxi. Back in China, academic staff didn’t even have individual offices, or a common place for communicating.*

According to him, Chinese people unconsciously being close to each other, and involved in Guanxi, was partly because of the limited physical space that they were allocated at work. The crowded space or working conditions gave them the environment to be close and to interact more often with each other, without making extra efforts.

On the other hand, 2 indigenous in Case UK discussed the issue from the psychological perspective of Westerners being more individualistic. Indigenous 9.03 focused on the context of work and private life, and assumed that,

*I couldn’t tell what exactly the difference is between Guanxi and networks. But perhaps my prejudice would be… perhaps the Europeans being more individualistic, are quite happy and feel easy to separate work from private life.*

In his opinion, the reason for Networks being more popular with Europeans was that Europeans were more individualistic and protective towards their private life than the Chinese. At the same time, it means that he acknowledged that Guanxi being more commonly applied in China was due to the fact that Chinese were more collective. As a result, Chinese are closer towards each other. Hence when Chinese build relationships with each other, relationships are often extended to
activities outside of the work context as well. Similarly, Indigenous 6.08 observed the psychological distance between Chinese and Western colleagues. He noted that,

> I find my Chinese colleagues… I can quite easily just have a chat with them. While some Western colleagues, I find more awkward to approach. And they might just give you not much time, not much discussion, unless you know them quite well. X (a colleague) seems like an OK kind of guy. But if you try to get information from him, or talking to him, doesn’t seem to be that communicative or that willing to interact with staff beyond his own group. Same with those PhD students, who might just want to see him and have a chat with some specific idea, but it’s hard to get any information. I had this with another professor before, outside the Business School. But he’s more interested in talking about himself and his stuff, rather than actually addressing the research thing we were talking about. But I’ve never really had that issue with Chinese or foreign colleagues. But I think it depends on the person. Certain Westerners are really uptight, and not very open. They keep their space to themselves.

In this case, Indigenous 6.08 found it difficult to make close relationships with his Western colleagues and easier to get involved with the Chinese ones. He found that the psychological distance was much closer with the Chinese, compared to the Westerners. In other words, the psychological space makes a big impact on the type of the relationship between people.

Being psychologically more individualistic and physically more distant from others, the Westerners demonstrated a strong sense of independence. They assumed that in the UK, people were more individualistic, and were not dependent on others as much as the Chinese are. Hence, the need for using Guanxi or counting on others’ help to solve problems is much less in the UK. This difference, based on the Westerners being individualistic and Chinese being collectivistic, was only mentioned by the Western and Chinese academics in Case UK, but not in other cases, either in Mainland China or Hong Kong. It indicates that the idea of being individualistic is more distinguished in the UK context. Neither the Chinese nor the Westerners working in the Chinese context emphasized that. The idea of being individualistic does not stand out or significantly reflect in daily life in the Chinese context.
8.2.2.3 Avoiding being negative in Guanxi

Guanxi being personal was not only about the close individual contacts that connected people, but also its social impact on people’s feelings and emotions involved in such close relationships. Expatriate 2.08 in Case HK analysed his own understanding of how to maintain Guanxi into two aspects, avoiding being negative and compromising to maintain harmony.

_I think my personal experience is that in Hong Kong, if you have any disagreement, basically you shouldn't be negative, less in Hong Kong. It's similar in China. Because the local culture, the Chinese culture takes everything personally. Basically don’t say anything, criticise anything, or put forward to your colleagues or whatever, or your students, you just cannot… you have to avoid being negative. Even if you don’t agree with others, you have to avoid being negative._

It indicated that negative comments or criticism had impact on people’s emotions, which would be reflected on the maintenance of Guanxi as well. In other words, Guanxi is not only individualistic in terms of having one’s own contacts and networks, but also reflects the individualistic side of people dealing with their emotions. Moreover, he suggested that to maintain a harmonious environment, people needed to negotiate, or even compromise sometimes to achieve a long lasting Guanxi. A more detailed analysis regarding harmony will be discussed in the chapter about Mianzi.

The concept of Guanxi being personal stresses the significance of individualism in building relationships in the Chinese context. That is Guanxi is mainly built on an individual basis. Through individual efforts to start and maintain relationships, people are connected together as a collective community. In this way, Guanxi combines both individualistic and collectivistic characteristics. Without either of them, Guanxi cannot be maintained, and the community will collapse.

Moreover, the idea of Guanxi being personal, or being an individual-oriented connection reflects the closeness of people’s relationship when they are involved in Guanxi. When people are not involved in any specific network, they are not connected with each other. Especially in the Chinese context, where collectivism is
highly valued, it is significant for each individual to have recognition from members in each society or community. It is regarded as proof of each individual’s social status. In other words, if the individual does not have any connection with the group, he or she will not be acknowledged by other group members. Hence, he or she will not be counted or considered as part of the group. This shows the exclusiveness of Guanxi. That is to say, people in China need to make efforts to form personal connections with the others in the Guanxi group. Once they build the connection to a certain extent and get acknowledged by the others in the group, they secure the recognition of that particular group. In this way, they form a tight affiliation to the group, which includes the strong collectivistic commitment to the group. However, when the individual is not in the group, he or she can be separated completely from people inside the group. As a result, it is difficult for people outside the group to get in contact or interact with people inside the group, unless they find some personal connection as a way to break in. In this sense, the Chinese collectivism is limited to a selective group, where members need to make efforts and earn respect from other group members. It distinguishes people inside the group from outside the group, so that the in-groups are much closer than the out-groups. That is why Guanxi, which demonstrates a strong collectivistic character of the Chinese, is built from personal and individual connections.

The individualistic aspect of Guanxi was mentioned by more Western academics than by Chinese ones (3 expatriates in Case NB, 3 expatriates and 1 indigenous in Case HK, 2 Indigenous and 3 Expatriates in Case UK). Among them, only one Western indigenous in Case UK only had working experience in the UK for 3 years. The rest of the academics had sufficient exposure in both Chinese and Western culture contexts, with Chinese academics having at least 2 years of working experience in the UK, and Western ones at least over a year working in China. However, the latter had a Chinese spouse to help him understand the Chinese culture in his everyday life.
Therefore, the interaction between Individualism/Collectivism and Guanxi can be demonstrated in Figure 8.1.

As indicated in the Yin-Yang figure, Guanxi contains elements of both Individualism and Collectivism. The white colour represents Collectivism, and the black represents Individualism. The white colour dominates most of the right side of the figure, but it also contains a little black dot. This represents the situations when Collectivism has the dominant control. It takes into account the existence of Individualism, which forms only a small part within collectivism. On the left side of the figure, a little white dot lies in the space which is mostly occupied by the black. This is to indicate the situations when Individualism takes the leading position, but where Collectivism exists at the same time. These two dimensions co-exist in each other’s domain, and the strength of Guanxi varies accordingly, depending on the strength of each dimension. For example, Expatriate 9.02’s (see 8.2.2.1) experience in Malaysia indicates a strong combination of both Collectivism and Individualism involved in Guanxi. Based on personal contacts, people build up their connections. When the focus is on the group, it shows the Collectivism side of Guanxi, and the individual person acts as part of the group. However, when Guanxi is taken to a personal level, such as Expatriate 9.02 mentioned, ‘I’m your friend. How can you do this for me’, it demonstrates a significant Individualism aspect of Guanxi, where individuals are ready to challenge others in order to achieve their individualistic purpose whilst being part of the group. This dynamic demonstrates the switch of focus between Individualism and Collectivism, within Yin and Yang. Therefore, Yin-Yang acknowledges the individuals’ both collectivistic and individualistic sides. When the person’s Collectivism is more active than individualism, he or she will be more devoted to building their Guanxi with others in
the group. However, when Individualism becomes more active, it takes over control, and the priority would be on the individualistic side of the matter.

### 8.3 Guanxi and Power Distance

A few academics from 3 cases (1 Expatriate and 1 Indigenous in Case SH, 2 Expatriates in Case HK and 1 Expatriate in Case UK) related Guanxi to people’s social status. Among them, 2 Western expatriates in Case HK mentioned that,

If you’re at a certain position, particularly with people... you allow them, and give them way, this way or that way, then they will use you. (Expatriate 4.01)

Usually for the management level of staff, you will have a lot of that (Guanxi). Because when you’re at the management level, … a lot of it is communication and management. But people like me, who have been here for 3 years, graduated 3 years, it’s pretty rare. It’s not a common thing. (Expatriate 1.04)

These two comments showed that Guanxi was used mostly to contact people who were in the management position, because they were expected to have more power to help fulfil others’ requests. Particularly, Expatriate 8.12 in Case SH emphasized the significance of people’s status in academia, which was related to people’s respect towards each other,

It all depends on how you’re respected as an academic. Once you’re respected as an academic and you have reached the certain level, then it doesn’t really matter where it is from. The respect will be there, and therefore Guanxi.

According to Expatriate 8.12, Guanxi happened when academics have obtained a certain status in their career. When their status gets to a higher level, people gain more respect from others, and as a result, more Guanxi will occur from others as well. Although this significant role of Guanxi linked people closer in the Chinese context, it was also noticed that sometimes Guanxi was abused by some academics. As Chinese Expatriate 6.02 in Case UK pointed out that,

Some Chinese are over doing it. They think Guanxi outweighs the laws, Guanxi is everything. If you have Guanxi, then you can do anything....
China, if you’re on the position, then you have the power. They would think that they can do everything.

Similarly, Expatriate 6.02 related Guanxi to people’s position in China, i.e. having Guanxi meant having access to more power to do things which were even beyond laws. In her opinion, Guanxi gave people the edge in having access to hierarchy, which empowered an individual’s ability to solve problems.

These examples emphasize a significant role of hierarchy in Guanxi. In other words, Guanxi is highly relevant to people’s social status in the Chinese context. People purposely build Guanxi with those who are at senior or managing positions. The higher a person’s position is, the more likely he or she will be contacted by Guanxi. It demonstrates that Guanxi is closely related to power distance. The higher the power distance, the more Guanxi is expected.

Apart from looking at individual’s social status, the participants discussed the interplay of Guanxi between people of different social statuses. Chinese Indigenous 8.06 in Case SH compared the influence of Guanxi on people at different levels of their career, and claimed that Guanxi was more important for people at a lower level,

It also depends on what position you’re on. Like for me, I’m a tenure professor, to me, Guanxi is not important at all. Even if I fight with others, it wouldn’t affect me. But on the other hand, I can’t say it’s not important, because I don’t want others to dislike me. If someone is an Assistant professor, it would be more important. Your job is not even secure, then how can you afford to fight with others. Of course, it would be important to them.

This indicated that academics at a lower level needed to make more efforts and pay more attention to build Guanxi with those at a higher level. In his point of view, although senior academic staff did not need to apply Guanxi to build relationships, Guanxi was still important in terms of maintaining harmony with others. Junior staff, however, did not have such luxury of not building Guanxi, which was expected to help them achieve some goals that were out of their own power. On the other hand, Expatriate 9.01 looked at the significance of Guanxi from the perspective of the relationship between superiors and subordinates, and stated,
Here in the UK, you have rules. If you offend the boss, the cost is not very high. If you offend the boss in China, the cost is very high. Again, it’s the personal relationship, and it will cost your career sometimes. But of course, you don’t want to offend your boss. It doesn’t help you with work.

Comparing this kind of relationship in the UK and China, Expatriate 9.01 stressed that in China, Guanxi was crucial between superiors and subordinates, which required more respect from subordinates to superiors. A bad relationship with superiors would lead to negative impact on one’s career, whereas it was not as important in the UK context. These two examples implied a large power distance in the Chinese context between people of high and low status. To reduce such a gap between different statuses, people at a lower level are required to make more efforts and build relationships with those at a higher level, thus Guanxi is applied. While according to Expatriate 9.01, there was no such need for Guanxi in the UK. According to him, power distance was not as important in the UK, because of its well-structured rules and regulations, and a more equal social system.

The significance of social status and power distance in Guanxi was reported by 3 professors, 1 reader, and 2 lecturers. These participants had been working in academia for at least 3 years, and experienced working in both Western and Asian contexts for at least 2 years. Among them, not only senior academic staff reported the advantage that they had due to having a higher position in the working environment, but also junior ones acknowledged the significance of Guanxi in terms of interacting with senior staff. That is to say junior academic staff need to take more initiative to contact and communicate with senior ones. It demonstrates that Guanxi plays an important role for junior academic staff. This opinion did not emerge from Case NB. Overall, these participants agreed that social status had influence on whom Guanxi should be applied to, and how much Guanxi people needed to apply. According to them, the extent of using Guanxi depends on people’s social status. The higher the social status one person has, the less Guanxi he or she needs to apply, while the more Guanxi others will apply trying to approach him or her.

The relevance of Guanxi and people’s social status demonstrates the link between Guanxi and hierarchy. Relating to Hofstede’s power distance dimension, China has a high power distance, meaning the management system has a more rigorous and
disciplined image for subordinates. Power distance between people from different social status, therefore in this context, can be distinguished by the different level of respect that is given and Guanxi that is applied. Moreover, with Guanxi, people are able to make connections with others who are at a higher status, so that the distance can be shortened to a personal level. This makes a high power distance flexible and accessible, which is not indicated in Hofstede’s cultural dimension.

While in the Western context where power distance is low, people are more equal across different power levels, and are able to participate more in decision making. It does not require people to make as much personal effort to reach out to the ones who are at a high position. Hence, it leads to a less personal type of relationship. Therefore, the connections and interaction between people in the Western context do not require as much personal attachment as in China.

### 8.4 Guanxi and Uncertainty Avoidance

In the interviews, academics reported uncertainty involved in Guanxi. It was related to the unknown return of favour. As Expatriate 8.01 in Case SH mentioned:

> Guanxi, in a sense, you’re going to put yourself at risk for someone else, or do something for somebody that it will be a big cost to you, without any explicit guarantee that the cost will be made up to you, or repaid to you. That’s very rare (in Western society).

According to Expatriate 8.01, once Guanxi was built, people were willing to make sacrifices or take risks to do others a favour, without an expectation that the efforts or favour would be paid back. Apart from that, Expatriate 8.03 in Case SH, who had a long term experience of living and working in Hong Kong and mainland China, suggested that the unknown perspective implied the depth of people’s relationships in Guanxi. He explained that:

> I find it (Guanxi) very very powerful. I think the depth of the relationship and porosity is not based on total self interest. You do somebody a favour, they find a way to repay it. It’s not necessarily important that you know that they did it for you. And I find that remarkable.

It indicated that the strength of Guanxi was so strong that people would do things for others, even though there was no expectation that it would be paid back. Both
of these two examples demonstrated that Guanxi built a strong bond linking people, through which people were willing to make efforts and do favours for others, even knowing it might not be paid back. This showed a strong tolerance of uncertain situations. Meanwhile, it also showed a strong collectivistic commitment towards the community built on Guanxi.

It was reported that Guanxi was closely related to gaining information. Indigenous 2.09 in Case HK found Guanxi was one of the channels to obtain information from others, especially through informal occasions. He stated that,

For social networking, you expand your communication network, so you can understand the situation easier, because you have more ears…. I think basically I use informal network. We talk more during lunch, basically everything, sharing important information…. We get a lot of so-called inside information from informal occasions rather than formal meetings.

As a junior academic, Indigenous 2.09 only had working experience in Hong Kong. He pointed out one of the benefits of building Guanxi with the senior academic staff or the management in the university. That was that junior staff were able to obtain certain valuable information, such as the availability of promotion, and potential research funding.

However, this point of view did not seem to be agreed by Western Expatriate 8.01 in Case SH, who claimed it as a misunderstanding to see Guanxi as obtaining information only. The latter mentioned that the information from networks, i.e. people gathering information by talking to others constantly, was not Guanxi. Instead, it was simply ‘information trading’ according to Expatriate 8.01. With over 10 years’ working experience in the US and a number of South-East Asian countries, including China, the Western Expatriate 8.01 pointed out that Guanxi offered much more than information.

Although both claims related Guanxi to information, it revealed different perspectives between Chinese and Westerners regarding obtaining information. Chinese Indigenous 2.09 emphasized a one-way information process, i.e. junior staff gaining information from the senior, while Western Expatriate 8.01 stressed a two-way exchanging of information. However, the Western academics perceived Guanxi more than just a channel to obtain information, but also identified that there
was the more affiliation involved behind exchanging information. Again, it demonstrates that the Chinese academic discussed Guanxi purely based on the surface of what people can achieve by having Guanxi, without mentioning the other factors that were involved in Guanxi building. It seems that the Westerners stressed the more in-depth aspects of what Guanxi offers, whilst the Chinese seemed to have taken more for granted that Guanxi was the information medium.

The contrast in the understanding of Guanxi between Indigenous 2.09 in Case HK and Expatriate 8.01 in Case HK demonstrated different views about how to obtain information. For Chinese, gaining information at work involved personal relationships. When Chinese are not certain about the information, they do not seek direct information in a formal way. Instead, they intend to find out through informal channels, by using Guanxi. Whereas for Westerners, obtaining information is more straightforward, with no personal relationships involved. This comparison showed that Chinese had lower uncertainty avoidance compared to Westerners, which was found in Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension as well. However, this comparison further indicated that Chinese used a more informal way to obtain information, so that future uncertainty is avoided, which was not specified in Hofstede’s dimension.

8.5 Guanxi and Long-term / Short-term orientation

Guanxi was found to be related to Hofstede’s Long-term and Short-term oriented dimensions as well. Mainly, it will be discussed in the aspects of reciprocity and obligation, trust, the length and depth, and flexibility of Guanxi.

8.5.1 Reciprocity and obligation

8.5.1.1 Reciprocity

In the interviews, it was pointed out that reciprocity was significant to maintain Guanxi. For example, Indigenous 9.05 in Case UK highly emphasized the importance of being reciprocal. She said,
... There’s an English phrase that ‘if you scratch my back, I will scratch yours.’ In some sense, maybe we’re not so different. Because I think in an English culture, you have the relationships with people, we help them. We help somebody out. And we hope that they may help us in the future. It’s not a direct transaction. But there’s a sense of saying ‘if you ask me for help, of course I will, I will do what I can’. And I would anticipate that you would do what you can. There’s not so much of Guanxi, but I think maybe it’s almost formalized. Perhaps the expectation is different, I’m not sure. ... I often get asked if I can help with certain things. I would say ‘yes, I will do what’s within my power’. I think as British, I think we create this illusion that we don’t have relationships. And you don’t have business relationships, and you don’t have the element of... I think we do. Maybe not to the same degree. So I don’t think it’s a question of Guanxi or no Guanxi. I think it’s a question about more or less.

Comparing the way of maintaining Guanxi with one of the English sayings, Indigenous 9.05 claimed that people had to maintain a reciprocal relationship not only in China, but also in the UK. Meanwhile, she noticed that in the UK, people would not maintain reciprocity to the same extent as in China. This seemed to be agreed by Western Expatriate 7.12 in Case NB, who said,

*Then there’s a …great reciprocity at home, if they give you a service, you’re meant to pay the service. It’s a… one-way favours don’t work, it must be two-ways. You must know the mutual advantage, you must know the system. It gives you a competitive edge, but it does mean that you have to do things that you wouldn’t really like to be done.*

Expatriate 7.12 acknowledged that Guanxi was reciprocal, which according to him, gave people advantage in societies. In this way, Guanxi links two parties in the process of reciprocity. It forms a two-way communication. When one party does a favour for the other, the other would pay back something in return, even though there is no specific set timeline for paying back.

Reciprocity was reported by a number of Western academics. Chinese Indigenous 8.11 in Case SH acknowledged that Western colleagues had been aware of and familiar with some topics about China to a certain level due to their experience of living and working in China. However, he found that there were some other cultural
values which might not be commonly accepted or understood by Western expatriates. He said,

> Of course, there’s something very cultural, that’s talked about more often among Chinese people. So they wouldn’t know as much, for example, about giving gifts. We often… to give cigarettes or alcohol, it’s quite common in China, but probably not popular in the Western countries. They didn’t know that.

It indicates that to some extent, reciprocity is understood by Westerners through years of living and working experience in China. However, there is still some difficulty in for Westerners accepting and tolerating the concept of reciprocity, in Chinese terms.

### 8.5.1.2 Expectation and obligation

Although people are not bound by any legal policy or regulations to be reciprocal within Guanxi, they are expected or even obligated to some extent to behave reciprocally in the Chinese context. For instance, Expatriate 9.02 pointed out that Guanxi was stronger in Malaysia compared to the UK. According to her, people were expected to be reciprocal or to return the favour. This was agreed by Indigenous 9.05, who found that in Malaysia and China,

> I think possibly stronger (in Malaysia) in the sense that if you ask somebody to do something, there was often a much greater willingness to do it. But then there’s a stronger expectation about something coming back. That’s fine. I don’t have a… it doesn’t cause any anxiety, as long as the things that’s coming back are within my power.

According to Indigenous 9.05, people were more willing to help when any favour was asked, and as a result they had greater expectation that favours would be returned in the future.

As Expatriate 7.09 in Case NB stated,

> In China, Guanxi is stronger. People expect the reciprocal exchange of favours. They even help no matter what. And it’s money involved in China as well. People have a relationship because they want to use you. It’s
harder. In the UK, you have the relationship because you like the person. Not necessarily, that you want to use the person or information for the future. In China, people make more efforts on Guanxi. Sometimes it’s friendship, in other cases it’s because the person has the influence or power. It’s very much … structured in China.

Expatriate 7.09 claimed that Guanxi in China made people more purposely build relationships with others. In this way, people tended to make more efforts in the process of building relationships, and expected the return of some favours and help in the future. This explains why Guanxi requires expected reciprocity.

Moreover, 4 expatriates in Case NB stated a strong point of view about Guanxi involving obligation. In their own experience of building Guanxi, they felt that they were forced to pay back other people’s favours, rather than out of their own initiatives or willingness to do so. Among them, Expatriate 7.05 pointed out that people bore duties to do things for each other in the Chinese context, even though sometimes there was no clear reason for it:

- It’s relying on duties or debts to get things done, … to push things through rather than to get people to buy you because the reason is clear.
- Sometimes you feel you are forced to do it because this is China, rather than there’s an explanation to do it.

Expatriate 7.07 emphasized that the attachment of the obligation to Guanxi was a major difference between Guanxi and network building in the UK, which made it much easier for building Networks compared to Guanxi,

- Although of course it’s a very different concept. If it is a network connection that is built up, there’s no kind of obligation placed on, as you getting Guanxi in China, I think. … There’re obligations attached to Guanxi in China. While in the UK, it’s simply a question of building up a network of all connections. Ok, you may do some work for them, and you do that work as well as you can, as you want them to be a client in the future…. But that would be as far as it goes, there’s no obligation on you. But you don’t have to do things just because they’re there.

In Expatriate 7.07’s opinion, building a network was more straight forward, based on practical matters, without any emotions and obligations involved. Whereas in
terms of Guanxi, people were indebted to do things to make up or return favours that they received before. Hence, reciprocity became kind of compulsory in the Chinese context.

Although it is not directly pointed out by the participants, it can be argued that people’s obligation towards Guanxi may be related to their awareness and acknowledgement of the bigger group and society. That is they acknowledge their responsibility and commitment towards the group, so that they feel obligated to get things done when any request or favour arises from the group members. In this sense, Guanxi is, once more, strongly related to the collectivistic character. People are compelled to carry out their responsibility and commitment towards the others in the community. Hence, within the community which is connected by Guanxi, people are obligated to do things for others in the group.

On the other hand, some other participants found that Guanxi was involved with individual goals as well. Expatriate 7.05 in Case NB assumed that Guanxi was an individual initiative, saying ‘Like even Face or Guanxi are not group things, it’s all because of personal motivation’. In his opinion, the reason that people tried their best to return the favours was to obtain the benefits for his or her individual goals, meaning people gain advantage on building the relationship by returning the favours. In this sense, Guanxi is again driven by a strong individualistic character of Chinese society. This reinforces the claims that Guanxi is both collectivistic and individualistic, which appeared in the early part of the chapter.

According the current research data, the return of favour is highly expected in the future, even it is uncertain when it will be returned. It demonstrates somewhat of a strong long-term orientation. This finding contradicts Hofstede’s cultural dimension, which categorises reciprocation of greetings, favours and gifts as short-term orientation. Although with such strong reciprocity and obligation of Guanxi in China, this finding emphasizes that China has a strong long-term orientation, which agree with Hofstede’s findings that China has a long-term oriented culture. Furthermore, it seems reciprocity and obligation are related to a collectivistic character when it is to serve a group’s interest, but also to an individualistic character when it serves for a personal motivation. In other words, reciprocation and obligation indicate that
Chinese culture is both collectivistic and individualistic, and it is not sufficient to look at it from only one side of the dimension.

Reciprocity and obligation were mainly reported by Western academics across all 4 cases (2 expatriates and 1 indigenous in Case SH, 4 expatriates in Case NB, 2 expatriates in Case HK, 2 expatriates and 1 indigenous in Case UK). In this claim, Westerners outnumbered Chinese academics by 9 to 3. Two of Chinese academics worked overseas in Case UK.

It appeared that Westerners shared much more discussion about Guanxi involving a high level of reciprocity and obligation than Chinese academics working in China. Meanwhile Chinese academics working in the UK perceived a difference in Guanxi’s impact while working in a Western environment, which was not obvious for those immersed in the Chinese context. Moreover, Westerners picked up the meaning of Guanxi in a more in-depth way, especially when they had working experience in Chinese context. On the other hand, indigenous Chinese academics did not stress such strong contrast or important influence of Guanxi in their daily life. The ritual of reciprocity and obligation to fulfil reciprocity did not draw their attention enough to mention it. In other words, it becomes part of their basic unconscious assumptions.

### 8.5.2 Trust

Meanwhile, some participants reported a close link between Guanxi and trust. Expatriate 1.05 in Case HK made a direct link between Guanxi and trust, and pointed out that,

> To me it (Guanxi) reflects a relationship and the development of trust and understanding. Trust might be the closest thing. But I don't pretend that I have the depth of knowledge to be able to talk about Guanxi, other than just appreciate that it's there….. it's a form of trust, but it's a form of trust which goes much deeper than just… it's very culturally contextual.

According to him, Guanxi required a deeper level of trust among people to carry out certain obligations to each other. Apart from that, Expatriate 8.01 in Case SH
claimed that the process of building Guanxi was a process of building trust, which made people more committed in their relationship with others,

That takes time to have that kind of trust to put yourself at risk on behalf or think of the cost now... but you're not sure, you don't have a particular guarantee that it will be repaid later.

According to him, Guanxi demonstrated the strength of trust that people built up gradually over time. Based on trust within Guanxi, people were willing to take risks to do things for others, even if it might not be paid back or returned in the future. In other words, people have trust to do things for others based on Guanxi, but also have trust about the unknown return of the favour. The former trust indicated strong collectivistic affiliation towards others in the Chinese context. The latter showed people’s tolerance in the Chinese context towards the unknown situation. Related to Hofstede’s cultural dimension, it reflected the high uncertainty avoidance among Chinese people. This also explains why Guanxi is closely related to people’s attitude towards uncertainty.

Moreover, the significance of trust in Guanxi had a strong influence on people’s relationships. Expatriate 2.01 in Case HK found that to some extent, Guanxi was dependent on trust. He said,

Generally I find in the Western environment, we move on. We don’t remember the differences of the last year, last month, or years on. But I find in this country (China), things are remembered for a long time. Any trust is broken, it’s very difficult to fix. I tried to fix it, but it’s very difficult.

In his opinion, trust had a strong impact on Guanxi. Once trust was broken, people’s relationship was damaged, too. In addition, it also indicates a long-term orientation of Chinese culture in terms of people dwelling on the memories related to their bad experience with trust.

According to these three expatriates, Guanxi was gradually built among people along with the growth of trust. The strength of Guanxi is based on that of trust in the Chinese context. Once trust takes place, people are more comfortable to interact with each other within the society that is connected by Guanxi. However, if trust is damaged, so is Guanxi, and it appears to be hard to amend.
On the other hand, Indigenous 2.08 in Case HK explained the link between Guanxi and trust from a different perspective. He noted that due to the low trust in Chinese society, Guanxi was applied to connect and differentiate people who are within Guanxi from the ones who are not.

Because in China, the trust level is low. That’s the argument. So in the UK you don’t need to have such kind of network. If you have one, it’s good. It may help a little bit. But in a Chinese context, it’s a must. You have to put in extra efforts to build in. In China and Hong Kong, this in-circle, or out-circle makes a big difference. There’s kind of saying in the Chinese environment, not just in HK, but also in Taiwan and mainland China, saying that ‘if you have a good relationship with the person who has the power, your supervisor or whoever, then if you’re incapable, you’re incompetent, you will still be regarded as competent. But if you’re outside this particular circle, if you’re competent, they will still regard you as incompetent. That’s the saying in the Chinese environment. The priority is not your capability, but your connections.

This statement indicated the significant role that Guanxi played in Chinese society. In Indigenous 2.08’s opinion, Guanxi connected people together, and formed each specific group, where each member of the group bore a very committed responsibility to carry out tasks for others in the group. Therefore, all the members were able to share the benefits of Guanxi in this group. In this way, Guanxi functioned as glue within the group and helped each member gain their own goals through other members’ help. Sometimes, Guanxi was so strong that members were given unfair or prestige treatment over the ones outside the group, in order to achieve the goals of helping each other. This kind of trust links people together, and serves as their loyalty and commitment to the specific group. In this sense, trust, again, reflects a strong collectivistic character of Guanxi.

8.5.3 The influence of trust on people’s attitude

Some participants noticed that people’s attitude changes in the process of building trust and Guanxi. Expatriate 4.01 in Case HK described this change before and after Guanxi was built,
If you don’t know them (Chinese), they can be the rudest, most dismissive, arrogant people you ever meet. Actually I don’t think it’s rude, I just think unless you have some connection with them (Chinese), you don’t exist. Whereas in a Western society, everyone exists. Yes, they’re close to their own community. But you can join that. You can get in that. But I think (in China), if I don’t know you, and you’re not in that group, they (Chinese) don’t purposely ignore you, or purposely be rude to you, I don’t think they even recognize that you’re there. They don’t see you. I don’t mean physically they see you, but mentally they don’t see you. But if they (Chinese) know you, and they see you, it’s fantastic. That’s what I think. Because a lot of people come and think Chinese people are rude, they’re not. They simply don’t see you, because they have their own world. I think it’s very different from the Westerners.

Based on Expatriate 4.01’s experience, people were not included or considered into others’ life if the latter did not know the former. In other words, without Guanxi’s connection, people were not taken into the group, or regarded as part of the community. However, Expatriate 4.01 also found that when Guanxi was built, people were able to receive much more respect and care from others. Their treatment was totally changed.

Definitely until you know (Chinese) people, they’re much less likely to open up to you. But once you know them, you have a good relationship with them, personal relation or Guanxi, but personal relationship, the warmest, most generous, good people in the world. It’s strange. If you know a Chinese person, if you know them and maintain it well, and mingle, it’s fantastic. They’re the most polite, generous people you could have ever met.

Expatriate 4.01’s experience seemed to correspond to that of Expatriate 8.03 in Case SH, who noticed that the difference in people’s attitudes before and after Guanxi was built. As Expatriate 8.03 mentioned, he claimed that,

The longer I’ve been here (in China), the more I’ve appreciated a richer halo of really good Chinese friends. And not all like academics, but in the community in various ways. So I think there is depth to the relationship over time in Chinese context.

In Expatriate 8.03’s opinion, people remained polite and nice before building Guanxi. However, after Guanxi was built, relationships changed into ‘an open,
supportive and rewarding thing’, and it became ‘a very meaningful relationship’. It indicated that in the Chinese context, once trust was built, people were more comfortable to offer support and expect reciprocity between each other.

The link between trust and Guanxi emphasizes the significant role of trust in building Guanxi. Moreover, the change of people’s attitude in the process of building Guanxi demonstrates the difference trust makes on Guanxi. Nevertheless, it seems trust is not as significant in Hofstede’s fifth cultural dimension, although trust has been used as one of the Chinese values in Hofstede and Bond’s primary research.

8.5.4 Longer and deeper

In the interviews, participants pointed out that compared to Western networks, building Guanxi required a longer time, and formed a deeper relationship. Among them, Expatriate 2.01 in Case HK stated that Guanxi was maintained much longer compared to Western networks, and the latter seemed to be on a shorter term basis,

Guanxi in Hong Kong seems to have a very long history. It can be a friend going back to 20 years ago, you could have a Guanxi relationship, and it could still be relevant today. … I would like to think that we don’t USE people in New Zealand.

In his opinion, Guanxi was still fresh after people knowing each other for a long time. Compared to his experience in New Zealand, he assumed that networks connected people for a short period of time for some specific purpose. After the purpose was fulfilled, relationships ended as well. According to Expatriate 2.01, Guanxi lasted over a lifetime in China. It involved not only a specific time that people needed each other’s help, but also over the years as a friendship.

Moreover, participants compared the strength of Guanxi to Western networks, and found that Guanxi was formed to a much deeper level in people’s relationships. Expatriate 5.01 in Case HK mentioned,

The network is important in Holland as well, perhaps not as important as in Hong Kong. Here in Hong Kong, it’s more friendship type of network. You
just meet people, talk to them, and very friendly conversation, that helps. In Holland, it’s more like you meet someone, and a formal appointment. But after work, you don’t need to maintain that.

In this example, Expatriate 5.01 pointed out that a network ended following the completion of work. In his opinion, Guanxi in Hong Kong was beyond a work-related network. It was also a friendship type of network, which remained continuing even when people completed their work. That is to say people maintained Guanxi even when there was no work contact required. As Expatriate 8.03 in Case SH described,

… Cos we Westerners, we have lots of superficial relationships. We make a friend in 60 seconds. I’m your great friend, but I hardly know you. You know, you can be friendly. But that’s that deep, so you call me tomorrow when you have a problem, and I say who are you? I think in a number of cases outside the media of family, Western relationships usually aren’t too deep.

According to Expatriate 8.03, Western network was more superficial, and was mainly practised in greeting each other and achieving specific goals. While Guanxi, on the other hand, appeared to be much deeper, which, as he explained, was one of the reasons why Guanxi took longer time to build.

Moreover, Indigenous 9.05 in Case UK argued that network and Guanxi shared similarity in terms of making contacts, but differed on the degree and approach that were dealt with. She stated that,

I suppose networking, in a narrow sense, is just about making contacts, as opposed to maintaining it. But on the other hand, how long you maintain the network, other than by doing things. So I think it’s the differences of degree, not the difference in absolute terms. The gift giving thing, I wouldn’t do if I went to the university in England. I might do when I went to Europe. I probably wouldn’t do it if I went to the US. I would do it if I went to Asia, Africa, Middle East.

According to Indigenous 9.05, Guanxi was a deeper kind of relationship, which was maintained longer between people. Moreover, she pointed out that the ways of maintaining the relationship were more contextualised, and it varied from place to place.
The discussion about the length and strength of Guanxi seemed to mainly come from the Western academics. Chinese academics made very few comments, except Expatriate 6.03 in Case UK emphasized that Guanxi was ‘a brotherhood type of relationship’, thereby accentuating the closeness of people’s relationships when they were involved in Guanxi.

From participants' responses, it suggests that Guanxi lasts longer, and does not need to be changed as much. Moreover, Guanxi is more difficult to build, as it takes a longer time to form deeper relationships amongst people. It indicates the persistence of Guanxi, which was one of the main elements among Hofstede’s long-term orientation dimension. According to Hofstede’s study, China has a long term oriented character, compared to Western countries, such as the UK.

8.5.5 The flexibility of Guanxi

Apart from Guanxi being longer and deeper, 4 Western expatriates (2 in Case NB and 2 in Case SH) and 1 Chinese indigenous in Case SH elaborated their opinions about the flexibility of relationships. For example, Expatriate 7.02 claimed that, Guanxi ‘tended to persist much longer, and much deeper’, while a network was more flexible in terms of time and efforts spent in building and forming it. He said,

… in many countries, networks are for specific reasons. You form network to suit different kinds of purpose. Then you dissolve the network and form a new network for another purpose. Then maybe some of the same networks in it, and maybe some new ones. Much more fluid, much easier to do.

According to Expatriate 7.02, Western networks were more easily built, flexible, and often more constantly changed to fit the needs of specific projects.

While in terms of Guanxi, Indigenous 8.06 mentioned that Guanxi sometimes needed a good chance to happen. However, it seemed to be difficult in Case SH. As a collaborated university by Chinese and European partners, Case SH aimed to attract Western academics who were interested and willing to settle down in China,
living and working in China. However, due to the complex issues involved in expatriates settling, quite a number of Western expatriates started working in Case SH, but later on withdrew when some problems emerged, which varied from cultural shock, cultural adaptation, interaction between the teachers and students, living style, and family members’ school or work problems in China. Therefore, it caused relatively constant staff turnover as noticed by Expatriate 8.01 and 8.02. In their opinion, people needed more time to build up trust and develop Guanxi. Expatriate 8.02 pointed out that in the last few years in Case SH, quite a number of staff worked on a fairly short contract, such as 3 or 6 months, which did not give academic staff long enough time to work together, get to know each other, or to have an opportunity to build relationships further as Guanxi. In other words, the process of building Guanxi was gradually ongoing, as mentioned by Expatriate 8.01 that:

I think you can develop a little… baby steps in terms of developing that. But that’s it. That will be the strategy for developing, starting small, and reciprocity, you see it’s reciprocated, and then you’re willing to take bigger and bigger risks, or costs for someone else. So it keeps developing. And that takes time.

Based on Hofstede’s theory, a long-term oriented culture features mostly positive, dynamic and future-looking characters, while short-term oriented has, on the other hand, negative, static, traditional and past-looking characters. Guanxi building was found to last over a life time or even longer, which was much more future-looking compared to rather short term project specific Western networks. However, from Western network’s point of view, it does not show any past-looking feature. Instead, it is a more present-looking feature, meaning it focuses on the current matters, instead of relating it to either past or future. In this sense, Guanxi does reflect Hofstede’s long-term oriented dimension in terms of length of time, indicating relationships lasting longer in the Chinese context. However, when it comes to describing Western networks, Hofstede’s short-term oriented dimension does not seem to be appropriate. A more detailed comparison between Hofstede’s long-term and short-term oriented dimension will be offered in the discussion chapter.
Interestingly, these claims all came from Western academics, most of whom had been working in China for at least over a year. The rest either had been working in other Asian countries over at least 2 years, or they had an Asian spouse who helped them gain an insight to understand Chinese culture through daily life. In other words, these Western academics have more experience in terms of adjusting in different contexts, which gave them more opportunities to observe and practise Guanxi.

However, such claims were not made by Chinese academics, either working in China or the UK. In other words, the length of Guanxi and strength of Guanxi were acknowledged more by Western academics than by their Chinese peers. The difference between Western and Chinese academics could be because Westerners perceived more differences between Guanxi and Networking. As such they were more sensitive to the presence of Guanxi, and aware of the minute progress involved in building Guanxi. On the other hand, Chinese academics, either working in China or the UK, had been more involved in Guanxi building throughout their lives. They were more used to the idea, and more embedded with Guanxi around them. Hence, they took the existence of Guanxi for granted, and did not observe any change in terms of Guanxi when they were in a different environment, or interacting with others in a different cultural context.

8.6 Guanxi in the academic context

8.6.1 Guanxi’s impact on academics

According to interview data, Guanxi was found to have important impact on academics, particularly in terms of academic career, research funding and publication, and doing research.

8.6.1.1 Guanxi and career

In the interviews, participants emphasized the influence of Guanxi on academic staff. The benefits of Guanxi included developing opportunities in respect of jobs and careers. 2 Indigenous in Case UK acknowledged the advantage of having and
maintaining relationships within academia. For example, Indigenous 6.08 stated that,

> Definitely it’s good to develop relationships with people, and work with them, be friends, and get to know them a bit, their interests or whatever. Even if I haven’t done research for a while, I’d send them an email, and have a chat. I think it’s kind of important to keep our relationship, maybe not as close friends, but good friends. Have some kind of relationship with them. Otherwise opportunities disappear, the research won’t be so good.

In his example, he did not specify the relationship as networks or Guanxi, although he emphasized the importance of maintaining the relationship. Relatively speaking, Indigenous 9.03 was clear about his claim, by saying that,

> In the UK, it’s absolutely important to have networks. I think everything works on networks. I think that’s part of the reasons that people go to conferences. Cos if you think about conferences as information dissemination, it’s a useless medium. Because I can read someone’s paper much quicker than going on the plane and listening to them. So I think the whole purpose of that is to talk to people. Also I think in terms of promotion, occasional jobs, networks are hugely important. I don’t think that’s stronger over in Malaysia than it is here. I think it’s just as strong here in the UK. I think you can easily trace the commonalities between the people who hold responsibilities. I don’t think anybody does it on purpose, I think perhaps through that it’s more difficult for outsiders to get the same access to resources and positions. People are different. I think it’s true anywhere. I don’t think anybody wants it to be true, but I think it happens.

He compared networks in Malaysia and the UK, and noticed that networks were important in both places. In his opinion, building and maintaining networks offered opportunities for the academics’ job and career, even though some people may not acknowledge the necessity or existence of networks. On the other hand, looking at maintaining Guanxi in the Chinese academic context, Expatriate 5.01 in Case HK stated,

> (With) a good teaching evaluation, a good publication, then connections help. But (Guanxi) it’s not the most important.
Admitting the advantage of Guanxi, Expatriate 5.01 emphasized that in academia, a good individual performance on teaching and publication was more important than Guanxi, which should not outweigh the former two.

### 8.6.1.2 Guanxi’s influence on research funding and publication

Secondly, participants pointed out that Guanxi was important in terms of seeking research funding and publication. Expatriate 2.02 in Case HK noticed the importance of Guanxi in applying for research grants in Hong Kong. Her opinion was shared by two Chinese expatriates working in the UK. Expatriate 6.01 in Case UK noted that Guanxi might not be necessarily important within the school, but it was important in the whole academic field, particularly when it came to applying for research funding. Similarly, Expatriate 6.03 emphasized that Guanxi was important for Chinese academics in publishing,

> Chinese scholar sought advice on ‘Goutong Goutong’ (沟通沟通) with the editor of the journal before submitting the paper. In UK, it doesn’t work like that. But in China, it’s suspected to be so.

Literally, Goutong in Chinese Mandarin means to communicate with someone, in order to achieve the similar idea or understanding on something. In this case, Expatriate 6.03 used the word Goutong to elaborate that building good Guanxi with the journal editors was regarded as a norm in the process of publishing a paper in China.

### 8.6.1.3 Guanxi and doing research

Apart from these, another aspect of Guanxi’s impact on academics was related to doing research. 3 Expatriates in Case NB, 1 Expatriate and 2 Indigenous in Case HK, and 1 Expatriate in Case UK acknowledged that Guanxi is important in academia, particularly in terms of doing research, both in the Chinese context and in the UK. According to them, Guanxi, to a large extent, helped academics make contacts with other academics who may assist or collaborate in some research projects, or help gain access to research data, particularly in the Chinese context. Among them, 1 Expatriate in Case SH and the other in Case HK stressed the advantages of having Guanxi in academia, particularly in terms of doing research in
the Chinese context. It means that having Guanxi helps academics increase potential contacts, so that they can approach doing research, including gaining access to some companies or even governments to collect research data, and possibly having enough funding and human resources to help them with data collection or interpretation.

Particularly, Guanxi’s influence in the Chinese context was emphasized by 2 Western expatriates in Case NB who stressed the significant role that Guanxi played in doing research in Mainland China. Based on his own experience in China, Expatriate 7.09 found it extremely difficult to access data without Guanxi, especially if it was from government organisations,

If you doing research, you’ve got to build up relationships, otherwise it’s very difficult to get research data, etc. for example, if you’re looking at government data, the only way to get that is through connections with the government. So you try to build up those through third parties, introduction. But it’s very difficult. … you can’t do research without Guanxi. I don’t think it’s necessarily in terms of working with other academics, … In China, to get into the stuff from the local government….is very very important. You can’t just contact local government and arrange the appointment. You need someone to introduce you, to open the way for the research.

Meanwhile, Indigenous 2.05 in Case HK reflected a similar issue when it came to collecting research data in Mainland China. According to him, without Guanxi, it was difficult to get access to research data in Mainland China and other developing countries,

But in the mainland, sometimes we have to get help from somebody else. If you want to be more efficient. That’s one of the disadvantages. People always say ‘do we have the reliability and availability of the data?’ I’m not just talking about China, but also in all developing countries, mainland, Cambodia, etc. … But like China, you have to use this kind of way. Of course, sometimes the Guanxi, you have to be more efficient, you have to spend some money. No expense, no free lunch…. But if the mainland Chinese scholars come here to Hong Kong and do research, they will have another channel, they do not need people. So the Guanxi here in Hong Kong is not as strong as in China.
These examples demonstrated that in the Chinese context, academics were more dependent on the influence of Guanxi, especially in terms of gaining access to organisations and information.

### 8.6.2 Guanxi’s influence in the academic context

Participants not only looked at Guanxi’s influence from the individual academics’ perspective, but also academic organisations. They related Guanxi to organisations’ management style and academics’ education background.

In Case HK, Expatriates 1.03 and 2.02 claimed that although having connections could give people benefits, some people in China used Guanxi to achieve some unfair treatment. For example, Expat 2.02 pointed out that,

> It probably has a bit more influence here (in Hong Kong). It does, you know, in the West something would be true that if you are somehow associated with those people in power, and you’ll be treated maybe better, or have some insider information or something like that. Somehow it seems that within Chinese society it may have a bigger impact. So those people who are associated with the powerful group will get advantage. And those people who are mutual, probably OK. And some people may be considered like …against them, they may have more difficulties.

This claim was agreed by Indigenous 2.08, saying,

> In the UK, most areas are pretty good, probably much better than the Chinese environment. Because the Chinese environment, in terms of promoting and everything, it’s still sometimes… it’s called black box operation or whatever, or Guanxi connections. But in the UK, it’s a much fairer system in terms of promotion.

Indigenous 2.08 used the promotion process as an example. He compared the UK with China, and noticed that Guanxi was more important in the Chinese context partly because of a much less more transparent and fair management system and working environment.
Moreover, participants claimed that Guanxi was not as important in academia. This claim mainly appeared in Case SH and NB. It was reported that due to a more transparent Westernised managing style, academics did not need to apply Guanxi as much. Besides, participants related Guanxi’s influence to academics’ education background and experiences as well. It was found that with Chinese academics having certain level of exposure to Western cultures through their further higher education in Western countries, there was a more mutual understanding of having a fair and transparent working environment. That means it would not involve Guanxi as much as other Chinese organisations. For example, in Case SH, both expatriate and Indigenous noticed the influence of the level of openness and transparency in the working environment on Guanxi. According to them, Guanxi could be more extreme in an organization where the working environment was less open and transparent. Particularly, Indigenous 8.11 in Case SH stressed that ‘here in the School, people don’t really care. The evaluation and assessment are very transparent’, which was different to his previous working experience in business industries.

Similarly in Case NB, 4 Western expatriates assumed that Guanxi was not important in their current organisation. They attributed the reason to the fact that Case NB was a colonial style organisation, which was managed mainly in a British style. 1 Indigenous pointed out that the British policy was a barrier for people to use Guanxi, hence it was not practical. Moreover, 1 expatriate pointed out that their Chinese academics all received higher education in the West to some extent. It meant that Chinese colleagues were used to dealing with things in a Western way, without using Guanxi. In other words, academics were used to a more open and transparent working environment as it was in the UK. Moreover, as Indigenous 7.13 claimed, it was more of a connection, instead of Guanxi per se in academia,

*Connections are always important, no matter what it is. But connections are not necessarily Guanxi. It's more professional connections, other than personal relationships. Don’t feel much Guanxi here (in Case NB). They need people who are capable of delivering teaching and doing research.*
In that sense, academics’ work performance was more valued in Case NB, instead of Guanxi. It reduced the chance of needing Guanxi to solve any potential problems that academics might come across at work.

8.6.3 Guanxi’s influence on students

Guanxi’s influence does not impact on academic staff and organisations only, but also on students. However, it was only reported by academics in Case HK and NB. That is mainly in the Chinese context.

2 expatriates in Case NB, 1 expatriate and 1 indigenous in Case HK noticed that Chinese students were more conscious of using Guanxi to build a good relationship with academic staff. For example, Western Expatriate 4.01 in Case HK found that when he had a good relationship with students, students expected academics would give students good marks in their exams,

And I treat students with respect, I will joke with them, and talk with them. But if they do a bit of … I will fail them. That’s very simple. It’s a very clear line. They get a shock. They were saying ‘you were talking nicely to me?’ I said ‘yes, but that was… we were talking about your kids, and worried about what happened in your school. So I was wondering whether I could help. But that has nothing to do with… that doesn’t mean I will give you a good grade or pass you.’ They have difficulty understanding that.

Indigenous 2.05 in Case HK shared a similar experience and found that Chinese students put more efforts on building relationships with academics, and making academics more familiar with individual students. Particularly, students from Mainland China were more into having a meeting with, or giving gifts to academics.

Moreover, 2 expatriates in Case NB noticed that students in China used Guanxi to build their relationship with academics. Expatriate 7.06 claimed that he adapted a different way of dealing with students in China compared to the UK. He said,

In the university, I think dealing with the students, maybe, a lot of things that I’ve done on a relationship level, wouldn’t be done in a British institution. For
example, I get students coming to visit me and bring me presents, and saying ‘I failed in my exam, but if I have to redo it this year, it would cause a huge problem in my life. So can you please just give me 40?’ You would never do that in a British university. And I don’t know the extent to which it is … dissertation students always… bring me presents. And you will be marking their dissertation, you don’t know whether there’s any connection there or whether they are just being nice… but there’s this kind of, … students do expect to build the relationship with you, and they expect that they would be able to call in because you knew them, because you had a fairly relationship with them.

From his own experience, Expatriate 7.06 became more open to students and receiving gifts from students in China. However, he found it difficult sometimes to judge whether students used Guanxi to achieve other purposes, rather than just friendship. The problem of dealing with Chinese students did not seem to apply to expatriates only, but also Chinese indigenous academics. As Indigenous 7.10 mentioned,

*But for Chinese students, if you’re good to them, they don’t know when to stop. They just go and ask anything with you. In Western education, people would know where the boundary is. Here, in China, if you give students freedom, … because all Chinese… we know we’ve been controlled by parents or elders. If suddenly you give them the freedom, they don’t know when to… they just thought that we’re very good, so we can be just like friends.*

In her opinion, Chinese students didn’t seem to be aware of the boundary between academics and students. Moreover, Indigenous 7.10 compared students in the UK to China, and explained that it was because Chinese students were mostly controlled by parents and families. Hence, when students built a good relationship with academics, students in China would count on academics a lot more than the UK ones.

From these examples, it showed that Guanxi did bring relationships between Chinese students and academic staff closer. However, it was hard for academic staff to judge whether students are trying to be close out of motivation for friendship
only, or for other purposes, which might include gaining a good impression, so as to receive a good mark in return.

8.7 Dealing with Guanxi

8.7.1 The significance of Guanxi

Participants from all 4 cases (including 3 expatriates and 2 indigenous in Case SH, 4 expatriates in Case NB, 1 expatriate in Case HK, and 5 expatriates in Case UK) noticed that Guanxi existed everywhere, both in the UK and China. Among them, most were academics working overseas as expatriates, including both Westerners working in China and Chinese working in the UK. Moreover, altogether 10 expatriates (including 5 expatriates in Case NB, 2 expatriates in Case HK, and 3 expatriates in Case UK) stressed that Guanxi was more important in the Chinese context. In this sense, Western academics working in the Chinese context shared more similar views with Chinese ones in the UK. On the other hand, a few other academics (1 Indigenous in Case SH, 2 Expatriates and 1 Indigenous in Case NB, and 1 Expatriate in Case HK) held quite an opposite point of view, claiming that Guanxi was not important.

In Case HK, 5 expatriates agreed that Guanxi was important. Particularly, 3 of them claimed that Guanxi was important in all countries, as Expatriate 1.03 said that ‘Guanxi is still important no matter where you are’. 2 other expatriates pointed out that Guanxi was more important in China than elsewhere. For example, Expatriate 4.02 explained that Guanxi was about finding personal contact. According to him, Guanxi was more important in Hong Kong because rules and systems were not as transparent as in Canada. Therefore, people needed more personal support to obtain some help. On the other hand, Expatriate 1.05 and 5.01 in Case HK did not seem to agree. Expatriate 1.05 assumed that Guanxi in Hong Kong was not as important as in Mainland China. He pointed out that,

In Hong Kong we have strong… we have norms and expectations. Things are pretty much laid out. There are not a lot of surprises. … So in Hong Kong, it has rules. It’s a very well established one. Guanxi, in that sense, doesn’t play perhaps as strong role as in the mainland, or less of that exists.
Moreover, Expatriate 5.01 emphasized academics’ work performance, which, he assumed, should be more important than networks and relationships.

In Case SH, Indigenous 8.05 pointed out that ‘it’s the matter of the degree’, and stressed that Guanxi in China was much more important than in the US and UK. Three other indigenous pointed out the importance of Guanxi as well, two of whom stressed the influence of Guanxi in the working environment and academia. Meanwhile, Indigenous 8.10 didn’t find Guanxi was important, acknowledging the fact that he was used to the Chinese style. In his opinion, it was possible that he had taken the significance of Guanxi in society for granted, due to his own deep rooted Chinese culture background. Moreover, he emphasized the necessity of a harmonious environment inside organizations,

*Or maybe I’m used to Chinese style, like working in an organization, as long as we get along harmoniously, then that’s fine.*

On the other hand, expatriates in Case SH did not agree as much on this issue, except one expatriate considered that most colleagues in Case SH had international exposure, which made it understandable that Guanxi was not that important in this specific context.

On the contrary, 5 expatriates in Case NB emphasized that Guanxi was particularly significant in the Chinese context. According to them, without Guanxi, some problems or issues were even not able to be solved in China. As Expatriate 7.08 stated,

*Guanxi is a seriously important thing in China. Without Guanxi… lot of things, cannot. I mean perhaps it’s changing. But it’s not there yet. Without Guanxi, there’re several things you cannot solve in China.*

Among them, 1 expatriate admitted that he was able to obtain his current job due to Guanxi, and was grateful for the opportunity being given. Nevertheless, this did not mean Guanxi was welcome by all. Another expatriate in Case NB expressed that ‘Guanxi system is a bit annoying’ as he had to ‘take precaution against it’, meaning he needed to be sensitive and not damage Guanxi while interacting with people. Indigenous 7.10 agreed that Guanxi was particularly important in China. She
claimed the negative influence of using Guanxi was undesirable, and that ‘Chinese depend too much on Guanxi’.

Regarding Guanxi’s importance, it seemed academics in Case UK were more indifferent. 1 expatriate and 1 indigenous in Case UK claimed that Guanxi was not important in academia. Indigenous 9.03 stated that ‘I didn’t see any connections or Guanxi between academics’, while Expatriate 6.04 assumed that Guanxi was not important. Besides, Expatriate 6.04 did not feel Guanxi at work, although she acknowledged that it could exist because she had only worked in the organisation for over 11 months.

8.7.2 The negative impact of Guanxi

Apart from the advantages of Guanxi, participants also noticed the negative impact of Guanxi. 4 Chinese academics (including 1 Indigenous in Case SH, 2 Indigenous in Case NB and 1 Indigenous in Case HK) warned that Guanxi could have a negative impact if it was overplayed. Indigenous 7.10 in Case NB acknowledged the necessity of using Guanxi sometimes as a Chinese. She noticed the positive influence of Guanxi. However, she was aware of the misapplication or negative impact of Guanxi.

8.7.2.1 Misunderstanding about Guanxi

Participants noticed that people were too dependent on Guanxi and had a misunderstanding that things could only be solved through Guanxi. Indigenous 8.07 in Case SH mentioned that overplaying Guanxi would lead people to believe that things could only be done through Guanxi, without having to obey regulations or rules. That is people would assume that they could only get help from others by building Guanxi, through which they had privilege or advantage over other people who do not have such connections. Moreover, Indigenous 8.07 pointed out that the negative aspect of Guanxi could emerge while people were overwhelmed by their desperate attempt to get things done,

Here we talk about Guanxi, people mean if you know the person, you can kind of get around certain rules and get something done. That becomes a
not really healthy relationship. I would say Guanxi as relationship is important. But it should be based on the same goal, and following the rules. But don't become hostile. As if someone has to work for you. Unless the department is not good, and staff didn't do their jobs. Then that's an issue.

8.7.2.2 Guanxi and bribery

Secondly, it was reported that Guanxi seemed to be related to bribery. Expatriate 8.02 in Case SH stated that Guanxi might be interpreted as bribery in the West, or even some kind of inappropriate treatment. Expatriate 7.04 in Case NB claimed that in China, some people purchase Guanxi by giving presents or money, which is taken for granted as a kind of acceptable behaviour. He stated that,

In the UK, you don’t... it’s not a bribe, they just see it as partly Guanxi building. If you give the guy or girl a nice gift that builds the Guanxi, it’s seen as criminal activity, but it’s seen as a normal aspect of Chinese life that you build Guanxi. … Some people talk about… how they have this, and all these companies’ old boys’ network, how they’ve the things behind the scene and get their son a job. Similar sort of things. But it’s more apparent in China. It’s more discussed, 'I have good Guanxi, or I don’t.. so I have more chances to get that job’. It’s more depending...

Whenever people encounter difficulties, they refer their solution to apply Guanxi, even if it involves gifts giving, which appear to be illegal to Westerners. Meanwhile, Expatriate 7.04’s experience also showed that Guanxi gave people confidence in achieving their goals, as they could count on others’ help.

8.7.2.3 Guanxi and unfair advantage

Another negative aspect of Guanxi’s impact was about unfair advantage. Indigenous 2.09 in Case HK noticed that Guanxi could bring negative impact on organizations and individuals, when people tried to use it to obtain some personal purpose, such as in promotion without fair competition. Nevertheless, it did not seem to cause as many arguments in the Chinese context. Expatriate 7.06 in Case NB looked at the issue from people’s reaction towards others being treated differently because of Guanxi. He compared the different responses that might occur in the UK and China, and said that,
I think the difference between China and the UK is.. in the UK maybe it happens, but people … if you’re caught being treated differently because you have the relationship, it would be seen as a bad thing. Whereas in China, it is seen as a normal thing. People take it for granted. If you are applying for a job in the UK, and you find out that you’re being passed by somebody less qualified, and that’s because they have personal relationship. You could do something about it. You could try bring it to someone’s attention and say ‘this is not fair’. And there would be some kind of feeling that you have been mistreated. Whereas in China, if you did that, maybe nobody would… of course you’re rejected, because they don’t know who you are. I don’t think it’s the same. The expectation is different. In the UK, even though sometimes it happens, by accident, you can highlight the issue to people and do something about it, but in China, that’s just the way things are, nobody would try and make a correction of what happened to you.

That is to say using Guanxi to achieve unfair advantage in the UK is not as acceptable as it is in Mainland China. In the UK, people are more alert to fight against the unfair deals, while people in China are more tolerant in those situations, which are accepted as a norm in the society.

On the other hand, participants suggested that Guanxi should be downplayed in Chinese context. Expatriate 7.04 assumed that Guanxi would slowly die out in China. In his opinion, internationalised companies in China would place greater emphasis on people’s skills and expertise in the future, which would eventually leave Guanxi in the Chinese only community,

We all think Guanxi will slowly, within 5-10 years, it will be gone because there’re so many multi-nationals coming in now, so many joint-ventures coming in now. They will all look at performance. Guanxi might get you the job, but after 2-3 years you work there and you can’t perform, then you quick, you’re gone. So it doesn’t get you the prospect for long. But it does give you the opportunity. … Even Chinese recognise Guanxi as an unfair thing, doesn’t reflect on ability, or skills or expertise … just a family thing. I think it will slowly die out. It only exists between Chinese friends and the Chinese population.
Expatriate 7.12 looked at the influence of Guanxi on the development of China, and emphasized the benefit of downplaying Guanxi in China. He stated that, 

*deep down it's good for China. ...... they (Chinese) will forget Guanxi, and go down to business aspects. There's a very large number of people here, who don't believe Guanxi is good for China.*

In contrast to the advantages and benefits of having Guanxi, academics who reported the negative influence of Guanxi were mostly Chinese academics working in the Chinese context. Although Chinese academics working in China did not comment as much in-depth about Guanxi as Western expatriates in China, the former were aware of the down side of Guanxi. This is probably because Chinese have more experience of dealing with Guanxi. While the positive side of Guanxi is more easily taken for granted, the negative side becomes more obvious in their daily life.

**8.8 Summary**

From these interview results, Guanxi links people together as a personal relationship. Moreover, it shows that Guanxi, a key Chinese concept, appears to be highly related to four of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, including Individualism/Collectivism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-term/Short-term Orientation. Guanxi is found to be related to both Individualistic and Collectivistic aspects. The potential negative impact of Guanxi is indicated as well. In terms of Power Distance, Guanxi is discussed by participants from different positions on academic hierarchy, and found that the higher the power distance, the more Guanxi is expected. Additionally, Guanxi is related to Uncertainty Avoidance. It shows that Chinese have a lower Uncertainty Avoidance. However, it does not mean that they avoid uncertainty completely. Instead, they tend to use a more informal way to avoid uncertainty, which appears to be different from more the straight forward approach of Westerners. Furthermore, Guanxi is found in both Long-term and Short-term orientations. Particularly, it plays a significant role in the aspects of reciprocity and obligation, trust, length and depth, and its flexibility as well. The results reveal that some of Hofstede’s cultural findings about China do
not reflect an accurate picture of Chinese culture, particularly in terms of Guanxi in this chapter.

Secondly, Guanxi has both positive and negative effects on organisations. Particularly, Guanxi’s influence seems to be more important for academic staff in terms of research related issues in the Chinese context, compared to Western ones. Besides, Guanxi is found to be more important among the Chinese students in China, who are used to the idea of using Guanxi to build personal relationships with the academics.

Through the interviews, Western and Chinese academics expressed different views about Guanxi. The above data analysis demonstrates that Guanxi was widely acknowledged across 4 cases. Based on different opinions between expatriates and indigenous, academics who work as expatriates in either China or the UK seemed to share slightly more views regarding the importance of Guanxi. Moreover, Western academics discussed and explained Guanxi in more detail, and emphasized the strength and more in-depth meanings of Guanxi as well.

The reason for this could be because Chinese academics were more used to the idea of using Guanxi and did not see as much difference between Guanxi and Western networks. It could be argued that Chinese take Guanxi for granted because it is in their daily life. However, to Westerners, who came from a different cultural background, issues of Guanxi appear to be more pertinent. Especially after experiencing life and work in the Chinese environment, Western expatriates in China grasped the essence of Guanxi after immersing themselves in the Chinese context for a certain period of time. They offered deeper insight into the characteristics of Guanxi, how to build Guanxi and Guanxi’s influence. By comparing Guanxi to Western networks, Western academics have learnt how to cope better with various situations in China, and adapt themselves better in a new environment.
Chapter 9  Findings - Mianzi and Harmony

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of Mianzi and Harmony. Mianzi is one of the main concepts of Chinese Confucianism. It mainly emphasises the significance of people’s dignity and personal image. However, in a collectivistic context, Mianzi is also operated with Guanxi, and requires individuals pay loyalty and obligation to a group or even patriotism to one’s country (Chen and Chen, 2004). The effect of Mianzi is often understood as saving or losing someone’s face.

From the interviews, the concept of Mianzi appeared to be mainly related to Individualism/Collectivism and Power Distance. Then the chapter focuses on the findings of maintaining Harmony, in terms of conflict and confrontation, willingness to express and embarrass and surface Harmony. Apart from that, the analysis also looks at its influence in the academic context, and interviewees’ suggestions about how to deal with Mianzi based on their personal experiences.

9.2 Mianzi and Individualism / Collectivism

From the interviews, Mianzi was more explicitly related to collectivism, including being private and personal, the significance of others and competitiveness.

9.2.1 Private and personal

Interviewees mentioned that Chinese colleagues responded differently in conversations when occasions changed. They were more comfortable in an informal or personal situation, which was based on inter-personal relationships. For example, Expatriate 8.01 in Case SH mentioned that,

… the real discussions are going to be smaller. Usually it’s one on one. Anything more than that, then the information, the willingness to express,
especially the negative thing goes down eventually. It means that people would hold the information till the informal occasions. It happens quite often between me and my colleagues. I think it’s part of being polite.

In other words, Expatriate 8.01 found that Chinese would not reveal or express one’s true opinion to protect each other’s Face in public. Instead, Chinese were keener to do that on informal and private occasions, where individual contact was based on the evaluation of their personal relationships. In that way, Chinese felt more comfortable and were able to express their opinions more freely, even negative ones.

Meanwhile, Expatriate 8.01 commented about people being private and personal from the perspective of an information receiver,

… Once people believe that you maintain that public propriety, then you’re allowed to say a lot more in private.

In this sense, Expatriate 8.01 believed that before making comments about others in the Chinese context, people need to build trust with the person who was expecting to receive comments. Until trust was built, then the person would feel more comfortable to receive comments privately.

This opinion was shared by 2 Expatriates in Case HK. Expatriate 4.01 in Case HK perceived that Chinese are concerned for their own Mianzi. He assumed that there was a link between Mianzi and pride in public for Chinese. In his experience,

… it is more important to the Chinese. At work, I have to be very careful in public not to take so much face. Or I have to be careful, I remember that guy that pisses me off… If I openly… if I abused him in every meeting we went into, I would lose face, not him. Because I’m the one losing control. I must stay until… for modern Chinese, moral outrage is not acceptable or expected in various occasions. That’s why one of my principals (Chinese) said to me ‘I go out and I smile all the time. But I cry inside.’

With over 13 years’ working and living experience in China, Expatriate 4.01 found he had adapted a great deal, to Mianzi. He noticed the link between pride and Mianzi. From his experience, a person would be considered losing Face if they
could not stay calm and in control while confronting others in public. It was important to maintain harmonious working relationships in public as well.

There were only 2 Chinese academics (1 Indigenous in Case HK and 1 expatriate in Case UK) who made comments about expressing opinions in different settings. Indigenous 2.05 in Case HK pointed out the different responses between his Chinese and Western colleagues,

*Maybe they (my Chinese colleagues) would challenge me just after the meeting, but wouldn't do that during the meeting. This is what I found that the Western colleague would do. It doesn't upset me.*

This indicated a strong emphasis on Mianzi among Chinese during their interaction. Meanwhile Western academics seemed to be better understood by Chinese academics in Case HK. As a result, Chinese academics had more tolerance for Westerners challenging conversation in public. Chinese Expatriate 9.04 in Case UK further suggested not to criticise Chinese colleagues openly or in public, because the latter would take the comments personally.

From these responses, it shows that Chinese feel more comfortable revealing their true opinions and comments in an informal and private situation, so as to protect other people’s Face in public. It demonstrates Chinese collectivistic way of thinking. Bearing concern for others, Chinese do not make comments until one-to-one private conversation, where a more confronting discussion can be conducted based on personal relationships and trust. To protect one’s own Face in public and maintain harmonious working relationships, Chinese are not allowed to express one’s own anger. It implies that when dealing with Mianzi, Chinese valued collectivistic harmony higher than the individual. In this sense, collectivistic thinking is more important than the individual.

Responses about Mianzi, and private and personal occasions were only reported by 3 Western academics in the Chinese context. Academics in Case NB did not comment much about this matter. Similarly in Case UK, only 1 Chinese expatriate mentioned the differences about giving criticism between Chinese and Western colleagues. For Case NB, with the majority of academics being Western
expatriates, Mianzi is not a problem in their daily interaction with each other. While in Case UK, it indicates that academics work more transparently and have more freedom in terms of sharing opinions and criticism in the British cultural context. In Case HK, again, Chinese indigenous seem to have more tolerance and understanding about their Western colleagues’ way of expressing opinions. Western expatriates in Case HK showed a good understanding about how to deal with Mianzi based on their long term experience in the Chinese context. However, it was not reported by any Chinese indigenous in Case SH. This is possibly due to the fact that most Chinese academics received higher education in Western countries, and they are more used to Western ways of thinking. Therefore, expressing their opinions and sharing conversations with Western academics honestly are not a problem for Chinese academics, in that setting.

9.2.2 The significance of others

A few participants put greater emphasis on Chinese concern about others’ opinions and comments. 2 western academics (1 expatriate in Case NB and 1 indigenous in Case UK) seemed to share similar opinions about maintaining Mianzi in front of other people. Expatriate 7.02 compared people’s reaction of being involved in a discussion or argument in Western and Chinese contexts. He found that maintaining Mianzi in front of other people was important in China, and suggested that more attention was required to consider when and how to express oneself while dealing with Chinese,

(In China) You’ve got to be very careful that you do not endanger people’s self-respect in front of other people, self-esteem in front of other people. So if you have particular issues you really do have to think about people’s attention, then you probably have to be a little bit more careful about how you do that, where you do that, and make sure it’s not in front of everybody else. You’re not embarrassing the face, and they do not lose the face.

Indigenous 9.03 in Case UK noticed that the difference regarding receiving criticism or comments between Westerners and Chinese was mainly because Chinese were much more conscious of external recognition, which weighted significantly in terms of their image and reputation in a collectivistic community.
Western Indigenous 6.08 in Case UK noticed Chinese had different responses about receiving criticism compared to Westerners,

_They (the Western colleagues) take less notice of criticism. I think the Westerners take less… they ignore criticism to a point. … I don’t think Chinese do that. They certainly don’t ignore them, they certainly have them in their mind. They take time to deal with them, instead of dealing with them straight away. So the impact is definitely stronger._

It appeared to be the case that Chinese took criticism while considering their personal image within the community, and took much more time to resolve personal emotions towards criticism. On the other hand, Westerners paid less attention to the emotional impact of criticism and moved on to seeking solutions to problems.

Moreover, Mianzi was related to pride and honour in Chinese society. Expatriate 7.07 in Case NB pointed out that the impact of losing Face in Chinese society was much stronger than the sense of losing pride and honour in Western society,

_Pride and honour is very important but is not nearly the same as face in China. … well as obviously your pride and honour in the UK will encourage you to do your very best work to be as professional as possible. But if somebody does better than you, or if something goes wrong, then there’s not that a sense of desolation that Chinese people feel like loss of face. Not that fear of retribution._

Expatriate 7.07 gave an example of students getting lower marks in taking a group work assessment, and showed the difference between Chinese students and others,

_Students from other (Western) cultures will be disappointed and come and say, ‘I feel that my pride has been hurt, where could I have done better, what should I have done?’ A Chinese person will come to me full of tears, and beg me to make their mark higher. Because they say ‘if my parents find out that I’ve got this low mark, I’ve lost face with my entire group, because I have got such a low mark. And when my parents find out I will be punished.’ To me, that seems to be a bit different between the pride and honour in the_
UK for Chinese, it seems to have a tremendous repercussion if you lose face.

From this example, Chinese students appeared to hold on to emotional feelings and were concerned more about pressure from his or her family and peer group members, while students from other cultures would look for solutions to improve the situation. This reflected a similar approach as Indigenous 6.08 in Case UK mentioned about receiving criticism. It demonstrated that Chinese students were more concerned over others’ opinions and comments, compared to Western ones. The former paid more attention to release their emotional stress caused by external pressure, while the latter took a more rational approach by looking at the solutions.

It demonstrates a strong collectivistic concern among Chinese, regarding their individual image and reputation among the community. Other people’s feedback and comments within the community are highly valued in the Chinese context, which in a sense creates pressure to some extent for people to fit in.

On the other hand, Chinese being concerned about others’ comments and opinions was also reflected in the response of using British humour. Expatriate 7.02 in Case NB pointed out that,

... if we use the same approach to this (British) light-hearted criticism (in China), it would be taken seriously, they do not understand in particular the British way of humour, which is often making fun of ourselves. ... a lot of British humour will be seen as losing face in the Chinese system. But we just think it's fun.

According to Expatriate 7.02, the British felt comfortable to use themselves as the target of jokes and maintaining their own Mianzi was considered unimportant. However, in the Chinese context, this approach of using jokes would be considered to be damaging one's own image in front of others. It is not seen as a desirable thing to do, as it damages an individual’s social status in front of others. It indicates a strong emphasis of collectivistic concern over others’ comments and opinions within the Chinese community. While compared to Westerners, particularly British ones from the example above, Westerners are more individualistically oriented. Hence, Mianzi is of little or no significance to them.
Although there is no openly stated rule about Mianzi, people have a strong affiliation to the community circle that they are in, so that they were more concerned about the influence of their own behaviour on others. On the other hand, in Western countries, individuals might be upset about negative comments. Nevertheless they were more independent from each other compared to the Chinese context. The impact on an individual is not taken into account by another as it would be in China. This comparison indicates that Mianzi reflects a strong collectivistic character.

9.2.2.1 The presence of others

Indigenous 8.06 in Case SH explained that the reason why Chinese valued the presence of others so highly was because of close relationships built within the Chinese community,

*Maybe for British and Americans, they can more easily say no (to each other), compared to Chinese. Whether it's because of face? Maybe it is because the Chinese are closer to each other, and the Westerners relatively more distant from each other. If you're closer to each other, you would be embarrassed to say No. Usually when we have a good relationship, and when they ask you to do something, how can you say no. But in the Western countries, maybe because people are more distant towards each other, so it's much easier to say No.*

From his own observation, Indigenous 8.06 compared Chinese to British and Americans, and noticed a link between people’s relationships and tolerance of making or receiving negative comments. According to him, within the Chinese community, people had closer personal relationship, which led to lower tolerance of rejecting requests for favours, and increased people’s sensitivity to protect each other’s Face in public. With strong feelings and emotions involved in relationships, it was hard for Chinese to make negative comments or reject any request for favours from others, which might damage the strong affiliation that was involved in relationships. In a sense, this kind of Face protection within the community was built based on Guanxi. However, outside the community where relationships vanish, people have no obligation to maintain relationships, hence no pressure regarding Mianzi either.
Moreover, it was noticed that Mianzi was also strongly influential while people were in the presence of others from outside the same group or community, which included people from other cultures. Chinese academics did not make much comment on this aspect, except 2 Chinese indigenous in Case SH. Indigenous 8.05 mentioned an occasion where Chinese students were joined by European students in the same classroom. He suggested that the presence of others was a significant factor to have an impact on Mianzi,

*When you are dealing with Chinese students, or when you’re dealing with European students, it’s ok. It’s because of the significant others. If it’s not because of the significant others, you can always say whatever you want to say. Face saving… I mean you can laugh at yourself, who will be upset? Nobody will be upset. But if you laugh at a Chinese in front of an American student for example, the Chinese might feel embarrassed. While preparing for the teaching content, you need to choose more solid, politically correct, more generic case, which can cause less trouble.*

From his experience, Indigenous 8.05 noticed that Mianzi was more important when Chinese students were in the presence of students from other countries. In other words, Chinese students automatically regarded other Chinese peers as people in the same group or community, so that preference was given to protect Mianzi for those sharing the same background against the ones outside of this group. Hence, in the presence of others who were outside this group, Chinese students formed a sense of collectivistic loyalty towards their own group.

### 9.2.2.2 Concern for others’ Mianzi

Another aspect of Mianzi involved concern for others’ Mianzi. For example, Expatriate 8.02 pointed out that compared to academic staff, students seemed to care more about others’ Mianzi,

*With colleagues, it’s the same. With the students, I feel even the face of others is important. I think it’s important.*

According to Expatriate 8.02, Chinese students were concerned about not only their own loss of Mianzi in front of other’s presence, but also that of others, including concern for academic staff losing face in front of students. However, this
concern may be related to students’ perspectives of regarding academic staff on a higher level of hierarchy, which will be further discussed later.

Overall, Western academics made more comment about Chinese paying attention to the significance of other people’s presence and comments, and other people’s Face as well. This did not come out as strongly from Chinese academics. This is probably due to Chinese growing up in the Chinese context, and being more used to applying different emphases of communication depending on the circumstances. Therefore, this aspect is not that obvious to them, compared to Westerners who have lived and worked in different cultural contexts. For Chinese expatriates in Case UK, this may not be a big issue to them because of a more transparent working environment.

9.2.2.3 Competitiveness

Another aspect of Mianzi was related to competitiveness. 4 academics, including 3 Chinese (2 Indigenous in Case SH and 1 in Case HK) and 1 Westerner (1 indigenous in Case UK) reported that Mianzi was strongly associated with the feeling of being competitive among Chinese. According to them, it mainly appeared in terms of gaining information, and career progression, such as having more publications and moving up the career ladder.

With over 3 years' working experience in Malaysia, Indigenous 9.03 in Case UK, pointed out that Mianzi was strongly related to winning among the Chinese in Asia,

… face is very important (to the Chinese). But status and face are different. And progressing is very important to them, just basically career progression, getting a good job, getting access to things. The expression of ‘Qiasu’ (in Fuqian dialect), meaning afraid to lose. That’s something which are often associates with Singaporeans, also Malaysian Chinese, I think. For example, if I find a shop with a discount, and you don’t, then you feel bad about that. Because you have no access to the things that I know that you don’t know. That’s something that I notice very strongly.
Indigenous 9.03’s experience showed that winning a position gave Chinese Face and an advanced status in the community. On the other hand, losing position affected their image in the community, because it meant they lost Face compared to the winning ones. Indigenous 2.07 in Case HK explained it as ‘a sense of failure’, which according to him was avoided as much as possible among Chinese. It does not mean that in China everyone is winner. However, it is the sense of gaining Face that encourages Chinese to achieve more advanced status than others. In this sense, Mianzi demonstrates a self-driven motivation. That is individuals make efforts to secure winning positions in the aim to gain Face in the community.

This strong individualistic character of Mianzi was reflected by Indigenous 8.06 in Case UK. It was noticed that people competed with each other not just to gain material reward, such as salary and title, but also to earn recognition from others by winning competitions, which gave individuals happiness and self-satisfaction. Indigenous 8.06 mentioned,

…it doesn’t mean that I don’t want face. Why does the academic want to teach better? It’s not just because you will have a higher salary, but also you want to be better than others. It can be kind of peer pressure. It can be kind of competitiveness. The foreigners also care about this as well. It’s like doing research. Why do we do research, why to win the Nobel Prize? The winner is happy, because they win face as well.

According to Indigenous 8.06, Mianzi was about competing under peer pressure. When academics won, they gained Mianzi among colleagues. In this sense, Mianzi became motivation, which encouraged people to compete with others. This example indicated that winning earned people recognition and acknowledgement within their community. This kind of feeling was highly valued by both Chinese and foreigners. Although it seemed to be people’s concern for others’ opinions and comments, it was proof of personal success. As Indigenous 8.05 commented that, Mianzi sometimes was about ‘protecting people’s ego and saving faces’. In other words, it revealed an individualistic aspect of Mianzi, which was opposite from the collectivistic aspect of Mianzi. Particularly according to Indigenous 8.06, Chinese and foreigners were quite alike regarding maintaining Face for the sake of individual achievement.
Relating Mianzi to private and personal occasions, the significance of others and competitiveness demonstrates that Chinese are more concerned about opinions and comments from people within the same group or community. This shows a strong link to the collectivistic character of the Chinese as it has been reported in Hofstede’s collectivistic and individualistic dimension of China. However, in the Chinese context, this collectivistic way of thinking does not mean that problems and issues can be discussed openly, and comments and criticism can be received in public without being taken personally. Instead, the sense of losing Face and other negative influences from individuals are often taken at a personal level. Moreover, straightforward opinions and comments are expected to be expressed in more private and personal settings and based on the closeness of personal relationships. It is highly important to maintain individual Mianzi with others’ presence. Besides, the sense of competitiveness is driven by individual success to build a better individual image, so as to gain personal Face. All of the above indicate a significant emphasis of society’s recognition of individuals in the Chinese context. It demonstrates that the Chinese collectivistic character is combined with a strong individualistic orientation within each group and community. In other words, Chinese do not only rest on the collectivistic side of Hofstede’s dimension when it comes to dealing with Mianzi. They also have a strong individualistic character, which often plays an important role in enhancing one’s own image and success within society.

![Mianzi and Individualism/Collectivism](image)

**Figure 9.1 Mianzi and Individualism/Collectivism**

Therefore, the relationships between Mianzi and Individualism/Collectivism can be demonstrated as in Figure 9.1 above. When an individual is in the group context, where Collectivism has the dominant position, it requires a strong sense of caring for others’ Mianzi, in order to maintain the group’s harmony. For instance,
Expatriate 8.01 in Case SH (in 9.2.1 Private and Personal) mentioned that his Chinese colleagues were unwilling to express their true opinion, in order to avoid offending colleagues or damaging their relationships between each other. It shows a collectivistic concern of Chinese for other people’s Mianzi. However, one’s own Mianzi would be much less important if a strong collectivistic bond is formed, such as commented by Expatriate 8.01 in Case SH regarding when people are willing to receive comments (in 9.2.1 Private and Personal). On the Individualism side, Chinese value recognition from others. They are concerned much more about his or her own Face in the group, meaning his or her own image and reputation in the group, such as Expatriate 7.02 in Case NB emphasised the significance of maintaining one’s Face in front of others in China.

**9.3 Mianzi and Power distance**

**9.3.1 Relationships between students and academic staff**

From the interviews, hierarchy seemed to be another important aspect of Mianzi. According to participants, Chinese gave more attention and respect to people’s hierarchical differences. It was not only reflected in students’ high respect for academic staff, but also academic staff’s obligation to show respect due to their status differences.

For example, Expatriate 8.02 in Case SH looked at the effects of different status on student and academic staff relationships in China. According to him, Chinese students were more used to taking a lower position because they were students. Because they looked up to academics as people who were in a higher authority position, students were not comfortable to joke or make fun of academics,

> You’re in the faculty position, and they’re the students. My Chinese students are not so comfortable with what I call self-deprecatory jokes. Like you might tell a joke about yourself, and the Westerners ‘Hahahaha...(laughing) ’ Chinese students are not so comfortable if I make fun about myself, telling a joke about... it could be as simple as one time I spent 30 minutes looking for my glasses, while I was wearing them. The Westerners think that it’s kind of amusing. The Chinese are not so comfortable with it.
In this example, Western expatriate 8.02 tried to make fun of himself, so as to build a good rapport with students. However, compared to students in the US and the UK, Expatriate 8.02 found that Chinese students were not used to such casual interaction with academics, and not comfortable making this academic lose face by laughing at his joke.

Two Chinese expatriates in Case UK noticed Mianzi’s influence on academic staff and students’ relationships as well. Expatriate 6.05 in Case UK compared Chinese students with the UK ones, and found that Chinese students were much nicer in terms of highly respecting lecturers and giving Face to lecturers. As she mentioned,

… in the Chinese educational system, we don’t encourage students to participate that much, or to debate or challenge lecturers. Often… students are very nice. I think for Western lecturers, it’s great to teach Chinese students cos they’re so nice. … I think students here (in the UK) really, give disrespect to the lecturers. They don’t… they view them literally as equal to themselves. They don’t feel you have … you’re great, you have sufficient knowledge, you have authority. But in China, you’re an authority. If I stand there, you have to listen to me, and show good respect to me.

According to Expatriate 6.05, students in China had an obligation to respect academic staff. By not challenging academic staff, Chinese students avoided making academic staff lose face in class. Academics were regarded as pure authority who had respected knowledge. Hence, learning and teaching were mainly one-way delivery from academic staff to students. While in terms of Western ones, they regarded students and academic staff as equal, hence there was no need to pay extra respect. As a result, teaching and learning was more of a two-way communication and discussion.

This hierarchical difference between students and teachers can be explained by an old Chinese saying, ‘yī rì wéi shī, zhōngshēn wéi fù’ (一日为师，终身为父), meaning even if someone is your teacher for only a day, he should be treated as a father for the rest of your life. It means that no matter how long someone is in a teacher position, he or she should be respected and treated with high respect. Based on Confucius Wulun rules, the son must obey the father. This saying highly emphasizes the significant role of the teacher in Chinese society. It also explains
why there is such a big hierarchical gap between students and academic staff in China.

9.3.2 Relationships among academic staff

Respect for hierarchy did not appear between students and academic staff only, but also among academic staff between junior and senior positions. It was found that the extent of Mianzi depended on status differences. As Indigenous 7.10 in Case NB mentioned,

... when I talk to Chinese, especially those at higher level, I find they want me to respect them, they want me to listen and follow what they say. Even though I have suggestions and opinions, I should be aware of what I’m saying. Even though I should respect Westerners if they’re my boss, I don’t have that pressure, to be very careful. It’s also maybe my background (as a Chinese)... it could be the tradition that we always have to respect people who’re higher than us. Maybe because of this, we have that feeling when we talk to....we feel like we have to respect them. This would affect me when I talk to Westerners also because I used to be like that, but actually I find some of the Westerners will accept your ideas and opinions if you tell them. It’s easier and less pressure.

From Indigenous 7.10’s experience, respect was expected from Chinese senior staff, which gave her pressure during communication. As a result, it may cause pressure at work and have impact on employees expressing their own opinions. However, she found it much easier communicating with Western staff. This was agreed by Expatriate 9.02 in Case UK, who pointed out that,

(in China) if you’re a senior person, they feel that they lost your face in front of others. They rather keep it quiet.

Based on her own working experience in China, Expatriate 9.02 noticed that junior staff would be cautious about what they talk about in conversation with senior staff. Junior staff would not express as much, so as to avoid potentially embarrassing senior staff and making them lose Face. Hence, hierarchy differences put pressure on people who are at a lower status. More attention and care are required to be given in order to maintain the Mianzi of those who are at higher positions.
It appeared that the tension to pay respect to others changes along with a person’s status. Drawing on his own experience of studying in the UK and working in China, Indigenous 8.11 in Case SH acknowledged the change of his own behaviour when his status changed,

*Even in the UK, you have to be polite to the supervisors, or even to their secretaries. Over here, I can just ignore the secretaries. Because my own position is different. Over in the UK, I was just a student, but right now I’m faculty.*

According to Indigenous 8.11, he felt obliged to respect academics and administrative staff while he was a student in the UK. However, when he became an academic in China, he claimed that he did not need to show the same respect to administrative staff as he did in the UK. That is to say that he evaluated the necessity of respecting others and maintaining Mianzi based on the hierarchical position that he had. When he was a student, he regarded himself at a lower position, so that respect was required while in contact with academics and administrative staff. Whereas when his status was changed as an academic, he regarded himself at a higher position, which was higher than that of administrative staff. There was no need to pay extra care in terms of respecting administrative staff.

Mianzi’s influence on relationships between students and academic staff, and among staff in the academic context shows that maintaining Mianzi is driven to a great deal by hierarchy differences in the Chinese context. Comparatively, it is much more equal in Western ones. The tension between status differences is, therefore, much stronger in the Chinese context. In other words, hierarchical differences need to be taken into consideration when it comes to dealing with Mianzi.

### 9.4 Mianzi and Long-term / Short-term orientation

Some participants noticed that Mianzi was expected in the Chinese context. Expatriate 8.12 in Case SH mentioned that in Western countries, Mianzi was not
taken as a big issue. While in the Chinese context, Mianzi played such a significant role that people were expected to accept it as a norm in the society.

\[\text{...in actual fact, if you spoke to them (Westerners), if you’re rude to them, or if you didn’t respect their ways of working, they would feel the same way, but they will pretend that they wouldn’t. It’s more direct in the Asian situation. In the Asian situation, you’re expected to respect and not to let people lose face. The big problem, I think, with a lot of people brought up only in the Western side, they tend to forget, that you really should treat your colleagues with some respect. Even your Western colleagues, it’s the same. But in China, it’s expected. I mean in the West, people tend not to do it so often. But they should, because in actual fact, the results are the same. If you don’t respect the others, losing face, and basically they will take it out in some other ways. But they’re so open about it.}\]

According to Expatriate 8.12, Mianzi was also relevant in Western countries, although its influence was not as dramatic as Chinese. The influence was not displayed as openly. However, in the Chinese context, people were expected to take Mianzi into careful consideration, especially how to protect others’ Mianzi.

In other words, in the Chinese context, people are obliged to look after each other’s Mianzi, and not to make others lose Face. That is Chinese people tend to protect Face, which is one of the main characteristics of Hofstede’s Short-term orientation. However, this finding contradicts with Hofstede’s Confucian Dynamism, which claims that China has a strong long-term orientation.

\section*{9.5 Maintaining Harmony}

When relating Mianzi to harmony, it was reported that maintaining harmony served the purpose of maintaining face. In order to maintain Face, it was not worth expressing one’s opinion if it would have the consequence of breaking harmony. The participants discussed their opinions mainly from three aspects, including conflict and confrontation, willingness to express opinions and embarrass others, and surface harmony.
9.5.1 Conflict and confrontation

9.5.1.1 Conflicts

Two Chinese Indigenous pointed out that Mianzi was related to Harmony. For example, Indigenous 8.10 said,

You can have many different ways of explaining yourself, even if there’s something that you don’t agree with, you don’t have to damage others’ Mianzi. I think it’s kind of politeness. I think this kind of harmony is more important. It’s not worth ruining it.

According to these Indigenous, keeping a person’s Face in public, meaning keeping a person’s dignity and good image unharmed in public, played an important role in Chinese society. When a person’s face was kept in public, it reduced or avoided the emergence of potential conflict in society. As a result, the society would benefit from having harmonious relationships. In this way, through avoiding conflict, maintaining harmony and Mianzi mutually influence each other.

Moreover, it was mostly agreed that harmony meant to avoid conflict. It was related to people’s response to disagreement or controversial circumstances.

Expatriate 2.01 in Case HK compared the ways that people dealt with situations of disagreement in Western countries and in Hong Kong, and found that,

I was raised on the principle to really learn something to make progress, you must discuss the undiscussable. Even if the topic is sensitive or controversial, you still have to talk through it, cos that’s the way to make progress. For example, if we are having a debate, the moment you feel like walking out is the moment you should stay. Cos that’s when you really need to keep talking. You imagine a couple, the husband and wife are fighting. One of them runs away. That’s not gonna solve the problem. Instead, you should really stay and talk it through deeply. Cos you’re getting to the heart of the matter. And I believe that it matters, talking through problems and conflicts. And the debate is healthy. But here (in China), it’s complete conflict avoidance. So I find that a little bit frustrating. Because I find you can’t really solve problems by not talking. They don’t get solved. It’s grossly inefficient, in my view.
According to Expatriate 2.01’s experience, people in Western countries tended to solve problems and conflicts by sharing opinions with each other, and discussing things through, which is regarded as a necessary and crucial step towards solving problems. However, in the Chinese context, Expatriate 2.01 found that people tended to avoid conflicts by not talking about it. In other words, Chinese people tended to deal with problems without confrontation, which delayed problem solving as well.

9.5.1.2 Avoiding Confrontation

While having conflicts, it was reported that confrontation was avoided as much as possible in the Chinese context by 2 Western academics (1 Indigenous in Case UK and 1 Expatriate in Case NB), and 1 Chinese indigenous in Case HK. Indigenous 2.05 in Case HK pointed out that in order to maintain harmony, his Chinese colleagues would avoid confronting others. They would not criticise or express their opinions during faculty meetings, so as to avoid making others losing Face. As Expatriate 6.01 in Case UK mentioned,

> In China, there're some extreme situations. People try to have a harmonious environment all the time, and try not to have confrontation. Because once you have confrontation, then you would break the harmony between each other, and it will be difficult to get back to a harmonious environment again.

That is to say that confronting problems and conflicts can easily break harmonious relationships between people. Hence, in the Chinese context, people tended to avoid confrontation, and left problems undiscussed.

Two Western expatriates noticed that there were two different types of harmony in Chinese society. For instance, Expatriate 4.01 noticed that,

> They (the Chinese colleagues) say that harmony is important. But what they are actually talking about is the surface harmony, or appearance of harmony. I actually have had the principal say to me that it’s more important that the schools appear in harmony than be in harmony. Because it’s important that people look at it. So once again, I think it depends on what
you mean by harmony. What would be interesting is the dimension of the harmony and Face.

From the expatriates’ opinion, one type of harmony was the real harmony which presents a genuine harmonious relationship and atmosphere; the other was surface harmony, in which people concealed some existing conflicts in order to pretend there was a harmonious atmosphere in public. Surface harmony was only a disguise to cover up conflicts. As a result, it saved the Face of individuals or the organizations.

However, it does not mean problems remain unsolved. There are approaches to achieve solutions, although it means taking longer time and more effort. Expatriate 6.01 in Case UK and Indigenous 2.08 in Case HK suggested that to maintain harmony, people needed to take on the approach of compromise and negotiation. Indigenous 2.08 in Case HK suggested that,

That’s exactly why in mainland China, you probably heard about, the government talks about harmonious society, what is harmonious, it’s Confucianism. So being harmonious means don’t demonstrate, don’t criticise the government, don’t be negative. That’s Chinese culture. If you want to get a problem solved, you negotiate. … That’s exactly what has been done by the Chinese. … Negotiate. At the end, you just compromise. Just don’t be negative. Compromise and negotiate. … negotiate to find solutions. Obviously it results something positive. … Something will work out. But not in every single case. But that’s Chinese culture.

According to Indigenous 2.08, Chinese solved problems and conflicts through negotiating and compromising, instead of confronting each other in a more straight forward way as Westerners do. During this process, people were expected to be more flexible with their opinions and decisions. Meanwhile, Indigenous 2.08 emphasized that the process should avoid being negative, in order to increase the chances of solving problems. Expatriate 7.08 in Case NB shared similar views as Indigenous 2.08. Although the former did not directly comment about compromising and negotiating, he emphasized the importance of putting up a friendly face when dealing with disagreement in the Chinese context,

if you’re not careful and if you don’t allow this person to understand, your message will sink down gradually, you will get somebody offended,
meaning somebody might feel that you…. You know, you have to put up kind of a friendly face to be able to discuss things. You can’t just bump into the office and say ‘this and that’. No. You have to find a way to pass the message. … (No matter how) insignificant or whatever, how minute that problem might be, you still have to have that kind of friendly face and expression. … That’s the thing that one has to learn from this place. … if you are not having this…. harmonious face or friendly face or whatever, and you bring up an issue, that issue might not reach a desired effect. It might turn out negative, or it just doesn’t get done.

Based on Expatriate 7.08’s experience, it helped to build a friendly atmosphere, and avoid making others losing Face, which gave people a more positive attitude to receive and understand others’ opinions.

These responses showed the significance of the harmony concept within the Chinese context. In a harmonious environment, no one loses face. However, in a conflicting environment, people feel their face is being attacked in front of others. This tension of conflicts would make the Chinese feel uncomfortable. The consequence of showing conflict in public, hence, damages the balance between harmony and Mianzi. That is why the Chinese always try to avoid conflict, so that they can protect Mianzi.

Moreover, harmony serves as a way to protect people from losing face. To maintain harmony and Mianzi, people tend to avoid conflict. Unlike discussing things directly in Western society, problem solving in China mostly involves compromise and negotiation. Particularly, the process needs to be conducted from a positive perspective. Although solutions are not always guaranteed, harmony is maintained, which means the society remains as a peaceful environment, at least superficially. Hence, Mianzi is maintained.

The comments about Mianzi and avoiding conflict were made by academics from all 4 cases. Among them, academics in Case SH and Case HK mainly emphasized the significance of avoiding conflicts and maintaining harmony, whereas academics in Case NB and Case UK stressed keeping harmony in the Chinese context.
Moreover, the comment that came from Case UK was made by a Chinese expatriate only. There were not any by Western indigenous. This seems to show that harmony and conflicts are not as obvious in Case NB and Case UK as they are in Case SH and Case HK. This is probably because both Case NB and Case UK have a dominant British culture. Although Case NB is located in Mainland China, it was mainly founded and managed by the British university. While Case UK existed in a strong British culture context.

9.5.1.3 The attitude toward confrontation

In terms of dealing with confrontation, there were more responses from the participants. 7 Western academics (5 Western Expatriates working in China and 2 Western Indigenous in Case UK) claimed that, compared to Western academics, Chinese were much less confronting, due to the potential Mianzi impact on others. Compared to her working experience in the US, Expatriate 2.02 in Case HK noticed that,

... (in Hong Kong) One thing that’s difficult for Westerners, because they (the Westerners) don’t see the conflict as necessarily a personal thing. So if I have a different opinion than you about how to do something related with work, it’s nothing to do with our relationship, we just are discussing this, throwing our ideas back and forth, and bring out the conflict. Here (the Chinese) people may feel that you are kind of attacking them personally, and it may influence your long term relationship... So many things are done just to preserve face, rather than because it’s the right thing to do. Even if they know it’s not right. Then sometimes, even though I’ve been here for so long, sometimes I feel that I may unintentionally make a mistake because I’m used to expressing my viewpoints. Maybe I would say something that hurt somebody because I was being honest, or giving my true opinion, rather than just being quiet or being nice.

According to Expatriate 2.02, the significance of maintaining harmony outweighed the necessity of confronting in Chinese society. Protecting each other’s Face was much more highly valued than confronting conflicts. Even after 18 years’ of living and working in the Chinese context, Expatriate 2.02 still found herself sometimes naturally taking a confronting approach, although she understood the important role of harmony and Mianzi in China.
Moreover, it was pointed out that the extent of Chinese confrontation depended on the closeness of relationships. The closer the relationships were, the more likely Chinese would confront. However, this confrontation was still limited to private occasions. For instance, Expatriate 7.14 talked about his experience of giving career advice to a Chinese colleague over a private dinner,

… I couldn’t have done that even to any Westerner, maybe from France or whatever. So you see straight away that when you are working with a Chinese, you can go as close as possible without offending others, without offending her. Because you can talk about things in a way that’s more friendly, more straightforward, more understandable without taking offense or getting annoyed.

This shows that there is potential for Chinese to confront with their Western colleagues, in conditions where if they have built a close personal relationship and have confrontation in a private conversation. In other words, confronting in public seems to be a taboo in the Chinese context.

On the other hand, 5 Chinese academics (2 Indigenous Chinese in Case HK and 3 Expatriates in Case UK) agreed with their Western colleagues that Chinese people are less confronting compared to Westerners. According to them, this reaction was related to Chinese tradition, i.e. respecting and maintaining a good relationship between each other. Chinese Expatriate 6.02 in Case UK said,

… That’s still Chinese tradition. Sometimes I won’t point out the Westerners’ fault or wrong right in front of them. I feel bad. If they’re Chinese, then it’s easier to do it in Mandarin. I don’t feel good to just tell people like that. Europeans would just say things straight out. It’s about face. … In UK, people respect each other, and are very collective towards the group. More based on the facts…. In China, sometimes we need to think clear, or hesitate.

Interestingly, Expatriate 6.02 interpreted Western colleagues being straightforward as being collectivist. From her point of view, Chinese, who were concerned more about the personal impact of confrontation and Mianzi, were more individualistic. In her experience of communicating with her Chinese colleagues in the Western
context, speaking Mandarin was more private between Chinese. It implies that confrontation among Chinese is still kept private. Meanwhile, Indigenous 2.05 in Case HK claimed that a Western colleague was more confronting compared to Chinese ones, even though both were his best friends.

*He (Western colleague) has differences just about the question, about the agenda. It's not about any particular person. It's about the matter, but not personal. Even if I ask him the question. He's one of my best friends, but he will still challenge me. From his personality. If it was one of my best Chinese friends, they wouldn't do that, because they still want to keep our good relationship.*

This example further enhanced the claim that was made by Expatriate 7.14 about having a close relationship and Mianzi. Based on the experience of Indigenous 2.05 in Case HK, it indicates that even when Western colleagues becomes close friends with their Chinese colleagues, it does not change Westerners’ issue-oriented thinking and confronting character. When the confrontation arises against their Chinese close friends, Westerners will still confront the Chinese based on issues, not the person. Furthermore, Chinese Indigenous 2.05's claim shows that Chinese academics in Case HK were aware of the Western issue-oriented way of thinking. To some extent, this contrasts with the example that emerged in Case UK regarding Chinese willingness to express their opinions. Again, it demonstrates that Hong Kong Chinese academics could be more open minded within an internationalised working environment, although differences in working experience and culture exposure of academics need to be taken into account as well.

Chinese Indigenous 2.05 in Case HK compared communication with Western colleagues to Chinese ones, and appreciated the efficiency of the confronting communication style used by Western colleagues. He mentioned that,

*The difference is about efficiency. If you talk to a Western scholar, the way of doing work, it’s more straightforward. Because they will let you know what he doesn't agree with from the very beginning. Then you can compromise, and then you know how to go ahead. He will tell you everything at a very early stage. But the Chinese don’t want to let you down, and keep it till the last minute, and then say ‘basically I really want to tell you, but I’m afraid that it will ruin our relationship.’*
According to Indigenous 2.05, Chinese academics took issues much more personally, and were much more concerned about Mianzi and ruining relationships between each other. This vacillation between confrontation and Mianzi obstructs work progress, and it is not helpful at work.

9.5.2 Willingness to express and embarrass

According to the participants, Chinese were not willing to express their opinions, or embarrass others in public, if it involved any negative point of view against others. 6 Western academics (including 3 expatriates currently working in China and 3 Indigenous working in the UK) assumed that the idea of harming other people’s public image or revealing other people’s faults in public had a big impact on Chinese willingness to express their own opinions, and to embarrass others. Among them, 3 Indigenous in Case UK found that their Chinese colleagues were not willing to communicate if it involved Chinese colleagues losing face. Indigenous 6.08 in Case UK shared his own experience working with a Chinese colleague and found that his Chinese colleague did not want to tell him the problems that she encountered while teaching a module until the situation deteriorated,

(The Chinese colleagues) just won’t tell me anything. … Jane (the Chinese colleague) was teaching my module. She sounded fine, and I don’t have any problem with her, or with her accent or English or anything. But some students did. So when she was teaching my module, I asked her ‘how did it go?’ she said ‘it’s ok, everything went on time. I asked a few questions, and got a few answers’. And that’s it. ‘ok’. Where other problems were the students were noisy at the time, and not paying attention, and some left half way through at the coffee break, after the first hour or something. She didn’t really want to tell me the problems yet. In case if they happened again and again, then she will…. I just think that well, if she has a problem, tell me now. Then I can sort out any problem immediately. So sometimes, they will just keep it to themselves for a while, and then they won’t tell me, till it’s kind of piled up problems. That’s the way that I’ve noticed anyway. At the end, I would still try to talk to them. And I always make efforts to chat and find out if there was any particular problem or if it’s all ok. I always ask, but I won’t force them to give me the information. It’s up to them to tell me something. But they wouldn’t be the ones to take the initiative. Not that I find.
In this example, Chinese expatriate in Case UK did not take the initiative to communicate with her Western colleague about problems at work, until the situation became worse. It was because raising problems would reveal the weakness of the Chinese academic at work, which would make her look bad in front of Western colleagues or in the teaching team. In other words, it would make the Chinese lose face by showing that she had some troubles in teaching. In this sense, the trouble in teaching was related to the personal image of the Chinese academic. To defend her own Mianzi, the Chinese academic avoided telling the truth when problems just emerged. This also means that the Chinese academic might have assumed that Western colleagues would look at the issue in the same way as herself.

Four Chinese academics (3 Indigenous Chinese working in Case HK and 1 expatriate in Case UK) talked about issues of expressing opinions. Instead of relating it to one’s own Mianzi, the Chinese expatriate in the UK related it to the influence on others, and claimed that expressing opinions was not necessary if it might potentially embarrass others. On the other hand, 3 Chinese indigenous in Case HK offered their understanding from a different angle. They compared different reactions between Westerners, Hong Kong Chinese and Mainland Chinese. From their experience, when expressing opinions, Westerners focused their opinions and judgement about issues, not about people. Individual attachment and emotions were not taken into account. Hence, based on this kind of issue-oriented thinking, Westerners were not concerned much about the influence on individuals, nor about the impact on Mianzi. Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese shared some similarities when expressing their opinions. That was a person-oriented way of thinking. They were concerned about the impact of their expressions on individuals and Mianzi. Moreover, comparatively speaking, Mainland Chinese appeared to pay even more attention to Mianzi than Hong Kong ones. This was agreed by one of the Western Expatriates in Case HK. Chinese academics in Case HK seemed to be more keen on the idea of expressing one’s opinions freely.

According to these responses, it shows that the Chinese had a more person-oriented kind of thinking when expressing their opinions. They took into consideration the influence of comments on individuals and their impact on Mianzi.
In Case HK, Mainland Chinese emphasized more the significance of Mianzi than their Hong Kong Chinese colleagues, when it comes to expressing one’s opinions. Comparatively speaking, Hong Kong Chinese Indigenous in Case HK seem to be more outspoken. Firstly, this reflects that universities in Hong Kong are more internationalized, so that Hong Kong Chinese academics grew up in that kind of environment and hold more open and positive attitudes towards expressing their opinions. Secondly, it indicates that Hong Kong Chinese are aware of Westerners’ issue-oriented kind of thinking. Therefore, Hong Kong indigenous could express themselves more freely, knowing that they would not be judged personally by Westerners and that Mianzi would not be harmed.

In Case UK, only one Chinese expatriate in Case UK stressed the priority of maintaining others’ face, and her Western colleagues also reported this issue. Moreover, Western indigenous in Case UK pointed out the significance of Mianzi to their Chinese colleagues when the latter were personally related to certain issues. It seems that Chinese expatriates in Case UK use strong person-oriented thinking, both regarding other people and individuals who express opinions. At the same time, they assumed that people who received information or comments would think in a similar way, including their Western colleagues. In consequence, the misunderstanding leads to difficulties in communication at work, such as not communicating when there is some trouble or difficulty.

On the contrary, neither did Chinese academics in Case SH nor in Case NB make any comment about expressing opinions and Mianzi. This indicates that expressing opinions is not so importantly linked with Mianzi in either case. For Case SH, it could be because of its unique collaborated higher education context. In Case SH, half of the staff were Westerners, and the other half were Chinese indigenous who received higher education overseas and had adapted to a Western academic style. Apart from that, Case SH adopted a Western academic managing style, and emphasized strongly both teaching and research. Case NB is a colonised type of British university in Mainland China, which is dominantly British in its higher education management style. However, expressing opinions and Mianzi did not appear to be strongly related in Case NB. This could also be due to the fact that there were only 2 Chinese Indigenous academics working together with the majority of Western expatriates.
9.5.3 Surface Harmony

Three academics in Case HK (2 Expatriates and 1 Indigenous) commented about the deceiving effect of Harmony in the Chinese context. According to them, Chinese maintained Harmony with each other in public as a superficial impression. However, quite often conflicts still existed underneath in the actual relationship. For instance, Expatriate 2.02 commented that,

Because you always like to have this harmonious kind of surface. It looks like you are doing everything right, everything is very positive. And meanwhile underneath there’s a lot of conflict going on.

Expatriate 2.02 observed that the Chinese were comfortable with a harmonious façade, which presented a positive environment to all. However, underneath this seemingly harmonious atmosphere, there actually were a lot of conflicts. Interestingly, this situation was only reported in Case HK. This could be because there that academics had a stronger tendency to maintain surface Harmony in Hong Kong. On the other hand, this also implied that Chinese academics in Hong Kong were more sensitive about noticing the differences in Harmony within the academic working environment.

Based on the examples above, it shows that Harmony is closely integrated with Mianzi. It demonstrates that maintaining Harmony is crucial in Chinese society. Affecting one’s Face in public can potentially break harmonious relationships. Vice versa, breaking Harmony damages the Mianzi of individuals or organizations. Hence, people compromise and aim to maintain Harmony, in order to show respect or to keep each other’s Face. Even though sometimes it is just surface Harmony, relationships sustain.

Besides, Mianzi shows that the closer the relationship is, the more confronting people will be in Chinese society, although it is still limited to a private occasion. Compared to Chinese, Mianzi and maintaining Harmony do not play such an important role in Western society. Hence Westerners can focus more on discussing issues by being straightforward. Personal relationships do not have as much
influence as in Chinese society. This is claimed to be a more efficient way to deal with problems, without taking things or comments personally.

Moreover, such incentive to maintain Harmony in the Chinese context implies that the Chinese are strongly collectivistic oriented. They would rather compromise by not expressing their individual emotions and opinions in order to protect the group’s harmonious image, and to maintain Face for all. However, the motive to look after others’ Face does not necessarily originate from collectivist thinking only. The individual benefit plays a significant role as well. While Chinese tend to consider Mianzi and maintain Harmony for others, Chinese do this also to secure their individual Mianzi and personal relationships. It demonstrates the individual friendliness and decency among the group, which are of great significance to secure individual presence and win acceptance from other group members. In this sense, Harmony shows that in Chinese society, individualism and collectivism interplay in people’s daily contact with others, which strengthens the claim that was made earlier in Mianzi analysis (9.2 Mianzi and Individualism/Collectivism). It further enhances the concept that Chinese culture contains both individualistic and collectivistic characters.

Whilst discussing Harmony, Westerners show more of an individualistic orientation. They focus on the issue, and do not bring personal feelings and relationships into discussion. Hence, Mianzi and Harmony do not have an important impact on Westerners’ interaction with others, so that they can respond to others based on their individual concerns.

9.6 Mianzi and Harmony in the academic context

9.6.1 Mianzi among academics

The participants emphasized the significance of Mianzi in academia. However, Expatriate 8.03 pointed out that due to the features of the academic profession, Mianzi might not necessarily be so strong in the academic context,
...science is about criticism and challenging, challenging of assumptions and hypotheses. So I think there’s more of a norm, typically for those that have been through the Western programme. That’s the way you do it. Faculty meeting, or candidate comes in, PhD or masters, very challenging. And then everybody is friends afterwards.

According to Expatriate 8.03, academics emphasized a strong interactive atmosphere to share opinions and ideas, particularly in the Western context. This opinion was agreed by Expatriate 7.08 in Case NB, who suggested that with the exposure to Western culture, Chinese academics who had experienced studying and living overseas, would have a better tolerance to a more straightforward discussion. That is to say that in the academic context, particularly for people who have received Western higher education, Mianzi might be taken less personally on professional issues than social issues. People are encouraged to discuss, argue and express their own opinions.

**9.6.2 Mianzi of academics**

Apart from that, Expatriate 3.12 in Case HK noticed that Chinese academic staff were very kind to students, which potentially might be a protection for academic staff who might be considered a bad teacher,

> But people are very kind to students. I’m not quite sure where that comes from. In part, it could be trying to protect themselves, the teachers. Because if you fail the students, that must mean you are a lousy teacher. There’s that mentality.

In other words, Chinese academic staff were kind to students in terms of giving marks. By giving good results to students, it reflected the academics' own performance. Hence, academics were protecting their own Mianzi to avoid being accused of bad teaching.

**9.6.3 Harmony among academics**

A few participants reported different opinions about the significance of Harmony in the academic working environment. Expatriate 2.04 in Case HK pointed out that,
In some way, I think at least in this organization, we cannot have a harmonious relationship, and it wouldn’t matter. People can still keep doing their job, keep doing their academic role easier…. If people are arguing and fighting here or whatever, it wouldn’t bother me that much.

According to Expatriate 2.04, the academics role was independent from personal relationships. Even if the atmosphere was not friendly or harmonious in the organisation, he would still be able to carry on his own research and teaching. In this sense, Harmony was not important in the academic working environment. Chinese indigenous 8.05 and 8.06 in Case SH seemed to agree on this point of view, that Harmony was not necessary or important in academic institutions. Indigenous 8.06 commented,

> Relatively speaking, everyone is doing research, it’s quite individualistic. But if in a team, or in the company, some companies may be more important. But in the university, and in teaching, …it’s different.

On the contrary, Indigenous 2.09 in Case HK claimed that,

> (Harmony) it’s very important here. Try not to have any conflict with other people, so that we do our work independently. … the working environment is ok. Because everyone understands that kind of Harmony can at least facilitate work. At least during meetings, we don’t have major arguments. It’s more like maintaining it. When we talk about any sensitive topics, we don’t’ have big conflict.

Although these two views were different about the importance of Harmony in the academic working environment, both groups acknowledged the individualistic character of academic roles, which reflected academics carrying out their teaching and research independently. Particularly, according to Indigenous 2.09 in Case HK, as long as people avoided having any major conflict and worked independently, Harmony would be maintained.

On the other hand, 3 expatriates in Case HK assumed that maintaining Harmony showed a strong collectivistic side of Chinese society. They emphasized that Chinese academics were keener to have a team-working spirit, see everyone is coping well at work, and reach a consensus when it came to decision making. For example, expatriates in Case HK claimed that,
If you’re committed to be in education, you can’t be on an island and do it all on your own. You’ve really got to do it as a team, which requires Harmony. (3.02)

I think definitely in Australian culture, if you feel strongly about idea B, you can go to the grave defending idea B with the rest of the department who chose idea A. Who cares? You would be the person who spoke up for idea B. You would be proud of that. But you never do that here (in Hong Kong). You don’t want to stand up for the wrong reasons. It’s more important to have consensus in HK, it’s more important to be seen to have consensus in Hong Kong. So discussion often lasts as long as it takes for consensus to be arrived at. (3.03)

These two expatriates’ opinions seemed to be quite opposite from the previous group, who suggested the insignificance of Harmony in the academic working environment. These two expatriates, 3.02 and 3.03 emphasized that Harmony was the key to keep academics working together, and that in Hong Kong people tended to make decisions based on common agreement. This perspective demonstrated the collectivistic side of Chinese culture.

Therefore, from these two opposite point of views, it shows that Western academics perceived more of the Chinese collectivistic character, while Chinese ones emphasised more the individualistic side of the academic working environment. This finding turns out to be different from what Hofstede claimed about Chinese culture, i.e. the Chinese are strongly collectivistic compared to the Western individualistic culture.

9.7 Dealing with Mianzi and Harmony

In interviews, academics suggested how to deal with Mianzi. These suggestions mainly highlighted two aspects, obligated respect in dealing with Mianzi and the status of being a Westerner in the Chinese context.

Firstly, respect in Mianzi was suggested by both Chinese and Western academics, including respect for the local culture, to individuals and to people of older age.
Chinese Indigenous 2.05 in Case HK pointed out that Westerners should respect Chinese while in the Chinese context,

*Especially when they (the Westerners) work in HK, I think they have to learn to at least respect Chinese. Because what I think is that sometimes they really want to say anything, and try to answer the question, try to dominate in the meeting. That’s the reason why some of the Chinese people don't like, because people think 'you know you have to respect me, let me talk first. Not every question you have to speak up,…' that’s the way that the Chinese people don’t like.*

From Indigenous 2.05’s experience, it seemed that Chinese academics were a little intimidated by Westerners confronting and challenging during meetings. The fact that Westerners responded more quickly to questions and were more out-spoken left the Chinese feeling less respected, and therefore losing Mianzi. Consequently, Chinese colleagues felt offended by Westerners’ bluntness, which might potentially affect Harmony in their working relationships.

Western Expatriate 7.04 in Case NB pointed out the significance of paying respect to Chinese from a different perspective. He claimed that it was important for Western expatriates to adapt to ways of doing things in China and showing respect to Chinese. Otherwise, if Westerners maintained their Western ways of doing things in China which may contradict with Chinese ones, it would be a loss of Mianzi for Westerners,

*Some of the young (Western) academics, the new ones, try to gain face and then usually fall flat on the face when they trying to gain face. And then they lose some face as well. One teacher here from the UK says ‘that’s the way we do things where I come from’. She’s from the UK, and just assumes that she can transplant what they were doing in the UK to China. They have lost so much face within the division, and with the boss as well. For goodness sake, this is China. This is what we do here.*

In this case, Expatriate 7.04 acknowledged the differences of the cultural context in China from the UK, and claimed that local cultural preferences should be considered as the priority. That is to say expatriates should respect local culture and adapt themselves into local ways of doing things, in order to avoid conflict and
gain respect from indigenous colleagues. At the same time, it will help maintain Harmony as well.

Interestingly, the concept of paying respect to the local context appeared mainly in Case HK and Case NB, both of which were located within the Chinese national context. Although Case HK seemed to be internationalised to some extent, Chinese academics felt Face being threatened by Western colleagues. While in Case NB, a British colonised university in Mainland China, Western expatriates felt the need to respect the local context by adopting Chinese ways of doing things. However, another China based case, Case SH, did not report such problem. This shows that in this collaborated university context, power and authority between Chinese and the Western academics were more balanced than the other two cases, Case NB and Case HK.

Another aspect of respect was pointed out. Chinese Expatriate 9.04 in Case UK mentioned the need to ‘talk after the meeting, not to let other individuals lose face’. Moreover, he emphasized the ‘need to recognise the age of the person’. From these, it shows that Expatriate 9.04 emphasized the importance of Mianzi not only to individuals, but also according to people’s age differences. It suggests that paying respect to age is another important aspect while dealing with Mianzi. Moreover, Expatriate 7.02 in Case NB shared his experience, in terms of dealing with criticising individuals,

Even though you concentrate on criticising the issues (in public), not the person, you have to be a little sensitive with the fact and the person. If you are criticising the issues that can identify the person, you have to put it in a way which doesn’t reflect on the individual, the person himself. So the person himself can buy in sort of suggestions for changing, can become a part of new suggestions you’re making.

According to this, Expatriate 7.02 pointed out that criticism in public should not be addressed directly to individuals in a very obvious way. Instead, he suggested that it should be made in a way that did not identify individuals. Again, this indicates that people need to pay respect to individuals while giving comments or criticism. As a result, Harmony will be maintained.
Westerners commented on the difficulties and benefits of being a foreigner in the Chinese cultural context. For example, Expatriate 2.02 in Case HK felt uncomfortable about making cultural mistakes without having background knowledge,

*I think a lot of times, it’s very difficult to... for people to come out with a problem… you may not know it. I don’t think it’s so clear. It could be the situation here that I did something that I didn’t mean to, and I don’t even know. I don’t know what I did to create the problem, and I don’t even know there’s a problem. I guess it’s somewhat uncomfortable that if you understand the situation, then there’s an American, used to be very open in expressing yourself, and it was uncomfortable to always be careful about what you say.*

This indicated one of the difficulties for Westerners who came from a different cultural background in communicating with indigenous Chinese. On the other hand, Expatriate 7.04 in Case NB found himself developing better understanding regarding Mianzi from his Chinese colleagues,

*Well, in a conversation people would say ‘Chinese won’t do that’. And then I realize that was a mistake. I didn’t mean to make them lose face, and I apologize. And it’s ok, once they understood that, and realized that I hadn’t intended to make them lose face, they’re ok with that. Usually they’re ok with that. Once they understand I wasn’t malicious to them, and did it on purpose, it’s ok. You have to learn about these kind of things.*

These two examples showed that Westerners unconsciously behaved in different ways from their Chinese colleagues. After being advised by their Chinese colleagues, Westerners learned how to adapt into Chinese culture. Hence, it will be helpful to increase Chinese indigenous’ awareness of Western cultural concepts, so that the former would be more understanding towards their Western colleagues, and be more tolerant when they encounter Westerners’ different ways of thinking and behaving. Vice versa, it will improve working relationships if local Western academics in the UK can have a better understanding about their Chinese colleagues’ concept of Mianzi and Harmony.
9.8 Summary

The analysis of respondents' views on Mianzi shows that it is closely integrated with Harmony. Protecting someone's Mianzi is highly valued among Chinese academics. To achieve that, Chinese not only avoid public confrontation as much as possible, but they are also unwilling to express their own opinion or embarrass others in public.

From the interview results, Mianzi seemed to be highly related to Hofstede's Individualism/Collectivism and Power Distance dimensions. In terms of Individualism/Collectivism, Mianzi is connected to both sides of the dimension. Looking at differences in private and personal occasions, the significant presence of others, and the sense of being competitive, the research shows that Chinese are not completely collectivistic. Instead, their collectivism is strongly driven by individualistic ways of thinking and personal motives. In other words, the concept of Mianzi involves both Individualism and Collectivism in Chinese culture. Relating to Power Distance, Mianzi emphasises differences of people's status in the hierarchy. Looking at Mianzi's influence among the relationships between students and academic staff, and those among academic staff, the current research results indicate that the higher a person's status, the more respect should be paid in terms of giving Face. Apart from these, Mianzi is also related to Hofstede's Long-term/Short-term orientations. The current research results find that with a strong Mianzi concept, Chinese culture would have to be categorised as short-term orientated, which contradicts Hofstede's findings that Chinese culture is a long-term oriented one instead. Furthermore, the present research demonstrates that Mianzi is mostly obligatory in the Chinese culture context. People are expected to maintain Mianzi for each other. This is different from the Western way of thinking, which believes in one's own judgement and is not as concerned about losing Face due to others' comments.

With regard to Harmony, the data analysis looked at Harmony's impact on dealing with conflict and confrontation, people's willingness to express and embarrass others, and surface Harmony as well. The current research results suggest that Harmony is very closely related to Mianzi, and that Chinese culture has both individualistic and collectivistic characters. The significance of Harmony is
emphasized and maintained in order to protect people or organisations’ Mianzi, and vice versa. Such coordination serves the purpose of continuing relationships, even if it is only for the surface Harmony.

Additionally, this chapter also presented Mianzi’s influence in the academic context. According to the interview data, academic staff are considered to have higher status, compared to administrative staff and students. That is to say, academics do not need to care as much about maintaining Mianzi with administrative staff as with their academic colleagues. Students in China and Hong Kong pay more respect to their teachers compared to these in the UK. On the other hand, Chinese academics can potentially be more generous in terms of giving higher marks to their students, so as to maintain their own Mianzi as being a good teacher.

Finally, participants’ experiences of how to deal with Mianzi suggest that respect should be given to local Chinese and individuals in public. Paying respect to people of an older age appears to be important as well. According to expatriates and indigenous, understanding Mianzi is significant while dealing with Chinese, both in the Chinese cultural context and the UK. This deep-rooted cultural concept reflects various dimensions of Chinese culture. It is a crucial part of increasing the awareness of culture differences between Chinese and Westerners.
Chapter 10  Discussion

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the discussion is guided by three research questions. The findings are summarised and interpreted in light of the research questions. Relevant theories will be referred to, and the contributions of the current research will be highlighted as they emerge.

10.2 How do Western cultural dimensions and Chinese cultural concepts relate to each other?

To answer the first research question, the current research looks at the relationships between Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and key Chinese cultural concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony. Hofstede's dimensions have been used as the key Western cultural research tool. Three of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Individualism and Collectivism, Power Distance, and Long-term / Short-term orientation will be closely combined with in-depth interpretation of three key Chinese culture concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony. The Chinese Yin-Yang concept is also applied to offer a more comprehensive interpretation between Hofstede’s I-C and the three Chinese concepts. This is mainly due to the complex dynamics and interaction between these cultural values.

10.2.1 Individualism vs Collectivism

The discussion of the interaction between Individualism and Collectivism will be examined respectively from the perspectives of Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony. Moreover, the results will be interpreted with Chinese Yin-Yang concepts, so as to demonstrate the interaction of I-C within the Chinese context.
10.2.1.1 Guanxi

The current research data shows that Guanxi had a strong collectivistic character (Earley 1989, 1993; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis et al 1998). Besides, it was identified that Guanxi did not only involve the network ties people shared at the work place, but also the relationships in their social life, including families, friends, and even strangers who made their way into Guanxi through some mutual acquaintances. The current research results affirm Hwang (1997-8)’s claim about Chinese living in a network of Guanxi, and the significance of individuals taking appropriate action due to one’s social network.

The present research results imply that Chinese Guanxi distinguishes different levels of collectivistic group, which consequently indicates the extent of the closeness of people's relationships between each other. The strength of Guanxi depends on the closeness of people’s connection. For example, Expatriate 7.09 categorised Guanxi into three different groups including family, acquaintances who share connections, and strangers. He further indicated that the more direct the connection is, the closer Guanxi is (See 8.2.1.1 Relationship and Connections). According to Expatriate 7.09, family and acquaintance types of relationships are the strongest in China. The acquaintances are the initial connections people build by sharing the same hometown, the same school, or the same college (See 8.2.1.1 Relationship and Connections). To some extent, the acquaintance type of relationship shares some similarity with the Western ‘old boys’ network’, where people get to know each other by going to the same schools. The stranger type of relationships are where people need to set up relationships from a brand new connection, either by being introduced by others, or known through other circumstances. These different types of relationships demonstrate the availability of Guanxi in the Chinese context. It supports Luo’s (2000) claim about the ubiquitous of Guanxi in Chinese society.

Besides, the different types of relationships imply the contrast of close and distant Guanxi. Using networks as the fundamental format of relationships, close Guanxi was the core network relationship which was based on strong sentiment and obligation; while distant Guanxi was the outer relationship which required much less sentiment and obligation (Chen & Chen, 2004; Chen & Chen, 2009; Podolny &
Page, 1998). The findings show different levels of sentiment and obligation have been committed between close and distant Guanxi. In this sense, the findings identify the discrepancy between Guanxi and Hofstede's collectivism. With both looking at people's distance in relationships, Hofstede's national cultural dimension does not imply differences in of people's relationships. Rather, it applies the overall collectivism and individualism to every individual or relationship. As a result, Hofstede's Individualism and Collectivism dimension reports differences between the individual and the society in a general way. However, Guanxi acknowledges various circumstances of collectivistic groups and closeness of people's relationships. Guanxi looks at each specific type of connections of people's relationships, and the dynamics of people's distance. Previous studies used mainly focused on the characteristics of the individuals and society as a general form, whereas the current research implies the development dynamics of people's relationships. It suggests a new research approach to explore more detailed variations in the nature of people's relationships.

The current research finding shows that Guanxi allows a much more flexible chance to set up contact and build Guanxi in the Chinese context by giving gifts, compared to the Western 'old boys' network'. For instance, Expatriate 7.04 noticed that in the UK, 'old boys' network' limited people’s connections within ready-built or shared networks. However, Guanxi in the Chinese context allows people to start new connections by giving gifts (See 8.2.1.2 The 'old boys' network'). Gamba and Kleiner (2001) claimed that the traditional concept of the 'old boys' network' originally referred to those who shared the same education, and it had been applied to a much broader range of networks in both business and personal domains. In other words, the 'old boys' network' refers to the connections and relationships that have already been built. People already know each other within the 'old boys' network'.

Referring to Trompenaars' (1994) cultural dimensions, this research finding reflects that Western 'old boys' network' is an achievement-oriented relationship, which is based on accomplishment. In other words, it depends on, what and where, people have achieved or where they obtained their education institute or work organisation. Nevertheless, this does not mean that some factors are not reflected in the Western 'old boys' network', such as birth and education background. On the other hand, Guanxi's more flexible accessibility and approach seem to be both
achievement and ascription-oriented, meaning it can be related to not only people’s accomplishment, but also factors of birth, gender, age, education background, and social networks.

Although it was suggested that (Chen & Chen, 2009; Millington, Eberhardt and Wilkinson, 2005) the gifts-giving gesture could be easily identified as one of the negative consequences in Chinese organisations, considering an individual personal interaction, the present research found that in the Chinese context, people can ‘buy’ Guanxi by giving gifts, which is not necessarily regarded as a negative effect of bribery in the Chinese context. This finding demonstrates that Guanxi enhances collectivistic aspects of Chinese culture by giving people more flexible assess to network connections and giving gifts, which may be regarded as a positive gesture in the process of Guanxi building. This finding endorses Qian et al’s (2007) finding that gift-giving has a positive effect on Chinese cultural values as a whole, including Guanxi.

The current research data also reflected the individualistic side of Guanxi. The current research finding shows that it is in an individual’s interest to build and maintain Guanxi. In this sense, Guanxi is personal to each individual. It becomes everyone’s own possession of different contacts, which forms Guanxi. This finding relates Guanxi to Luo’s (2000) claim that Guanxi is seen as being personal. It operates at the individual level (Chen & Chen, 2009).

Guanxi being personal does not only reflect on the individual possession of contacts, but also the influence of feelings and obligation involved that is placed on the individual. When an individual is involved in Guanxi within certain groups, apart from the collectivistic commitment one has to make in order to maintain relationships, he or she also has to be prepared to deal with both positive and negative comments and criticism from others, which is reported to be taken on a personal level and has an impact on one’s own emotions and feelings. For example, without justifying whether such negative reception happened in a public or private setting, Expatriate 2.08 reported that people tended to take negative comments personally, which caused damage to Guanxi (See 8.2.2.3 Avoid being negative in Guanxi). It demonstrates that individuals do not separate their own emotions and
feelings completely from the group, meaning when one’s own emotion and feelings are damaged, an individual’s sentiment will be taken as priority. According to the current research results, such comments and criticism are taken at a personal level, meaning feedback will be justified based on an individual’s feelings and emotions. In other words, the consequence of such comments and criticism is judged and related to one’s own circumstance, depending whether it is beneficial to the individual. In this sense, Guanxi reflects an individual aspect. This finding demonstrates a strong individualistic side of Chinese culture, which has been overlooked in the previous cultural research. Based on Hofstede’s bi-polar cultural dimension, Chinese culture is categorised as a strong collectivistic one. It overshadows the fact that Chinese context also has individualistic feature.

Furthermore, other researchers have looked at Guanxi in different ways to distinguish the level of collectivism and individualism involved within Guanxi, in order to explain the concept in more detail. Fei (1948) claimed that each individual was the centre of every relationship, which expanded on different relationship levels with various contacts. The aim of such a relationship network is to serve the individual's own purpose. Hwang (2000) argued that Fei’s analogy indicated the way that Chinese society was structured. Indicated by King (1991), Confucian society developed people into Guanxi individual, which was supported by the prevailing cultural imperative. In this sense, Chinese are relation based, rather than either individually or group based. In other words, it is the connection, between people, i.e. Guanxi, which forms the base of Chinese society. Relating this to the present research findings, it enhances the present research results that Guanxi accommodates both the group and the individual, and it connects people together. Ho, Chen and Chiu (1991) claimed that individuals in Chinese society were relational self, who were highly sensitive towards others’ existence, and the concept of the individual would lose its meaning separated from others. Looking at the connection between individuals and others, the concept of relational self was strongly emphasized in Confucianism (Ho, 1995; Hwang, 1995). This explains why individuals and others are two elements in Guanxi, which is maintained and continued based on both the relationship and the needs of individual. In this sense, the concepts of individuals and groups are operated based on relationships. They inter-twine within Guanxi. One cannot operate without the other.
Therefore, in terms of Individualism and Collectivism dimension, the current research data suggest that Guanxi operates with both individualistic and collectivistic characteristics. Such display of Chinese culture presents a different explanation of Chinese culture from that of Hofstede's. It provides a more comprehensive illustration, which requires a different approach of using Western cultural dimensions to look at the Chinese ones.

10.2.1.2 Mianzi

The current research data suggest that Mianzi has strong collectivistic characteristics. According to the current research data, people have great concern about the presence of others, and protecting others' Mianzi in public. To achieve that, people leave honest and negative comments and criticism till private and personal occasions. Moreover, it is found that the significance of Mianzi is emphasized more in others' presence including both within and outside the group. Opinions and feedback from others are highly valued, in order to enhance individuals' status in public and among group members. Fang (2003) emphasized that Mianzi involved individuals' family, social networks and even community. For instance, Indigenous 8.05 mentioned Chinese students were concerned more about Mianzi in the presence of their peers from other countries (See 9.2.2.1 The presence of others). Hence, it illuminates the connection between Chinese students' fear of losing Face and collectivistic concern for Chinese students as a whole. Hwang et al (2003) conducted research looking at the relationships among Mianzi, Individualism-Collectivism, and feedback processes and learning outcomes in Hong Kong, Singapore and the United States, and they failed to find the link between the loss of Mianzi and collectivistic values. However, the current research data supported Hwang et al (2003)'s hypothesis of the connection between the loss of Mianzi and collectivistic values. These characteristics of Mianzi not only affirm Hofstede's findings about the collectivistic aspect of Chinese culture, but also more specifically, they indicate that the collectivistic aspects of Mianzi are mostly related to the idea of losing Mianzi in front of others.

The current research data found the concept of Mianzi also serves individualistic purposes, in terms of catering for others' Mianzi is to maintain individuals' Guanxi with each other. Expatriate 8.02 mentioned that Chinese students were keen on
protecting the academic staff’s Mianzi, so as to maintain harmonious Guanxi with the academic staff (See 9.2.2.3 Competitiveness). In this way, once Mianzi is protected, individuals strengthen mutual trust. As a result, it enhances their interpersonal relationships between each other, i.e. Guanxi. In other words, by protecting others’ Face, Mianzi helps fulfil an individual’s interest to protect and develop their interpersonal relationships with others. It demonstrates a strong individualistic orientation. Nevertheless, this example may also be argued in terms of the social status difference between students and academic staff, which falls into the discussion of hierarchy and will be discussed further in the next section.

The current research results found that in the Chinese context, Mianzi was highly related to people being competitive, which was motivated by the sense of gaining Face, and winning Mianzi. Mianzi gaining helps build individual confidence and ego among the group. In this sense, Mianzi was found to strongly reflect an individualistic perspective. This finding mirrors Hwang et al (2003)’s research, which confirms the effect between gaining Mianzi and individualism.

The current research results further verifies the research conducted by Wagner’s (1995), who carried out an exploratory factor analysis of the works of other researchers and found that Mianzi contains both individualistic and collectivistic factors. From the analysis of Individualism and Collectivism, and Mianzi, the current research finding suggests that Mianzi, like Guanxi, involves both Individualistic and Collectivistic point of views, which adds further evidence to challenge Hofstede’s cultural dimensions claim, that Chinese only a collectivistic culture. The current research results show that the Chinese concept of Mianzi is closely involved with both collectivism and individualism. People’s perception about Mianzi varies when the circumstances and perspectives change. It cannot be simply categorised in either of the dimensions.

10.2.1.3 Harmony

The current research finding shows the concept of Harmony in Chinese society has a strong collectivistic feature. Triandis et al (1988) suggested that the individual had to behave modestly to present oneself and avoid confrontation at all cost, in order
to maintain Harmony within the group. According to the data, Harmony is related to a strong collectivistic concern for other people’s Face. For example, Expatriate 7.08 emphasized the importance of maintaining Harmony in order to protect others’ Face, which he claimed to be very useful when it comes to dealing with conflict (See 9.5.1.2 Avoiding confrontation). Hence in this sense, Harmony is strongly collectivistically oriented. On the other hand, some Western academics, for example, Expatriate 2.01 found it frustrating sometimes to avoid conflict without solving problems (See 9.5.1.1 Conflicts).

Moreover, the current research results show that Harmony caters to the individualistic side of culture as well. Expatriate 6.02 noticed people’s individualistic interest while making efforts to maintain Harmony (See 9.5.1.3 The attitude toward confrontation). The findings display that the purpose of maintaining Harmony in Chinese society is to fulfill people’s individual needs, in terms of building a better individual image among the group that he or she belongs to, and consequently building a better Guanxi with others. In this sense, Harmony serves individual benefit, which indicates a strong individualistic side of Harmony.

Therefore, the current research results further emphasize the significant role of Harmony while balancing the tension between individualistic and collectivistic values. In other words, Harmony acts as a moderator in Chinese culture to balance individualism and collectivism, so that it does not lead to either extreme of the two. However, most of the previous research focuses on interpersonal Harmony, the relationship of Harmony with Mianzi, benevolence, instead of identifying the connection between the Harmony and individualism. The discussion of the relationships between Harmony concept and individualism will bring a new perspective to look at Harmony. It allows Harmony to be interpreted into the individualistic aspect of the cultural dimension.

10.2.1.4 Yin-Yang

The current research data show that Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony have both collectivistic and individualistic characteristics. These findings demonstrate that Guanxi, Mianzi, and Harmony cannot simply be considered on only the
individualistic or collectivistic side of the culture dimension, as reported in Hofstede’s national cultural dimensions. Rather, Individualism and Collectivism combine and complement with each other within Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony. Together, they form a more comprehensive and dynamic explanation of Chinese culture. Moreover, along with the interaction between Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony, the emphasis on individualism and collectivism varies accordingly. That is to say that the layout of Individualism/Collectivism should not be displayed as static as in Hofstede’s bipolar national cultural dimensions. Instead, a more dynamic and interactive movement is reflected in Chinese culture. Although Individualism and Collectivism are literally referring to different aspects and choices that individuals make, they exist simultaneously within Chinese culture. Sometimes one of them is stronger than the other, whereas when the conditions and circumstances change, the weaker one may take over the stronger. This constant changing dynamics of Individualism/Collectivism in the Chinese context can be further elaborated by using Yin-Yang (See Figure 10.1 Individualism/Collectivism and Yin-Yang).

![Diagram of Individualism/Collectivism and Yin-Yang](image)

**Figure 10.1 Individualism/Collectivism and Yin-Yang**

Within such Yin-Yang context, people tend to maintain Guanxi with others, in order to fulfil their individual interest. Whereas when Individuals are taking care of their own interest and business, they still have to pay attention and maintain their collectivistic duty to maintain Guanxi. Collectivism and Individualism cannot claim their complete side of domain, without having some space for each other. Reflected in Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony, three main concepts of Chinese culture, Individualism and Collectivism are both important. They interact with each other, and form a harmonious flow of the social energy.
The Yin-Yang display of Individualism and Collectivism presents a dynamic interpretation of Individualism and Collectivism. It demonstrates that Individualism and Collectivism are not mutually exclusive as shown in a bi-polar dimension design. The Yin-Yang display also emphasizes the significance of balance between Individualism and Collectivism.

10.2.2 Power Distance and hierarchy

10.2.2.1 Guanxi

The current research data show that Guanxi is highly related to power distance. For instance, Expatriate 1.04 pointed out the level of Guanxi that was owned by individuals depends on their status (See 8.3 Guanxi and Power Distance). The current research findings show that an individual’s social status has a great impact on a person’s Guanxi involvement and the way they approach Guanxi. The higher an individual’s social status is, the more Guanxi he or she will be involved in. This finding reflects what Kirkbride, Tang and Westwood (1991) claimed, i.e. that status differences were highly valued within the Chinese context, and they made people strive to maintain Guanxi. However, it does not mean people spend the same amount of efforts in maintaining Guanxi. According to the current research data, the higher the status is, the less effort individuals need to make to have Guanxi. For instance, Expatriate 8.12 reported that when academics’ status reached to a certain level, there was no need to make efforts to build Guanxi, as respect was followed by an academics’ status (See 8.3 Guanxi and Power Distance). In other words, this finding means people have to make more efforts to approach to those at a high status in building Guanxi.

Moreover, it was also reported that people show more respect to others at a higher status (Expatriate 8.12, See 8.3 Guanxi and Power Distance). The current research findings demonstrate that people’s respect is closely related to social status. The greater the respect, the bigger the distance in people’s relationships with each other. In other words, this explains Hofstede’s Power Distance effect in the Chinese context. Farh et al (1998) carried out two studies looking at the influence of Guanxi and relational demography in the Chinese context. Particularly, when they conducted the research between supervisors and subordinates, they found that
Guanxi was related to people’s status as the status difference generated stronger trust from the subordinates towards their superiors. Although Farh et al (1998) linked Guanxi with people’s status difference, i.e. power distance, and acknowledged a number of factors that affect people’s trust towards each other from the perspective of relational demography, Farh et al did not examine directly the connection between Guanxi and power distance.

In contrast, according to the current research data, individuals’ social status indicates that one has more power than others if he or she has higher status, which gives them the advantage of doing things that are out of reach of others. In this way, those who have a lower status tend to seek help from those at a higher status by building Guanxi. Hence, Guanxi becomes the bridge connecting people with different social status, and helps shorten the power distance caused by people’s different status. The current research result indicates that within the Chinese context, which is ranked with high power distance, people make more efforts to building inter-personal relationships in order to shorten the gap of power distance. Whereas in the UK context which is ranked with relatively low power distance, there is less effort needed to build or maintain people’s inter-personal relationships. However, the connection between power distance and people’s inter-personal relationships has not been the main focus in previous research. Brockners et al (2001) used power distance as a key element to conduct four studies to investigate people’s reaction in relation to their status in decision making. Nevertheless, they did not relate power distance specifically to people’s relationships with each other.

### 10.2.2.2 Mianzi

The present research results reveal that the gaps of power distance cause employees’ pressure concerning their relationship and interaction with superiors, which brings obligation for employees at lower status to maintain Face for the latter. For instance, Expatriate 9.02 mentioned that junior academics were much more reserved about expressing their opinions when they were communicating with senior staff, and paid more attention to maintain Face for the latter as well. The influence of power distance on Mianzi does not only demonstrate among academic staff, but also among students. Chinese Expatriate 6.05 pointed out the different values that Chinese and UK students have regarding showing respect towards their
teachers (See 9.3.1 Relationships between students and academic staff). She noticed that due to the low power distance, UK students regarded teachers as equal status, and were comfortable to regard teachers as working partners without considering maintaining Face for the latter. On the other hand, Chinese students held more thoughts when it comes to interacting with teachers. Due to the status difference, the former pay more attention to respecting the latter, and maintaining Face for the latter. This result shows different power distances between students and academics in different cultural contexts. Chinese Students, who are at a lower status, are more concerned about maintaining Mianzi of academics, who are at the higher end. In other words, power distance difference gives those at a lower status a greater obligation to maintain Face for others at a higher one.

According to Leung (2001), relationships with superiors often were assessed as one’s social standing, that was an individual’s own status in front of others. In other words, such relationships represent one’s own Mianzi in his or her organisation. However, Leung (2001) did not discuss employees’ concern for maintaining Face especially due to the pressure caused by power distance. Instead, Leung (2001) pointed out the tendency to assess one’s status and base Mianzi on their interaction with those at higher status, might cause negative effects on individuals at lower status in terms of receiving feedback from their superiors, especially negative comments. Liao and Bond (2010) suggested that power distance influenced the dynamics of Mianzi, particularly in hierarchical cultures (Leung and Chan, 2003). This research finding provides empirical evidence to Leung’s (2001) claim about the significance of maintaining a good relationship with those at higher status, and that it outweighs that of focusing on one’s task in high power distance societies.

The current research results found that maintaining Mianzi was highly expected within Chinese society. Particularly, with such strong power distance, people are more pressured to maintain Mianzi due to their different status. Within such a large power-distance culture context, Chinese are more concerned about others’ Face. When it comes to the conflict between maintaining Face and Power distance, Chinese are more pressured by the power distance, so as to maintain superior’s Face and prevent the damage of relationships. Meanwhile, it also maintains harmonious working relationships, which is another key aspect of Chinese culture.
On the other hand, in the UK where power distance is low, people share more equal status and are able to voice their opinions if there is any conflict. They do not fear harming other people’s Face due to the status difference. Harmony is maintained on the basis of fair argument and discussion. Hence, power distance does not affect as much people’s Mianzi in the UK context as it does in the Chinese one.

This finding endorsed Oetzel et al (2001)’s quantitative research, which suggested power distance’s positive influence on people’s face concerns. Besides, the finding further supports Oetzel et al (2001)’s claim that the larger power distance a country has, the more concern individuals pay towards maintaining others’ Face, and the more likely individuals opt for compromising and preventing losing others’ Face. Based on a qualitative research approach, the current research strengthens the link between power distance and Mianzi.

10.2.2.3 Harmony

Although Harmony has been discussed a great deal in the current research, the responses about Harmony have been mainly focused on interaction between maintaining Harmony, Mianzi and relationships. In other words, participants of the current research did not directly specify the interaction between Harmony and hierarchy. However, the inter-influence between power distance and Harmony has been indicated in the section above, i.e. 10.2.2.2. Mianzi. The current research results show that power distance has an influence on the concept of Harmony, and that Harmony is closely related to the concept of Mianzi. When it comes to a high power distance context like China, Harmony, along with Mianzi, are emphasized more. This finding supported Bond et al’s (1985) research, which found that higher power distance and in-group identity made Hong Kong Chinese students much less critical to their verbal insulter, who was at higher status or an in-group member, compared to students in the United States. Again, Bond et al (1985) took a quantitative approach to collect and analyse data. The current research strengthens the link between power distance and Harmony from a qualitative perspective.
10.2.3 Long-term and Short-term orientation

Regarding Hofstede’s Long-term and Short-term orientation dimension, the current research findings raised a number of questions and issues about the validity of Hofstede’s bi-polar dimension design and concept.

10.2.3.1 Guanxi

The present research results found that Guanxi was built heavily on the strength of trust. The stronger trust grows in Guanxi, the closer people’s relationships are. Expatriate 2.01 in Case HK pointed out the crucial role of trust played in Guanxi (See 8.5.2 Trust). This finding indicates a close link between Guanxi and low Uncertainty Avoidance within the Chinese context. This is demonstrated by people’s tolerance of uncertainty regarding when favours will be returned throughout the development of Guanxi. Referring to Hofstede’s Long-term and Short-term orientation, trust is not listed as one of the key values in either of the dimensions, although trust is one of 40 other characters in the Chinese Value Survey from The Chinese Culture Connection (1987). Maybe that is why Hofstede did not identify the connection between the uncertainty avoidance dimension with the Long-term and Short-term dimension (Fang, 2003; Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede, 1993). With the qualitative data, the current research provides empirical evidence to explain the connection between Guanxi and Uncertainty Avoidance.

The current research results show that Guanxi lasts much longer and deeper compared to Western networks, meaning inter-personal connections and relationships. Expatriate 8.03 pointed out that Guanxi was a much deeper kind of relationship, which also explained why it took longer time to build, and lasted longer as well (See 8.5.4 Longer and deeper). This finding relates Guanxi to Hofstede’s long-term orientation characteristic, i.e. persistence. The current research results reveal that Guanxi is more stable than Western networks, and it happens in a more spontaneous opportunity. On the other hand, Western networks are mainly based on a more current need or demand. Hence they are more flexible and easily built. Lee and Dawes (2005) investigated the impact of Guanxi on buying firms’ long-term orientation and trust towards its supplier in the Chinese business market. They found that in the Chinese context, buying firms’ long-term orientation towards
its supplier is highly dependent on personal Guanxi between a buying firm’s personnel and its supplier’s sales manager. Although Lee and Dawes’ research does not directly link long-term orientation as a feature of Guanxi, their findings suggest Guanxi’s external impact on longer-term relationships for companies. The current research demonstrates the link between Guanxi and Long-term orientation. The analysis of Guanxi confirms that Chinese culture is associated with the values of persistence, and ordering relationships by status and observing this order (see 10.2.2 Power Distance and hierarchy).

Apart from that, the current research results show that Guanxi is dynamic and future oriented. For instance, Expatriate 8.01 pointed out that Guanxi was able to be developed, when given a good chance, and it would last a long time. The present research results show that Guanxi can be dynamic although it needs a precondition to happen, and the long-lasting character of Guanxi represents a future-oriented focus. As Chen and Chen (2004) pointed out, great efforts were needed to begin and maintain Guanxi before it was able to be used. Hofstede (1991) claimed that Long-term orientation referred to a positive, dynamic, and future-oriented culture. In this sense, the research findings confirm Hofstede’s claim of Chinese culture as being dynamic and future oriented, although the positive feature is not reported in this research.

The current research results reveal that Guanxi requires reciprocity. Interestingly, this is found not only in Guanxi within the Chinese context, but also people’s relationships in the UK. For instance, Indigenous 9.05 in Case UK (See 8.5.1.1 Reciprocity) emphasized the importance of being reciprocal, and pointed out that the rule was applied in the UK as well. However, she acknowledged that the extent of reciprocity in the UK was not as strong as that in the Chinese context. Moreover, the research findings demonstrate that such reciprocation in the Chinese context involves much higher expectation and even obligation. Expatriate 7.07 emphasized the attachment of obligation to Guanxi and claimed it made Guanxi much more difficult to build than networks. The current research findings verify that Chinese culture is strongly associated with the value of reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts, which is categorised as Short-term orientation by Hofstede. Jacobs, Belschak and Krug (2004) pointed out that Chinese reciprocity was based on a long-term time orientation, and it was opposite from the Western short-term basis.
The connection between Guanxi and reciprocity has been noticed by other researchers who have looked into Guanxi’s influence on Chinese business. When assessing Guanxi as sustained competitive advantage for doing business in China, Tsang (1998) pointed out Guanxi was a long-term relationship, and required reciprocation of gifts. The significance of reciprocation and long-term orientation of Guanxi was mentioned by Su, Sirgy & Littlefield (2003) when they investigated Guanxi’s orientation influence in Chinese enterprises. Unfortunately, neither Tsang (1998) nor Su, Sirgy & Littlefield (2003) had data to support this claim. The current research result affirms Tsang’s (1998) and Su, Sirgy & Littlefield’s (2003) claims with empirical evidence. Furthermore, the current research findings contradict Hofstede’s division of Long-term and Short-term orientations, and proclaim that Chinese culture is involved with values from both orientations of Hofstede’s fifth dimension. In other words, analysing Chinese culture from simply either of Hofstede’s Long-term or Short-term orientation is not sufficient to reflect the comprehensiveness of Chinese culture.

On the other hand, in terms of Western networks, the current research results find them to be dynamic and present-oriented. Indicated by Expatriate 7.02 (See 8.5.5 The flexibility of Guanxi), Western networks are built and formed with a more flexible approach compared to Guanxi. In other words, Western networks appear to be more easily changing than Guanxi. This demonstrates the dynamic character of networks. Western networks were reported to mainly reflect current issues. When issues are solved, networks ceases as well. Expatriate 5.01 pointed out that networks mainly dealt with work-related matters, and ended when work was completed. This finding indicates that Western networks are more present-oriented. After dealing with issues in the present, the network serves its purpose, and does not last as long as Guanxi, nor develop at the personal level. Hence, the analysis of Western networks illustrates a dynamic and present-oriented focus. Referring to Hofstede’s (1991) claim of Short-term orientation as negative, static, traditional, and past/present-oriented, the current research results do not match most of these features, except present-oriented. This comparison shows that Hofstede’s Short-term orientation contradicts the features of Western networks, and indicates that more attention are needed when using Hofstede’s Short-term orientation to look at Western culture as well.
10.2.3.2 Mianzi

According to the current research finding, both Chinese and Westerners share the value of ‘having a sense of shame’. As pointed out by Expatriate 8.12 in Case SH, Mianzi was a much more sensitive issue in the Chinese context than in the West. She found that the consequences of losing Mianzi actually were the same between Chinese and Westerners. According to her, Westerners would be as upset about losing Mianzi as Chinese. This shows that both Chinese and Westerners have a sense of shame. However, Hofstede’s (2001) finding only categorised the value of having a sense of shame in the Long-term orientation, but not the Short-term one. The current research finding demonstrates that the value of having a sense of shame can be the feature for Short-term oriented countries as well. Based on this finding, the current research suggests when national cultures, both sides of Long-term and Short-term orientations need to be considered. It verifies that Hofstede’s bi-polar cultural dimension approach may not be sufficient to discuss Western cultures.

In addition, the current research findings demonstrate that Chinese have a stronger drive towards ‘protecting your face’, and that Westerners do not concern as much about Mianzi as the Chinese. Reported by Expatriate 8.12, avoiding others losing Mianzi was highly expected in the Chinese context, which was not the case in the West. That means Chinese are much more protective in terms of Mianzi, and their response is more upfront than Westerners. Hence, the results show that as a long-term oriented culture as indicated in Hofstede’s finding, Chinese have a much stronger sense of ‘protecting your face’ compared to the Westerners. However, ‘protecting your face’ is categorised as one of the key values for Short-term oriented cultures, such as Westerners. This finding highlights another contradiction of Hofstede’s bi-polar design of Long-term and Short-term orientation dimension. Again, it further shows that Hofstede’s Long-term and Short-term orientation dimension does not justify either Western or Chinese culture properly.

The discussion of ‘having a sense of shame’ and ‘protecting your face’ was mentioned by Fang (2003). Using his indigenous knowledge of Chinese culture and philosophy, Fang (2003) scrutinised Hofstede’s fifth cultural dimension, and pointed out that ‘having a sense of shame’ and ‘protecting your face’ shared the same
Confucian moral base, i.e. face-caring or face-need. According to Fang (2003), these two values should not be treated as two separate or opposing values as claimed by Hofstede (2001). With empirical evidence, the current research results affirm Fang’s claim that these two values share the same Confucian moral base, which is closely related to the emotions and reaction towards Mianzi, and that they should not be treated as opposing values. Apart from that, the current research results further demonstrate that these two values have different meanings, with ‘having a sense of shame’ representing people’s intrinsic emotions towards Mianzi, and ‘protecting your face’ representing people’s extrinsic response towards the public. It reveals that Chinese and Westerners both share the value of ‘having a sense of shame’, but Chinese have a stronger extrinsic response with the value of ‘protecting your face’. Therefore, in terms of Mianzi, Hofstede’s fifth dimension does not give an appropriate culture explanation for either Chinese or Westerners.

10.2.3.3 Harmony

From the current research results, Harmony is found to be closely related to both Guanxi and Mianzi, and reflects the value of ‘persistence’ in Hofstede’s Long-term orientation. According to the current research data, Harmony acts as the catalyst that balances people’s relationships in Chinese society. As indicated in the previous Individualism vs Collectivism section, Harmony is one of the key elements when it comes to maintaining Guanxi and Mianzi (10.2.1.3. Harmony). For instance, Expatriate 2.02 pointed out that her Chinese colleagues were more comfortable with a harmonious façade, even though there were a lot of hidden conflicts (See 9.5.3 Surface Harmony). This implies that even when people have trouble dealing with their relationships, Harmony, as the centre of the social norms, holds people together. Hence, it forms what seems, at least, a harmonious society that everyone can keep working with each other, and encourages people to continue working or interacting with others. With the result of China having such a strong persistence in maintaining Harmony, the current research affirms Hofstede’s claim of the Chinese having a strong Long-term orientation.

The current research results demonstrate the link between Harmony and the value of ‘ordering relationships by status and observing this order’. For instance, Indigenous 7.10 in Case NB reported that due to the status difference with her
superior, she had to avoid losing the latter’s Face, and maintain a harmonious relationship (See 9.3.2 Relationships among academic staff). Particularly, she pointed out that this kind of manner was expected from the superior as well. This finding emphasizes Harmony’s impact on how people deal with their relationships by status and observing the order, and verifies with qualitative data that China having a strong Long-term orientation. Nevertheless, the value of ‘ordering relationships by status and observing this order’ is related to power distance, regarding people’s tolerance towards hierarchy. The discussion of Power Distance and Harmony has been elaborated in the previous Power Distance and hierarchy section (10.2.2 Power Distance and hierarchy).

Except the value of ‘thrift’, the current research results identify Harmony’s influence in other values of Long-term and Short-term orientations, including ‘having a sense of shame’, ‘protecting your face’, ‘personal steadiness and stability’, ‘respect for tradition’, and ‘reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts’. These values cover both Long-term and Short-term orientations. As discussed in the previous Mianzi section (10.2.3.2 Mianzi), the values of ‘having a sense of shame’ and ‘protecting your face’ mainly represent individuals’ initiatives to protect his or her own Face, this effort is also based on the mutual influence of individual-group Harmony, which is to avoid losing others’ Face as a pre-condition to protect one’s own Face. For instance, Chinese expatriates in the UK revealed their unwillingness to express opinions if it comes with the cost of causing others to lose Face, which will lead to breaking the harmonious relationships with others (See 9.5.2 Willingness to express and embarrass). Particularly, the emphasis on self-awareness and fulfilling the duty to maintain Harmony for the group among Chinese, is demonstrated in their attitude toward confrontation. Expatriate 2.02 noticed that Chinese would rather maintain the Harmony of relationships, instead of confronting others even if they had the issue. The current research results confirm that the significance of maintaining Harmony outweighed the necessity of confronting in Chinese society (See 9.5.1.3 The attitude toward confrontation). As Chen (2002) suggested, people needed to communicate in a way that helped to maintain the relational Harmony and to avoid conflict, so that harmonious interpersonal relationships could be achieved. Therefore, Harmony does not only balance the values between individual’s ‘having a sense of shame’ and ‘protecting your face’, but also the Face of both individuals and groups. In this sense, it exists in Hofstede’s both Long-term and Short-term orientations. Additionally, Harmony is also embedded in people’s
efforts in maintaining ‘reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts’. It emphasizes individual’s image and relationships with others in the society, which requires individuals to commit to the social norm, and maintain the smooth and harmonious relationships of the society. This finding reflects that the Chinese concept of Harmony can be justified in both sides of Hofstede’s fifth dimension, instead of within the Long-term orientation only as reported by Hofstede. Again, the current research findings provide empirical evidence and demonstrate the applicability of Hofstede’s Long-term and Short-term orientation dimension on explaining Chinese culture.

To sum up, comparing Chinese concepts of Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony to Hofstede’s Long-term and Short-term orientations, the present research results show that although these three Chinese cultural concepts have been integrated into Hofstede’s fifth cultural dimension, they are not divided or separated as neatly as Hofstede’s structure. Based on their literature review, Wong, Shaw and Ng (2010) claimed that collectivism, Harmony, respect for age and seniority, relationships (Guanxi) and face were the five most important values in Chinese culture. Among these, three main Chinese concepts, i.e. Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony, have been found to be applied and related to the other two. According to the current research results, each Chinese concept is identified in both Long-term and Short-term orientations. That is to say, Hofstede’s fifth cultural dimension does not provide a sufficiently broad framework to present Chinese culture concepts. Besides, the current research results show that Long-term orientation is not sufficient to represent Chinese culture alone. Neither is Short-term orientation for Western culture. Some of the values can be identified in both orientations. In other words, the original interpretation of Hofstede’s fifth cultural dimension and his bipolar orientation design do not offer a convincing explanation for the complex Chinese culture, or Western culture, both of which needs more comprehensive than Hofstede’s work can offer.
10.3 How do the Chinese concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony interact with each other?

The current research results show that the three Chinese cultural concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony are closely related between each other. Firstly, the current research data show that Guanxi is closely related to Mianzi. People’s strong concern about Mianzi is bound to a connection with Guanxi. As Expatriate 7.07 found, Chinese students stressed the pressure and opinions from their parents regarding their academic achievement (See 9.2.2 The significance of others). The current research data reveal that people emphasize the value of the individual’s image and reputation within the group. In other words, one’s Mianzi is justified by what others say and think within the group. One’s decisions about how to interact and maintain Guanxi with others are highly affected by how the person’s Mianzi is reflected within that group. In this way, one’s sense of Mianzi, to a large extent, influences his or her Guanxi with others. Hence, this individualistic sense of Guanxi is explained by the collectivistic aspect of Mianzi. That is to say Guanxi and Mianzi are closely related, and reinforce each other.

The current research results indicate that the influence of individual emotions and feelings involved in Guanxi are taken care of in Chinese context when dealing with Mianzi. When it comes to the concept of Mianzi, the current research data demonstrate that in Chinese society, it is crucial to show concern for other’s Mianzi, which is regarded as a norm in the Chinese context, and to avoid offending and making others uncomfortable with negative comments. Hence, the occasions of bringing up negative comments and criticism have to be given careful consideration. For instance, Expatriate 8.01 reported that Chinese colleagues are more comfortable to express their real, mostly negative comments in private conversations (See 9.2.1 Private and personal). Accordingly, this individualistic aspect of Guanxi is balanced by collectivistic concern from the Mianzi perspective, meaning concerning for others’ Mianzi. Moreover, the individualistic side of Mianzi indicates Mianzi is closely related to Guanxi (10.2.1.2 Mianzi). Buckley, Clegg and Tan (2006) claimed that Mianzi and Guanxi were both crucial cultural awareness in knowledge transfer to China, and that Mianzi was intrinsic to interpersonal relationship development, which served as a shortcut for people to enhance their relationships. This current research finding further develops Buckley, Clegg and
Tan (2006)'s claim, and analyses the connection between Guanxi and Mianzi into more detail.

Furthermore, the current findings show that Harmony is closely integrated with the concept of Mianzi, and involved in Guanxi. In order to protect others’ Mianzi, Harmony needs to be maintained while dealing with conflict, confrontation, and expressing one’s opinions and avoiding embarrassing others, and maintaining surface Harmony as well. In terms of Harmony’s connection with Guanxi, Expatriate 7.14 pointed out that close friends would be more willing to make comment or criticism, even if it will bring damage to Mianzi or Harmony (See 9.5.1.3 The attitude toward confrontation), although such confrontation is still limited to private occasions. This finding indicates that the closer people’s Guanxi is, the more likely confrontation will take place, and consequently the less concern for maintaining Harmony. Whereas when Guanxi is distant, people would be more careful about confronting, and the more important Harmony will be. This finding confirms Jia (2008)’s claim about the relationships between Harmony and Guanxi. According to Jia (2008), interpersonal Harmony depends on Guanxi, which is mainly operated by Ren (in Chinese Mandarin, ‘仁’, meaning humanity and kind-heartedness) and benevolence, instead of individual interests. Jia (2008) claimed that such interpersonal Harmony was based on a conflict-free and mutual emotionally satisfied environment.

The current research findings verify that Harmony, Guanxi and Mianzi are inter-related. Reviewing several theories of Harmony, Leung, Koch and Lu (2002) pointed out the inter-relation of Harmony with the concept of Face and Guanxi respectively. However, the discussion of the inter-influence between these three concepts was not presented (Leung, Koch and Lu, 2002). The current research results indicate the emphasis of all three concepts, and balanced significance of each within the Chinese context. Each of the concepts inter-relates to one another.

Furthermore, with a thorough analysis and discussion of the findings, the current research results indicate that although Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony are inter-related, the dynamics are not always on the same flow. Instead, the current research results signify that the strength of Guanxi works in the opposite way to
Mianzi and Harmony, i.e. the stronger Guanxi is, the less important Mianzi and Harmony would be. Vice versa, the more distant Guanxi is, the more important Mianzi and Harmony. In other words, the strength of Guanxi contradicts with the flow of Mianzi and Harmony. Hence, with the integration of Hofstede’s Individualism and Collectivism, the inter-relationships of Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony is displayed as Figure 10.2 Individualism/Collectivism and Guanxi, Mianzi & Harmony:

![Diagram showing the interaction of Guanxi, Mianzi, and Harmony with Individualism and Collectivism]

**Figure 10.2 Individualism/Collectivism and Guanxi, Mianzi & Harmony**

The interaction of these three Chinese concepts (Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony) is different when it comes to the Individualism/Collectivism dimension. As shown in Figure 10.2 above, Guanxi appears to flow in the same direction as Collectivism. The stronger Collectivism is, the stronger and tighter Guanxi becomes. It indicates an increasing strength of people’s relationships and trust. Hence, the demand for Mianzi and Harmony is lowered. On the other hand where Individualism becomes stronger, the strength of people’s Guanxi weakens. Quite oppositely, Mianzi and Harmony grows in the same direction as Individualism. That is when Individualism grows stronger and takes the dominant control, people are getting more individualistic and concerned more about their own interest and benefits. As a result, the request for fulfilling Mianzi and maintaining Harmony becomes more important, in order to satisfy the individual’s urge to keep his or her image and reputation in front of others. Hence, the dynamics between Guanxi, and Mianzi and Harmony complement each other, and balance people’s stance of Individualism and Collectivism.
The difference in this analysis from Hofstede’s Individualism/Collectivism dimensions is that even within the strong collectivistic side of Guanxi, these dynamics do not deny the existence of individualistic side of Guanxi. Instead, it accommodates the individualistic part of Guanxi, and implies the potential change of dynamics when influenced by other factors, such as timing, context and people involved. Vice versa, this analysis does not offer just the individualistic side of Mianzi and Harmony, but also enhances their collectivistic aspects. This combination of both individualistic and collectivistic characteristics offers a more complex and clearer explanation of the Chinese culture context.

10.4 How do these understandings of cultural differences influence the academic working environment?

This section is to discuss the influence of these cultural differences and understandings in academic working environment. It will distinguish different cultural understanding and sensitivity between Chinese and Western academics, and expatriates and indigenous academics. Then the 4-case research design and the outcomes of the research is to be examined as well.

10.4.1 Academics

Overall, the participants can be categorised into two groups, expatriates (who were working overseas) and indigenous (who were working in their home country). Expatriates are the academics who work in the host country, including both Western academics working in China and Chinese ones working in the UK. On the other hand, indigenous are those who work in their home country, including both Westerners working in the UK and Chinese working in the Chinese context. The current research results reveal that there are some similarities and differences between the groups, mainly demonstrated in the contrast between Chinese and Westerners, and expatriates and indigenous.
10.4.1.1 Chinese and Westerners

The current research findings demonstrate that Western and Chinese academics have different levels of understanding about Chinese culture concepts. The differences between these two groups' expression and explanation of the concepts do not necessarily correspond with their culture backgrounds. According to each group's culture background, Chinese academics are expected to be more familiar with the concepts, and have better understanding, compared to Western ones. However, based on the current research results, Chinese academics do not offer as detailed and in-depth understanding about Guanxi as their Western counterparts, although the former are found to be more aware of the negative influence of Guanxi. On the other hand, in terms of Mianzi, Western academics are found to be aware of the existence of Mianzi within the Chinese context. Nevertheless, Westerners appear to be less sensitive about the significance of Mianzi while interacting with Chinese colleagues.

Firstly, Westerners expressed more understanding about the Chinese concept of Guanxi than their Chinese colleagues. For example, while comparing Guanxi to the old boys’ network, Western Expatriate 7.04 identified more differences between Guanxi and the Western “networking” concept. She claimed that Guanxi was more accessible in the Chinese context, as people were able to buy Guanxi by giving gifts. Whereas in contrast, Chinese indigenous 8.05 only described these two terms in a general way, as he claimed they were more or less similar anyway (See 8.2.2 Individualistic aspect of Guanxi). Moreover, the current research results imply that Western academics’ information and understanding about the Chinese concept of Guanxi are more detailed than Chinese. For example, while looking at the relationships between Guanxi and obtaining information, Indigenous 2.09 simply acknowledged the benefit of Guanxi as the channel of receiving information. However, Expatriate 8.01 explained that Guanxi was not only a channel for information, but also included other affiliations while using Guanxi, such as people taking risk for others, and uncertainty about returned favours (See 8.4 Guanxi and Uncertainty Avoidance). The latter offered much more in depth details about the meaning of Guanxi. Westerners noticed the minute progress of Guanxi developing when it comes to the flexibility aspect of Guanxi. Nevertheless, this aspect was not mentioned by any Chinese indigenous or expatriate (See 8.5.5 The flexibility of Guanxi). Again, this evidence shows that Westerners are much more sensitive.
towards the presence of Guanxi, and have more insights when discussing Guanxi. Apart from that, when it comes to the individualistic aspect of Guanxi, there are more Westerners explaining their views than Chinese, even though they share a similar amount of working experience and culture exposure in both Chinese and Western contexts (See 8.2.2.3 Avoiding being negative in Guanxi). This in-depth understanding of Guanxi mostly came from Western expatriates in the Chinese context.

The reason why Westerners provided a more detailed explanation regarding Guanxi is due to the substantial cultural differences when living and working in a foreign environment. Such alert awareness of the culture differences stems from expatriates’ personal experience in the Chinese context, including frustration, confusion, adaptation and understanding. For example, Expatriate 2.01 talked about his experience of dealing with Guanxi in Hong Kong. By comparing to the Western context, he found that once trust was broken in the Chinese context, it was hard to fix the relationships. This finding of Westerners being more aware of cultural differences demonstrates that Westerners are more sensitive towards the concept of Guanxi in Chinese context.

On the other hand, when it comes to the negative impact of Guanxi, indigenous Chinese academics demonstrate more emphasis than the others. For instance, Indigenous 2.09 in Case HK pointed out that people gain promotion at work through Guanxi (See 8.6.5.3 Guanxi and unfair advantage). The current research findings indicate that although Chinese academics are less sensitive towards explaining Guanxi, they are more aware of Guanxi’s negative influence. Referring to the previous section where it was noted that Chinese indigenous may seem more unconscious about Guanxi’s impact, this finding further emphasizes that the negative impact of Guanxi is more obvious for indigenous Chinese.

Similarly, the current research results demonstrate that Western academics are aware of the fact that Chinese academics pay more attention to Mianzi, and emphasize more of Mianzi’s influence (See 9.2.2.2 Concern for others’ Mianzi). However, unlike the discussion of Guanxi, Chinese academics demonstrate stronger understanding and emphasis than Westerners in terms of Mianzi. For
instance, Indigenous 2.05 noticed that Western academics were not as sensitive towards protecting Mianzi of their own, nor did they towards Chinese colleagues (See 9.2.1 Private and personal). He further explained that he understood Westerners’ reaction was due to their cultural background. Besides, Chinese academics express their understanding about Westerners focusing on matters and not taking things personally (See 9.5.2 Willingness to express and embarrass). Regarding these, the current research results indicate that Chinese academics are more sensitive in terms of Mianzi, and understanding about Westerners’ indifference regarding Mianzi.

The above research findings show that although Chinese academics are more familiar with their own cultural concepts, it does not mean that they can offer a better understanding and explanation about Chinese concepts than Westerners. Whereas Westerner expatriates, who experience both Chinese and Western cultural environments, are more aware of the differences and able to describe and explain in greater detail. Kaye and Taylor (1997) conducted research on expatriate hotel managers’ culture shock in China, and found that non-Asian expatriates had greater intercultural sensitivity than Asians than the indigenous working in the Chinese context, due to working in an unfamiliar environment. The current research results partly support Kaye and Taylor’s (1997) study in an academic working environment, and show that Western expatriate academics have greater intercultural sensitivity than Chinese indigenous ones.

However, Kaye and Taylor’s (1997) study over-generalised expatriates' cultural sensitivity. According to the current research results, Western expatriates are more sensitive than their Chinese counterparts in terms of Guanxi, but not in the discussion of Mianzi. It appears that Chinese academics are more sensitive towards certain aspects of Chinese concepts, including the negative influence of Guanxi, and the understanding of Mianzi. In other words, Westerners have greater cultural sensitivity towards certain Chinese concepts, instead of all of them. Schein (1992) pointed out that culture lay within individuals’ most fundamental assumptions, beliefs, norms and values, which was reflected in both conscious and unconscious ways. Additionally looking into culture’s influence on organisations, Schein (1996) claimed that as the most powerful and stable forces in organisations, culture could be taken-for-granted, as shared and tacit ways of observing, thinking
and reacting. Applying Schein’s theories to the current research, it explains why Chinese academics do not make as much effort regarding Guanxi. This is because living and working in such a familiar cultural environment, the Guanxi concept can be easily taken for granted among Chinese, although the negative influence of Guanxi seems to be more obvious, and argued by more Chinese than Westerners. This might reflect on Chinese concern about the negative influence of Guanxi.

Hence, the current research regarding expatriates’ cultural sensitivity towards Chinese concepts needs close scrutiny. In addition, the current research results show that Chinese academics from Mainland place stronger emphasis on Mianzi than the ones from Hong Kong. This reflects Hong Kong’s more international cultural influence which helps academics having more positive attitudes towards expressing their opinions (See 9.5.2 Willingness to express and embarrass). Hong Kong’s internationalisation started in the 19th century, when Hong Kong became a colony and an oriental trading base for the British empire (Bond and King, 1985). Hong Kong’s history included Japanese occupation in the 1940’s, and it was finally returned to China in 1997 (Findlay et al, 1996), based on the condition that the social and economic system of Hong Kong would be retained for at least 50 years (Bond and King, 1985). According to them (Bond and King, 1985), indigenous Chinese in Hong Kong had experienced a full array of foreign reality during this colonised period. Moreover, Bond and King (1985) pointed out English has been the instruction language in better schools; most textbooks which had been imported were written by Westerners, and top posts used to be dominated by the British. Conducting a study of skilled expatriates in Hong Kong, Findlay et al (1996) noticed that increasing employment opportunities for skilled immigrants in Hong Kong caused growth in the expatriate community. Referring to Hong Kong’s higher education institutions, academics with Western teaching and learning backgrounds are in high demand. It has been a routine policy to have certain number of Western expatriate academics working in Hong Kong universities, so as to support and assist improving each department’s teaching and research quality and standard. Therefore, academics in Hong Kong universities are much more used to working within an international environment, and sharing the community with Westerners. Whereas in terms of Mainland China, the internationalisation of higher education has developed progressively since 1978, with the implementation of ‘open door’ policy in China. Between 1978 and 1992, the Chinese government merely dealt with improving its own human resources’ quality by dispatching scholars studying
abroad, inviting foreign scholars and experts to China, and enhancing using English in teaching and learning within higher education (Huang, 2003). From 1992, Chinese government started to pay more attention to attracting Chinese scholars back to China, and foreign students coming to study in China, and developing transnational education and internationalisation of higher education (Huang, 2003). In other words, the number of Western academics working in Chinese higher education would be much less than the ones working in Hong Kong. Apart from that, the living environment in Mainland China still maintained a strong Chinese style, unlike a much more mixed international style in Hong Kong.

10.4.1.2 Expatriates and Indigenous

Apart from the differences between Chinese and Western academics, the current research findings are reported between expatriates and indigenous. According to the present research results, expatriate academics (including both Westerners working in the Chinese context and Chinese working in the UK) appear to offer more in-depth description and understanding about Chinese culture than their indigenous counterparts. For instance, expatriates emphasized and explained more differences when relating reciprocity and obligation to Guanxi (See 8.5.1.2 Expectation and obligation). This included both Western expatriates working in the Chinese context and Chinese ones working in the UK. This research result indicates that expatriates have working and living experiences in both Chinese and UK contexts, meaning they have more culture exposure to two different environments. Such experiences give them opportunity to notice and be aware of the differences between two cultures. Hence, it enables them to express and explain their understanding in greater detail. Whereas indigenous. They live and work in their home environment, and are more likely to have unconscious assumptions about their cultural values. As Schein (1992) suggested, the core of culture values were individuals’ unconscious and taken-for-granted beliefs in their daily life. Particularly, for Chinese indigenous, who experience such Chinese culture in their daily life, the sensitivity to notice and pick up culture differences is not as strong as expatriates. This finding demonstrates that expatriates have advantages in experiencing both cultural contexts. Therefore, they have more amplified understanding about Chinese concepts.
10.4.2 Academic work context

The current research findings indicate that Guanxi has a big impact in the academic working context in China. Reported by both Western and Chinese academics, Guanxi is a key element to assist academics developing their career path and gaining access to research funding and publication. Particularly, participants claimed that Guanxi was important to increase contacts, so as to gain access to companies and governments to collect research data. For example, Expatriate 6.03 pointed out academics needed Guanxi by using ‘Goutong’, 沟通, (in Mandarin, meaning communication) with others in the process of publishing papers in China (See 8.6.1.2 Guanxi’s influence on research funding and publication). The current research results indicate that academics are more dependent on Guanxi while doing research in Chinese contexts. Whereas in terms of Case UK, which is in the UK context, management style and working environment are open and transparent. Academics do not need to depend on Guanxi in order to develop their connections or research projects.

Apart from Guanxi’s influence on academics, the current research results show that Guanxi also influences students’ interaction with academics. However, this was only found in Case HK and NB, both which are located within the Chinese context. For example, Indigenous 2.05 in Case HK found that Chinese students made more efforts to build good relationships with academics, especially Mainland Chinese students (See 8.6.3 Guanxi’s influence on students). This finding demonstrates that Guanxi has an impact on how Chinese students deal with their relationships with academics. However, this issue was not reported in Case SH or Case UK. According to the present research results, both expatriates and indigenous academics working in Case SH have sufficient international culture exposure (See 8.6.4 The significance of Guanxi), and they operate in a working environment in the Western style, which is open and transparent. Hence, such a Western system appears to have influence on students’ behaviour in Case SH. Apart from that, the present research results demonstrate that Mianzi’s influence is stronger on Chinese students, who have more respect for academics. However, this influence is not found within British students in Case UK.
10.4.3 Case study research design

Apart from the focus on culture’s influence on academics, the current research also looks at its influence on the academic working environment, i.e. in different academic contexts. The current research is based on 4 cases. Each case is located in a different organisational design from the others. The 4 cases included Case UK a British university; Case SH a collaborated university; Case NB a colonial university, and Case HK the Chinese university. Based on these 4 different organisations, the current research aimed to investigate the link between the culture and organisational structure systems. Particularly, as shown in Figure 10.3 Case study design, the 4 cases are located in 3 different contexts, ranging from the British context, the internationalised Hong Kong Chinese context, to the Mainland Chinese context. There was a great interest to see the influence of national culture upon academics working in each case. However, the current research results do not demonstrate the link between national culture context and academics’ understanding. Instead, through each individual case analysis, the current research results suggest significant divergence between organisational context and national cultural context. It also indicates an interaction between organisational and national context. As shown in Figure 10.3, Case UK appears to be the most distinct in terms of the combination of both organisational and national contexts, whereas the influences on the other cases may be more complex.

Figure 10.3 Case study design

10.4.3.1 Case UK

The present research finds that the difference between individualistic and collectivistic is more obvious in Case UK than others. The current research results show that only academics working in Case UK, including both indigenous Westerners and expatriate Chinese, claimed the difference of Westerners being individualistic and Chinese collectivistic. This claim was not reported in the other 3
cases which were based more in the Chinese context (See 8.2.2.2 Compared to Western networks). It enhances the overall claim that the UK has a more individualistic environment than the Chinese one.

Apart from that, both Western and Chinese academics working in Case UK compared Guanxi to Western networks. They claimed that although Western networks exist within the British context, there was little evidence of Guanxi, which according to the participants involved a much more personal level of relationships. For example, Indigenous 6.08 in Case UK noticed that people were more distant in Networks, but much closer in Guanxi. Mainly, this is because the UK context provides an open and transparent working environment.

10.4.3.2 Case NB

With a colonial management style, Case NB was found to have a strong British higher education policy and management system. The current research findings show that under such strong British style management, Guanxi was not strong within the organisation. For example, expatriates in Case NB reported that Guanxi was not important in Case NB, due to a more open and transparent working environment (See 8.6.2 Guanxi’s influence in the academic context). On the other hand, all academics in Case NB seemed to be indifferent towards the concept of Mianzi. This is probably because of the relatively small number of Chinese academics working in Case NB, compared to the Western ones. In Case NB, there were only 3 Chinese indigenous, 2 Chinese origins (1 Chinese Canadian and 1 Chinese Malaysian), and 10 other Westerners. The Chinese origins and Westerners grew up and were educated in the Western or international context. Hence their awareness towards Mianzi was not as sensitive as the Chinese indigenous. Moreover, the British style management offered a clear structured organisation and communication channel. The academics do not need to depend on the concept of Guanxi and Mianzi to smooth working relationships with each other. It shows that Chinese cultural concepts do not have a significant impact in the colonial management style context. In other words, the working context overrides national culture, and that Chinese culture does not have sufficient impact if the organisational system is sufficiently different to indigenous Chinese systems.
10.4.3.3 Case SH

Case SH is a collaborative case study design. The present research findings demonstrate that there is a high staff turnover in Case SH. This is because operating based on the Western education style, Case SH recruits both Chinese and Western academics who have experienced Western higher education systems. Among them, Chinese academics have all received Western academic degrees and worked in the West, such as the US, the UK. Hence, Chinese academics can easily adapt into the Western system when they work in Case SH. Meanwhile, as indigenous working in their home country, Chinese academics are more flexible to tune into the Chinese culture environment when they are back in their homeland. Additionally, this also explains why Chinese academics did not report or express their opinions regarding Mianzi (See 9.2.1 Private and personal). This is because they are more tuned into the Western working style, without having to apply any Chinese concepts.

On the other hand, although it is easier for Western expatriates to adapt to the Western style of higher education system in Case SH, it does not mean that expatriates are exempted from problems in a different culture environment. Research findings showed that problems involved in expatriates’ settling, such as cultural shock, cultural adaptation, interaction between academics and students, living style in China, family members’ work and school problems in China, caused relatively higher staff turnover in Case SH (See 8.5.5 The flexibility of Guanxi). Black (1988) conducted a study of American expatriate managers’ work role transition in Japan, and found that poor culture adjustment to the foreign environment caused over 16-40% expatriate managers to leave their jobs earlier than expected. The current research findings confirm the significance of expatriates’ cultural adjustment in the new environment, including both living and working environment. Whereas this situation did not seem to be reported in the other two cases, i.e. Case NB and Case HK, both of which were also located in the Chinese context. Through the research, it found that the colonial style of Case NB had arranged various cultural training sessions for their expatriate academics. The activities included cultural lessons, such as learning Chinese calligraphy and Chinese mandarin. The purpose of doing this was to help expatriate academics develop a better understanding about Chinese culture. Apart from that, Case NB arranged weekly shopping trips and sometimes outdoor activities for academics.
For example, academics in Case NB had better access to Western groceries by going to Metro supermarkets in the city on a university shuttle bus. In this way, it helped academics in Case NB settle down and adjust to the local living environment. Although Hong Kong is regarded as having a strong Chinese culture and has a majority Chinese population, Hong Kong has developed a good international atmosphere due to its long term colonised history by the U.K. In terms of Case HK, it is much easier for expatriates to adapt their working and living life in Hong Kong.

10.4.3.4 Case HK

With deeply rooted Chinese culture, Case HK did not seem to report much influence from Guanxi. Nevertheless, in terms of Mianzi, the current research results show that Chinese academics within Case HK have more tolerance and understanding of Mianzi (Mianzi chapter, p.5). They were more understanding about Western colleagues’ less sensitive reaction when dealing with Mianzi. As Bond and King (1985) point out, the Chinese in Hong Kong have been coping with how to compromise their own Chinese culture integrity along with Westernised economic development, long since Hong Kong’s colonisation in 1841. In other words, indigenous Chinese in Hong Kong are more used to live and work in a mixed Chinese-Western culture context.

Although the importance of Guanxi in Case HK was acknowledged by mostly Western academics, the actual impact of Guanxi in Case HK was reported to be stronger than that in Western countries, but not as significant as that in Mainland China (See 8.6.4 The significance of Guanxi). According to the present research, the effect of Guanxi in Case HK appeared to be limited by a rather balanced international and Chinese context in Hong Kong. According to the participants, Guanxi did not play an important role within the academic working environment. Instead, it was more applied to building personal relationships between academic staff. In other words, Guanxi was not completely wiped out in Case HK. It operated on a moderate level. This was partly due to the benefit of transparent Western management having been operated within much internationalised universities in Hong Kong, and partly because of the deeply rooted Chinese culture.
10.4.3.5 Summary

The 4-case design was set up to investigate how Chinese culture concepts are understood and influence the academic working environment, while having the potential to differentiate between differing organisational contexts. The present research results and findings show that understanding about Chinese culture concepts and their influence are not completely based on the national culture context. Rather, the organisational context plays an important role on employees’ culture understanding. That is the national context does not necessarily match with the organisational context when it comes to academics’ culture understanding and influence. The internal contexts and structures of each specific organisation need to be taken into consideration as well. For instance, the concept of maintaining Harmony and avoiding conflict appeared to be much more emphasized in Case SH and HK, but not in Case NB and UK (See 9.5.1.2 Avoiding Confrontation). This result demonstrates that although Case SH, HK and NB are located in the Chinese cultural context, maintaining Harmony is not given the same level of cultural emphasis. Harmony is highly valued within Chinese cultural contexts. However, with a strong British managing style and working environment, plus the majority of academics are Westerners, Case NB does not report a significant emphasis on Harmony in the work place. Whereas located in Mainland China, and operated on a Western style of management, Case SH has more balanced academic staff, half of whom are Chinese and the other Westerners. The value of Harmony is claimed to be important in Case SH. Comparing domestic to expatriate jobs, Shin, Morgeson and Campion (2007) claimed that worker requirement was higher in expatriate jobs, and expatriates adjusted their behaviour to the specific culture context. However, they did not identify the differences between expatriates’ working and living environment. Looking at the work of management academics from an English language perspective, Tietze (2008) found that the continued and increasing significance of the English language was caused by the internationalisation of the higher education sector and large scale institutional change, which had influence on weakening the influence of local and national traditions. Although Tietze (2008) focused on the use of the English language, her research recognised the impact of such institutional change on that of local and national traditions. She (Tietze, 2008) suggested that academics should bring their own knowledge, cultures and practices while collaborating with others toward knowledge creation, which could have potential tensions and paradoxes. According to the current research results, Western expatriates do not need to adjust their behaviour as much in a familiar
working environment, even though it is in a Chinese culture context. Notwithstanding, this finding does not contradict the fact that expatriates need to make some efforts in adjusting to the living environment.

The present research finds there are much more differences among academics’ understanding of Chinese concepts, and how they are interpreted. These differences mainly lie in groups between Chinese and Westerners, and expatriates and indigenous, rather based on different cases, although each case reveals some distinguished issues of its own.

10.5 Summary

The above discussion has examined the current research results and findings in great depth. By comparing its results to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, the current research analysed three main Chinese cultural concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony. It developed a much more comprehensive way of interpreting Chinese concepts. It answers the current research question regarding how Western cultural dimensions and Chinese cultural concepts of Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony interpret each other. The current research results demonstrate the influence of these culture concepts on different academic working contexts in China and the UK. Furthermore, it distinguishes degrees of cultural sensitivity between indigenous and expatriate academics.

Firstly, the current research finds that the three main Chinese concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony are closely interwoven with three of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, Individualism/Collectivism, Power distance, and Long-term/Short-term orientation. Based on Chinese Yin-Yang, the current research results show that Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony interplay Individualism/Collectivism within the Chinese context. It reveals that Hofstede’s bipolar Individualism/Collectivism is not sufficient to explain the Chinese culture context. Individualism or Collectivism cannot be used separately to look at Chinese culture, as Hofstede concluded in his cultural research. Instead, applying the more dynamic and comprehensive Yin-Yang way of thinking, the current research finds that the strength of Guanxi grows stronger along with that of Collectivism. Meanwhile, such strength of Guanxi is
balanced by that of Mianzi and Harmony, which grow stronger with that of Individualism. Hence, Guanxi, Mianzi, and Harmony are integrated with Individualism/Collectivism, and they exist and interact simultaneously within the Chinese context.

Relating to power distance and hierarchy, the current research finds that Guanxi, Mianzi, and Harmony are closely related to power distance and hierarchy. Each of the concepts is under the influence of power distance, which decides and moderates the distance of Guanxi, the intensity of Mianzi, and the necessity of Harmony. In other words, Guanxi, Mianzi, and Harmony reflect the significance of power distance and hierarchy within the Chinese context.

Whereas comparing Long-term/Short-term orientation to Guanxi, Mianzi, and Harmony, the current research demonstrates that each of these Chinese concepts can be identified in both orientations. Besides, it shows that Hofstede’s Long-term and Short term are not completely opposite from each other. Instead, some of the values overlap on both sides. As a result, the current research finds that Chinese culture is not simply interpreted from Long-term orientation alone. It requires values from the Short-term orientation as well. Again, this finding reflects a similar framework of interpreting Chinese culture using Hofstede’s culture dimension of Individualism/Collectivism. It confirms the idea that Chinese culture cannot be interpreted or investigated from one side of the dimension only. It needs to have a more balanced view to explain its complex meaning.

The present research results reveal that these three Chinese concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi, and Harmony, are closely interwoven with both ends of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. This finding contradicts Hofstede’s bi-polar cultural dimension design. It indicates that more in-depth scrutiny is needed when applying Western cultural theories and dimensions to conduct research in the Chinese context.

Another finding of the current research is that Western academics have more understanding about Chinese culture, even though Chinese academics were expected to be more familiar with it. The present finding confirms Schein’s (1985)
claim that culture is in both conscious and unconscious. Although Guanxi was significant within the Chinese context, Chinese academics did not offer as much comprehensive explanation or comment as their Western colleagues. Whereas, Mianzi, on the other hand, was reported to be much more noticed and emphasised among Chinese academics, compared to the Westerners. Moreover, the current research reported a substantial difference between expatriate and indigenous academics, no matter whether Chinese or Westerners. It found that expatriate academics have much stronger cultural sensitivity than indigenous ones, due to their living and working in a foreign environment.

A third finding of the current research is that the results demonstrate that the organisational cultural context has more influence on academic staff’s working environment than that of national culture. The current research examined 4 different case study settings, ranging from the British management style, colonial style, collaborated style, to Chinese management style. Its results reveal that if the organisational context is accommodating enough for the academic staff, the latter do not necessarily need as much culture understanding and influence to fit into the national culture context. In other words, the impact of the national cultural context is limited by the organisational cultural context. Within certain organisational managing styles and cultures, the national cultural context does not necessarily play an important role in terms of employees’ cultural understanding and working relationships.
Chapter 11  Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

The current research has analysed its interview data in great depth, and presented its answers to three questions. According to the results, the current research has made both empirical and knowledge contributions. At the same time, the conceptual and methodological limitations of the current research are to be discussed. Finally, the chapter will conclude with practical implications and recommendations for future research.

11.2 Contribution

11.2.1 Empirical contribution

One of the empirical contributions of the current research is that the analysis of data was carried out at an individual level. The participants were asked about their own understanding of culture differences and individual perception regarding the group culture and working relationships among each other. With a qualitative approach, the data was analysed the indepth meaning and sense-making of each participant’s feedback. This distinguishes from most of previous cultural research, which has mostly used quantitative methods and been based at the macro level, meaning global, national and organisational levels. It is the more traditional approach to cultural research, by gathering massive data from one or more organisations, and analysing collective results at organisational or national levels. Although looking at the influence of organisational and national culture, the current research was conducted at the micro level of cultural research, meaning the research was conducted at the individual and small group level (Erez and Gati, 2004). The current research examined differences and interaction between Western and Chinese cultures. The current research data were collected from a sample of individuals within selected universities; analysed them individually, and then summarised the results based on shared, common aspects that were generated from individual data. Tajfel and Turner (1979) pointed out that a significant psychological effect of globalisation on individuals was presented at
individuals’ identity transformation, which was reflected in people’s self perceptions in relation to the social environment. In other words, globalisation has impact on individuals’ way of thinking in relation to their surroundings. In a dynamic cultural context, individuals represented the values of shared meaning system of their society, which then aggregated, shared with others, and formed higher level cultures of the group, organisations and nation (Erez and Gati, 2004). In this sense, it is crucial to look at cultural understanding at the individual level. Moreover, the current research took a qualitative approach to look at cultural differences. It provided in-depth cultural understanding from the participants. This is a strong advantage compared to the quantitative research approach, which has been the dominant research method in cross-cultural research.

The current research investigated four different cases, in order to distinguish and evaluate the impact of national culture and organisational culture. The purpose of having four different case designs is to enhance the comparison of cultural influences in these different contexts, so as to distinguish the cultural differences much clearer. The contexts vary from the purely British context (both national and organisational); the Colonialism context, involving the Chinese national context and British organisational context; the Collaborative context, with Chinese national context and Sino-European organisational context; to the purely Chinese context in Hong Kong. Such a design is one of the first that involves multi-cases and multi-contexts to look into cultural influences on employees’ cultural understanding and working relationships. It provides the researcher with more contextual diversity to compare cultural elements’ effects and participants’ understandings, which leads to more detailed and comprehensive research findings. In this way, it helps highlight the differences and influences of both national and organisational levels, which might have been overlooked if in a single cultural context research setting.

11.2.2 Knowledge contribution

Firstly, the current research examined the research gap between Western and Chinese culture. As shown in Chapter 2 National Culture, a great deal of cultural research has been conducted, mainly from a Western cultural background. Comparatively speaking, Chinese culture is rather a new research area, which has attracted academic attention in the last two decades due to its increasingly
important economic position in the world. Particularly, the knowledge of making sense of Chinese culture to the Western world and vice versa is still underdeveloped. The current research applied fundamental cultural theories from both sides to interpret Western and Chinese culture, so as to obtain a comprehensive understanding and explanation towards each other.

Secondly, the current research interpreted three main Chinese cultural values, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony from both Western cultural dimensions by Hofstede, and Chinese cultural theory, i.e. Yin-Yang. Hofstede’s bipolar dimensions have been questioned in terms of its approach to analysis of culture, particularly Chinese culture. The current research is one of the first to analyse qualitative empirical data and examine Hofstede’s bipolar cultural dimensions on Chinese cultural values. Through detailed discussion, the current research has found that Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony are closely integrated in Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, most obviously identified in Individualism/Collectivism, Power distance and Long-term/Short-term Orientation.

Particularly, the current research develops a Yin-Yang approach of interpreting the dynamics of Hofstede’s Individualism and Collectivism dimension, and that of the interaction of Chinese concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony (See Figure 10.1 Individualism/Collectivism and Yin-Yang, and Figure 10.2 Individualism/Collectivism and Guanxi, Mianzi & Harmony). It demonstrates that Hofstede’s bi-polar design may not be sufficient to explain Chinese cultural values. As Fang (2010) pointed out that it is not sufficient to have a single country/culture-specific phenomenon in the twenty-first century, instead cultural values and management practices became more self-selected and self-identified. That is to say people’s culture values develop according to ‘the ocean of culture of the entire world given situation, context and time’ (Fang, 2010, p.167). Therefore, Hofstede’s bipolarised cross-cultural paradigm needs to adjust accordingly, in order to fit into today’s cross-cultural management environment.

Yin-Yang theory has been mentioned and analysed in great detail by a number of researchers, in order to distinguish the different way of thinking in Chinese context from that of Western ones (e.g. Wong and Tam, 2000; Tung, 2002; Fang, 2003,
2006a, 2006b; Fletcher and Fang, 2006; Faure and Fang, 2008). However, most of these discussions were limited to theoretical analysis or conceptual framework design for future research. Based on a large amount of qualitative interview data, the current research applied Yin-Yang theory into data analysis, and is one of the few studies investigating Yin-Yang theory empirically.

Furthermore, Cooper (1990) points out that Yin-Yang is perhaps the best known symbol of East Asia. It is deeply rooted in Chinese belief, and exists in everything, including Confucian values (Fang, 2003). Looking at Yin-Yang’s influence on intercultural communication, Yuan (1997) states that Yin-Yang principle emphasizes a complementary approach to understand the world and people. According to Yuan (1997), Yin-Yang approach provides a much more complete picture of the issues involved, compared to an either-or approach. The significance of Yin-Yang has also been demonstrated throughout the data analysis of the current research. With the support of Yin-Yang’s dialectical and paradoxical view, it does not only allow the researcher to examine the dynamics within each cultural value, and provide a more comprehensive explanation to enhance people’s understanding. Moreover, it also accommodates the examination across different cultural values, such as Guanxi, Mianzi, Harmony, and Hofstede’s dimensions. In other words, the current research has managed to interpret Hofstede’s cultural dimensions within the Chinese context, and explore further the dynamic interaction with and between the main Chinese cultural values, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony. The Yin-Yang approach offers a new way of analysing national cultural differences. Apart from applying it to exploring the cultural differences between Chinese and Western cultures, it is worth exploring further and researching its potential application into a much wider field of cultural studies.

The findings of the current research can also be related to how to distinguish Chinese and Western perceptions about Chinese values. Discussing from both conscious and unconscious ways, the current research results show that Chinese show stronger unconscious concern about the value of Guanxi than Westerners, however they show stronger conscious concern in terms of the value of Mianzi and Harmony. This conceptual contribution has led to a couple of practical implications, which will be explained in the next section.
Apart from that, the current research looked at academics’ different status as indigenous and expatriates. It was found that expatriates have stronger cultural sensitivity than that of indigenous, no matter whether they are Chinese or Westerners. This finding indicates that the role of being expatriates may enhance employees’ cultural sensitivity. Such a finding may improve and enhance studies about expatriate and indigenous management.

Furthermore, the current research may contribute to the knowledge development of cultural research, by analysing and inspecting differential impact between national culture and organisational culture. Based on various case study designs, the current research identifies stronger influence from organisational culture upon employees’ cultural understanding and adaptation, compared to that of national culture. It provides a more detailed conceptualisation of cultural studies at various levels and demonstrates the inter-relationships between employees and their working environments.

In addition, the present research context is the academic working environment in higher education. Most of organisational and cultural research has looked at business companies and managers, studying companies’ culture and management, and employees’ work attitude. The cross-cultural research on academic staff and their working environment and attitudes is rather limited. Apart from that, the academic working environment within universities is different from that of the business world. With distinct characteristics of management styles, structure, responsibility, and particularly people’s interaction, research on academic staff needs to be examined in its own distinctive context. Altbach and Knight (2007) pointed out that more efforts were needed for internationalised higher education, particularly in the specific initiatives of branch campuses, cross-border collaborative arrangements, programmes for international students, establishing English-medium programs and degrees, and others. Furthermore, Lauring and Selmer (2010) examined cultural and gender diversity within internationalised academic sector, and their influences on academics’ performance. They (Lauring and Selmer, 2010) pointed out that cultural diversity played a much more significant role in academics’ performance than that of gender diversity, and the former was positively related to
academics’ performance and satisfaction. The current research contributes to developing cross-cultural understanding within the academic working environment. With such a fast changing higher education industry blooming in the world, the current research examines the diversified academic working environment, and explores academics working relationships. However, it does not mean that the academic context is completely different from business corporations. Baruch and Hall (2004) analysed the model of academic career and compared it with career contracts in the corporate environment. They claimed that academic careers moved towards a more corporate direction, due to more customer focused and business driven change in universities. According to them, corporate career displayed a more original view of academics as autonomous professionals. In this sense, with a close look into such changes and differences between academics and corporations, the current research about the academic considers its application into the business environment in the future.

11.3 Limitations of the study

11.3.1 Conceptual limitations

Initially, the current research aimed to analyse three Chinese values, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony, and discussed their integration with Hofstede’s cultural dimensions respectively. However, as the research progressed and data analysis developed, it was found that the response about Harmony was not as greatly discussed on its own. Instead, Harmony was found to be very closely related to the concept of Mianzi. By using a combined analysis on Harmony and Mianzi, the current research data were able to present more detailed and in-depth explanation, and suggested to merge the analysis of Harmony and Mianzi together, and not necessarily to analyse them as individual concepts.

Furthermore, the current research applied Chinese Yin-Yang theory to analyse Hofstede’s Individualism/Collectivism dimension, and found dynamic relationships between Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony with Hofstede’s Individualism/Collectivism dimension. It provides strong evidence of inter-relationships between Chinese cultural values and Western cultural dimensions. However, Yin-Yang was not applied in Hofstede’s other two dimensions that were examined in the current
research, Power Distance and Long-term/Short-term Orientation. This was because the structure of these two dimensions did not fall into the framework of Yin-Yang theory, which was formed of dualism and paradox (Cooper, 1990).

11.3.2 Methodological limitations

One of the methodological limitations of the current research is associated with choosing qualitative methods. The current research used only a qualitative research approach, in order to gather more in-depth data to explore participants’ thoughts and behaviours. As Payne and Williams (2005) suggested, qualitative studies provided thick descriptions about social life, process and patterns of behaviour, which could be potentially applied in similar forms in different settings. By doing this, one of the concerns regarding applying a qualitative research method was about generalisation. It was pointed out that generalisation was not the purpose of case study research to generalise to other cases or populations outside the cases (Yin, 2003; Bryman, 2004). However, there could have been possibilities for the current research to look at a bigger sample, such as by using questionnaires. Although the generalisability may still need to be carefully examined, the research context will be expanded into a bigger population, and it may enhance the examination of cases.

The sampling could be another concern to methodological limitation as well. Among all four cases of the current research, the sample would ideally be half Chinese and half Westerners. However, in the Colonialism Case, Case NB, the number of Chinese academics was only one third of that specific case, or nearly half of Western academics (See Table 3.2 Respondents). This is because Case NB was newly built in the last two years, and it required academics who had obtained a Western postgraduate degree carrying out both academic and research tasks. Apart from that, the teaching and research are in English. Such requirements limited the number of qualified Chinese applicants. With the small number of Chinese academics in Case NB, the argument can be that the voice of Chinese academics in Case NB may not be as strong as their Western colleagues. Furthermore, Western academics may not have as much culture exposure to working with Chinese colleagues in Case NB, compared to the more balanced Chinese and Westerners samples in the other three cases. However, with the
development of Case NB, it is expected to have more balanced Chinese and Western academics if future research is to be carried out in the organisation.

Another limitation of sampling was caused while analysing interview data collected from Chinese academics. In the current research, the data collected from Chinese academics appeared to be less elaborate or explanatory, compared to that of Westerners. This was found possibly due to the Chinese less out-spoken characters, meaning not able to express their own opinions in a straight forward way. This may due to the significance of Mianzi, either protecting others’ Mianzi or preventing themselves from losing Mianzi. However, this does not mean that Chinese participants do not have opinions on these cultural values.

Furthermore, the researcher's stance in the current research can be argued as a methodological limitation as well. As emphasized in Chapter 7, Research Methodology, the Chinese background of the researcher was an advantage while conducting research in the Chinese context and with Chinese participants, as well as implementing and interpreting the research data and finding connections with Chinese values. However, this particular advantage may have inhibited a full understanding and interpreting of Western cultural values. Despite this greater inherent understanding of Chinese cultural concepts, the researcher has lived and studied/worked in the West for a number of years.

**11.4 Practical implications**

The current research has explored the understanding of Chinese and Western academics about Chinese cultural values, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony, which formed an in-depth cultural analysis regarding how these two groups understand each other, and their working relationships. Based on the analysis from four case studies with different settings, the current research has highlighted the influence of cultural understanding upon employees’ working relationships, and the influence of organisational settings on employees’ cultural understanding. The practical implications of the current research, therefore, can be summarised in three aspects, the significance of Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony; the cultural involvement of the
management in internationalised higher education, and organisational and national contexts’ influence.

Firstly, the current research highly emphasized the significance of Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony when interacting with Chinese. Although sometimes the value may not be demonstrated or discussed as much by Chinese, they are still the key values which guide the Chinese. Furthermore, the weight of Guanxi may not necessarily be the same as that of Mianzi and Harmony. It means in certain circumstances, Guanxi is more important than Mianzi and Harmony, and vice versa. The contextual factors, including people, location, and timing, need to be examined carefully in order to evaluate each specific situation.

Secondly, the current research findings suggest that the management of international academics should involve more in terms of employees’ cultural adaptation, including both indigenous and expatriates. The cultural involvement should include both Chinese and Westerners. It does not matter whether it is Chinese expatriates in the UK context, or Western expatriates working in the Chinese context, the cultural adaptation should include both indigenous and expatriates. It’s not only important for expatriate academics to have a good understanding of their host working environment, but also important for indigenous academics being more open-minded and prepared for culture exposure. This implication can also be extended into the business environment, where international companies have both Chinese and Western employees working in the same context. As Dong and Liu (2010) suggested, cross-cultural management practices in China should be practical, because there was no well-developed multinational culture in China. It is an advantage for an organisation to prepare employees better for their international working environment. It serves the purpose of improving employees’ working relationships, and work performance as well.

Apart from these, the current research indicates that organisational culture actually has stronger influence on employees’ cultural awareness and behaviour, compared to the influence of national culture. Particularly, while applying the current research findings to business industries, it means that business organisations need to evaluate the significance of culture influence based on their own organisational
designs. For the Chinese or UK type of organisations, the host company will have the most strong national culture influence within the organisation. Whereas for Collaborative and Colonialism types of organisations, companies can emphasize home organisational culture, and deal with a bit less effort and emphasis on national cultural awareness.

11.5 Recommendations for future research

The current research found that three Chinese cultural concepts, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony were closely inter-related. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions were able to be explained by these three Chinese values. However, the analysis should not be limited to bi-polar perspective only. Instead, as shown in the current research, the Long-Term/Short-Term dimension did cover most of the Chinese values, although the bi-polar view of that dimension has been found to be insufficient for Chinese cultural study. Further studies may include a more dialectic view, such as using the Yin-Yang theory, and be open to changes and improvement when it comes to studying Chinese culture.

Particularly, based on Yin-Yang theory, Guanxi, Mianzi and Harmony were found to be closely integrated and inter-dependent. The change of one concept may affect people’s emphasis on others. Moreover, such dynamics were found to have the same effect on Western cultural values, such as Individualism/Collectivism. Yin-Yang theory offers a new unique perspective to explore cultural research. Hence, it is worthwhile applying Yin-Yang theory in future cultural studies, and investigating its influence on other cultural settings and social responses.

Future studies should also focus on the significance of cultural influence on different levels, meaning organisational and national context. The current research examined four different management style contexts, to see the effect of cultural influence. It may be possible for future studies to examine further and measure the impact of organisational context and employees’ cultural understanding.
Besides, the current research focused on working environment and relationships of academic staff in internationalised higher education. By studying academic staff alone, the current research was able to look into academics’ work and life from the academics’ perspective. Future studies in this research area may take into account other factors being involved in higher education, such as students’ perspective, administrative employees’ perspective, and that of management level as well. For example, the influence of academics’ acculturation on students’ academic performance should be investigated.

In conclusion, the current research has investigated in great depth with a qualitative approach, cultural difference and its influence on academics’ working relationships. Hopefully it will help future research to take on new theories, such as Yin-Yang, and explore cultural understanding and its influence on people’s work and life.
References


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Appendix 1 Email Invitation Letter

Dear Professor x,

Chinese/Western Cross Cultural Research in Higher Education

I am a Senior Lecturer at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom. In conjunction with a colleague, Dr Alistair Cheyne, Senior Lecturer in Organisational Psychology, I am supervising a research project which is researching cultural interactions between academic staff in higher education. The document attached to this email gives a brief overview of the research project. In summary we are interested in the impact of an academic’s national cultural background on their working relationships with academic colleagues from other countries.

We are particularly keen to identify academics from the western hemisphere who are working in universities which have a predominately Chinese cultural background. We are also seeking to interview academics whose background is Chinese, in the same universities.

Therefore, we are seeking your help in the hope that you will be prepared to be involved in field work for our research project.

The extent of the participation will comprise an interview lasting approximately one hour.

Obviously, we will guarantee confidentiality to all the individuals and institutions involved.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

I sincerely hope that our research associate, Xiaozheng Zhang, will have the honour of interviewing you.

Thank you in anticipation of your help

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

John Loan-Clarke

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The Business School
Loughborough University
United Kingdom
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Research topic: Chinese/Western Cross-Cultural Research in Higher Education

- The purpose of the study is to explore cultural interactions between Chinese and Western academic staff in higher education, and its potential influence on academic workplace activity.

- The interview will take about 1 to 1.5 hours.

- The interview will be recorded and documented, and it will be transcribed and translated at some later stage. All information provided for the research will be kept highly confidential. The participating individuals and institutions will remain anonymous throughout the process.

- There will be no risks involved in the research.

- This is also to acknowledge that you may be contacted in near future for any further discussion if necessary.

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Xiaozheng Zhang                             Participant
Researcher
Appendix 3 Interview Guide in Chinese

Interview Guide in Chinese

感谢，保密

个人工作经验（来英前后）:
- 工作简历，*在英就职年限，在其它国家工作经验
- 简述目前工作情况，职责，如授课，研究，工作长度，学生情况等

组织适应:
- 在英国授课的情况如何？
- *与国内相比，在英的教学方式和研究有何不同风格，如工作方式，与同事的合作研究？你认为英国的学术界的文化、氛围又是怎样的呢？
- 是否意识到中英教育体系，高等教育机构的不同（如，不同国籍学生比例，学生对教育与学的接受方式有何不同）？
- *与国内相比，如何调整自己适应英国的教育制度和机构？
- 工作气氛？与英国同事间的合作，沟通

基于已有的经历，文化适应:
- 文化差异意识，如何适应中英生活，工作差异？
  - 当你初到英国，对英国有何想法？有哪些方面是你之前所没有料到的？
  - 刚开始工作时，对于授课，研究有何想法？你是如何调整适应的？你所在学院都给予什么样的培训或帮助？
- 与上级，同事的工作关系？
  - 你与你的英国同事，上司的工作密切吗？都有什么样的定期会议或交谈？会共同参加一些工作外的社交活动吗？
- 如何沟通，表达个人的不同见解和异议？
  - 在工作上，你与英国同事间的交流是怎样的？通常都会谈些什么？
  - 如有不同意见时，你是如何沟通的？是否会有理解上的困难呢？你认为你的英国同事的交流方式与中国人是否有和不同的地方？
  - 与上司沟通时，是怎样的一种情况呢？你是如何表达自己的观点以达到共识呢？
  - 能否举些与英国同事沟通时比较普遍出现的误解情况？你是如何察觉误解的？
- 如何沟通与英国同事间的交流是怎样的？通常都会谈些什么？
- 如有不同意见时，你是如何沟通的？是否会有理解上的困难呢？你认为你的
- 与上司沟通时，是怎样的一种情况呢？你是如何表达自己的观点以达到共识
- 能否举些与英国同事沟通时比较普遍出现的误解情况？你是如何察觉误解的？

如何调整适应文化差异引起的问题？
- *在文化过渡期，你是如何调整自己的？大概需要多久的适应期？
- * 你认为文化差异中出现的困难主要是由什么引起的？为什么？
- * 你对这些困难的因素都有哪些？你是如何意识到这些因素，及改进行改善方法？
- 与他国同事相比，你认为你的同事主要有何不同？
- 到目前为止，你对英国文化及工作环境都有何看法？
- 经历这些差异及适应过程，对你的工作有何影响？以及工作情绪呢？

从学院组织的角度：

- 学院的组织管理是怎样的？以及人力资源管理，包括招聘、行政支持、研究基金、及
  个人发展？
- 学院的组织结构是怎样的？
- 学院的组织管理是否有变化？或对于中、西方教员采取不同的措施？

基于之前在国内大学的工作经历，

- * 在来英就职前，接受此工作前有如何的准备？（如对于即将与英国同事一起工作，
  是否有准备，思想上或教学方式上？）是否可以的话，你认为是否从不同的角度去准备？
- * 在就职期间又有何对策？
- 你认为学院的人力资源管理方面能有何进一步改善的地方，以及组织管理？

对西方文化的理解，以及在工作环境中的体现：

- 权力差距：对上级有何距离感？对上下级之间的平等性的容忍程度？例如？
- 个人与集体主义； 人与人之间的亲近程度？对他人、家庭、集体的责任感？ 例如？
- 未知情况的接受程度： 对于未知或不明情况的接受程度？对于未知状况的容忍度，承担风险？
- 办事特征：理性－感性化，果断感，竞争感，以事业为重还是情感、家庭为重；例？
- 时间主导性： 以将来或过去为主，及其重要性，节俭和执着一个人安定，尊重传统
  和顾及面子； 例如？

对中国文化的理解，以及在工作环境中的体现：

- 社会地位、层次感，尊老， 例如
- “关系”；人际关系网及应用，个人交情
- “面子”：自豪、荣誉、羞耻
- “以和为贵”；和睦相处的和谐， 氛围
- 时间的价值观：针对追求奋斗目标，针对享受生活
- 个人发展－组织发展，例如？

简谈全球文化的产生及影响，尤其在学术界和高等教育中的影响，如学术全球化：

- 全球文化对学术者及学术领域工作关系的影响？
  - 与你共事的有多少外国教授？他们都是从那些国家来的？
同本国教员相比，与外籍教员工作有何不同？
- 对高等教育国际化的影响，涉及教育质量、教学、研究、学生的学习成绩？
- 当你教授外籍学生时，你的教学方法有何不同？
- 对外籍学者文化适应有何作用？对你个人的经历有何影响？
  - 你在与外国同事工作前都作有何准备？你从哪里得知的信息？都学到些什么？这些对你的文化适应过程起到什么作用？
- 对高等教育的管理有何影响？你的工作单位、学院又是如何应付全球文化而产生的变化，如国际学生，尤其是中国学生数量的增加？

未来的计划：
- 预计将留英工作时限？
- 以上所谈的中英文化差异又是如何影响你个人的职业计划？

对本研究项目中中西文化差异在高等教育、及授课老师中的体现有何建议？

谢谢！
Appendix 4 Interview Guide in English

Interview outline in English

Thanking for taking part; confidentiality

Personal information (before and after coming to UK / China)

- Working experience; * Any experience of working abroad, and with foreign/Chinese colleagues?
- Describe your current job, in terms of teaching, researching, learning, working hours, what is it like to work with the students?

Organization fit:

- What is it like to work as an academic in UK?
  - What are the differences working as an academic in a Chinese/UK university, such as working style, collaborating with CN/UK colleagues?
  - Are you aware of any differences between China and UK education or university system? (how many Chinese colleagues, Chinese students? What are they like in terms of learning and teaching?)
  - What are you perspectives on Chinese / UK academic culture, academic working style?
- Working atmosphere
- * How to adjust into a different educational system, compare to that of UK/China?

Assume the experience, Cultural fit:

- Awareness of cultural differences, living adaptation into Chinese / UK environment?
  - When you first came to working in UK/China, how did you find it? What were the main issues that you didn’t expect?
  - How did you find it at work? What was teaching and researching like? How did you adjust? Did you receive any help from your host institution / colleagues?
- Working relationship with colleagues and superiors / line manager?
  - How close do you work with your Chinese colleagues and line manager?
    - Any regular meetings or personal contacts? Do you socialize together outside work?
- Communication
  - At work, how do you find about communicating with your UK/Chinese colleagues? Normally, what do you talk about?
  - How do you express your different opinions? Any understanding difficulties? Do you find any different communicating styles from your UK/Chinese colleagues?
  - What is it like to communicate with your line manager? How would you express your own opinions to achieve agreement?
  - Any examples of misunderstanding? How do you find out about misunderstanding?
How to get over the cultural fit problems?

- * How did you get over the cultural shock period? How long did it take?
- * What is the main cause of the difficulties? If yes, why?
- * What are the factors that helping you to get over those difficulties? How do you come to the stage to realize the difference and change your strategy to cope with it?
- Comparing with colleagues from other countries, what are the differences of your Chinese colleagues and others?
- Develop any different perspectives about UK / Chinese culture and working environment?
- How does it affect your work?

Organizations:

- What are the management like, in terms of human resource management, including: recruiting, admin support, funding, personal development?
- The organizational structure
- Does the organization strategies or policies differ due to the different nationality of the academics? Any special policy or strategies were taken to help Chinese academics?

Based on your own experience to work in a CN / UK academic environment:

- * What did you do before taking up the job? (Have you prepared yourself to work with people coming from UK / China? How? If it’s possible, would you have done it differently?)
- * What have you done while you’re in the position?
- Do you think is there any Improvement in human resource management could make it different? And organizational management?

Western Cultural understanding, and how the concepts are presented at work:

- PD: Feelings towards the managers
  Tolerance of equality in the organization, such as giving orders;
  Example
- I / C: Closeness of individual attachment to others
  Responsibility and commitment between individuals and others (group, family)
  Example
- UA: The need for planning and predicting future,
  Coping with uncertainty and ambiguity tolerance, risk taking and avoidance
  Example
- M / F: Rational / Intuitive
  Assertiveness and competitiveness,
  Importance over the choice between relationships and career/money
  Example
- L / S: Future or past value orientation and their significance,
  Thrift & persistent VS personal stability,
  Respect to tradition and face
  Example

Chinese cultural understanding, and how the concepts are presented at work:
- Hierarchy  Social status, family status, respect to the older; Example
- Guanxi  Personal connections, relationship, networking; Example
- Mianzi  Pride, honour; embarrassment; Example
- Harmony  Harmonious relationship, environment; Example
- Time  To achieve the goals in life; Example
          To enjoy the life; Example

- * Personal growth / development  Individual VS organization; Example

Introduction of Global culture, influence: (Academic globalization, academic global culture?)

- The impact on academic role and working relationship among academics?
  ▪ How many foreign academics that you work with? Where are they from?
  ▪ What are the differences between working with foreign academics and with the ones from your own cultural background?
- The quality of internationalized higher education, in terms of teaching and researching, students’ academic achievement?
  ▪ What are the different approaches that you take to teach students from other cultural and education background?
- How does it help you fit in? What are the effects on your own experience?
  ▪ Did you learn about other cultures before you working here? Where did you learn it from? What did you learn? Are they useful for your fitting-in?
- The impression of global impact on higher education management? How does the business school deal with increasing number of international students, Chinese?

Future plan:

- How long to work in China/the UK?
- How does the cultural difference affect your career plan?

Any other comments they would like to make?

Thanking for taking part.
Appendix 5 Interview Guide in Chinese - Pilot

来英前后的经验：

- 工作概况
- * 在英就职年限
- 简述目前工作情况，职责，如讲课，研究，工作长度，学生情况

组织适应：

- 组织管理，人力资源管理，如招聘，行政管理与支持，研究资金，个人发展
- 组织结构
- * 与国内相比，如何调整自己适应英国的教育制度和机构？
- * 与国内相比，在英的执教和研究有何不同，如工作方式，与同事的合作研究？你认为英国的学术界的文段又是怎样的呢？
- 工作气氛？

文化适应：

- 文化差异意识，如何适应中英生活差异？
- 与上司、同事的工作关系？
- 如何沟通、表达个人的不同见解和异议？

如何调整适应文化差异引起的问题？

- * 需要多久的适应期？
- * 主要的文化差异在哪里？为什么？
- * 如何产生对英国文化的不同见解？如何诠释与中英文化的差异，以及工作环境的不同？
- * 如何意识到这些不同，及改善应付方法？
- 经历这些差异及适应过程，对工作产生怎样的影响？

基于之前在国内大学的工作经历，

- * 在来英就职前、接受此工作前有何的准备？
- * 在就职期间又有何对策？
- 在人力资源管理方面有何改善，以及组织管理？
对西方文化的理解，以及在工作环境中的体现：

- 权力差距：中央集权，因职责不同而引起的权力地位不平等关系？上下级之间的关系？
- 个人与集体主义：人与人之间以及为主，还是以集体为主？集体责任感？
- 未知情况的接受程度：对于未知或不明情况，坦然接受，还是迫切寻找答案，排除未知？
- 男女品质特征：阳性、果断、好胜、竞争性、逻辑性强；阴性、优柔寡断、安于现状、多愁善感
- 长短期导向：以未来为主，做长期打算；以历史为主，确保个人的短期稳定

对中国文化的理解，以及在工作环境中的体现：

- 阶级主义
- “关系”：人际关系网及应用
- “面子”
- 时间的价值观

简谈全球文化的产生及影响，尤其在学术界和高等教育中的影响，如学术全球化：

- 全球文化对学术者及学术领域工作关系的影响？
- 对高等教育国际化的影响，涉及教育质量、教学、研究、学生的学习成绩？
- 对外籍学者文化适应有何作用？对你个人的经历有何影响？
- 对高等教育的管理有何影响？你的工作单位、学院又是如何应付全球文化而产生的变化，如国际学生，尤其中国学生数量的增加？

未来的计划：

- 预计将留英工作时限？
- 以上所谈的中英文化差异又是如何影响你个人的职业计划？
Appendix 6 Interview Guide in English - Pilot

Personal information before and after coming to UK / China:

- Age / Working experience
- * How long been living and working in UK / China? Which universities?
- What do you think about your current job? Enjoyment and satisfaction in teaching, researching, learning, working hours, students’ progress

Organization fit:

- The management in terms of human resource management, including: recruiting, admin support, funding, personal development?
- The organizational structure
- * How to adjust into a different educational system, compare to that of UK/China?
- * What are the differences of working as an academic in a Chinese/UK university, such as working style, collaborating with CN/UK colleagues? What are you perspectives on Chinese / UK academic culture?
- Working atmosphere

Assume the experience, Cultural fit:

- Awareness of cultural differences, living adaptation into Chinese / UK environment?
- Working relationship with colleagues and superiors / line manager?
- What is it like to communicate and express disagreement? How do you communicate about different opinions? Can you explain that further?

How to get over the cultural fit problems?

- * How long does it take?
- * What is the main cause of the difficulties? If yes, why?
- * Develop any different perspectives about UK / Chinese culture and working environment?
- * How do you come to the stage to realize the difference and change your strategy to cope with it?
- How does it affect your work?

Based on your own experience to work in a CN / UK academic environment:

- * What did you do before taking up the job? (Have you prepared yourself to work with people coming from UK / China? How?)
- * What have you done while you’re in the position?
- Do you think is there any Improvement in human resource management could make it different? And organizational management?
Western Cultural understanding, and how the concepts are presented at work:

- **PD:** central control, inequalities of power distribution and tolerance, giving orders, closeness between managers and subordinates
- **I / C:** relationship and commitment between individuals and others (group, family), individual initiative, sense of duty
- **UA:** the need for planning and predicting future, coping with uncertainty and ambiguity tolerance, risk taking and avoidance
- **M / F:** assertiveness and competitiveness, macho norms and values, female status, importance over the choice between relationships and career/money
- **L / S:** future or past value orientation and their significance, thrift & persistent VS personal stability, respect to tradition and face

Chinese cultural understanding, and how the concepts are presented at work:

- **Hierarchy**
- **Guanxi / relationship, networking and connections**
- **Mianzi / face**
- **Time**

Introduction of Global culture, influence: (Academic globalization, academic global culture?)

- The impact on academic role and working relationship among academics?
- The quality of internationalized higher education, in terms of teaching and researching, students' academic achievement?
- How does it help to fit in? What are the effects on your own experience?
- The impression of global impact on higher education management? How does the business school deal with increasing number of international students, Chinese?

Future plan:

- How long to work in China?
- How does the cultural difference affect your career plan?
Appendix 7 Interview Transcript Sample

Interview Transcript

KEY:  I = Interviewer
      R = Respondent

R: I’m 28, nearly 29 next month. Did my undergraduate, masters and PhD in Wales. I started working here in September 2004. I’ve been here over 3 years and 4 months. It’s quite good. I’m happy. I did a few minor work for business before that, but nothing big, nothing have consequence.

I: how do you feel like working with Chinese colleagues?

R: I like it. It’s fine. I work with one Chinese here, and one in Nottingham and my wife is Chinese. So I deal on a daily basis. It’s not real... maybe there’s some cultural stuff, in general, things are fine, easy enough to get on.

I: could you be more specific when you said in general?

R: I haven’t had any personal difficulties myself working with anyone. Language is not too much of a problem, I’m kind of used to it anyway. And English is not my first language either anyway. Welsh is my first language. I started to learn English when I was about 7, or a bit older. So I kind of know it as my second language anyway, I don’t mind. I think I notice the students have problem with language at times. For me, it’s fine. On the whole, I have no real problems.

I: while you work with Chinese colleagues along with Western ones, do you identify any difference between them?

R: they work harder. I find the Chinese colleagues do intend to work a lot, for longer hours. Perhaps the more UK based colleagues would 9-5, and don’t work over weekends, or 9-6, and no weekends. So it’s slightly different way of doing things. But I know it’s cultural thing as well. So whenever I go to Taiwan, the shops open all the time, people work all the time. Very busy. I think that would be the main difference.

In terms of communication, I haven’t found any difference so far. Mostly because we work on similar research areas. Because of that, they have the same level of knowledge of me, and they know the same references or whatever. On the whole, I don’t think I have a problem with any of that. If they come from an entirely different area, then I need to explain that area. I can do that, and they will catch up. I haven’t found any problem so far anyway.

I: how do you deal with when you have different opinions from each other?

R: Just go through, and open to talk. I don’t mind if there’s differences of opinions, cos that means there’s different ideas. I like different ideas, being able to bounce things off, and get new ideas from it. I don’t necessarily mind if there’re differences of opinions anyway. Whenever there’s any, we just talk it through, and it always resolve in the end anyway. Not bothers with any disagreement at all. That’s probably with anyone really. That’s who I am,
very calm about things. I would like to talk things through. Research wise, I’ve never been to any big conflict, so it’s never an issue. Personally, if there’s a conflict, which can get arise quite often. Definitely there’s a talking through very thoroughly, I find. You have to communicate, have to be a big dialogue and talk things through in detail. Quite often, there’s an element of compromise, quite often there’s an element of giving to the Chinese side. Yeah, dispute arises, it’s always good to talk things through. If it’s with Western friends, probably I would do it in a differently. Mostly because you have to take cultural things into account. Again, research terms there’s no issue. But personal terms, yes. Like it took my in-laws 4 years to recognize me and like me. 4 years, nearly 5. Quite often, they would prefer talking or communicating, especially with disputes through letters. They would give me a letter saying the problems, and why they dislike certain things, dislike me or whatever and what their plans are, and so on. To a point, I would like to talk, not to write a letter. It’s just silly. But I mostly prefer talking. Whereas the cultural problems from their expectation, and their expectation for the future, and my wife being their only child, things like that. So various cases of communicating a lot, compromising a lot. It’s really a big, big problem. It took me a long long time to sort things out. It works, but it’s still on the same… they like sending letters, and they like getting letters back. You don’t really do it in this letter. You just phone, or email.

I: In that case, after all this ice breaking, is there any change in their attitude or?

R: Yes, I find they’re more open, accepting, which is good. They talk more to me. They even value my opinion, to a point, which are also good things. Previously, it’s always their opinion, and you have to compromise your way towards their opinion, and eventually they compromise back to me. More respectful, once you get to that stage. I think it’s possible to be similar when I’m accepted by Western friends, especially when there’s a big dispute or something. Maybe it would be easier with Westerners, easier to resolve any problem in the first place, to get problem solved at the first place. That’s part of cultural things I suppose. And the fact that, it’s just easier to communicate, and get straight to the point, and work things out.

In my own personal life, I also socialize with other Chinese friends. A few. They’re quite similar. They’re easy to get along with, and chat. Sometimes with text message, it can be quite confusing, because of the language issues, you kind of decode that. On the whole, they’re very easy to get along with. If anything, sometimes I prefer them to Western people. Because they’re just generally nicer. The problem with some Western people, is that the first time, they see, they judge you. In my opinion, while often I find in Westerners, the first time they see you in the first few occasions, they will judge you immediately and hold that opinion. They see you at the first, they see how you dress, think you don’t look that good, or clever, then they have a poor opinion of you afterwards. I’ve seen that a lot. I don’t see Chinese people doing that. I find them easier to get along with, even if I don’t know them much. They’re easier to get along with, definitely compare to English people.

I: Back to work, you’ve been here 3 years, how do you find yourself work and working relationship with your boss?

R: With the managers, it’s quite good actually. TV has been my superior mentor, he’s very good. Really good with mentoring, explaining things, get through your supervision. They’re all quite easy to get along with, chat with. There’s a few at the committee level can be a bit annoying. There are a few others… I dislike. There’s one particular I don’t like. Mostly because that particular person, he, is an idiot. It’s more personal character, and the way they approach things. Perhaps the way they push me or something…. 

I: How do you deal with different opinions from them, say in a meeting?
R: I will say my opinion, and I will say, this is what I think, and if it's different to somebody else think, it's fair enough. But I just feel that I'm entitled to my own opinion. So if my opinion differs, fair enough, but it's another contribution to debate or whatever. My Chinese colleagues won't do the same. I have one or two examples where they prefer to stay quiet. They don't create a problem, so they stay quiet. The Chinese colleagues will stay quiet, instead of seeking to say something that they know would perhaps raise a problem, or being seen as a problem. Even, it happens once, something related to my group, I knew that at the point it should have been said, so I said it. Different opinions to others in the group or whatever, so I say my different opinion. And one other, another Chinese colleague in the group thing 'oh well, that's what I was thinking, but I didn't really want to say it. Because it might create a problem, or hassle for group'. If you have an opinion, you should be allowed to say it. They just kept it to themselves. Well, they said it me, and other people within the group. But still not to people outside the group. So they kept it within the immediate group, we're broadcasting over. Since somebody else knew I've already said it to the outside group, then it's ok. Well, what would have happened if nobody else would have said it, I'm not sure. They prefer to stay quiet. I have found it sometimes where... colleagues just won't tell me something. Let's say they're helping a teacher, and whether there's any problem or. They would say 'it's ok'. But they may have other problem without necessarily telling me immediately there was a problem. J was teaching my module. She sounded fine, and I don't have any problem with her, or with her accent or English or anything. But some students did. So when she was teaching my module, I asked her 'how did it go?' she said 'it's ok, everything went on time. I asked a few questions, and got a few answers'. And that's it. 'Ok'. Where other problems were the students were noisy at the time, and not paying attention, and some left half way through at the coffee break, after the first hour or something. She didn't really want to tell me the problems yet. In case if they happened again and again, then she will. I just think that well, if she has a problem, tell me now. Then I can sort out any problem immediately. So sometimes, they will just keep it to themselves for a while, and then they will tell me, till it's kind of piled up problems. That's the way that I've noticed anyway. At the end, I would still try to talk to them. And I always make efforts to chat and find out if there was any particular problem or if it's all ok. I always ask, but I won't force them to give me the information. It's up to them to tell me something. But they wouldn't be the ones to take the initiative. Not that I find.

I think my Western colleagues probably would do a bit different. They take less notice of criticism. I think the Westerners take less... they ignore criticism to a point. Some will get really annoyed by them. I won't want to be with them straight away. While others will simply ignore problems or critics, or whatever. I don't think Chinese do that. They certainly don't ignore them, they certainly have them in their mind. They take time to deal with them, instead of dealing with them straight away. So the impact is definitely stronger.

Normally, when I deal the critique with Chinese colleagues, normally I will try to get them to talk. If they know there's criticism is problem, then they start talking. My next thought, my act is reassuring. I try to help them solve their problems. Or despair any worrying. So if there's any particular criticism are really bugging them, let's say accent, then I will just try to reassure them, make it less a problem of what it is, and explain it's not as a high issue as what it is. So just to see to explain, reassure it, I do, sometime with research problems as well. Just talk it through.

I: Is there any building up sensitiveness dealing with Chinese?

R: Yeah. I suppose there's need to be somewhat sensitiveness. But kind of depending on the situation really. If it's just trivial research related stuff, it's ok. But if it's bigger problem with the research or teaching, but it has to be more sensitive. So it's context depended.

I: In your deal with Chinese friends and family, how do you think of their relationship with others? How close are they to you comparing to your Western community?
R: I'm not sure whether it's closer. I probably say similar. Maybe it's a bit more distant, but similar.

I: What do you think of Guanxi?

R: Not entirely certain what it means. But I've heard of it a lot. The only thing I do, nobody has really explained properly what it is. So I'm not sure. I think in my idea, Guanxi has something to do with communicational kind of social capital. The way that I once got to explained to them, is my sister-in-law, and her mother, she has lots and lots of friends in Taiwan. She has network of friends there, and lots of relationships and good social capital with her. She needs something done, or has problem need to be sorted out, she can like use her friendship, and networks with them, to get something done. Even it's formal, bribery almost. So if I'm right with saying Guanxi is the social capital, then yes, it is quite important. I think within the business school, the colleagues are actually quite good. If you want to talk to them many times, they're quite open for a talk, discuss something, or you want an advice on teaching or research, they're quite open. But some are different. I find my Chinese colleagues; I can quite easily just have a chat with them. While some Western colleagues, I find more awkward to approach. And they might just give you not much time, not much discussion, unless you know them quite well. WS seems like a OK kind of guy. But if you try to get information from him, or talking to him, doesn't seem to be that communicative or that willing to interact with staff beyond his own group. Same with those PhD students, who might just want to see him and have a chat with some specific idea, but it's hard to get any information. I have this with another professor before, outside the Business School. But he’s more interested in talking about himself and his staff, rather than actually addressing the research thing we were talking about. But I've never really had that issue with Chinese or foreign colleagues. But I think it depends on the person. Certain Westerners are really uptight, and not very open. They keep their space to themselves.

I: Among research, what do you think of the Guanxi’s role?

R: Definitely it's good to develop relationships with people, and work with them, be friends, and get to know them a bit, interest or whatever. Even if I haven’t done research for a while, send them an email, and have a chat. I think it’s kind of important to keep our relationship, maybe not as close friends, but good friends. Have some kind of relationship with them. Otherwise opportunities disappear; the research won’t be so good.

I: What are the difference between Guanxi and networking?

R: There’s difference at the same time. From my understanding of what Guanxi is, it's based on networking, and developing networks with people and so on. But it seems to be more, I don’t know whether it's personal, or colloquial? … For example, I know there's a couple of strategists in Cardiff, and I'm quite good friends with them and do some research with them. I would feel there probably some Guanxi blossom, and someone in Aston as well. Whereas some other people I emailed in the US, to get some information about different research stuff. There I have a network. The people that I know, I can email. But on personal level, friend level, No. it isn’t. I know that person, maybe I will email again in the future, I will send them a paper in the future. It's not really a close network that I can rely on further than future, or friends or son on. Not on a personal level. That's the difference between network and Guanxi. I think network, is more distant. You have people you know that you can contact, for specific information, while here you have people who you can contact for information, and also talk with them in general, and rely on perhaps things outside of the work. So that's how I see it.

I: what do you think of Mianzi?
R: Not with the word. But Face is… very familiar. Face and face saving. That’s a problem. My experience is that it’s very problematic, getting in the way of a lot of progress, and stifles progress. It’s a barrier to certain things, I think. What I often find is that if we’re in the situation now where there’s a dispute or argument, one party tries to save face, let’s say the Chinese side, it can be extremely difficult to resolve a problem. Personally I can tell you that, it took 4 years. it caused a lot of problems. If they haven’t used that back down at time, I also found this with my wife. let’s say again argument, I have my view, she has her view, and her view is concrete, my view is … she won’t back down from her way, but will eventually, taking a long period of time. Or if she did something wrong, she will deny it. But eventually she will admit that she was wrong. But the basis problem that I get is that to getting her to apologize. It takes a lot of time, a lot of patience. Usually I have to apologize first, even if I haven’t done anything wrong. The way I view things is that when we have an argument, I would apologize anyway. Because one person doesn’t create an argument. Two people always. So I always apologize, quickly after the argument, meaningful. But it takes time for them, ok, you should apologize, instead of thinking I should also apologize, which is maybe a bit more Western things, or a more man thing. I’m not sure. Anyway, we have problems like that previously in a lot of different situations, with face saving, not willing to change views, or taking so long to change views, things like that.

I: How do you balance on the face issue then?

R: it’s awkward. I’m not going to seek to patronize … or become any problem if anyone by making them apologizes, or making them notice that they try to save face. I usually just try to work around it. I’m aware of the problem. But instead of addressing that problem saving face, let’s just address the dispute. It can make things a lot quicker when you try to resolve problem. But it’s not as badly as resolving problem.

Not so far at work with colleagues. So far I haven’t had the problem. I had it once, several times with PhD students. But the PhD student is an African. But it’s a lot of face saving, like it’s her research, she knew best. And she just frankly refused to accept anyone else’s view. She would call me up to 10:30pm, saying that specific professor was an idiot. I had not idea what she’s talking about. And that professor was her second supervisor. Just because he suggested something which was counter what she believed, and what she wanted to believe. It’s really hard. It took a long time to work around her, by getting her to show that the other guy was correct. He knew what he was saying, and there was a lot of evidence on that. So you need to change your views, and understanding something. So instead of directly attacking her view, I support the opposite view and bring her around to it. So that’s the way I would approach. But it takes a lot of time, instead of accepting in the beginning, yeah there’s a different view I’m looking at, at a specific concept. That means you need to research more on that area. She’s like ‘well, now he doesn’t know what he’s talking about. That’s different from what I’m looking at. So I only look at this one, specific thing.’ It just causes a lot of trouble.

If dealing this with Western colleagues, it can be difficult as well. Some Western colleagues can be prone to face saving as well, especially if they feel some kind of embarrassment, or humiliation from that. It can happen to Westerners. But it’s less common to have it with Westerners. It would more straight forward, and less time consuming to sort out problems. I find anyway.

I: what do you think of harmony? Have you even come up with situations that people try to maintain harmony?

R: yes. In research wise, no. but again, in personal level, yes. Very often, especially like around Christmas. For example, when we go home, and my brother and his wife come up as well. It used to be the last several years, his then gf, and now wife always seemed to gain the attention from my parents, and favour, and do lots of stuff. Because all the efforts that she’s doing, they naturally talk to her, and chat. But my wife kind of feel that there’s no
balance here. There’s disproportional level of attention going up with. To me, it was no problem. I was like I’m on my holiday, I don’t mind. It’s ok. Out of one or two word of that, people want to talk, let them talk, chat or whatever. It’s fine. But for my wife, it’s a big deal. She thought it should be a balance, a harmony kind of thing. She would like some fairness. Why do we get often do our own stuff for a couple of days, and they always get the attention or whatever. That’s the best way of describing it. My wife always particularly picks up on it. You know, the balance. At the end, it isn’t solved. If there’s a problem of balance, then you need to do something to resolve that problem of balance, trying to do something equally, like in research, for both parties do equal work, but sometimes in the cases where, like in research for instance, like one person has to do more than the other, because the other is too busy, or get other projects on, or just can’t commit time to it. Then that’s it, you have to work more on that. But you can easily do different things like authors, who’s the first, who’s the second, who’s the contact author, something like that. There’s a phase that you can do fairly is depending on if it’s my data set, maybe somebody did more on the writing, I still want in mine. There have been occasions where I would differ to whoever has done the most writing, I would say ‘no, you are the first author’. Even if it’s my data, I don’t mind. That keeps that balance. But they can’t analyze scene of what’s the situation, and I know specifically one situation, really big journal paper, where the lead author literally did no work on the first revision, or the third revision, he still wouldn’t change the authorship order. The guy, who did all the work, was the second author. It wasn’t my paper. It was my supervisor’s paper, whose colleague was from probably France. He’s quite a big name, this colleague. It’s his idea, so his paper, rather going for the second. Despite the fact that he did literally all the work of the paper, he was still the second author, which is not right. Again, that’s a balance issue.

To maintain the harmony, I’ve seen that you have to compromise. You have no choice but to compromise. Or in most cases, I have to deal with problem. so I don’t perceive that to be much of a problem, but because my wife perceived it as a lack of balance, I had to solve the problem. So it’s kind of really awkward. It’s hard to know how to go about it sometimes. Quite hard.

The only person that I’ve ever noticed in the West is my twin brother. He’s a long haul to perception that he didn’t have equal or balanced that when we were growing up, I was always favoured. Although he was older by 20 mins or something, he was the first twin. He quite often well noticed that other people getting more or something. He would want that 50-50 balance. So I’ve seen it in him a lot. And he’s very… even though his wife seems to get more attention, or get more of the balance, he doesn’t complain then. If it favours him, he doesn’t complain. If the balance moves away, he complains. So it’s kind of tricky. But I don’t see it from other Western people.

I: With the globalized development, what are the influences on communicating with each other?

R: I suppose if you always have a lot of people, then that makes communication a bit more awkward. And I suppose if you introduce people from lots of different countries, lots of different cultures, and lots of different ideas, I suppose I would again sort out problems, giving with any issues, that problematic. But that’s why you get imposed the hierarchical structure from the university. They impose the structure, in business school, they impose how you approach to the decision making, so you have committee groups, individual groups in the business school, committees come to decision into agreement, that goes to somewhere else, that gets agreed. The head of department agrees, that’s the way things get done. You don’t involve everyone in decision making, but you try to get a good mix. So representatives of different cultures, or whatever, bring them in if there’s different people, different countries, make sure their committees are representative. Everyone comes to an agreement, to those committees. At the same time, you impose all the controlled system, on what could be an awkward thing. in fact that, there’re so many different people, different cultures, and so many different background. It’s hard to say that if that controls wasn’t in place, what would happen. I’m not sure. I find it quite easy to get a long with people, talk
and resolve any problem, but other people might have very different views, and be quite
difficult to change it, which is why you have this structure placed upon you, really.

I: what are the influences of globalization on students’ academic achievement?

R: I think so. On the whole, I think it’s a good thing. it’s slightly critical having a Western
lecturer speaking about Chinese business environment. Because you’re more familiar with
the environment in your country. Although you are more environment of that country. I think
it’s good to always bring in lots of different colleagues from lots of different background.
That’s a good thing. you can see different things, got different sources and information,
different experiences, more knowledge in specific countries, which is good, especially when
you teach like international business or strategy. On the whole, it is a really good thing. The
problem is of course, that can create problems if the students don’t accept it, or can’t see
the value in that. We can see the value in it, we would like to have researchers from
different backgrounds. I think it makes it more diverse environment in it. but sometimes, the
students can’t see it. They’re the problem. Not the actual people in the Business school.

I: Among your students, what are the differences between Chinese and Western students?

R: Mostly they’re the 3rd year undergrads. But more and more Chinese and Indian perhaps
students come along as well. You do find again more and more diverse. But that’s because
lots of Indians live in the area anyway. It’s fine. So you get different types of students. But
even the Indian students will complain if they can’t understand a Chinese person, which is
hypocrisy. Because sometimes, you find it difficult to understand them as well. So accent
should not be a problem. It’s what they can teach you. If they teach you what’s the insight of
Chinese business or international business, then it shouldn’t be a problem. So the students
are hypocritical people anyway. Generally I think it’s a good thing. Variety is a good thing.

I: In your dealings with Chinese, is there any other cultural thing that they need to be aware
of in terms of culture fitting in here in the UK?

R: if I would have thought about it, maybe I could think of a few things. I suppose one of the
hardest things is to define what the culture of the UK is. Suppose sometimes you have to
get used to how things operating in this place, especially when it comes to bureaucracy,
and how slow things can take. Cos I’ve seen one or two Chinese friends of PhD students,
or colleagues get really annoyed by how slow the things are. We get annoyed by how slow
things are, but we accepted it, because of bureaucracy. It’s just one of those things, you
have control placed upon you, and controls of them. I get frustrated with them. But it kind of
gets time to get used to, of the ways things operated. It certainly makes senses for
everyone. You all have to learn the rules of how things work. Maybe it’s easier for us to
understand them maybe. Can’t really think of anything.

I: what would you suggest the new Chinese academic to prepare before coming here?

R: Get to know the staff, their research profile, so you can try to fit in as soon as possible.
Maybe see whether you can work research with others. Try to find out as best as you can,
how the system works here. Because we have a very different entry system with students.
They do GCSE and A levels; they get specific points, for all the grades they get. And they
get to do a course. Just familiarize of the system and courses here. Get used to the idea of
standing up and talking, cos that’s the only thing you can do to the size of the group in this
world, lecturing. They have to have hard skin. Hard skin is to be . . . not oblivious, and not
maybe even to ignore, but be resistant to unnecessary criticisms. So in other words, little
things like the students complain, let’s say you get a lower mark from the students, because
they don’t... let’s say the students has a difficulty with your accent, they will mark it down on
everything. It’s not just accent is the problem, when it comes to the end of your feedback,
how effective really? 2 out 5. How well prepared? 2 out 5. Did they encourage discussion? 1 out of 5. Even though you may have asked them lots of questions in class to get them to talk, they will still mark you down. Because they’re biased, because they have one problem. I see that happens. If you see her teaching, she asks a lot of questions trying to get them to talk, yet in the feedback form, they think I ask more question and I make them participate more. But I ask fewer questions, I just talk. They deduct your marks. It’s the same as my first semester. They have no problems with my accent, despite the fact that I have a strong Welsh accent. They have no problem with accent, what they have the problem was in my first semester was in class test. When I started September, I just had to take over the module as it was, I couldn’t change it. So we had in class test, and we had negative marking. They had to answer the questions in class on specific day, and get marked on that. It went to their grade. If they get one question wrong, they lost one mark. But you do that, because you don’t want them to just guess and get lucky, and get some mark. So it’s negative marking. So they complain that like hell, I don’t change it. so at the end of the semester, my feedback, wasn’t low, but I knew it was as low as that. Let’s say it was 3…. Something, but I know it was towards 4 it should be. But they bring you down because there’s something that they don’t like already. If they have that negative opinion in their mind, it biases all of the answers. So if you are watching TV, and there’re two programmes on TV, and you’re asked to grade those two programmes. Let’s say one is a documentary on China, and the second one is football. I would guarantee that my wife would automatically rate the documentary on China really interesting, and like my wife says football is really boring, even though she may not really enjoy the documentary. Because she hates football, she downgrades it. Your opinion is always dictating your answers to the questions. So that just develops a thick skin, or hard skin.

I: what do you think the management can do to improve the international working environment?

R: they could have better protection mechanism in place. There’re two things. First, there’s always be the protection mechanism. If you’re a woman lecturer, you naturally have a softer voice than a man. But the problem with that is, if I’m in the class, having over 200 students sitting in front of me and making noise, I can get them to shut up in a few seconds, very easily. Just by raising my voice, shouting. But for a woman, it’s harder. And a lot of female colleagues here will tell you. Cos they’ve told me the same thing, it’s harder to get them to be quiet. Because your voice is less higher, and softer. And they generally take less notice. They think they can take a bit less notice. Even if it’s used in the same way, it wouldn’t work as much. Well, what also has happened here, there was one specific Asian colleague has had problems with students, because of her accent? The students literally in the middle of the class make a lot of noise, lots of talking, even make fun of her voice in the middle of the class. What can we do about it? you can’t do anything about it. Even if they did anything like that to me, I can’t do anything about it. Because I don’t know who they are. There’s no class register. How can I stop them from doing it again? How can I ever stop them, and how can you ever … this is something that I’ve raised in our committee, like I said before, it has to be something like protection mechanism. And there’s none. There’s nothing there to protect the lecturer. If they want to make noise in the lecture to the lecturer, and they will, unless you say ‘ok, that’s the end of the lecture, let’s stop it’. And then they will complain that you’re not teaching. So there’s nothing there to protect you. You have to be a bit aware of that.