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**AN INVESTIGATION OF MALE CHINESE INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS' UNIVERSITY CHOICES AND THEIR
ACCULTURATION PROCESS: WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS
ON THOSE STUDENTS WHO ATTEND SPORTS CLUB
SESSIONS ON A REGULAR BASIS**

by

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Partial Fulfillment of the
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Summary

The purpose of this study is to gain an empirical understanding of why exactly the male recreational athlete amongst Chinese international students chooses to study at the University of Glasgow, as well as how they acculturate to a new cultural and social environment by participating in a range of organized sports clubs. Specifically, this study employed a qualitative method to interview eight male Chinese students individually who participated in sports clubs in Glasgow on a regular basis. Student responses were interpreted and evaluated by utilizing thematic analysis. The results indicated that firstly, Chinese sports participants' overseas university choices are predominantly motivated by educational reasons, especially the worldwide ranking of the target university, while their decisions tend to be less affected by economic reasons as well as other people's recommendations, in comparison with the decisions of non-athletes. The results also suggest that, secondly, sports participation can help Chinese international students improve target language skills as well as facilitate their understanding of the host culture. In addition, physical activities can also benefit students in making new friends, coping with loneliness, and relieving their accumulated academic pressures, all of which in turn minimizes their stresses derived from acculturation.

Findings from this study highlight the importance of the role that sporting activities play in Chinese international students' cross-cultural adaptation—from the process of choosing a university to while they are students. The study results, additionally, can offer a more customized strategy for boosting the university's marketing effectiveness and can offer a more culturally appropriate strategy to facilitate the Chinese international students' adjustment with the assistance of sports involvement.

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***An Investigation of Male Chinese International Students'
University Choices and Their Acculturation Process: With a
Particular Focus on those Students who Attend Sports Club
Sessions on a Regular Basis***

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Recruitment of Chinese international students is of vital importance for many colleges and universities in the United Kingdom (Higher Education Statistic Agency, 2015; Jones, 2012, pp.54-56). Chinese students represent the largest group in the overall international student population in this nation (UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2015) and bring in valuable tuition currency. So far, the University of Glasgow, which is always ranked in the top twenty largest recruiters of international students across the whole nation, has done well in the competition for Chinese students (ibid). Between 2013 and 2014, for example, approximately one in six Chinese students who chose Scotland also chose Glasgow University, which currently has over 1500 Chinese students. Of these, more than 90% reported overall satisfaction about their transitional experiences (University of Glasgow, 2015a; UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2015).

However, although the University of Glasgow always has booming enrollments, the overall higher education environment has become increasingly competitive, and it is important to understand exactly why these students choose to study

there (Sia, 2013). Their detailed university preferences could offer key information to assist in marketing efforts (Soutar and Turner, 2002). Recruiting sports enthusiast (recreational sports athletes who participate sports activities on consistent basis) among Chinese students, in fact, is even more strategic due to their potential for healthier physical and psychological well-being and the higher likelihood of boosting multicultural understanding between both domestic communities and their own (Yan, Cardinal and Acock, 2015; Jarvie, 2006). This special sub-group of Chinese international students thus might be worth more attention from the university admissions office. Male Chinese international students who are recreational athletes (versus student-athletes who play for a university team) are accordingly to be the focus sample in this project.

First of all, as the research subjects in this project are those sports participants, there is a need to explain the definition of 'sports' in the first place. There are several different understandings of the meaning and components of sports, and it could be helpful to have an explicit and inclusive definition of sports. Based on popular definitions, there are basic criteria for identifying what a sport must have (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015; Cambridge Dictionaries, 2015; Macmillan Dictionaries, 2015). Firstly, it must fit the category of physical activity (more of a demand for physical than mental power and skills), and secondly, people must perform the activity for a purpose, in a more structured way: for example, either for fitness, entertainment, or competition. This study's researcher will use the following definition throughout this research paper: "Sport is structured physical activity that human beings do for fitness, enjoyment, or competition, and the sport is generally accepted as being a sport." This concept includes the range of a series of world-famous competitive events such as the Summer and Winter Olympics, to informal recreational games and drop-in club sessions such as 'pick-up' football (ibid). In addition, games such as international chess, Chinese chess, and computer programming have also recently been publicly viewed as

sports (Santos and Alonso, 2014, pp.61). However, in these games, the mental component is obviously more significant than the physical. Thus, they are very different from the definition of sports that will be used to guide this project.

The benefits of moderate sports participation are multifaceted (Humphreys, McLeod and Ruseski, 2014). But especially for a Chinese international student, one of the key merits which cannot be overlooked is that sports have the potential to facilitate a student's acculturation in a foreign country (Yan, Cardinal and Acock, 2015). Acculturation refers to a process of adaptation to a new culture (Kwon, 2013). Studies suggest that in this process, international students may experience a great number of challenges or problems which can create much stress (Crockett et al., 2007, pp. 347, Sherry, Thomas and Chui, 2010, pp.34). The stress induced by this adaptive process is referred to as acculturative stress, which has proven to be eminently influential on a person's overall well-being (Kwon, 2013). Stress, specifically, has been linked to a number of very unwelcome psychological, and subordinately physical, outcomes including anxiety, depression, heightened blood pressure, increased participation in unhealthy behaviours, and decreased participation in healthy behaviors (Wong, et al., 2014; Sapranaviciute, Perminas and Pauziene, 2012; Jung, Hecht and Wadsworth, 2007). Participating in sports activities has been proven to be one way to offset the effects of stress (Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Allen et al, 2010). In fact, from a systematic review of relevant studies (ibid), it is shown that there is a strong connection between Chinese international students' sports participation behaviour and their cross-cultural adaption. For some Chinese students, the main motivation to join sports clubs, whether the motivation is conscious or not, is just to overcome these acculturative stresses (ibid). This case of motivation however will be discussed specifically and separately in the following chapter. Unsurprisingly, Chinese international students who join sports clubs thus tend to be better acculturated overall (Burnette et al, 2011).

The impacts of sports on international students shows that sports are a very legitimate field of academic study. Due to a personal interest, the researcher is particularly interested in the deeper connections between sports and Chinese students' transitional experiences. Personally, this researcher believes that he have developed significant confidence and improved his skills of socialization as well as the English language competency through regularly attending sports club sessions in the university, which has resulted in a happier acculturation process. The researcher therefore decided to design an empirical study and conduct several in-depth interviews to obtain knowledge about these connections. The interview technique is believed to provide insightful and rich information to the research topic but specific reasons regarding why the interview approach was particularly chosen will be justified in the Methodology chapter of the paper.

Meanwhile, studying recreational athletes among the overall Chinese international student population, in terms of how they adjust to the university through sports participation, will have very important implications for the higher educational institution they belong to. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the strategies that help this group of students to be better integrated and adjusted. It must be mentioned that, in addition, although the strategies to help with students' transition processes may need a certain level of ethnic sensitivity, sports involvement has been proven by many academics as an appropriate strategy for many groups of international students (including Chinese) as well as domestic students (Gomez, Urzua and Glass, 2014; Gallucci, 2013). It has been suggested that increased sports involvement is highly likely to benefit a large range of the student population in any institution. However, addressing the acculturative stresses of female students through sports has currently been found to be less effective and needs a more critical view, especially for female students coming from Asian countries (Yan and

Cardinal, 2013; Franz, 2015). Studies suggest that involving females students in sports activities, and the connection of sports to helping them adjust to college life, is far more complex than with males (ibid). But a study of female student athletes will not be covered in this project.

Therefore, for improved institutional management, universities need to have a clearer understanding of Chinese students' university selection criteria. At the same time, it is the institution's very responsibility to assist Chinese students to maintain appropriate health conditions to ensure their future success. The focus and scope of this study, accordingly, is twofold. It will investigate both a group of male Chinese international students, paying special attention to the students' university selection criteria as well as the impact that regular sports participation has on their acculturation process. The target sample of this study all attend the University of Glasgow.

Overall, in order to achieve the research purposes, this project will investigate:

- ***What are the main factors influencing decisions to study at the University of Glasgow for Chinese international students who are recreational athletes?***
- ***How does involvement with sports help with their acculturation process at the university?***

This research project will firstly build a theoretical framework through an empirical review of relevant literature. The methods and instruments implemented during the research practice will be introduced in the following chapter. The paper will then highlight the findings of the interviews before discussing and comparing them with those of previous relevant studies. The discussion section will also include the project's limitations and implications for future investigators and finally, the conclusion will summarise this project. Following the outline of the paper, readers will clearly understand the process

as well as outcomes of the research practice. This research project is expected to contribute to Glasgow University's marketing strategy and to the well-being of its overall student population.

Chapter 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Purpose of literature review

Due to increased competition for Chinese international students at major universities, the need to study issues regarding their transitional experiences—such as how they choose overseas educational destinations and how they adapt to foreign environments—is greater than ever (Higher Education Statistic Agency, 2015). However, the valuable sub-group of Chinese international students, those who regularly participate in sports activities, remains largely unexplored. For instance, while there have been numerous studies examining factors influencing Chinese international students' university selection criteria, currently there is a gap in the body of research as no study has focused specifically on recreational sports participants. Additionally, only a very limited number of the studies examining the relationship between sports participation and the transition process have focused only on Chinese international students. Rather, studies tend to focus more on immigrants as a whole, which often do include Chinese, or other groups of college students' transition experience associated with sports. Furthermore, most of this relevant research is predominantly interested in the impact of acculturation on people's sports participation behaviour, instead of the role that sports plays in their acculturation process. Nevertheless, there is still value in referencing these studies.

Hence, the purpose of this literature review is to examine the previous studies which are relevant to typical Chinese international students' university choices,

as well as the acculturation process as it relates to sports participation, in order to provide a theoretical, methodological, and analytical framework for the current project. This review follows the thematic order of the project, which means that after justifying the selection of relevant literature, the literature review will examine the factors influencing Chinese students' university selection, and then discuss the relationship between regular sports participation and students' acculturation experiences in foreign countries.

2.2 Justification of the Selection of Articles

There are, in fact, many existing studies that discuss the university choices of student athletes—students who are recruited not only purely as students but as sports representatives of the university as well (Davies and Burakowski, 2015; Vermillion, 2010; Pauline, 2010). They, however, cannot be referenced for this current study. Unlike other students, their athletic identities have a very important role to play in both the university's admission procedures and in their own institutional selection process (Zonder, 2013; Judson, James and Aurand, 2004). Although the studies show that student athletes may undergo a similar selection process as recreational athletes, their experiences in many ways are different, due to the additional factors they have to consider (Smith, 2006). Student athletes, for example, have to consider the athletic and academic reputations of the school, the social atmosphere of the team, and the head coach of the university's team; this last consideration is often indicated as the most important choice factor for the elite athletes (Nicole et al, 2003).

Additionally, athletic status also brings about unique stressors relating to their acculturative process, such as extensive time demands, pressure to win, injuries, challenges in prioritising academics and athletics, the possibility of being benched, and conflicts with their coaches, among other factors (Jones, 2005; Kissinger and Miller, 2009). The interaction of these multiple unique stressors presents a very different acculturation experience for the college

student athlete. This may explain why student athletes often report some acculturation problems like headaches and digestive problems which are rarely experienced by the students who are recreational athletes (Wilson and Pritchard, 2005). All of the above suggests that student athletes can be thought of as a separate, non-traditional student group, due to their own unique culture and identifications, and thus studies about them will not be included.

2.3 Factors that Influence Chinese International Students' Decision Making Process

Push and pull model of students' university choices

The push-pull model for studying students' mobility was developed by Altbach (1998) who argues that students are pushed by unfavourable conditions in their own particular environment—like employment pressures—and are pulled—in other words 'attracted'—by positive conditions such as a school's good reputation and advanced facilities. Altbach's model reflects a decision process of trade-offs in terms of how a student selects a final educational institution. This classic framework is popularly adopted by academics for studying international students' mobility (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Soutar and Turner, 2002), and therefore is used in the current project as well. However, unlike the current project, previous academics tend to not target student samples from any specific country. Rather, they are interested in finding out the university selection criteria of the whole population of international students, at least those associated with a very large demographic region—such as East Asia or Africa—who are studying in a specific university or a college. University marketing strategies based on these findings are less-customised and thus will gradually lose their significance, especially in view of the competition for students, which will become increasingly intensive.

Choice factors

In order to develop a more comprehensive view of those determinants

motivating Chinese international students in their overseas destination choices, Liu, Elston and Zhou (2013) conducted a systematic review of some updated overseas-based and China-based research outcomes. They adopted a push-pull model as well to summarise the research outcomes, as the following Table 1 shows. However, this table only represents a limited part of their research outcomes, as they actually identified more than thirty push or pull factors. Their factors provide a large source of information that will be used as the main guidance for the coding process in the current project.

Table1: Choice Factors

<i>Push Factors</i>	<i>Pull Factors</i>
<i>Lack of access to local higher education (HE)</i>	<i>Opportunity to improve a second language</i>
<i>Perceptions of better quality of overseas HE systems</i>	<i>Geographic proximity of the host country (to China)</i>
<i>Education methods in China</i>	<i>Institution's reputation for quality</i>
<i>Perceived national power gap between China and developed countries</i>	<i>Range of available programmes</i>
<i>Political environment</i>	<i>Qualifications and credentials of staff</i>
<i>Employment pressures</i>	<i>Financial aid</i>

-Liu, Elston and Zhou (2013)

The major factors for Chinese international students have been identified by some relevant studies, although there are some disagreements. John (2007), for example, found that the university's ranking and its reputation are the top two leading choice factors for Chinese international students. John's research

revealed that although various rankings of UK universities influenced Chinese students' particular choices, students also looked at individual course rankings and were always thinking about UK universities as compared to other universities around the globe, placing them in a sort of global hierarchy. In the view of Zhang and Chen (2012), in contrast, the main factors identified include the institution's good reputation, affordable living fees, and influence on future employability. In details, participants in Zhang and Chen's study believed that the most influential factor for Chinese students choosing to study in Malaysia's private university is the institution's reputation, followed by students' concerns about future employability, and then by cost of living. The least important factor for them is the duration of the course offered. Bhati, Lee, and Kairon (2014), however, conducted an online survey identifying factors influencing the decision of Chinese students to pursue tertiary education at the Australian Institutes of Higher Education, located in Singapore. These survey findings, by contrast, illustrated that Chinese students rank international exposure as the top influential factor. Quality of education comes in second, and the multicultural environment comes in third. The least important factor for them is the institution's applied teaching methods.

Overall, the specific factors which mainly influence Chinese students' university choices and how the students rank them according to importance differ greatly. Ignoring the possibility that a previous researcher may have made a significant mistake during the research practice, one of the effective reasons to explain the differences is their multiple sample framework. Firstly, researchers normally tend to have different foci and scopes. For instance, one may target potential participants who are enrolled in private education in a developed country, while another may focus on samples studying at a public university in a developing country. Secondly, the distribution of factors such as age, different geographic areas, or different social classes among the participants are very different between each study. The above chaotic body of the literature (a collection of

research with widely varying observations) suggests that the major influential factors may not always be generalizable, and caution is required when applying findings to current research and the context of the study.

However, at the same time, it is worth noting that previous researchers also agreed about how the various criteria regarding choice were weighted. Educational and economic reasons for choosing a university are often identified by academic researchers as two of the most important factors (Wei, 2013). Educational factors include a focus on the academic reputation, the university's ranking, and future employability (Wei, 2013). Economic reasons are the student's concerns about the financial aspects of overseas education, which include but are not limited to tuition fees, exchange rates between the host and source countries, and cost of living (ibid). In a well-known piece of research, Wei (2013) conducted a secondary research to study the determinants of how forty-eight countries attracted international students from 1999 to 2008, arguing that students from developing countries mainly value these two reasons (education and economic) when seeking preferred educational institutions in developed countries. Although Wei's study uncovers student samples from China, which represents the largest part of the international education market, this finding is widely accepted by many relevant studies such as that of Chen (2007) and Mariel et al. (2011), which do involve a larger proportion of Chinese international students. This current project, which only focuses on Chinese students, may, however, present different outcomes.

Another academic commonality is that Chinese students' mobility—as well as that of many other Asian students—is highly affected by their social networks, including for instance, their parents, friends or teachers, which is an outcome believed to be predominantly affected by Confucian and collective cultural values (Bodycott and Lai, 2012). Studies indicate that other people's suggestions and recommendations can play an important role in Chinese

students' university decision-making (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Bell et al., 2009). In view of this, some universities even have included the students' parents, who may influence the university selection in greater depth, in their marketing strategies (Terenzini et al, 2011; Moogan and Baron, 2003).

2.4 The Influence Sports Participation Has on Acculturation

General impact of sports on personal health and fitness

The importance of sports has been well documented, showing that sports are reflected in multiple aspects of human society (Scherer and Jackson, 2010; Stoddart, 2013). Sports may, in many ways, influence a society's economy and culture, and most directly personal health (ibid). Although research interest in sports and well-being dates back a half-century, breakthroughs in scientific evidence regarding sports' health benefits largely took place between the 1980s and 1990s (Sportanddev, 2014). There is an overwhelming amount of research evidence showing the benefits of participating in physical activity as an integral part of healthy lifestyle (Acevedo, 2012; Morgan, 2013; Brehm, 2014).

The positive, direct effects of engaging in regular physical activity, is obviously shown in a person's physical level. Physically, sporting activity is linked to a reduced risk of over twenty illnesses, including cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol, stroke, and some cancers (Sport England, 2015; Michelini, 2014, pp.43-47). Sports, furthermore, have been associated with less cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug use, and antisocial behaviours (Palm and Palm, 2015). Young people who often participate in sports activities, therefore, are less likely to suffer from multiple diseases and illness or to engage in risky behaviours (ibid).

Psychologically, sports can be a form of mental therapy for people with depression and multiple psychological disorders such as anxiety disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, personality disorders, trauma, and stressor-

related disorders (Weinberg and Gould, 2014; Ayers et al., 2007, pp.375-277). Sports may, for example, promote self-esteem in the form of positive perception of body image and self-worth (Girginov, 2009). Scientific evidence relating to the health benefits of physical activity mainly focuses on intra-personal influences. However, this research does not exclude sports' social and inter-personal benefits, which can also produce positive health impact on individuals and one's social network (Sportanddev, 2014). Especially structured group sports activities, for example, can facilitate people's access to positive social environments to promote psychological well-being (ibid).

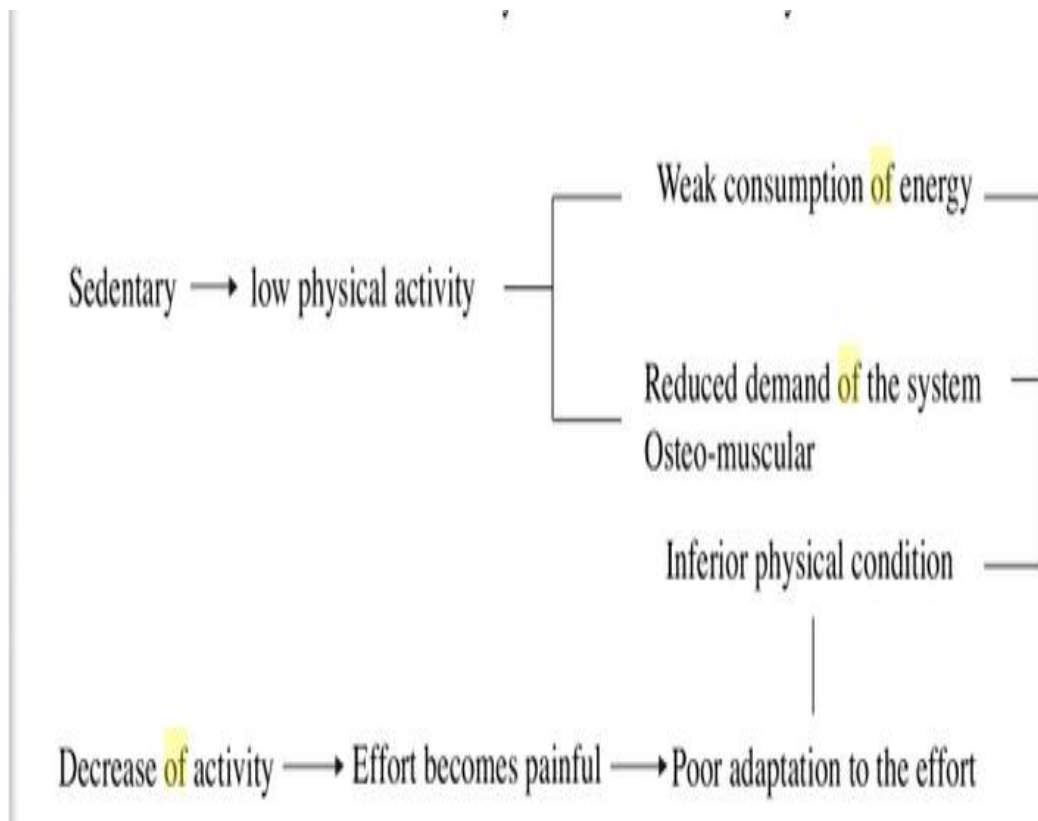
Overall, these health benefits in turn could contribute to individuals' increased life expectancy. A study involving more than 1500 Harvard alumni, interestingly, demonstrates that this difference could even reach up to two additional years of life (Szymanski, 2005 , pp.143-145). On the one hand, this study may seem marginal as it only applies to a homogeneous population, which is the student population with a high standard of education. But it does imply that the sports enthusiast from the University of Glasgow, another world-famous higher education institution, may tend to have longer life expectancies as well, in comparison to those students living sedentary ways of life.

The negative impact of sports, on the other hand, has also caused much concerns for academic researchers (Merkel, 2013; Bahr and Mahlum, 2004). First, there is an inherent risk of injury for athletes of all ages when participating in sporting activities (Merkel, 2013). Adult sports players are generally less resilient and heal significantly slower than do children and adolescents (ibid). Any inappropriate sports practice, like over-exercise, has the potential to cause people injuries of the bones or muscles (ibid). These injuries may take an adult considerable amount of time to heal (ibid). A hasty return to sports with incomplete rehabilitation, moreover, can result in further chronic pain with repeated injuries, dysfunction as well as increased time away from sports (ibid).

Participating in sports, secondly, might possibly undermine an individual's psychological health. While the physical act of playing sports is helpful for reducing stress, for instance, the mental act of over emphasising on winning might create it (Cockerill, 2002). This stress, induced by pressure and high expectation, may in turn lead to fatigue—known specifically as athletic burnout—or even depression (ibid). However, it should be noted that there are in fact many scientific strategies to help people participate in sports appropriately, in ways that can avoid these injuries and negative emotional effects (Merkel, 2013; Bird et al., 1997). These emotional effects, however, are not necessarily caused only by sports participation. Overall, although some critics have questioned whether sports participation can be truly beneficial for the individual, there is a wide agreement that the positives of physical exercise far outweigh its negatives (Scherer and Jackson, 2010; Morgan, 2013).

People who live a sedentary lifestyle, in contrast, risk endangering their health, as the following figure (1) summarises (Szymanski, 2005, pp.144). With little or no exercise, the human system seizes up, and a lack of physical activity becomes self-perpetuating (ibid). The individuals in this condition not only lose the habit of making an effort but, as such effort becomes painful, they are thus less and less motivated to exert themselves (ibid). As suggested by the National Health Service (2015), therefore, male Chinese aged nineteen and above should try to do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity—such as cycling—every week along with muscle-strengthening activities—that work all major muscle groups— two or more days a week.

Figure 1



Health Condition of People who live in a Sedentary Life

-(Szymanski, 2005)

Focus on international students' acculturation process

Living and studying in a different country can be a tough life transition for Chinese international students (Crockett et al., 2007; Wang and Hannes, 2013). Previous researchers have found that many students' health significantly declines after coming to a new culture (Yan, Cardinal and Acock, 2015; Yan and Cardinal, 2013). The acculturative stress is proven to be the key reason that leads to this result (Kwon, 2013; Yu and Shen, 2012). Acculturative stress includes, but is not limited to, lack of knowledge about the host culture, leading to cultural distance; a still-developing competency in the target language, which leads to low linguistic confidence; and lack of friendships with members from the domestic culture (Kwon, 2013, pp. 536-544; Ota, 2013; Smith and Khawaja, 2011, pp. 669-670). These reasons, individually or together, could result in a

tough transition process for students. Good proficiency in the target language, for instance, is seen to be directly related to greater interaction with members of the host culture (Zhang and Goodson, 2011; Zhang and Zhou, 2010). Improved language skills help Chinese students establish social supports and interpersonal relationships, which in turn facilitate their adjustment (Yu and Shen, 2012, pp.72-75). Meanwhile, target language competence also plays an unarguable role in predicting international students' academic adaptation (Kwon, 2013; Zhang and Goodson, 2011; Wang, Andre and Greenwood, 2014). Any Chinese student that lacks the required language ability is highly likely to suffer from socially and academically adaptive problems.

Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010, pp. 34) and Kwon (2013, pp. 545-547) have suggested that a narrow focus on these personal characteristics as reasons for difficult acculturation may run the risk of missing some larger environmental factors, namely exclusion, social isolation, and racism in the host community. These larger factors can create a very uncomfortable, stressful, and humiliating environment for international students to live in, which in turn undermines their social integration (Kwon, 2013; Yu and Shen, 2012). Academics overall suggest that second language proficiency and race-based discrimination can be taken as the two single strongest factors affecting Chinese students' acculturation (Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Yang, Noels and Saumure, 2006; Kwon, 2013; Sherry, Thomas and Chui, 2010). Academics further indicate that assisting Chinese students to cope with challenges in the transitional process is very important in ensuring their well-being in a whole new environment (Kwon, 2013; Yu and Shen, 2012).

Sports participation as one way to minimize acculturative stress

Sport activities are actually a popular path through which Chinese international students can acculturate (Yan, Cardinal and Acock, 2015; Cahill and Stavrianeas, 2013). Although there are only very limited relevant studies about

the influence of sports participation on students' cross-cultural adaptation that focus on a research sample from China, academics have widely agreed that sports participation on a consistent basis has positive effects on the student's adaptation to a foreign environment (ibid). The multiple benefits of sports involvement are identified, but based on those studies, it is apparent that sports affects international students' adjustment in mainly two ways.

Firstly, sport participation can address international students acculturative stresses by helping individuals to build up the required skills and knowledge for healthy responses in a new linguistic culture (Yan, Cardinal and Acock, 2015; Jarvie, 2006; Yu and Shen, 2012; Kwon, 2013). Taylor and Doherty (2005), for example, who conducted a mixed-methods study (including questionnaires and focus group interviews) on new arrivals in Canada, demonstrated that learners from international backgrounds identified the benefits of sports involvement as helping them to increase learning target language skills and learning about the domestic culture. They took the view that this opportunity is especially important and valuable as students can develop and practice the second language within the domestic social norms and cultural environment, through increased interaction and cooperation with native peers (ibid). The sports activities thus contribute to individual's language development and understanding of the host culture. Wolin et al. (2006), furthermore, they particularly investigated physical activity related to language acculturation in multi-ethnic populations. The findings revealed that people with high language acculturation have a higher level of physical activity than those with low language acculturation (ibid). This drives a virtuous circle: the more often that international students take part in sports activities, the better their second language skills develop, and in turn they become more willing to spend time on exercise and fitness.

Sports, secondly, can also contribute to international students' adaptation by directly facilitating individuals to enter into particular social networks, which in

turn can help ease acculturation stress (Brunette et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2010). For example, group sports activities can uniquely provide a setting for social networking which provides social benefits from meeting new people and dealing with loneliness and social isolation (Brunette et al., 2011). In addition, sports has especially proven to have some inherent properties that makes it a possible instrument of integration and harmonious ethnic and race relations (Jarvie, 2006, pp. 319). A review of the acculturation experiences of international students conducted by Rachel A. Smith and Nigar G. Khawaja (2011) shows that common themes stated on participant feedback forms include gratitude for being able to share experiences and emotions without judgment. Increased sports participation among international students may thus provide opportunities to increase healthy intercultural communication and, accordingly, boost mutual understanding and help reduce instances of racism and other forms of stereotyping and discrimination (Johnston, 2014).

In addition, promoting physical activity to international students can also help reduce acculturative stresses which derive from academic pressures, difficulties adjusting to new food, lack of self-management skills, and homesickness (Yan, Bradley and Cardinal, 2012; Brunette et al., 2011; Yan, 2012). For example, Yan (2012) suggested that many international students use physical activity as an effective way to release their accumulated academic pressure. Participants in Yan's study indicated that they feel they should consistently focus on their intensive academic studies, and a lot of them experience fatigue and a lack of energy as a result. Students perceive the need for a break from their studies, and sports exercise appears to be a primary strategy to accomplish this. They comment that they appreciate having a diversion from their daily work and study, and that they enjoy the feeling of being refreshed through participating in various sports activities, which helps them be more energetic when going back to schoolwork.

Since physical activity has been reported to help students comprehensively cope with acculturative stress and reduce stress-related symptoms, individuals who do not participate in sports may have a relatively tougher acculturation process and arguably miss valuable opportunities for socialisation, education, and even professional development.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Previous literature is very revealing in basically three aspects. Firstly, academics indicate that Chinese students' decision-making about attending overseas universities is generally modeled on a combination of push-pull factors and especially educational and economic reasons. Secondly, relevant studies have already identified the unarguable benefits that sports have on people's physical and psychological health, despite the potential risks of being injured and experiencing related pressures. Thirdly, the two most significant benefits that sports have for international students' social adjustment are opportunities for second-language development and the establishment of strong host networks which generate social support.

This current research study is based on the benefits of sports on health, the role of sports in reducing acculturative stress, and the role that sports plays in male Chinese students' choices of international study. Such a focus and framework does not exist in any other studies. In light of very few studies that investigate the influence of participating in sports on Chinese international students' transitions, and in view of no single study that could be identified that focuses on exploring the university selection criteria of those Chinese recreational athletes, this current project is therefore designed to bridge these gaps. The following chapter will specifically discuss the research methods used for addressing the research questions.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

The methods utilized during the research practice were based on the overall purpose and research questions of the study. In this chapter researcher will present the paradigm of inquiry, research approach, instrumentation, ethics, sampling methods, and data analysis techniques employed according to the chronological order of how this research was conducted.

Attempting to fill the gap existing in previous studies, the main purpose of this project was to explore the university selection criteria of sports activists amongst the Chinese international students who studied in the University of Glasgow, as well as examine how they acculturated through regular sports participation. Accordingly, the research question that were addressed here include:

- *What are the main factors influencing decisions to study at the University of Glasgow for Chinese international students who are recreational athletes?*
- *How does involvement with sports help with their acculturation process at the university?*

3.1 Paradigm of Inquiry

The methodology and research design chosen with regard to this study were guided by naturalistic paradigm (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006), which was chosen to be pertinent to the inquiry (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). The nominated paradigm also provided a basis of how this study was conducted as well as which data collection and analysis methods were used. It is necessary, therefore, that the ontological and epistemological positions of researcher must first be explained (Waring et al., 2012., pp.16).

Ontological position refers to views about nature and forms of the social world (Scott and Morrison, 2007, pp.85). In other words, it refers to how a person views social reality. The current study rests on the assumption that there are multiple realities instead of a single reality (Guba, 1981). Specifically, as the majority of the previous relevant studies agreed, Chinese international student's university decision processes were determined by a number of factors predominantly relating to personal and individual choices (Zhang and Chen, 2012; Bhati, Lee and Kairon, 2013; Padlee, 2010). How exactly participation in sports affected their acculturation also showed strong differences between each students (Yan, 2012; Yan, Cardinal and Acock, 2015). Therefore the current research was conducted based on the reasonable assumption that there are great variations in the reasons students choose to study at University of Glasgow and also significant variations in the role of sports in their acculturation process, although the researcher tried to find commonalities and patterns from the variation. Furthermore, the researcher did not attempt to infer any general conclusions for the research settings, nor was there an aim to test if all participants valued any single university choice factor significantly. The researcher also did not believe that all students viewed the relationship between sports and their acculturation experiences in the same way. The rationalistic paradigm which embraces the existence of a single reality or single voice and rejects the notion of subjective realities was thus not suitable for this study (Guba, 1981). Therefore this research was identified as a naturalistic study, which could be appropriately guided by both interpretivist and constructivist paradigm.

Epistemological position relates to understanding what is assumed to exist between the inquirer and the object of inquiry (Gray, 2009, pp.17; Crotty, 2003, pp.10). In the view of Guba (1981), and in contrast with the rationalistic paradigm which implies that the inquirer should maintain a detached distance from the objects of the inquiry, this naturalistic study asserted instead that

researcher and the respondents were interrelated. Further, as the researcher decided to obtain and interpret the relevant information through lengthy communication with the participants, in fact, it was impossible for the researcher to be "independent" from them as well as compartmentalize his own previous background and knowledge (Guba, 1981; Mertens, 2014, pp.15). Unlike those studies which employed a rationalistic paradigm, therefore, preventing a researcher's personal values from influencing the outcomes was not a standard the researcher strove for in this study (ibid). Correspondingly, all of the participants were actually recruited from the researcher's own social networks and shared a good friendship, in part through attending sports clubs together. The whole interview process and the data management process, moreover, was conducted with previous knowledge in relation to international students university choice as well as their transition experiences associated with sports participation behaviour, which based on both relevant studies and personal experiences. And during the research practice, the researcher also did not value pure objectivity as a rigorous role to follow, which is what rationalistic researchers do; neither did the researcher intentionally stay at a detached distance from those friends.

Overall, because the researcher accepted the coexistence of many voices and saw knowledge—in terms of the Chinese international students' university choices and their acculturation experiences associated with sports— as something interpreted by individuals (subjectivity) rather than governed by the laws of nature (objectivity), this research was suitably placed on the naturalistic end of possible paradigms as an interpretivist/constructivist study (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

3.2 Research Approach

This project utilized a qualitative approach to investigate the participants' university choices and acculturation experiences. This form of research design

was necessary and advantageous to this study because the naturalistic paradigm highlighted the predominant position of using qualitative methods for data collection and analysis (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006), although a naturalistic paradigm does not necessarily prohibit a quantitative approach. The researcher's original personal interest was to explore and understand the target participants' university preferences and adjustment process, specifically through deep communication by interviewing them. And the researcher—being the instrument to analyse the data—preferred to have theory emerge from the interview data (Admiraal and Wubbels, 2005). The qualitative design allowed the researcher to easily collect and manage this in-depth rich information. Further, and most importantly, in the views of Sale and Brazil (2004), a quantitative study is not suitable for a project like this which did not have a prior theory to test. Nor is rigor (scientific and objective) the most important criteria for assessing the quality of the inquiry (ibid). Conducting a quantitative research might be generally less time-consuming (Watkins and Gioia, 2015, pp.5), and it would also contribute to an accurate reflection of the overall population from which the sample was drawn (VanderStoep and Johnson, 2008, pp.6). This means that if the researcher utilized the quantitative method, the findings could be generalized and projected to the wider population of Chinese international students, from the smaller sample from the University of Glasgow (Koul, 2009, pp.82). But this actually depends on the exact sample size (ibid). In light of the constraints of time, manpower, and funding in this master's-level project, the sample size could not be large enough; therefore the characteristic of generalization in fact cannot be fully achieved in any way. On the other hand, in consideration that quantitative methods adopt close-ended and quantitative data, quantitative methods cannot adequately provide wide, deep, and specific information about the sample's experiences (Koul, 2009). Therefore, although quantitative methods may have some unique merits, those methods did not really fit the main purpose of this study. Instead, as suggested above, the adoption of a qualitative approach was comparatively more appropriate.

In addition, it was suggested by MacKenzie and Knipe (2006, pp.200) that:
"Any and all paradigms should better employ mixed methods rather than being restricted to any one approach, which may potentially diminish and unnecessarily limit the depth and richness of a research project."

Admittedly, combining both a quantitative and qualitative approach in a study can provide a better understanding of research issues than either the quantitative or qualitative approach alone (Lodico et al., 2010, pp.13; Punch, 2009, pp.290). But a mixed methods approach might not be suitable for a Master's student in view of this approach significantly increasing the level of complexity and demanding higher-level research skills.

3.3 Instrumentation

This qualitative study was based on semi-structured and single face-to-face interviews. There were, in fact, a number of methods that could be utilized within qualitative research, but the interview technique had certain advantages that made it appropriate in this situation (Gratton and Jones, 2010, pp.157-158). Beyond the fact that the researcher's initial purpose was trying to obtain relevant information through verbal in-depth communication with respondents, the interview technique, compared with others, can be more insightful and easier to adopt (ibid). However, one of the most significant risks associated with interviews was the interviewer becoming dominant and leading the interview in unwanted directions (ibid). In light of that, the researcher stayed cautious to avoid asking any leading questions.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were necessary because they allowed the researcher to probe useful answers about participants' university preferences and acculturation experiences in a both a flexible as well as a structured way (Conway, 2014, pp.251). Fully structured interviews were not used in this study because of their inflexibility (Gratton and Jones, 2010, pp.

156). Meanwhile, unstructured interviews were excluded as well because they would leave much of the information lacking focus (ibid). In addition, although group interviews (focus group) tend towards a more semi-structured nature (Silverman, 2004, pp.180), focus groups were not employed in this project as they demanded more skills of the researcher than any other type of interviews (Rubin and Babbie, 2010, pp.470). Although the project researcher had many previous experience conducting research, it was actually the first time for him to adopt the interview technique. The one-to-one interview technique was thus utilized.

Face-to-face interviews, furthermore, were particularly important in this qualitative research because they helped the researcher capture non-verbal communication (Williams and Vogt, 2011, pp.192-193). And in this study, face-to-face interviews were also possible because of the close proximity and low amount of travel needed.

The semi-structured interview was basically divided into three parts (See Interview Guide, Appendix A, page 76) which included an initial part for the participants' backgrounds and two main parts which addressed the two research questions. The first interview was informally piloted on a Chinese student who fit the target samples' profile, but was not one of the eight formal participants. At that time, no question demonstrated a need to be changed. In addition, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy of interpretation during analysis. All participants were clearly aware of being recorded, based on their reading and signing the consent form. And taking into account that English is not the first language of these eight respondents, the study adopted both English and Chinese to enable clear understanding between the interviewer and interviewees. However, language choice depended on the participants' own preference. Only one participant chose to fully speak English (See Example Transcript, Appendix B, Page 78) during the

interview while others used both English and Chinese. Each of the eight interviews took between fifteen to forty minutes.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

In light of this research exercise involving human beings, prior to actually commencing the study the researcher gained ethical approval from the University of Glasgow. Moreover, rather than being viewed as an afterthought or a burden, ethics was an integral part of both planning and the implementation process (Mertens, 2014, pp.12).

Possible ethical concerns could have risen from issues with the Plain Language Statement, Consent Form, and interview procedure as well as personal data management. Participants were firstly asked to read a Plain Language Statement carefully, which addressed the following: (a) the primary purpose and description of the study; (b) the expectations and requirements for the study; (c) the researcher's background and contact information; (d) the safety of the data management process and potential risks; and (e) participants' legal rights, especially their autonomy to freely withdraw from the study as well as withdraw any data supplied previously (Denscombe, 2003, pp.140-141). Participants also were asked to sign a consent form to indicate that their participation was voluntary. To allow the participants being sufficiently informed that it was a completely voluntary research, moreover, the researcher also left time for them to ask extra questions regarding the whole project before the interview started.

The researcher focused on the development of respect and beneficence with the interviewees as well as avoidance of poor practices and maleficence (Saunders et al, 2012). In accordance with best practices in research, the researcher tried to avoid any practice during the interview which might cause psychological or physical harm (Jackson, 2014, pp.46). Action had already been taken to prevent anticipated physical and emotional stress, including, for

example, avoiding asking sensitive questions in the interview, especially where participants were encouraged to discuss their problems and the negative experiences of their adjustment process. The researcher also tried to create a non-judgmental environment by showing respect both verbally and through body language during the interview. In order to allow participants to feel comfortable to take part in the study, the research was conducted in public and open places during the day, within the campus of the University of Glasgow.

Secondly, participants' involvement was kept anonymous, and personal information was held with strict confidentiality. This study dutifully abided by the research protocols commonly used in the UK (Gilbert, 2001, pp.50-51; Kuper, 2013, pp. 258). More specifically, during the study participants' identities were protected, and once the data collection was finished, personal information including the real names and contact numbers were replaced by pseudonyms, codes, or other numbers to ensure that no one could use the information to trace back to any of them (Babbie, 2009, pp.69). Apart from this, all research data on paper was stored and kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's own flat, and electronic data—the raw audio-recorded communication—was stored on the researcher's own password-protected computers. When the research and assessment of the dissertation is completely finished, all paper documents will be shredded and electronic files erased using software: Freeraser (ibid). In addition, the data and the results of the study will only be open to access by the researcher, supervisor, examiner, and participants themselves (University of Glasgow, 2015b).

Overall the whole study closely follow the ethical protocols of the University of Glasgow.

3.5 Sampling and Samples

Purposive sampling, the most common qualitative sampling technique, was

employed in this study (Marshall, 1996). As Polkinghorne (2005) noted, the selection of participants here should not be random. The primary objective here, thus, was to find participants with specific experiences (Creswell, 2007; Marshall, 1996). In this study, all the participants were interviewed mainly in the context of their experiences of overseas university choice, as well as experiences of being members of various sports clubs.

The researcher himself participated mainly in three sports clubs in Glasgow: two badminton clubs and one basketball club, spending approximately 500 minutes on exercise every week, including four to eight hours on club activities. The researcher knew many sports enthusiasts from these sports clubs and had many friends among them who were Chinese international students as well. Therefore the investigator recruited participants who were friends and athletes from his own wider social networks. Those participants, moreover, were recruited by personal invitation, either through phone calls or personal contact during club sessions.

Initially there was not a consensus in determining an adequate sample size for this qualitative research. However, considering the time and financial constraints and that many potential participants were not able to participate in in-depth exploration (Sandelowski, 1995), the researcher and the supervisor finally agreed that a maximum of eight persons was sufficient and realistic enough to provide richness of information. This sample size also allowed for a detailed examination of convergence and divergence of responses.

Overall, eight participants who fit the target profile were involved in the study. Interview participants' ages, regions of origin, levels of study, selected sports club(s), and weekly time spent on sports are specifically summarized in the following Table 2.

Table 2: Interview Participants' Profiles

<i>Participant number</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Club(s)</i>	<i>Weekly time in sports clubs</i>	<i>Geographic area</i>	<i>Course level</i>
1	25	<i>Football</i>	<i>6 hours</i>	<i>HeNan, China</i>	<i>Master</i>
2	23	<i>Badminton, Fitness</i>	<i>10 hours</i>	<i>Hunan, China</i>	<i>Master</i>
3	25	<i>Badminton</i>	<i>6hours</i>	<i>JiangSu, China</i>	<i>Master</i>
4	24	<i>Kayaking, Rock Climbing, Badminton</i>	<i>10 hours</i>	<i>ShanXi, China</i>	<i>Master</i>
5	26	<i>Badminton, Basketball</i>	<i>8-11hours</i>	<i>BeiJing, China</i>	<i>Master</i>
6	24	<i>Badminton, Swimming</i>	<i>11-12 hours</i>	<i>GuangXi, China</i>	<i>Master</i>
7	27	<i>Badminton, Camping</i>	<i>4-9 hours</i>	<i>HeNan, China</i>	<i>Master</i>
8	27	<i>Basketball</i>	<i>7-8hours</i>	<i>AnHui, China</i>	<i>Master</i>

3.6 Procedure

During the formal interview, the participants were first required to provide demographic and background information, specifically, their ages and what they were studying in the University of Glasgow. Following this, the interviews then moved to the next part which aimed at exploring the participants' university choices. In order to obtain useful information in a systematic way, the participants were encouraged to generally discuss their motivations to choose to study at the university and how they made that decision in the first place. They were next asked to talk about what they believed were the determinants that had influenced their decisions and how they ranked these determinants by importance. So far, the information they supplied was basically enough to answer the first research question in this project:

What are the main factors influencing Chinese international student sports

activists' decisions to study at the University of Glasgow?

However, for the purpose of understanding more comprehensively about the respondents' decision-making processes, the researcher asked participants to examine if anyone else from their social networks were involved in the university decision-making process and if participants considered other people's involvement as very influential. In addition, in light of all these participants being recreational athletes, they were also asked to explain if they considered that having relevant sports services, including facilities, activities, and communities, were important selection criteria as well.

Once the researcher believed that participants answered the questions regarding their university selection criteria clearly and sufficiently, the interviews then moved to the next section: whether sports participation influenced their acculturation. Considering that the participants might have found it difficult to understand the concept of what acculturation actually means, prior to their answers, the researcher clearly explained the meaning of it in English or in Chinese. After that, the researcher let the participants discuss their acculturation experiences, such as whether they believe they were acculturated well and how they coped with the problems that occurred in their acculturation process at the beginning of their time as university students. Each participant was then asked to describe the sports clubs he attended: what club(s) he joined, how often he participated in the club sessions per week, as well as his personal motivations to join in the club(s). By further asking about the role that sports participation played in an individual's transition to life at the university, and by intentionally allowing time for individuals to add other comments, the interview fully explored the final research question:

How does sports involvement help with their acculturation process at the university?

Although the description above shows the basic structure of how these interviews were conducted, the process of interview communication were slightly different between the eight cases, because the researcher put the participants' communication styles and needs first. These participants were encouraged to answer the questions in the way they preferred and to skip any questions they did not desire to discuss in-depth. But generally, the eight participants cooperated very well in the study. This cooperation may be because the friendship between interviewees and interviewer helped establish a good rapport for the interview. All the interviewees provided rich information to all the questions, and they all patiently answered the follow-up questions which were asked for the purpose of clarity. The interviews were later transcribed by the researcher. To ensure accuracy, participants were given the option to read over the transcripts to verify that the researcher captured the essence of their experiences and what they had hoped to share. But no changes were actually made to the transcripts.

3.7 Data Analysis

Verbatim data transcription and analysis process in this project were all performed by the researcher. Firstly, individual cases were analyzed using themes and categories (and sub-categories) to catch the relevant information from each single participant. Specifically, the template analysis approach was utilized to analyse the interview data (Cessell and Symon, 2004, pp. 256-257). The coding strategy used on all eight transcripts was thematic coding, which was suitable for a semi-structured, qualitative research like this study (Kretschmer, 2011). The coding process here, which involved initial coding and categorizing, also incorporated previous knowledge (which came from the literature review) that aimed to elaborate the category schemas (ibid). However, occasionally, the researcher also needed to create *in-vivo* codes from personal interpretation in order to maintain the connection to the terms used within data (Given, 2008, pp.472-473). The coding process, furthermore, also involved

hierarchical coding, which was a key feature of template analysis, that aimed to cluster together similar codes in order to produce more general higher-order codes (Cassell and Symon, 2004, pp.258). For example, participants' responses regarding the ranking of the University of Glasgow both nationwide and worldwide were all categorized into 'Ranking of the University' which was a sub-category of 'Educational Reasons'. Hierarchical coding here allowed the researcher to analyse these transcripts at a good level of clarity and specificity (ibid). In this first step, in addition, determinants related to each participant's university choices were coded by adopting Altbach's "push-pull model" of international students' mobility (1998). Eventually, all these codes under each theme provided details about the university selection criteria for each participant and the role that sports played in each person's transition to university life.

Secondly, cross-case analysis was used to compare cases, looking for both similarities and differences in the data. In this step, participants' answers about their university selection criteria were compared among the eight cases in order to see whether these participants were mainly affected by educational factors and economic factors, as well as whether they were significantly affected by other people's opinion who came from social networks similar to and shared by most Chinese international students. After that, the researcher synthesized the participants' experiences of adjustment, aiming at clearly describing some of the challenges that might face Chinese international students at the University of Glasgow and how sports participation might have helped them cope with the stress caused by those challenges. This coding process revealed interesting findings, which will be presented in the next chapter.

3.8Chapter Summary

For the purpose of ensuring the subjectivity of a qualitative study, every procedure of this project was given careful consideration. The researcher and the supervisor worked together in order to make sure the research context,

samples, approach, ethics, and data management methods specifically addressed the research questions in the best possible way. However, as explained above, this was the first time for the researcher to adopt a qualitative study with interviews; as such, there might be several sources for errors in this investigation. For example, the researcher's skills are still developing in terms of how to establish high trustworthiness, although the participants and the researcher were friends during the study while simultaneously staying 'bias'-free during the data analysis. These conditions may have limited the quality of this study to a certain extent. Further research training is required to improve this project in the future or to conduct any relevant studies at the next level.

Overall, this section described the methods that were adopted as well as the process of how this study was actually conducted. In conjunction with a qualitative research design, the researcher conducted eight formal face-to-face individual interviews in a semi-structured way. The interview data as well as the data analysis process were performed by the researcher on his own. Thematic coding was utilized through all eight transcripts before running cross-case analysis to compare them. Ethics, additionally, was carefully integrated across the whole research practice from the very beginning of the project design.

Chapter 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the thematic data analysis conducted in this study. First, the chapter explains the push-pull model in order to summarize the main factors influencing participants' university choices. Second, the chapter summarizes and combines the influence of sports club activities on the research participants' acculturation experiences. The final section of this chapter will highlight the significant or interesting research findings.

4.1 Main Factors Influencing Participants' University Selection Criteria

This study investigated recreational athletes', among Chinese international students from University of Glasgow, university selection criteria as well as the perceived role that sports participation has on an individual's transition process. Firstly, in order to systematically understand the main factors influencing their university choices, the researcher attempted to examine any factors that participants consider influential by asking them about their motivation to study at the University of Glasgow, the process of university selection, and all factors that they believe that influenced their decision making. The participants then were encouraged to rank the top three of these factors by importance. The push-pull model was adopted here in order to clearly answer the research question. Codes and themes were developed based on the participants' responses to the individual interviews and were later categorized as push and pull factors. Overall, there were a total of four major themes that emerged collectively from all interviews. These themes were as follows: (a) economic reasons (financial constraints); (b) educational reasons; (c) recommendations from social networks and (d) facilities and the wider environment. Economic reasons really are the only push factor found in this study; the rest are considered pull factors.

Push Factors

Economic reasons (financial constraints)

Economic reasons refer to the student's concerns about the financial aspects of overseas education, which are often reported as valued by international students from developing countries like China (Chen, 2011; Mariel et al., 2011). Considerations such as lack of funding or scholarships sometimes could push international students to make university decisions, versus basing their choices purely on their desire to attend a particular school (ibid). In relation to this study, however, one unanticipated finding was that Participant 7 was the only person

to rank economic reasons in the top three. His response was also the only one can be categorised as a push factor.

Participant 7 reports that, in his opinion, he did not consider other higher education institutions as he believed the University of Glasgow was the only choice that affordable. His financial situation somehow significantly pushed him to make the final decision, as the following example shows:

‘ Interviewer: Could you tell me are there any factors influenced your university decision making process?’

Participant 7: Yes...one of the reason is that studying and living in Scotland is relatively cheaper, it is something I can truly afford...but to be honest I like England more but it is too expensive...

Interviewer: Now could you please rank top three of these factors you just mentioned by the importance?

Participant 7: Yes....and the top two is its affordable price, like tuition fee...”

Pull Factors

Educational reasons

Along with the economic reasons, educational reasons is another group of factors that proved to be a major determinant in Chinese international students’ university decision-making process (Chen, 2011; Mariel et al., 2011). Educational reasons indicate that students may attracted by the academic aspects of the preferred institution (ibid). In relation to this study, these reasons included the university’s ranking, the university’s reputation, and the quality of the teaching it supplied. For instance, during the interview, Participant 2 indicated that the university’s ranking is the most important criteria:

Interviewer: Now could you please rank top three of these factors you just mentioned by the importance?’

Participant 2: Yes, OK, the top one I believe is its (University of Glasgow) worldwide ranking, according to the QS World University Ranking...I remember

in 2013, the first year I studied in here, it (University of Glasgow) ranked at 51 worldwide, what a fascinating ranking order... ”

In fact, all of the participants in this study ranked educational reasons as the top determinant. Some participants valued educational reasons because of the university itself while some because of their preferred master course. Furthermore, it is worth noting that a total of five participants valued the university's ranking as one of the important determinants, but four actually valued the worldwide ranking as the top one. Following this, three respondents ranked the university's reputation in the top three, while only one believed that the reputation of the specific course important. Two respondents, additionally, ranked the quality of teaching as the top second important factor.

Recommendations from social network

Previous studies indicate that another commonality shared between Chinese students is that their overseas university decisions could be, to a considerable extent, influenced by other person's opinions, such as their parents and peers (Bodycott and Lai, 2012).

Two (Participant 7 and Participant 8) among eight participants indicated that other peoples' recommendations significantly affected their final decision. For example:

Interviewer: Now could you please tell me why you particularly chose to continue your study in the University of Glasgow?

Participant 8: OK, in fact, before I made the decision, due to some reasons in relation to my family, I have more choices, like Liverpool, not just this University (University of Glasgow). But because my friends recommend me to study in Scotland, so here I am...'

Interviewer: OK, but what factors, generally, influenced your decision making process?

Participant 8: ...The second thing is because I have social connections around here (Glasgow) and they recommend me to come to study at here (University of Glasgow)...”

However, it is interesting that neither of them (Participant 7 and 8) actually ranked this factor as the most influential one (Top 1).

Further, when participants were encouraged to discuss to what extent do they believe other people’s involvement was influential, no one in fact indicated others’ suggestions or recommendations were more important than themselves. The majority (overall six) of them indicated that overseas university selection is highly dependent on autonomous choice, while only two indicated that others’ suggestions held the same importance as themselves.

Facilities and the wider environment

The previous literature about university choices for international students shows that students sometime also concentrate on the environmental pull factors (Bhati, Lee, and Kairon, 2014; Padlee, 2010).

Other than the educational character of the institution, some participants in this study also focused on the overall environment of the university setting which includes elements such as its campus, sports facilities, and the natural environment of the city in which the university is located. Among these, sports recreation facilities ranked as top third twice and the Glasgow city’s natural environment ranked once as top third and once as top second.

However, contrary to expectations, when the researcher required the interviewees to discuss whether they believe having a good sports environment—including advanced facilities and sports-related communities—was an important criteria for choosing a university, a majority indicated that

although they would take it into consideration, it was generally not that important due to multiple reasons, as the following example shows:

Interviewer: You are recruited in this study because you are sort of people love doing sports...therefore, in your university selection process, have you ever considered that having relevant sports facilities or services as one of the selection criteria?

Participant 7: Yes, I think if any university do not have advanced sports facilities, I must have very negative impression on it... because, for example, if it (the university) does not have these facilities, I probably should spend a greater amount of money on physical activities in other places...

Interviewer: So you have considered in terms of financial aspect of sports participation?

Participant 7: Yes, I have to take that into consideration...

Interviewer: But to what extent do you believe it is important? Do you consider it as one of the top three important factor?

Participant 7: Um...no, I took it into my consideration but it actually not that important....for example, even if I have to pay for other facilities and get a membership in other places, it is affordable and would not cost me too much...

4.2The Impact Sports Have on Participants' Acculturation

This section will present the role that sports has on interview respondents' adjustment process.

Improving English Competency

Participants 3, 5, 6 and 8 highlighted the benefits of doing sports in an English environment, for improving their English language competency. Below is an excerpt from an interview from Participant 5 describing his view about the benefits of sports on language improvement:

Participant 5: ...the second thing is, the sports participation do bring the opportunity to communicate with others, especially the people from other

countries. Therefore, it (the sports club activity) provides me many chances and increase the overall time for me to live in a full-English environment. In turn, it (sports participation) contributed to my language improvement and acculturation...'

Participant 3 and 6, in addition, mentioned that sports participation had a particular role in addressing their difficulties of understanding the Scottish accent, for instance:

Interviewer: Now could you tell me if you experienced any problems in your acculturation process?

Participant 6: OK, one of the biggest problem is that I really cannot understand the Scottish accent in the very beginning of time...

Interviewer: OK, but how do you address this problem?

Participant 6: Through more interaction, more communication and having more conversation (with others using English)...and sports participation is actually a good way which provided me many chances to interact and communicate with people using English...

Learning Local Culture and Traditions

Some participants indicated that sports club activities provide them an important opportunity for interacting with people from Glasgow and as such especially contributed to their understanding of domestic culture and tradition.

Participant 8's response is a good example:

You know, I like play basketball and I often go to the Gym. I meet, although most of them are Chinese, some students from Glasgow...through increasingly communication with (domestic students) them, I gradually understand the differences between them (Glaswegian) and our Chinese and it is important for me to understand their culture. This make me feel confident to live in here (Glasgow).

Participant 7 further highlighted that including his 'logical thinking, personal interest as well as manners and attitudes' were all shaped into 'Scottish' style during his cultural adjustment. Other respondents, however, failed to give specific examples of what was exactly learned about local culture.

In addition, interestingly, Participant 3 also believed that the increased communication with local people from club sessions in turn also contributed to his sports performance:

Participant 3: "...by increasingly interacting and talking with local people, I can know more about the way of their thinking, and thus I can also learn from how they play the badminton thus increased my skills..."

Making Friends

Very importantly, sports club can build up a ground for socialization through which participants can make friends who are truly helpful. Participant 1, for example, shares the following regarding how the friends he met in the Gym helped him with daily academic study and living in Glasgow:

Interviewer: Could you please tell me why you join the club?'

Participant 1: OK...and another reason is, as I told you, it is easier for me to make friends there (at Football club)...

Interviewer: OK, but how does it precisely connected to your acculturation process?

Participant 1: You just knew why I am doing the football, I mean making new friends. And, um, these friends mostly come from Glasgow. They can tell me a lot of things and information about Glasgow which I do not know...

Interviewer: OK, but how does the information they told you helped you acculturated?

Participant 1: For example...um...taking living things for example, they told me which supermarket is cheaper, like Morrison...And they can also tell me, you know as I am Chinese and not familiar with British education, they can told me

how to study in here, for example like how to do the presentation, how to write an essay... which are really helpful.

Addressing Loneliness

Three respondents indicated that sometimes they feel very lonely during their study in the university. The loneliness brought them many psychological pressures. Participating in group sports provided them a setting for socializing. It is the social benefits that helped them deal with the feeling of loneliness. The following comment come from Participant 8, when discussing the social benefits of sports involvement:

Participant 8: ...another thing about participating in sports is we Chinese students here (at Glasgow) normally live a single life. I come to this place (Glasgow) alone as well...then i meet many friends in sports clubs and they (team members) are really helpful...um...anyway, it is better than live in lonely...

Participant 5 also mentioned this sort of benefit that sports has by stating that:

Participant 5: I think firstly that I can communicate with other people (during the club session)...I think my psychological well-being can benefit from these interactions and communications with other participants...um...you know, I just want to have someone to talk to because I (feel)...um...

Interviewer: You mean loneliness?

Participant 5: Yes...'

Addressing Academic Pressure

Finally, Participants 4, 5 and 7 also indicated that it was hard for them to adjust to the intensive Master-level studies at University of Glasgow. They felt under extreme stress, for example, adjusting to the Scottish educational system or finishing the courseworks. The sports club sessions provided them a valuable chance to release the accumulated pressures from intensive studies. Participant 4 shares the following regarding this:

Interviewer: Now could you please tell me about your experience in terms of living and studying at here (Glasgow)

Participant 4: OK...um...you know firstly, the education system here (in Scotland) is so different from China...I have to take time to adjust to their (Scottish) way of education, it was such a big challenge for me! Another thing is, you know, we have to finish the Master level study (at University of Glasgow) just within one year, comparatively speaking, it was such an intensive job... You know it is not just because we have to learn a massive of knowledge during course time, we have to finish a great deal of course assignments as well (within this one year)...

Interviewer: Now, could you please tell me why you join these sports clubs?

Participant 4: ...um, it is also a good way for me to release my academic pressures...

Participant 5 concurred, saying that:

I think that the sports provided a basis for academic study. Because I would feel on edge if stay in my apartment to study all day long. The sports participation can make me feel refreshed. I would continue my study only if I am mentally ready and happy...

Negative Impact on Acculturation

The most striking result to emerge from the interview data is that more than half of the participants, overall five precisely, shared that sports had a negative impact on their transition. On the other hand, all of the interviewees agreed that the positive impact of sports far more outweigh its negative influence, and they all suggest that it is really worth doing exercise on a regular basis in a new environment. However, it could be interesting to note here that what those negative impacts were, exactly. First, respondents indicated that participating in sports activities sometimes brings injuries, and they often over exercised which caused many problems. Participant 2 states that:

Sometimes, it is a very painful process to recovery from the injury and over-exercise.

Moreover, two participants also believed that they have exercise addiction. For example, Participant 5 said:

I think I have the sports addiction (exercise addiction) problem and when I was off sports exercise some days, I felt really guilty!

More than half of the participants further claimed that participating in sports, sometimes, did take time and that could distract them from intensive academic study. They agreed that it was a tough challenge to balance time on academic study and physical activity. Although the aim of this investigation is to explore the benefits that sports have on students' transitions, negative influences discussed here may have valuable implication in terms of what cautions should be taken for sports participants.

4.3Chapter Summary

Overall, four major themes were identified that summarize the main determinants in participants' university choices. Among those, the only push factor was Participant 7's consideration regarding his financial problems. In contrast, the pull factors included educational reasons, others' recommendations, and students' considerations of the university environmental setting and facilities. All participants valued educational reasons at least as one of the top three, and half of the participants actually valued the university's overall ranking (worldwide) as the top one. In addition, no respondent indicated their university selection was more dependent on other people's opinions, and only a minority of respondents considered a good sports environment of the target university as an important selection criteria.

With regards to students' transitional experiences, sports participation can save research participants from having acculturative stresses by helping them improve their target language skills as well as facilitate understanding the

domestic culture. Social benefits of sports participation can assist students in coping with loneliness and broadening their circle of friends, who were helpful at addressing the problems caused by the unfamiliarity with daily living and studying in Glasgow. Sports, in addition, also helped effectively unload students' academic pressures. Overall, research participants suggested that sports not only kept them physically healthy but was helpful at maintaining their psychological well-being. The next chapter will then explain and illustrate the link between these findings and the relevant literature.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

In recent decades, researchers have started to examine the factors that contribute to Chinese international students' mobility (Liu, Elston and Zhou, 2013; John, 2007) as well as their sports participation behaviour during the transition process to an overseas school (Yan, Cardinal and Acock, 2015; Cahill and Stavrianeas, 2013). A review of the literature revealed that university choice factors related to the recreational athlete amongst Chinese international students has received no attention, and the way in which sports participation influences those students' adjustment and acculturation continues to be understudied. The purpose of this qualitative study is to bridge the above gaps. The research findings with regards to two research questions will be discussed in details in the following.

5.1 Participants' University Selection Criteria

Overall, this study found that similar to normal Chinese international students, those who regularly participate in sports clubs predominantly value educational reasons when they choose a university in a developed country, but comparatively speaking they tend to be less concerned about economic reasons and less influenced by other people's opinions in their social network.

All participants declared they were significantly motivated by the “pull” factor of educational reasons for choosing a university. Overall, this result is partially consistent with that of Chen (2011) and Mariel et al. (2011) who argued that students from developing countries emphasized educational and economic reasons when seeking education in developed countries. Moreover, among the educational reasons, in fact half of the respondents in this study indicated the most attractive reason for them to choose the University of Glasgow was its good ranking worldwide. Unsurprisingly, this finding aligns with the research from many other scholars, such as John (2007), who found that the university’s ranking is the most important selection factor for Chinese students, and they always placed the UK universities in an approximate global hierarchy.

In addition, a possible explanation for the majority of research participants not emphasizing economic reasons may be related to the drastically changing currencies of the China Yuan against the UK pound, which makes overseas education in the UK much cheaper for Chinese students (Currency Converter, 2015).

Previous research in international students’ mobility also shows that Chinese students’ university choices could be highly affected by other people’s involvement as a result of Confucian and highly collective cultural values (Bodycott and Lai, 2012). However in this study, although some of the participants did indicate that the advice from their social network was an important criteria, no one actually believed it exceeded the importance of their own decisions. It seems that the university selection process tended to depend on research participants’ own autonomous choices. A possible reason to explain this result may be that all the research participants are males in their twenties. The research finding coincides with Foskett et al.’s (2004) theory of students’ university decision-making, which argues that, unlike the females,

young males at this stage desire far more to demonstrate stronger independence in the process of decision making.

In addition, results from the current study also suggest that the environmental pull factors such as a university's infrastructure and natural environment would be important for Chinese. On the other hand, the findings show that these may not be as important as educational reasons in that no participant actually ranked this group of factors as the top one. Meanwhile, the recreational athlete may not prioritise the sports environment of their target university as a key factor in their choice of institution and, indeed, the interview respondents largely disagreed that sports facilities was an important criteria.

5.2 Influence of Sports Participation on Acculturation

With regards to the second research question, previous studies indicate that sports involvement mainly contributes to an individual's acculturation by firstly building skills and knowledge required to better adapt to the host culture. And secondly, sports helps address acculturation stress by facilitating learners with international backgrounds to actively access to a new social environment. Additionally, sports participation may also help release students' academic pressure and address coping with homesickness, as well as contribute to students' adjustment to local food.

In relation to this research finding, participants first of all demonstrated that sports club activities helped them build up the English competency that prevented them from suffering from language-related troubles. Academics indicated that poor proficiency in the target language could result in poor communication with members of the host culture (Zhang and Goodson, 2011; Yu and Shen, 2010, pp. 72-75) and terrible academic performance (Wang, Andre and Greenwood, 2014; Kwon, 2013; Wang and Hannes, 2014). Therefore, not surprisingly, the research participants who highlighted this

benefit of sports did not report any negative experiences regarding of language problems after they believed they had acculturated well. Secondly, through interacting with Glaswegian students, Chinese students facilitated their understanding of local culture, traditions, and customs, which saved them many potential troubles which might lead by misunderstandings. These findings are in line with the research conducted by Taylor and Doherty (2005) in Canada which showed that new arrivals with international backgrounds value sports participation as an increasing chance to learn target language skills and about the domestic culture.

Following the above the participants did indicate that regularly participate in sports club activities brought them social benefits. They however did not report any benefits of participation related to experiences with racism, which contradicted some research on the topic of sports, acculturation, and race-based discrimination (Johnston, 2014; Jarvie, 2006). For example a study conducted by Smith and Khawaja (2011) suggests that increased sports participation among international students may provide opportunities to increase intercultural communication and boost mutual understanding, thus helping reduce instances of racism and other types of stereotyping and discrimination. However, this theme did not emerge from this research. A possible reason for this is that in Glasgow, most of the people from domestic community are quite open and friendly to the international students from China. They are happy to talk, work, and help with Chinese students who are open to people as well. Participant 8's comment may support this as the following example shows:

I generally feel I did not experience many troubles in this (transitional) process....another reason, maybe, people here (in Glasgow) are nice and friendly. We always greeting to each other, we help each other, (for example) I have great relationship with neighbors... For instance, they (neighbors) always recommend me some great places to travel which

is really helpful...'

In addition, the above could also explain why no participant in this study reported experiencing racism during sports participation.

This study however found that there were mainly two ways that the social benefits of sports can address Chinese students' acculturative stress. Firstly, sports can broaden the individual's circle of friends, especially friends from the domestic community (Glasgow), who later could be helpful at addressing the problems caused by unfamiliarity with daily living and studying in a new culture. Also, sports clubs provide participants an environment helps them cope with psychological problems derived from loneliness. These effects perfectly support Brunette et al. (2011) who argue that structured group sports can provide a setting for social networking, which provides social benefits from meeting new people and dealing with loneliness.

In addition, this study also found that sports activities can effectively release Chinese students' academic pressures. This result aligns with Yan's (2012) study which demonstrates that students perceive sports participation as an effective strategy to have a break from their intensive academic study. Both the participants in my study and the participants in Yan's (2012) agreed that they enjoy the feeling of being refreshed through participation and have positive attitudes when going back to schoolwork. It can therefore be assumed that sports can also play a significant role in keeping a balance between brain-work and leisure entertainment. The interviewees' responses suggest that physical activity holds the potential for easing the challenges of cross-culture adjustment, with a conclusion that physical activity can increase Chinese international students' physical and mental health.

Although the participants discussed mostly positive experiences in their sports participation, some also mentioned its problems associated acculturation.

These unexpected problems involves such as injuries, over-exercise, exercise addiction as well as difficulty balancing time for academic study. Nevertheless, it is apparent that these problems are all based on the individual level, and participants in this study agreed that the social benefits of joining sports clubs outweighed any of negative effects, which they perceived as minimal.

5.3 Recommendations

Overall, based on the finding discussed above, this study provides the following insights that could be helpful for the University of Glasgow.

Firstly, if the university plans to target potential Chinese international students who are sports activists from the growing number of applicants, it should develop a new marketing strategy which caters to these students' requirements. The university should be aware that this group of students is probably less concerned about their economic situation, but predominantly value the educational aspects of the university—especially its worldwide ranking. The university, however, does not have to include these recreational athletes' parents and peers into their marketing strategy since their suggestions and recommendations tend to have very limited influence.

Secondly, the study also holds significance for the university to consider its role in the actual transitional experiences of Chinese international students. Although most of the university students are already adults, which means they should take responsibility for own health, the university still needs to help Chinese intentional students who are not adjusting well to ensure their well-being as well as academic success. Increased well-being would in turn contribute to the students' satisfaction and the university's good reputation, which this study has demonstrated is fairly important to Chinese students. Based on these results, it is vital that overseas universities understand the struggles that Chinese students encounter, because of their poor English

proficiency, lack of understanding of the local culture, yet-to-be-developed friendships, lack of sociability, suffering from loneliness and problems of balancing academic study. The university may need to come up practical strategies to help Chinese students who report poor health conditions due to these problems, by involving them into organized sports clubs.

Thirdly, medical services should be ready to help students who are over-exercised or injured. Suitable advice, moreover, should be given to inform students how to avoid exercise addiction and how to balance physical exercise with intensive academic study. These measures would eventually facilitate student acculturation and thus increase the institution's reputation as well.

5.4 Limitations

Before drawing any final conclusion, it is important to acknowledge that this current study has several deficiencies that should be addressed. For instance, the major limitation of this study is embedded in the research design. First, the interview participants recruited may not accurately reflect the whole group of Chinese international student (recreational) athletes from the University of Glasgow since these participants share so many homogeneous characteristics. For example, they all came from mainland China and enrolled in the master-level course in the university, and they also only represented members from a few sports clubs. One alternative approach would have been to have a sample comprised of individuals who meet the target profiles as well as represent a broader demographic and background. This would also have expanded the sample size. Another shortcoming may could be addressed by conducting several cross-disciplinary researches in order to ensure the reliability of the data. For example, the research participants in this study reported that their language competency substantially improved by attending fitness clubs. This, however, may only be the participants' own perception. Ideally, the project would need to run a follow-up scientific study, utilizing a variable-controlled experiment to see

for example if the stress index changed when participants were exposed to the second language environment—both before and after participating in sports clubs, to test if those club sessions did contribute to their stronger language competency (which includes linguistic confidence).

5.5 Implications for Future Study

Implications from this research study are also important to consider as there are many ways to build upon this research study to ensure a greater contribution in the field.

First, this study did not include several areas that future research could continue to explore to further our understanding of the sport participation experiences of Chinese international students. For instance, this study only examined how sports club activities affect an individual's transitional process. The research participants were already involved in the sports clubs in Glasgow, but the experiences of those not involved in sports clubs remains unknown. I think the university may be interested in understanding not only how sports participation works for students' transition, but also in what facilitates as well as what creates barriers for students to take part in sports activities. This study, moreover, only examined male Chinese students' transitional experiences associated with sports participation. Future research could also include female experiences, or build up an empirical framework to compare the differences between males and females. Another interesting area that this study intentionally did not cover is that it did not examine the students' transition experiences connected to cerebral sports such as international chess or Chinese chess. Future research in these areas could be illuminating. This recommendation may provide insight into how different types of recreational activities contribute to students' cross-cultural adjustment.

Second, the findings in this study suggest that the negative influence of sport

participation on acculturation may be a complex interaction that continues to deserve attention. It would be helpful to understand if these negative impacts can be completely avoidable. Questions might include: What could be more appropriate strategies to increase the effectiveness sports on students' transition? Is sports participation the most cost-effective way for students to acculturate? Overall, the implications discussed all above may also need to utilize further qualitative studies to answer specific questions about this field.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The review of literature found that recreational athletes amongst Chinese students who study abroad tend to have an easier transition process compared to non-sports persons. They also hold the potential of healthier physical and psychological well-being and the higher likelihood of boosting multicultural understanding. However the review of the literature indicated that this group of Chinese students' university preference has received no attention in research, and how sports participation contributes to those students' adjustment and acculturation continues to be understudied.

This researcher utilized a qualitative study for the purpose of bridging the gap which exists in literature in order to compare this study's findings with those of previous academics. With a qualitative design, specifically, the researcher conducted eight formal semi-structured interviews in order to obtain research data. The researcher talked with all eight participants individually face-to-face and then interpreted their responses by employing thematic analysis. After a thorough investigation of all of the research questions in the study, the following conclusions were drawn based on the results.

With relation to the first research question, firstly, similar to typical Chinese international students, those recreational sports athletes value educational reasons as predominantly important, especially the target university's (worldwide) ranking. Secondly, compared with typical Chinese students, recreational athletes worry less about their financial situation when they choose overseas higher education institutions. Thirdly, relatively speaking, Chinese recreational athletes' university selection depends more on personal autonomous choice rather than other people's opinions. In addition, most Chinese recreational athletes are not really concerned about whether the target university has a good sports environment or infrastructure.

With regards to the second research question, sports participation can address Chinese international students' acculturative stresses by helping them improve their target language skills as well as facilitate an understanding of Glaswegian culture. Also, social benefits of sports clubs can minimize Chinese students' acculturation stresses by broadening their circle of close friends in a new culture and assisting them to cope with feelings of loneliness. Sports, in addition, can be beneficial at effectively releasing Chinese students' accumulated academic pressures. However, additionally, there are also some negative aspects of sports, such as injuries and exercise addiction that need Chinese students' attention.

Several positive impact and outcomes may derived from this study. For instance, the research's empirical practice has contributed to the development of the researcher's overall interview skills. The marketing effectiveness, furthermore, of the University could benefit from the research's results regarding the participants' university requirements, and its students' overall well-being could benefit from the results with regard to participants' acculturation experiences associated with sports participation.

Since I am very passionate about these topics, I will continue my study in relevant fields in the future. To enhance my research effectiveness, I would like to conduct future studies with a team of researchers who share the same interests.

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Appendix A



University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Interview Question Guide

***An Investigation of Male Chinese International Students'
University Choices and Their Acculturation Process: With a
Particular Focus on those Students Who Attend Sports Club
Sessions on a Regular Basis***

Background Details

Participants profiles: ***Tell me***

- ***Who you are***

Motivation: ***why you choose to study at University of Glasgow?***

Regarding their University Selection Criteria

What makes them to study at the University: *What do you believe that affect you university selection process?*

-Can you tell me more about your university selection process?

-What do you think the main factors among them (Above) affected your process

of choosing University of Glasgow?

-Can you rank them together by importance?

-Do you consider that having relevant sports services, including facilities activities and communities are important criteria in your university selection process? And please explain that to me.

Did you make the choice on you own?

-Was anyone else involved in this decision making process? Like your parents or friends who might given you some suggestions or recommendation.

-Do you think their participation is influential in this process? To what extent and why?

Regarding their Acculturation Process Associated with Sports

[Define Acculturation to participant]

Can you talk about you life of studying and living here?

-Do you think you settled well here?

Can you please talk about your acculturation process here?

- Has anything has helped your acculturation?

- Has anything caused you any problems in terms of your acculturation here?

-How do you cope with that?

Thinking now about your participation in sports clubs...

Did you regularly participate any sports club sessions before you come to Glasgow?

Can you tell me why you joined our club?

-What do you believe the role of the sports participation is in your life here?

-Do you think participating in the club session has any positive or negative impact on your acculturation here? If so How does it affect you?

(If more negative, why you still join the club here)

Final Question

Do you have anything to add?

Appendix B

Example Transcript: Interview with Participant 1

(the only full English interview)

Interviewer/Researcher:<Int>

Participant 1: <P1>

Briefing... ..

Int: The first thing is, id like to know do you want to use English or Chinese, any language is OK in this interview, just choose one you like.

P1: English.

Int: OK, the first question is id like to know, like who you are, where are you come from, what are you doing in Glasgow , anyway just your background information.

P1:um...first of all, i am a postgraduate student in University of Glasgow and im doing real estate, urban study program, which is ranked first in the UK. ...um... Im a male student, i love sports very much, especially for football. So i attend football club in our university...um...so...please ask any ques ion do you like about my participation experience.

Int: Sorry, your age?

P1: Im 25 years old. And Im a Chinese from Henan province.

Int: OK, now please tell me why you choose to study in the University of Glasgow?

P1: Well, there are many reasons why i choose to study in here. First of all, as i said before, i love football, so this is the reason why i choose United Kingdom. Secondly, you know, im doing real estate and this major in our university ranks No.1 in UK, so this means my major has a good reputation and good quality in here, so there is no reason that i do not choose here. And thirdly, you know, British education has good quality and recognition, i mean high recognition worldwide, so i choose this education.

Int: Now you have told me a lot about why you choose to study in UK, but please could you tell me more about why you particularly focus on the University of Glasgow? Apart from the reason that its ranking very high worldwide.

P1: I think i told you before, yes, reputation and good ranking. In addition, firstly, this university can provide good quality of education, and you know, this university also ranks in the top level in the UK. So these are the reasons i choose here.

Int: So, do you think any factors affected you in your university selection process?

P1: Any factors? OK, the application process is difficult or not influenced me so much. If this university is difficult to apply, and you know everyone do not want to have so much trouble, i will refuse to take it into account. Yes, it is easy to access. And, secondly, you know, for the language requirement. For our

university, the IELTS result needs 6.5, so comparing with other universities such as the University of Manchester and University of Birmingham, the language requirement for University of Glasgow is a bit of lower than these universities. This is another reason why i choose here.

Int: So, do you think there are just only two reasons?

P1: No, another reason is for Chinese students population. According to the statistics from my consultant, he told me that the amount of Chinese students in England is bigger than Scotland. You know, i dont want to, during my study aboard, see Chinese students every day. So this is the reason why i choose Scotland.

Int: So you need a full-English language environment?

P1: Yes, for language environment. ...um...Id like to have a full-English environment for me. Everyday. And i can contact (with) people from different cultural background.

Int: Multiculturalism?

P1: Yes, multiculturalism, yes! It is good for me to know outside of world. Yes!

Int: Among all the factors you just mentioned about, could you rank them by importance? Which means what factors are most important? Could you rank top 3 of them?

P1: Top 3 for me? For my university choice?

Int: Yes.

P1: Um...first of all, reputation, university's reputation, this is the first and most important one. The second important, teaching quality, yes i also focus on teaching staffs' ability. Thirdly, university facilities such as library, and gym.

Int: OK, as you are a member of university's soccer team, do you think that an university have such as good facilities, services and sports communities is very important, In your selection criteria?

P1: Yes i think it has a close relationship of why i choose this university.

Int: OK, but how bad it is. Which means to what extent you think it is important?

P1: Um...its quite significant for me. You know the sports can cultivate a person's ability, perseverance, you know what i mean? ...um...A good socialize way as well, as i can play foot ball, its easy for me to make friends there.

Int: So that is why you consider this factor as important?

P1: Yes.

Int: OK, and do you think your university' choice is very depend on your own autonomous choice?

P1: Autonomous?

Int: Autonomous, which means, for example, your university choice very depend on yourself not on other's opinion.

P1: XXX (invalid answer given by misunderstanding)xxx

Int: OK, and do you think such as your parents, your friends' advice are very important for your university choice?

P1: Yes, of course, they (parents) are my sponsor! They pay for my study, of course, i should listen to their voices.

Int: You mean your parents?

P1: Yes, my parents, yes.

Int: So...um...now lets move to the next part of the interview. This part we would discuss more about your acculturation process and its relationship associated with your sports participation.

P1: Acculturation?

Int: Acculturation...um...i will explain it to you now, it means a process of how you adjust to the whole new environment. Is that clear?

P1: Yes. OK.

Int: Perfect, OK, could you firstly tell me your life about living and studying in the Glasgow. Generally, anything you want to talk about.

P1: OK, studying is not a easy task for me! As i told you, our major ranks No.1 in the UK. Every day, a lot of lessons. Every day, a lot of essays. So i write essay every day! And a lot of calculations as well, so for me its not a easy task! And as for living in here...um... for me i dont have so much spare time to enjoy my life, for me, the most enjoyable thing is to meet friends outside. We often

find somewhere and drink something and talk about something. This is the most enjoyable thing for me in here.

Int: But basically, are you settled well or not?

P1: Well i think im doing well. Because, for example, i passed every lessons, so i think i settled well.

Int: Um...are there any problems in your acculturation process? In the university of Glasgow and this new environment.

P1: Um...i think i can make every thing balance. I dont think there are so much problems for me. I can adjust myself to this new environment very fast.

Int: Dont you think the problem is your academic pressure?

P1: Academic pressure, obvious it is, but i dont think it is the main reason. I dont think it influenced me so much as im a student, undertaking the academic pressure for me is normal. I can accept it and it is reasonable.

Int: OK...

P1: And wait, sorry i also forget one thing. I think it is common to see in every good universities. As a student, especially, when you are in a good university the academic pressure will be huge. So it is common to see.

Int: So you think the pressure exist but cause you not so much problems?

P1: No, not so much problems.

Int: That is acceptable!

P1: Yes!

Int: OK, now lets move to the next part of this interview which is about your participation in the sports clubs. Now could you tell me how often do you participate in the sports sessions every week?

P1: Three times a week.

Int: How long?

P1: Every time maybe 2 hours. 6 hours overall.

Int: Did you regularly participate in the sports clubs before you came to Glasgow?

P1: Yes of course, i love sports very much!

Int: OK now lets move to the most important part of this interview. Now could you tell me why you join in the sports club and why you doing the sports?

P1: Um...Firstly, i will tell you why im doing it. You know, doing sports regularly will keep me healthy, especially im young, i want to have a healthy condition everyday! Secondly, when people doing the sports, the sports will cultivate his ability, as i said. We will have a strong psychological power, strong perseverance and a strong union-ship.

Int: Um...You mean Leadership?

P1: Yes, leadership. And for why i join the sports club, as i told you, it is easy to

make friends there.

Int: So you think the sports clubs can provide you a ground to access to the socialization environment?

P1: Yes!...

Int: And what do you think the role of the sports has and how does it precisely connected to your acculturation process?

P1: You just knew why i am doing the football, i mean-making new friends. And, um, these friends mostly come from Glasgow. They can tell me a lot of things about Glasgow which i do not know. So this make me much easier to adjust to this new environment soon and efficiently...

Int: So you think the socialization aspect is very important?

P1: Yes!

Interviewer: OK, but how does the information they told you helped you acculturated?

P1: For example...um...taking living things for example...um... they told me which supermarket is cheaper, like Morrison is cheaper than Marks and Spencer.

Int: So they helped you a lot on living stuff...um...that is the only reason?

P1: No...And they can also tell me, you know as i said i am Chinese and not familiar with British education. But they are the British they told me a lot about

how to study in the UK, for example like how to do the presentation, how to write an essay...um...like how to write my academic paper. Academic not...um you know, some times i always use spoken English. They can teach me a lot of things about study which are really helpful.

Int: So the benefits you get from socialization is the help on firstly living stuff and another is the...um...academic stuff?

P1: Yes.

Int: Um...do you think thats all you get from sports participation?

P1:Um...yes, thats all i get from sports participation.

Int: Um...do you think sports participation has any negative role to play in your life here?

P1: Negative role?

Int: Which means do you think that sports have any bad side to do with your transition life in Glasgow?

P1: No! I will never think doing the sports is a negative thing. I always think it is helpful for me, a best thing for me!

Int: Alright. OK, do you have any thing especially to add to...or do you have anything want to mention again about this interview?

P1: No.

Int: That is all you want to share?

P1: Yes, all my experiences have shared with you.

Int: Alright, thank you for participating in my interview.

P1: Thanks for spending time.

Int: Thank you for your time, man. Cheers! (END)