

Introduction

~~Increasing~~The growing numbers of international students, defined ~~here~~ as ‘individuals enrolled in institutions of higher education who are on temporary student visas and are non-native English speakers’ (cited in Andrade, ~~M.S.~~, 2006), have been ~~flooding to enrolling at~~ universities ~~in across~~ the Western world. ~~such as~~Institutions in ~~the~~ United Kingdom, the United States, ~~and~~ Australia, ~~as well as a range of other states,~~ ~~pursuing~~have been chosen by ~~international students seeking to attain~~ higher educational ~~qualifications~~ and ~~to~~ broaden~~ing~~ their horizons– (Akanwa, E.E.,Akanwa, 2015). From 2000 to 2014, ~~the~~ number of international students more than doubled, with an average annual growth of around 7%– (OECD, 2016; ~~c~~)cited in Yu and Moskal, 2019). ~~In~~Of the Western countries, the United Kingdom and the United States attracted ~~most the largest minorities of~~ international students, 16% and 13% respectively, in 2014 (Yu and Moskal, 2019; OECD, 2015). For the UK, the arrival of a ~~large growing~~ number of international students has made a significant contribution to ~~its~~economic growth and cultural diversification~~ty~~. For example, in 2010, ~~the~~ international students population ~~have~~ contributed ‘\$14 billion to the U.K. economy’ (cited in Smith et al., 2011; UK council for International Student Affairs, 2010).

~~Meanwhile, some~~Many international students ~~who have~~ stayed in the UK after graduation; ~~these graduates~~ tend to be ~~equipped with top~~knowledgeable and ~~skills~~highly skilled, in ~~different~~their respective fields. They ~~also have~~enriched ~~added value to~~ the UK labour market and ~~have promoted its~~boosted the UK’s international competitiveness. ~~Similarly, for~~International students studying in the UK ~~in turn,~~ they acquired ~~greater an unique~~ opportunity ~~of to~~improving their English, ~~thus~~ broadening their horizons, ~~being and they are~~ exposed to different cultures ~~and gaining better~~whilst obtaining a world-class education (Jibeen and Khan, 2015). ~~It seems to be mutually~~The growing influx of

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acculturative stress has been identified, ~~such as including stress elicited by~~ language ~~differences~~, academic ~~pressures~~ and psychological ~~stress factors~~. However, ~~these literatures studies were are~~ based on ~~different specific~~ populations ~~and at~~ different periods ~~of arriving in the migration host~~ ~~country trends~~. ~~Thus, and~~ this study ~~fills a gap in the research by further~~ exploring ~~es~~ the acculturative stresses ~~es~~ that CISs ~~in particular~~ experience ~~when~~ studying in the UK.

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~~In contrast, in the field of~~ In terms of studies on ~~ehurehchurch~~ engagement, few studies have concentrated on the experiences ~~s~~ of CISs. The limited existing literature ~~that available that has~~ examined the experiences ~~s~~ of international students attending ~~ehurehchurch~~ activities have focused on ~~their students'~~ motivations ~~for behind~~ participation ~~ong~~ (Yu and Moskal, 2019) and ~~generalised~~ ~~students their~~ experiences of acculturation at ~~a local ehurehchurches~~ (Sun and Rhoads, 2018). Therefore, there is a ~~literature key~~ gap in ~~the evidence base~~. ~~This study deepens~~ understanding ~~of~~ the role of ~~ehurehchurch~~ engagement in reducing ~~the~~ acculturative stress experienced by CISs studying in the UK.

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The ~~presentis~~ dissertation ~~aims to~~ provides ~~s~~ insights ~~valuable~~ for the educational community and ~~for other~~ organisations ~~that are~~ interested in ~~increasing~~ the well-being of international students. ~~Such as organisations include, not least~~ ~~ehurehchurches that work~~ to better incorporate CISs. The study also helps ~~and for~~ CISs to maximise their ~~ability to benefit from the~~ advantages of studying in the UK.

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Literature Review

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This chapter ~~will~~ reviews ~~the~~ existing literature ~~related pertaining~~ to international students' acculturation, acculturative stress, coping strategies,

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social support, and church engagement. The different manifestations of acculturative stress that international students experienced will be identified and the positive impacts of social support on acculturation and lowering acculturative stress will be discussed and analysed. It will also review studies that focused on international students' church engagement and their motivations for engaging in religious organisations whilst studying abroad are also highlighted. This chapter concludes with the justification of this dissertation study and a clear statement of its rationale.

The Definition of Acculturation and Acculturative Stress

Thomson and Hoffman-Goetz (2009) have reviewed the varied definitions of acculturation from sociological, anthropological and psychological perspectives (Berry, 2003; Gordon, 1964; Redfield, 1936). At the beginning its genesis as a concept, acculturation was considered as a one-dimensional process, that is, the process of giving up one's original culture and accepting the new culture after immigrating to a nonnative new socio-cultural environment (e.g. see Gordon, 1964; Rogler et al., 1991; Schwartz et al., 2010; Smith and Khawaja, 2011). A more recent and more commonly used definition of acculturation was provided by Berry (2005): 'the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members' (p. 698) (Zhou et al., 2018). Four different acculturation strategies are identified in Berry's (1997, 2003) works: 'Integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization' were identified in Berry (1997, 2003)'s work.

The concept of acculturative stress was first proposed by Berry (1970) and used as an alternative to the notion of 'culture shock' (Berry, 2006; Oberg, 1960). Berry (1987) defined acculturative stress as 'a reduction in the health

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status of individuals, and may include physical, psychological and social aspects' (p. 493).

~~In addition, there~~ There are many different definitions of acculturative stress, ~~all~~ of which generally refer to ~~the~~ negative ~~results-aspects~~ of ~~the~~ acculturation process (e.g., Allen et al., 1998)

Acculturative Stress

~~Among-Within~~ the extensive ~~research-literature~~ on acculturative stress; studies mainly focus on the classification of acculturative stress (e.g., see Berry et al., 1987; Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Ying, 2005), factors ~~affecting-causing~~ acculturative stress (e.g., see Parr et al., 1992; Sakurako, 2000; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Kim, 1991; Yang and Clum, 1994), potential stressors (e.g., Chen, 1999; Dao et al., 2007; Trice, 2003), the impacts of acculturative stress; and ~~the-key~~ coping strategies ~~(REFS?)~~.

Classification of Acculturative Stress

Smith and Khawaja (2011) ~~concluded~~ state that ~~the~~ acculturative stressors ~~as~~ take place at the levels of language, academic, socio-cultural norms, discrimination and practical ~~stressors~~life.

~~Earlier~~, Berry et al. (1987) ~~have~~ classified ~~the~~ acculturative stressors into five main ~~sub~~ categories (Zhou et al., 2018):

- Physical environment: stressors ~~relating~~ to accommodation and safety ~~issues~~ (Berry et al., 1987; Bradley, 2000; Zhou et al., 2018).
- Biological: ~~the~~ stressors ~~relating~~ to physical ~~and mental~~ health
- Social: stressors ~~relating~~ to seeking opportunities to build new social networks and ~~concomitant~~ ~~the~~ experiences of loneliness (Savile et al., 2008).

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International students who ~~have~~ left their home country, families, and friends need to build new social networks in their ~~ir~~ host country; ~~decisions and actions in this respect are~~, ~~which are~~ influenced by ~~their~~ personalities (Brisset et al., 2010; Wang and Mallinckrodt, 2006), language proficiency (Townsend and Poh, 2008), cultural differences between ~~the~~ home and host countries (Lee et al., 2004; Mori, 2000; Triandis, 1999; Yeh and Inose, 2003), and local social support ~~mechanisms~~ (Ward et al., 2001). A number of studies ~~have~~ reported that the more ~~ex~~ introverted ~~they~~ students are, the higher language level they have, the smaller the cultural differences between the two cultures, and the more social support they receive, the easier ~~it is~~ they find it to build new social networks and the lower ~~the~~ levels of social stress they ~~would~~ experience (Brisset et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2004; Mori, 2000; Townsend and Poh, 2008; ~~Triandis, 1999~~).

Many studies have shown that social stress ~~often can~~ lead ~~s~~ to a sense of loneliness ~~among for~~ international students, especially during the first few months of their stay (e.g., ~~see~~ Chataway and Berry, 1989; McLachlan and Justice, 2009; Sawir et al., 2008). ~~Among some~~ ~~S~~ studies of ~~a~~ international students from Asia, ~~whose cultures are~~ characterised by collectivistic ~~culture~~ values and strong family ties, ~~have found that these students~~ tend to ~~have face~~ more difficulty ~~to in~~ making friends and building relationships with locals in the host country, ~~featured which – in the West – are more shaped around by~~ individualistic ~~culture normative~~ values (Mori, 2000; Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Triandis, 1999).

● *Cultural*: stressors ~~due to~~ arising from ~~the~~ cultural differences between ~~the~~ home country and ~~the~~ host country (Yeh and Inose, 2002)

While ~~each~~ international students ~~may all tend to~~ experience a certain degree of acculturative stress ~~in when~~ adapting to a new environment, many studies have found that the greater the cultural difference, the greater the ~~degree of~~ acculturative stress they ~~may~~ experience (e.g., Choi, 1997; Furnham and

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and providers that helps manage uncertainty about the situation, the self, and the other or the relationship and functions to enhance a perception of personal control in one's life experience' (Albrecht and Adelman, 1987 p. 19).

(p.19) is the definition of social support provided by Albrecht and Adelman (1987).

Two common forms of social support are informational support and emotional support (Rose & Campbell, 2000; Thuen, 1995; Ye, 2006)

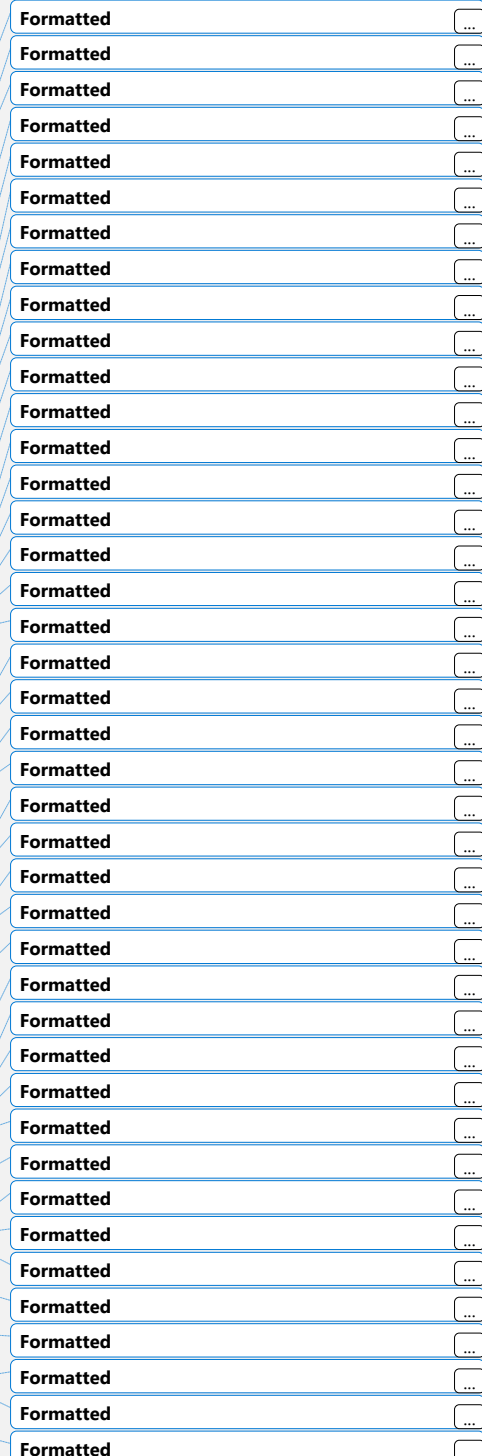
- Informational support: this refers to providing practical, knowledge-based advice or assistance related to individuals in the facing of difficult and stressful situations (Uchino, 2004; Ye, 2006).
- Emotional support: this refers to verbal or nonverbal expression of caring and concern (???, cited in Ye, 2006 p.???)

The latter is often expressed as encouragement, compassion, understanding, and concern through verbal or nonverbal expression communication, such as including giving hugs (Ye, 2006).

Social support is considered as an effective coping strategy that can alleviate and manage the acculturative stress that international students experienced, which. This contention is supported by various studies of international students (e.g., see Arends-Toth and Can deVijver, 2006; Safdar et al., 2003; Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Ward et al., 2001).

Social Support Within and Beyond the Classroom

Social support can be at times provided by, and facilitated by, university service deliverers, and at other times it is accessed and developed volitionally by individual behavior and actions. Leask (2009) emphasises that social support takes place within and outside the classroom: both are equally important factors in supporting and furthering the acculturation process (Yu



and Moskal, 2019). Social support within the classroom cannot be underestimated; ~~and~~ teachers play an important role in the international student acculturation process on campuses (Yu and Moskal, 2019). As Cushner (2008) suggests, ~~the teacher acts as a~~ 'cultural translator and mediator', ~~teachers link~~ linking the formal courses with a wide range of events ~~in across a~~ the global context. ~~However,~~ Stone (2006) and Ward (2001) ~~have found,~~ ~~however,~~ that higher education teachers are not adapting sufficiently ~~when~~ dealing with ~~to the heightened influx of~~ international students; ~~they claim that~~ teaching staff are failing to help students, ~~particularly to those from countries~~ ~~with~~ deal effectively with significant cultural differences; ~~this finding is,~~ ~~which~~ is also supported by Dessel (2010) and De Beuckelaer et al., (2012).

Compared to classroom interactions, which ~~is are~~ more academia-orientated ~~de-~~ centered, extracurricular activities ~~and organisations~~ such as clubs ~~and~~ festivals can provide a variety of opportunities for international students' ~~to~~ enhance their ~~intercultural integration and establishment of meaningful~~ social networks (Couros, 2009; Yu and Moskal, 2019). ~~In the meantime,~~ ~~substantial~~ Several notable studies indicate that most international students ~~who~~ ~~tend to~~ get involved in ~~to different~~ extracurricular activities ~~do so to achieve~~ ~~engage in~~ social interaction and ~~to~~ build friendship with locals, ~~thus thereby~~ decreasing ~~the~~ acculturative stress (Brown, 2009a; Holmes, 2007; Marginson, 2014; Tran ~~&~~ Vu, 2017b; Yang, 2016; Yu and Moskal, 2019).

Social networking with co-nationals, other international students and locals is ~~another an~~ important ~~source means~~ of ~~accessing~~ social support. In general, ~~such~~ social networking seems to have a significant buffering effect on ~~adapting to~~ difficulties ~~in adapting to the new culture by,~~ ~~thereby~~ lowering ~~their~~ acculturative stress (Safdar et al., 2003). However, Brown (2009a) ~~has~~ found that there is a lack of interaction between students of different backgrounds in

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~~an the~~ intercultural environment ~~of the campus~~. The main reasons ~~for this~~ ~~include the~~ locals' lack of interest in interacting with international students (Brown ~~&and~~ Holloway, 2008; Brown, 2009a), ~~the~~ limited and superficial interaction ~~opportunities~~ (Brown, 2009a; Dunstan, 2003; Eisenchlas ~~and&~~ Trevaskes, 2007; Peacock ~~and&~~ Harrison, 2008; Yu and Moskal, 2019), and international students' fear of being unintentionally offended, embarrassed, ~~and~~ stereotyped, expelled, ~~and-or~~ misunderstood (Peacock ~~and&~~ Harrison, 2008).

The coping strategies used by CISs ~~were-are greatly~~ influenced by their culture (Mortenson, 2006). In general, CISs ~~would-tend to~~ choose self-control as ~~the-a~~ ~~major~~ coping strategy when dealing with acculturative stress (Bai, 2016). They ~~were-are often~~ educated to be patient and ~~to~~ not complain when they face difficulties (Zhou et al., 2018).

Positive ~~I~~mpacts ~~of~~ Social ~~S~~upport

~~Well-documented~~The literature has consistently shown that social support has a positive impact on reducing acculturative stress ~~amongst~~ international students ~~experienced~~ (e.g., ~~see~~ Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Misra et al., 2003; Ra, 2006; Zhou et al., 2018). ~~Key~~The main effective sources of social support ~~are~~ ~~include the~~ services provided by universities and other ~~formal~~ organizations (Misra et al., 2003), the establishment of new social networks (Ra, 2016) ~~and~~ ~~support~~ from ~~their~~ peers and families (Bertram et al., 2014).

Studies ~~concentrating-focused~~ on CISs have identified the ~~significant~~ positive role of social support in helping ~~to~~ alleviate acculturative stress (Bertram, Poulakis, Elsasser, ~~&and~~ Kumar, 2014; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Ye, 2006; Zhou et al., 2018). ~~For instance~~, Bertram et al. (2014) and Ye (2006) ~~have~~ found that social support ~~from others~~ and ~~the-new~~ social networking ~~have~~ ~~and~~

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Christian ~~ehurehchurches~~ ~~can be seen as~~ thus act as a strategic cross-cultural and socio-~~al and languaginguistic~~ ~~practieing venue~~ medium for CISs (Yu and Moskal, 2019). ~~Their~~ CISs involvement in ~~ehurehchurch~~ activities often stems from their strong ~~will~~ ~~desire~~ to interact and connect with the local culture, ~~which is as is the case for many similar to the motives for~~ immigrants and refugees ~~engaging who engage~~ with local religious organisations (Constant and Massey, 2003; Yu and Moskal, 2019). ~~It is reported that E~~ evangelical ~~ehurehchurches~~ tend to be ~~very~~ friendly and welcoming ~~to and this can~~ attract international students (Yang, 1998). ~~For instance, M~~ many ~~ehurehchurches~~ provide dinners ~~and/~~ student lunches; ~~they~~ offer airport pickup services, ~~held~~ ~~hold~~ “international café’ ~~sessions~~,” and invite international students to attend Bible discussion ~~groups~~ where they can ~~practise~~ see their English. In addition to providing material support, religious organisations ~~can be regarded~~ ~~function~~ as a vehicle for international students to assimilate to the host culture. Thus, CISs ~~who that~~ attended ~~ehurehchurch~~ activities ~~often find they can~~ ~~pursue~~ ~~build~~ more rewarding and meaningful relationships (Yu and Moskal, 2019). Unlike university services, ~~that~~ lack continuity and adequacy ~~in terms of of~~ ~~their~~ ~~role as~~ cross-cultural ~~facilitative media~~ ~~or~~ for CISs, ~~through by~~ attending ~~ehurehchurch~~ activities regularly, ~~CISs~~ ~~would feel grateful for thereceive~~ ~~ample~~ linguistic, cultural, academic, and psychological ~~help~~ ~~support~~.

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~~It was also found that~~ CISs ~~were engaged in church~~ activities are also provided with ~~much more~~ ~~many~~ opportunities to build friendships, ~~practise~~ see English, ~~learn about~~ ~~be exposed to~~ different cultures, acquire information, access resources, and gain psychological and practical assistance (Yu and Moskal, 2019).

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~~I, therefore, argue~~ ~~contend~~ that CISs at ~~the~~ University of Bath ~~who are~~ engaged in local Christian ~~ehurehchurches~~ ~~to gain~~ ~~enjoy~~ a range of ~~significant~~ ~~and tangible~~ benefits; ~~a crucial~~ ~~one of~~ ~~which is to~~ these is that they experience

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lower acculturative stress and a greater ability to cope with the myriad pressures they face in the UK. Although some studies pertaining to church participation exist that have focused on the motivations and experience of international students ~~to who~~ attend religious organisations, ~~it is still unknown that to what extent do~~ it is vital to deepen knowledge and understanding of how CISs in particular experience and respond to acculturative stress and ~~that~~ how can ~~ehurehchurch~~ church participation help to alleviate that stress.

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Research ~~Q~~uestions:

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~~Accordingly, this~~ This study ~~follows onis fed into by from~~ existing studies of ~~n~~ international students. ~~It has and~~ examined ~~the~~ acculturative stress ~~of in~~ Chinese students ~~in and around~~ who engage with religious organisations ~~at in~~ Bath.

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~~The research aim:~~ Core Research Question

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To what extent ~~might does~~ engagement in religious groups help to alleviate acculturative stress in Chinese ~~i~~ international students studying at the University of Bath?

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This ~~broad-core~~ question is ~~broken down~~ ~~complemented into by~~ the following more specific research questions:—

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Research objectives:

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1) To what extent do Chinese international students at the University of Bath experience acculturative stress?

2) ~~To what extent~~How have Chinese international students been affected by engaging with ~~different types of~~religious groups in Bath in terms of their integration and acculturation?

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Methodology

Introduction

A qualitative ~~approach~~methodological approach was used in this study to explore the acculturative stress that the sample of CISs experienced and the role that engagement with Christian ~~ehureh~~churches has played in alleviating ~~their that~~ acculturative stress.

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This chapter outlines ~~the detailed justification of~~ the research design and gives a detailed justification of the adoption of the philosophical underpinnings and the data collection and analysis methods. ~~Firstly, the~~The chosen foundational philosophical assumptions underlying this study and their congruence with the research question will be detailed. ~~It will then describe the~~The research procedure, ~~such as the process of~~including the participant recruitment process and the data collection methods, is then outlined. Finally, the researcher engage in's reflection on the and key ethical considerations will be addressed-relevant to this study.

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Philosophical Underpinnings

In terms of its ontological stance, this study assumes that the nature of reality is ~~restricted by individual~~intersubjectively negotiated and constructed through social interaction (Bryman, 2012; Burr, 2003; Ormston et al., 2014). As Bryman and Bell (2003) suggests, objectivists argue that 'independent social actors' can shape the nature of reality and truth and that people can only passively accept the social world as neutral observers of a stable reality.

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Considering the nature of this study, the researcher has participated in recruiting participants, collecting data and data analysis, so objectivist-This objectivist or 'realist' ontology is rejected here because the sample of. The study attempt to examine CISs and their² acculturation experiences of acculturative stress and church~~church~~ engagement whilst studying in the UK need to be understood in perceptive terms. Because I am concerned with perceived motivations, subjective experiences, meanings, associations of ideas and normative evaluations at the level of the subject, I adopt a, and thus constructivist/interpretivist ontology was adopted in this study.

As Bryman (2012) suggests, an epistemological stancey answers the question of determines what the proponent claims can be known and how it can be known, as well as the nature of the knowing subject. Interpretivism insists that there is no objective reality on earth which is operationally independent of human subjectivity, and Therefore, the only way that people can understand and interpret the world is through social interaction and analysing by existing in an ideational interplay with broader and intangible social structures (Hovorka and Lee, 2010). In this study, each the Chinese international students' experiences of the ²s acculturation process is constructed seen as through a product of social interaction discourses and their values. A acculturative stress as well as and church~~church~~ engagement experience needs to beare relevant concepts here insofar as they are interpreted as such by the participants (Myers, 2009; Scotland, 2012). Hence, the The epistemological position of this study is thus interpretivism as it focuses on interviewing and interpreting each the study uses interviews and researcher-participant dialogue to participant's develop a clearer impression of the personal experiential side of acculturation experience, acculturative stress; and the role of the benefits of church~~church~~ engagement.

Research Design

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tools used by researchers to collect data in a qualitative research studies. Unlike focus group, which involves a group discussion to explore the opinions and ideas of a chosen group of people on a particular subject (Edmunds, 1999), interviews can effectively generate detailed explore the ideas and allow for of individuals and allow them to express their personal feelings, opinions, and ideas-values independently of their respective group associations (Francis, 2000). Moreover, the respondents may often feel more confident and comfortable during such interviews, as they are more motivated to can share their deepest ideas, feelings, emotions and experiences about a particular topic without being concerned about how they come across to others being in the discussion at the same time group (Mason, 2002). Given that this This study aims to explore CISs' intra-personal experiences, rather than exploring the degree of consensus in terms of acculturation on a particular subject experiences, so interviews would be more are the most appropriate data collection method for this study.

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In addition, The semi-structured interviews were performed conducted to gain obtain knowledge of data on CISs' personal experiences, points of view, and understandings (Irvine, 2012) concerning their acculturation process and their church church engagement in the UK. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to prepare a small score schedule of questions and to take these questions answers in off into distinct spontaneous directions based on what when the participant's answers bring up a significant or pertinent issue. Thus, the semi-structured interviews can provide the for a high degree of researcher flexibility, enabling me to improvise through by asking more flexible, off-schedule questions, allowing the researcher to and thereby to obtain a deeper and wider-reaching knowledge understanding of the participants' respondents' perceptions, ideas and and their ideas as well as beliefs (Bryman, 2016). Such an approach is also extremely appropriate if the researcher has some pre-existing understanding in relation of the overall topic,

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Data Analysis

All participants chose to be interviewed in Chinese, and the coding process was ~~also accordingly~~ conducted in Chinese. Thirteen participants were interviewed over ~~a period of~~ fifteen days ~~span~~ in August. Each interview lasted from 12 minutes to 56 minutes depending on the willingness and confidence the participant ~~has had to in~~ sharing their opinions and experiences. ~~In order to~~ ~~To~~ codify ~~e and interpret the data~~ easily and accurately, the transcripts were not translated into English. All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. The transcriptions were read several times ~~whilst I took notes~~, and data were coded and ~~then~~ collated into several themes. The method of data analysis used in this study ~~is was, broadly speaking, that of~~ thematic analysis. As thematic analysis is theoretically ~~flexible~~, it can address different kinds of research questions ~~in in alignment with~~ different ~~theoretical~~ frameworks. ~~Especially,~~ thematic analysis can be used to answer research questions associated ~~to with~~ the opinions and ideas of individuals (The School of Psychology of Auckland, 2018).

~~In order to~~ ~~To~~ effectively analyse ~~and interpret~~ the transcripts produced from ~~all the~~ interviews, I coded the data by identifying recurring ~~themes phrases, topics,~~ ~~words and points of emphasis~~ (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I read through ~~all~~ the transcripts several times and ~~tried to identify~~ recurring themes, ~~also~~ ~~noting themes~~, which ~~potentially~~ relate to ~~the~~ existing literature. However, some ~~other new~~ themes, ~~that were~~ not ~~formerly~~ covered in previous studies, were also found ~~in during~~ this process (Boyatzis, 1998; Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Ethical Considerations

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An ethical approval form was presented to the SSREC ~~at the~~ Department of Social and Policy Sciences at the University of Bath and this study was fully approved before conducting the interviews (Code: S19-067). This research was rigorous in ~~was eager~~ putting all measures in place to not to expose respondents participants to any harm (May, 2011).

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~~The~~ My position ~~of as an~~ 'insider' may ~~cause~~ have affected my ~~less-ser~~ relations and dialogues with the interviewees ~~positivity regarding some information due to~~ because my pre-existing relationships with some ~~of the~~ participants and the fact that I have attended ~~most may church~~ church activities ~~they alongside them attended~~ mean that the interviewees may have conveyed their opinions in a different way to how they would if speaking to an unknown researcher. This therefore introduces certain methodological and validity issues which are discussed later.

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~~Moreover,~~ Since some of the participants ~~have already~~ got to know ~~knew~~ I was recruiting Chinese international students ~~for my study,~~ they might ~~feel~~ have felt compelled to participate ~~when I talked to them about~~ in the study. ~~However, the purpose of the study and~~ For this reason I repeatedly asserted their right to withdraw at any time ~~had been fully notified before they agreed to participate for any reason, and I emphasised that they were under no obligation to partake in the study and there would be no negative consequences from withdrawing whatsoever.~~

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A ~~main core~~ principle ~~closely related to~~ in research is 'beneficence ~~—~~ doing good for others and preventing harm' (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2000, p.95). Because ~~the data was were~~ collected ~~by in~~ interviews, I was ~~acutely~~ aware of the importance of evaluating how and to what extent sharing ~~about their~~ personal experiences, particularly those regarding stress and possible psychological problems, ~~may have affected the participants.~~ I accordingly

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ensured that the participants were aware of support services they could access if any issues in the interview discussion caused them any distress.

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Research on the ~~The~~ acculturation process can be a sensitive topic and can ~~make participants feeling~~ emotional, and possibly harm them vulnerable (Allmark et al., 2009). ~~In this study, the participants need to look back to their experience of feeling challenging or stressful after their arrival in the UK~~ This is why I made it clear where participants could access professional support should they need it, and I reminded them that they were under no obligation to reveal or discuss anything that they find upsetting.

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Kavanaugh and Ayres (1998) ~~suggested argue~~ that the researcher should be alert ‘throughout the research process for signs of potential distress’ (p. 95) and that the researcher needs to adopt different approaches to avoid harm coming to respondents according to the respondent’s ability to “reveal and manage his or her own distress’ (p. 95). ”

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If the participant is willing to share his or her experiences of stress openly and deeply, and he/she is able to cope with that ~~this or her~~ stress during and after the interview, then the participant should be allowed to guide the researcher ~~throughout~~ the interview (Kavanaugh and Ayres, 1998). However, for participants who are reluctant to reveal their stress or who have limited ability to in dealing with their stress, it is absolutely necessary to stop further exploration of this area topic (Kavanaugh and Ayres, 1998). ”

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Therefore, the questions ~~had been were~~ written and ~~proposed read with~~ sensitivelity and with tact; ~~and~~ probing questions had been avoided were not posited when the participant was unnot willing to talk more about one a question or showed themselves to be upset in doing so.

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During the interviews, all the participants were ~~animated~~ highly vocal, open and engaged, and ~~seemed un~~not-affected emotionally while telling their stories—~~whatever the depth is.~~

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Mutual respect and trust between ~~the~~ researcher and participant ~~s are~~is the basis ~~for~~a core component of a successful study: ~~I sought to build an~~, and this was ~~achieved by~~ open and honest communicati~~ve rapport~~en (Tindall, 1994). ~~Thus,~~ ~~All~~ participants were provided with ~~an~~ informed consent ~~form~~, ~~an~~ information sheet explaining the aims ~~s~~ of the study, ~~their~~a clear overview of their rights ~~including the right~~ to withdraw at any time, and ~~how~~a comprehensive ~~statement as to how~~ the data ~~will were to~~ be stored and used (Denscombe, 2014; Smith *et al*, 2012). ~~The p~~

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Participants were ~~promised-informed~~ that they ~~have-had~~ the right to ask any questions at any time and ~~have-they~~ signed the consent form prior to the interview. ~~It was clarified that consent was on an on-going basis and that should they withdraw at any point then the interview recording would be destroyed and any materials pertaining to them would be deleted.~~

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~~The participants were encouraged to ask questions at all stages and signed the consent form attached to the Information Sheet when I ensured that they fully understood its contents.~~

Ethical ~~research~~ practice is a dynamic process and participants' consent ~~is necessarily on-going~~; rather than being a 'once and for all prior event' ~~it is~~ 'subject to negotiation over time' (BSA 2002, p3).

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~~It is argued that the researcher cannot~~ Researchers cannot completely guarantee 'confidentiality', ~~and-but can-they can only~~ assure 'anonymity' (Smith et al, 2012). Before the interview, the participants were aware that their names, ~~ehurehchurch~~ names, staff names and other identifying information would be anonymised. They were ~~also~~ informed that my supervisor can access this

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~~stress~~coding and thematisation of the data. ~~This acknowledgement has made~~
~~me~~ I became more aware of the ~~significance~~ importance of ~~bracketing~~ such
assumptions throughout the process ~~conducting of undertaking~~ this study
(Smith et al., 2012).

~~In order to make sure that the~~ To ensure the themes I identified represented the
~~accounts of~~ the respondents' ~~and not my~~ foci and to increase the degree to
~~which the themes conveyed their own priorities and not mine~~ account, I
~~criticised my interpretation of the transcripts and asked for~~ engaged in critical
~~dialogue and discussion over my transcriptions with~~ my supervisor's advice.

As suggested by Smith (2012), I used a detailed reflection diary ~~was created~~ to
record my ideas and ~~challenge my presuppositions and~~ opinions throughout the
process ~~of analysis~~.

~~There are still many~~ Some notable constraints ~~to the generalisability, reliability~~
~~and validity of~~ this study exist, primarily ~~with regard to~~ in terms of the
sampling process. As mentioned ~~earlier~~, the sample was not ~~sufficiently~~
~~diverse, large-scale or cross-sectional to achieve a strong~~ representative
~~value~~ enough; all ~~were participants were~~ studying at the University of Bath;
most of the participants ~~had~~ attended at least one of two ~~“International Café”~~
~~sessions”~~ in the two Christian ~~Church~~ Churches; and all participants ~~are were~~
studying at PG level. ~~These scoping criteria have meant that students at other~~
~~universities, those who are less engrained in church activities but who are~~
~~beginning to be, and students at other levels, may have reported significantly~~
~~different experiences~~. Thus, the data may not be generalised ~~to~~ and thereby
~~found applicable to~~ all CISs who attended ~~church~~ church activities whilst
studying in the UK (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014; Smith et al, 2012;).

~~As mentioned, my~~ My position; as a Chinese international student who ~~has~~
attended ~~church~~ church activities and ~~has~~ helped out was ~~possibly~~ problematic
~~insofar as the participants' awareness of these factors may have affected their~~

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conducted in Chinese, ~~and whereas~~ the themes I identified and presented in the findings ~~were (in English. This translational process)~~ may ~~not have meant loss of meaning and/or an amplification of my own interpretive bias when emphasising certain phrases or codes~~ ~~fully represent the transcripts considering the difference between two languages.~~ ~~Moreover, the lack of literature~~ ~~Finally,~~ ~~addressing the role of~~ ~~the dearth of research into~~ ~~the effects of~~ ~~church~~ ~~church~~ engagement (especially those on acculturative stress) among international students, whilst comprising the rationale for the study, has made it difficult for me to compare and contrast my findings with those of others. ~~may influence the relevance of the review, as this is the core of this study.~~

Findings

The findings from the semi-structured interviews with ~~the~~ 13 Chinese international students ~~will beare~~ presented in following sections. Different ~~forms and expressions of~~ acculturative stress ~~that the~~ CISs ~~have~~ experienced during their stay in the UK ~~will beare~~ described, ~~and themes regarding~~ ~~pertaining to~~ ~~church~~ ~~church~~ engagement as a coping strategy ~~will beare~~ ~~presented~~ ~~dissected and discussed~~. These themes include language practice, social community, increased cultural knowledge, and practical and psychological assistance. Finally, ~~the~~ negative effects of ~~church~~ ~~church~~ engagement ~~on~~ ~~in terms of~~ lowering acculturative stress will be discussed.

CISs' ~~A~~acculturative ~~S~~stress

All ~~the~~ participants ~~had encountered~~ ~~shared~~ acculturative stress in their transition to ~~the~~ UK student life in ways that centred around ~~terms of~~ language, cultural differences, academic life, social ~~isingation~~, and practical ~~life~~ needs. It was ~~reported~~ ~~found~~ that language stress, academic stress, cultural stress and social ~~isingation~~ stress were ~~all positively~~ correlated.

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Language-Related Stress

Although most participants expressed that although they were mentally prepared and had achieved an eligible IELTS score before they arrived in the UK, they still reported language proficiency issues to be as a major source of acculturative stress. However, participants with different levels of English abilities expressed these stresses varying in terms of their social, academic, career-related, and psychological aspects. Regarding informal social life settings, the extensive use of idioms and slang, the diversity of English accents, second language pressures, fear of making mistakes and being a sense of feeling awkward were found to affect the participants' confidence and their willingness to socialise with English-speaking people.

Since the English teaching is more test-oriented and he the participants had been less exposed to English-speaking people than their European peers in China, he they found he have reported having more difficulties in communicating with the English than European peers did.

One participant shared her experience of using an improper word in a conversation and was whereby she was seriously corrected by a native speaker: this, which made her feel not lacking in confidence and inferior when interacting with locals after that thereafter:

I was sharing my experiences of going to the peak district, and I wanna say the sheep's droppings, but at that moment, I can't find a proper word, so I just use "shit" to describe, and then a British at our table said "droppings". He looked very serious and not in a friendly way, which embarrassed me a lot. I had a sense of inferiority after that. (L)

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Some other participants ~~who~~ also pointed out that they ~~had~~ tried to respond ~~concisely quickly and simply~~, and ~~they would~~ rarely open themselves ~~in up for~~ fear of embarrassment; ~~echoed such feeling~~.

I am not confident to have deep conversations with them and locals speak so fast, I can't stop them 10 times saying "say it again", can I? So I learnt the best way to avoid being awkward is to keep conversation simple. (V)

At the beginning, I attended many different clubs, like debating, dancing. But the first time I went there, people spoke so fast, I can't fully understand, this made me feel so uncomfortable and embarrassed. So I didn't go these clubs any more after that. (H)

Many of the ~~interviewees had in therefore~~ attempted to hide their language deficiencies; ~~they~~ did not ask for explanation when necessary, and ~~they tended~~ to socialise with Chinese peers.

Since a higher level of English proficiency is required in academic settings, the fact that English ~~as was~~ their second language ~~may result in caused increased~~ ~~their~~ academic stress. Several participants reported difficulty ~~in~~ understanding the lectures, ~~especially when the lecturers had ve strong accents~~; ~~they avoided~~ asking questions during or after lectures, and ~~they sought to avoid~~ expressing their ideas confidently during lectures and seminars; ~~they and~~ were reluctant to communicate with their lecturers even when they had some ~~doubts issues~~ ~~about or queries about~~ the lecture.

I think we are expected to have the same language skill with locals in academic life, but to be honest it took us much more time and effort to read and write, and understanding the lectures is so hard, especially the vocabulary and different lecturers' accents. (V)

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One participant expressed that it was impossible for him to achieve distinction in a course due to a time-limited handwriting examination:

We need to answer two questions from six given-set questions within a 2-hour time frame. The maximum words I can write within 2 hours is 3000, but one of my course mates wrote 6000 words with references. That was impossible for me; I am just hopeless about getting a distinction (K).

As well as in part from social and academic life, language proficiency has also affected them in the workplace. One participant was doing a part-time job in a restaurant; her manager's accent affected her working efficiency ability and her desire and confidence to work in the UK.

My manager is from Italy. His English has a very strong Italian accent, it's so hard for me to understand his instructions and my efficiency was strongly affected. I just tried twice and then I gave up. (H)

A was doing an internship in the summer, she expressed that even she found that language has not become a barrier in her work, social and academic life, she because 'as a non-native speaker, I was assigned to do more basic jobs and was not paid'.

Language was not always seen as a barrier. X, studying TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), highlighted that language for me is not a barrier; I would rather say it's a huge source of stress.

She didn't report any difficulties in terms of language, but her strong desire to have an authentic British accent and impress native speakers, and along with her expectation to achieve native speaker proficiency, had level resulted in considerable pressure stress.

Stress R-related to Ccultural Ddifferences

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The differences between Chinese and British cultures ~~s can be manifested~~ ~~in~~ became pertinent in different aspects of ~~the~~ CISs' lives in the UK. Although such differences helped CISs to broaden their horizons, ~~them can lead~~ they also led to difficulty in socialising and ~~the to a~~ lack of a sense of belonging.

Participants provided various examples, ranging from ~~those relating to~~ social norms ~~to those relating to the~~ drinking culture ~~to and~~ eating culture, ~~which put pressure on them~~. Some participants reported ~~their concerns about cultural difference and about~~ their lack of knowledge ~~about of~~ British norms and expectations. ~~Some CISs attributed the difficulties to their different cultures and ways of socialising~~. X shared her confusion that British jokes for her were so hard to understand and ~~that~~ she found it tiring to pretend laughing at these jokes when everyone else was laughing. She said *'there is so much sarcasm in their conversation and I am not sarcastic person'*.

P expressed that some political topics in social settings ~~may can~~ result in embarrassment and frustration:

They often talk about various topics over meals, such as Tiananmen Square, Brexit. But to be honest, I don't know much about politics and I am even not interested in that. When they asked me some political issues, I just said sorry I don't know. At that moment, I felt like I ~~am was~~ ignorant, which frustrated me. (P)

H ~~also echoed with P that~~ shared her experience of participating a quiz party ~~that~~ made her feel ~~so~~ upset and inferior:

The quiz night for me was like a nightmare, ~~even if even~~ I can understand what's the question ~~is, bt but~~ I don't know any of those answers. I was just like an idiot. (H)

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The differences in the ways ~~they the two cultures~~ socialise ~~also~~ included how they greet. A expressed ~~that~~ shaking hands and hugging made him feel ~~unnatural and ill at ease and~~ awkward.

I think shaking hands is way too formal for me and hugging is just like too intimate. I don't really like it.

~~Another~~The other participant ~~echoed~~ stated that their interactions with locals are often superficial.

British drinking culture ~~also~~ affected ~~the~~ CISs' acculturation. In Chinese culture, drinking, especially excessive alcohol consumption, is socially discouraged. Therefore, some CISs reported that it is uncomfortable for them to go clubbing, ~~because~~ they may suffer from ~~the a~~ sense of loneliness and ~~lack of a~~ sense of ~~not~~ belonging.

P described herself as an introverted person and ~~stated that she~~ had no interest in nightlife ~~that as~~ many British students ~~would enjoy~~ tend to.

Some of my British course mates had invited me to go to a pub or even a club at the very beginning, but I personally don't fancy it and I feel our lifestyles are so different. I don't like fast food like Mac Donalds. So I just don't hang out with them. And after a while, no other foreign friends invited me. (P)

~~Apart from~~As well as ~~the~~ differences in social norms and drinking culture, ~~the~~ severe criticism of ~~the~~ Chinese government and Chinese politics also frustrated one participant.

When they criticise my country, my people, sometimes in an unfriendly way, and it's not true accurate, it made makes me so upset and angry. (X)

Non-L Language R related A academic S stress

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Although many participants reported facing academic challenges as ~~the~~ a key source of stress, the ~~degree~~ nature and sources of academic distress varied from individual to individual. Most

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~~As it mentioned above, most~~ participants found it hard to understand the lectures due to a lack of language proficiency. This barrier can definitely increase ~~their~~ academic stress and make ~~them~~ CISs spend ~~much~~ more time reading the textbooks or ~~other relative written~~ materials. In the initial stage of acculturation, academic stress can also resulted from the teaching styles, the curriculum, interdisciplinary ~~from notions of knowledge from~~ undergraduate to postgraduate levels, time pressures and personal expectations.

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Participants ~~have expressed~~ different views of ~~the~~ British educational system and teaching style. Some participants reported that they had not previously used-encountered ~~to~~ seminars and presentations, which required students to share their own ideas. As H said:

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I've never had seminars back in China, so when I got to know that everyone was supposed to share their own opinions, I felt very uncomfortable and nervous. I prefer speaking after I have done enough research around one topic and when I really want to share.

Some participants reported anxiety around some ~~100~~ forms of assessment, especially when it ~~is~~ involves assignments or presentations ~~based~~.

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I still remember doing a 25 minutes presentation in the first term, and it was so scary. I needed to answer questions from my course mates and lecturers after presenting for 30 minutes. And it's 100% presentation-based assessment. I felt so anxious and spent almost one month ~~to~~ preparing, and it still didn't go well. (V)

friends in China, so usually I felt especially lonely at night when they were 2 am or 3 am. (K)

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Practical Stress

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Some participants mentioned spoke of different the practical problems they had experienced. Several participants complained about the public transport system in Bath and sometimes it expressed that they often took them over had to wait for up to 1 hour to wait forget a bus to the university bus. One participant found it this very really difficult and less efficient to makesaid that it posed challenges in attending important appointments. She had been late to a booking at the an appointment with dentists when she was sufferinged from painful toothaches. Some other participants echoed this expressing that even though they had paid costly health insurance but had found that the medical system was disappointinged.

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Church Church Engagement as a Coping Strategy

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The other focus purpose of this study was to examine the impacts of CISs' engaging in church church events regularly. These impacts that emerged as relevant to the interviewees ranged from those pertaining to language practice and socialisation to those concerning spiritual growth. Participants mentioned that Church Church engagement as a group activity that had significantly helped them to alleviate their acculturative stress.

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Church Engagement: Language Practice

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All participants regarded practising English as a major key benefit of engaging in church activities. Many participants mentioned that although there were many CISs at the church, especially at the International Café, they all spoke in English, which is and this was different and easier to access compared from to when they were at in lectures. Helen expressed that within of the 10 times of speaking English outside of the classroom, at least 5 times were happened were at the church. Moreover, Volunteers at the church tend were reported to be very patient and friendly to in encouraging CISs to talk in English confidently, which and this provided CISs with more opportunityies to practise English and buildt their confidence in speaking English sense of proficiency. A expressed that he felt more comfortable speaking English when he was talking to Christians Church members because he would not feel judged and the Christians Church members were really fully engaged in to the conversation.

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Christian friends are mainly native, and their accents are quite standard. And I feel they tend to slow it down when they speak, so I can fully understand. Also, when they say some native expressions or some words that I don't know, they were are really patient to in explaining them to me. So after several months, my English has naturally improved a lot, especially in terms of listening, speaking and vocabulary. (A)

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Some participants also reported their undergoing progress in their vocabulary and expression s about relating to cultures and the Bible. This progress had allowed them to interact with locals better and to meet other internationals and engage with them over on topics of different of cultures and faith more confidently and comfortably.

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I learnedt how to introduce Chinese New Year and acquired many new words and expressions about cultural issues, that's because my church friends would introduce different cultures in the

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International Café and it ~~kind of~~ helped me to pick up these useful expressions. (A)

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These improvements ~~of in~~ language skills ~~also~~ helped them to develop their ~~general~~ communication skills and social skills ~~in their host society~~.

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Social ~~Co~~community

It ~~has been frequently~~ ~~was frequently mentioned~~ stated throughout this ~~dissertation~~ that socialising ~~was~~ an effective method of alleviating international students' acculturative stress. ~~This was supported in the findings~~.

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As L said, 'talking to people comfortably itself releases my stress and is a way of recharging'. Most participants agreed that ~~the church~~ provided an ideal place for socialising and relaxing. Participants mentioned several ~~advantages and~~ differences between ~~church~~ events and other social events.

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Firstly, compared to other social events ~~organised~~ by the ~~U~~niversity, people of different age groups and nationalities ~~sy~~ were engaged ~~at in~~ the ~~church~~. As H said:

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~~I can meet people that are very different, for example, some ~~Christian~~ volunteers are retired British people and ~~currently~~ working people. Talking to older people makes me feel ~~so~~ comfortable and they are so knowledgeable, wise and full of wisdom.~~

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The diversity of ~~the church~~ members' backgrounds ~~can make~~ ~~made the~~ conversations more meaningful and helpful for ~~the~~ CISs. ~~Church~~ members ~~were said to~~ have distinctly different experiences, expertise ~~areas~~, skills, and points of view, which ~~makes~~ ~~made the~~ CISs more willing to ask questions and ~~to~~ acquire ~~new~~ information. For these participants, the processes

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profound, and this~~which~~ attracted and impressed P ~~and~~ ~~and brought~~gave her the a sense of belonging at ~~ehurehchurch~~.

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When they were really open about their life stories, I was touched and gradually ~~I~~began to open ~~up~~ myself. Throughout ~~the process~~, we truly ~~ge~~et to know the person. The familiarity and closeness ~~about~~ among the people in this environment make me feel safe and warm. (P)

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Some respondents ~~even~~ described the ~~ehurehchurch~~ as their second home and the ~~ehurehchurch~~ members as family members. The care, ~~welcome~~, company, ~~welcoming~~ and attention of the atmosphere had won the trust of the CISs and ~~freed had them from~~countered their loneliness ~~and bore~~. Some respondents reported that they had received sincere care from kind and warm-hearted ~~ehurehchurch~~ members, ~~which and that this was~~ one of the key differences with to other social events;

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People are really warm-hearted and nice. You can tell that they really care for you and all the conversations are so comfortable. I feel so accepted and cared for at the ~~ehurehchurch~~. (J)

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Finally, some participants had established close relationships with ~~ehurehchurch~~ members beyond the confines of the ~~ehurehchurch~~ building. Some participants had met up with ~~ehurehchurch~~ members to read the Bible, while ~~some several~~ participants were invited to ~~ehurehchurch~~ member's house-homes over Christmas. Such intimacy helped the CISs to feel warm, and being loved and supported, which ~~definitely~~ helped them to reduce their stress.

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Increased Cultural Knowledge

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Most of the participants expressed their desire to acculturate into British culture and they agreed that attending ~~ehurehchurch~~ events regularly had contributed to accelerating their acculturation to into the wider British society. The CISs'

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knowledge ~~about of~~ the UK and other countries had ~~ve~~ been increased ~~through~~ ~~by~~ interacting with British ~~ehurehchurch~~ members and ~~with~~ international students from other countries. ~~“~~“Cultural nights” ~~”~~ ~~that aimed at~~ introducing different cultures and festivals, ~~attending as well as~~ Bible discussions and Sunday congregation services, ~~were highlighted as increasing the CISs cultural knowledge and understanding.~~

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~~First,~~ ~~Since~~ most ~~ehurehchurch~~ members ~~are were~~ British, interacting with them ~~can~~ helped the CISs ~~to~~ understand ~~more about~~ their ways of thinking, greeting and acting ~~better.~~

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H expressed that she tended ~~to~~ hug people ~~for when~~ greeting ~~them since~~ ~~because~~ she ~~had~~ received hugs every time she went ~~into the ehurehchurch, and~~ although ~~it was this is~~ very different ~~from to~~ Chinese traditional culture ~~it was~~ ~~welcomed by her.~~

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Not only CISs ~~were~~ engaged in ~~the ehurehchurch~~ activities, but many international students from Europe and other states ~~also~~ actively participated. Socialising with people from other countries ~~also had~~ helped the ~~CISs to~~ gain ~~new~~ knowledge about other cultures.

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Some participants ~~were had been~~ invited to attend ~~a~~ British weddings ~~s~~ at the ~~ehurehchurch~~ during the summer and they ~~had~~ regarded ~~it this~~ as a benefit ~~of to~~ attending ~~ehurehchurch~~ events and building friendships with the ~~ehurehchurch~~ members ~~who just got married.~~

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If I didn't go to ~~ehurehchurch~~, I ~~can~~ would have never known ~~N (the bride)~~ and I would not ~~have been~~ able to witness a British wedding.

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~~Second,~~ ~~both~~ ~~Both~~ ~~ehurehchurches~~ ~~provide hold~~ events that ~~reflect celebrate~~ cultures, festivals and customs from Britain and ~~some~~ other countries, ~~such~~ ~~as and these include~~ British greetings, Irish night, Japanese night ~~a~~ and Pancake

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Some participants ~~who had~~ joined ~~B~~bible discussion ~~groups~~ and congregation services, ~~and they~~ reported that through worship and reading ~~the B~~bible, ~~they became~~ ~~had become~~ ~~more~~ calmer and ~~more~~ peaceful.;

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I don't believe in Jesus, but I have to say every Sunday when I ~~was am~~ sitting in the ~~ehurehchurch~~ building, I feel# so peaceful and grateful. (X)

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One participant ~~onee had~~ suffered from severe academic stress, ~~and~~ he felt less stressful ~~though by~~ reading ~~the B~~bible one-~~to-~~one with a ~~ehurehchurch~~ member, ~~who~~ also prayed for him.;

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These academic stress is still there, ~~but~~ what has changed is my attitude towards, ~~thatose~~ stress. I was so touched by his prayer and ~~these~~ words in the Bible comforted me so much. (B)

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Some participants expressed ~~that~~ their ways of thinking, their personality, and even their lives ~~had~~ changed after engaging in ~~ehurehchurch~~ events.;

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I used to think ~~the notion of~~ God is ridiculous, and the story of Jesus turning water into wine ~~is was impossible implausible~~ and unrealistic. – But when I ~~really~~ read the Bible, ~~still~~ I didn't read too much, ~~and but I~~ got to know more about my Christian friends. I think I had prejudicial ~~beliefse~~ before, and I am more open-minded and tolerant now. I began to accept and try to understand ~~things ideas that~~ are different ~~from what to those that~~ I believe ~~in.~~ (L)

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I was baptised last month, and I think my life ~~has~~ changed after coming to ~~ehurehchurch~~. (B)

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Negative ~~E~~ffects of ~~ehurehChurch~~ ~~E~~ngagement

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Although most participants reported ~~several tangible~~ positive benefits to ~~their~~ ~~life when asked about the effects of~~ ~~ehurehchurch~~ engagement, X expressed

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that the “International Café has labelled students according to their home countries”. X is a Christian who regularly attends Sunday congregational services and have has been helping out in at the International Café; several times.

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Everyone was like draping a flag. When they asked ‘what about your culture?’ I really don’t know what to answersay. I know they were are expecting me to share knowledge about of Chinese culture. But the thing is that we are individuals and we all have different cultural outlookses even though we are all Chinese. I think the types of questions and their introduction of some certain cultures are very biased. (X)

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Discussion

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This study has explored the acculturative stress that CISs often experienced and it has investigated the role of church engagement in alleviating their that stress in a sample of 13 students studying at the University of Bath. The other core purposes of this study have been the replication of were to deploy the qualitative methods and to advance on the existing literature body of evidence pertaining to the on acculturation of a specific group of migrants s — Chinese international students (Constantine et al., 2005).

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This study has highlighted some key factors affecting this the sample of CISs and their cultural adaptation in the UK, including factors such as preparation, language skills, social skills, and church engagement.

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Acculturative Stress

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When compared to the The literature exploring the acculturative stress experienced by international students in general has produced some similar findings have been to those of found between this study with existing

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literature, with such as language proficiency, stress related to dealing with cultural differences, socialisation-stress arising from social life and customs and academic stress were both identified as key forms of acculturative stress (see Constantine et al., 2004; Constantine et al., 2005b; Constantine et al., 2005c; Farver, Narang, and Bhadha, 2002; Koutrelakos, 2004; Mori, 2000; Ghuman, 1997; Pedersen, 1991; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2003).

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Although all the participants expressed herein stated that language proficiency is a major stress factor regardless of their language proficiency level, the language proficiency's influence on the level of stress experienced by each individual varied appeared to be a key feature. Since this study did not provide the a large-scaled sampled quantified dataset pertaining to the of CISs' experiences of stress and their language proficiency, future studies can would do well to adopt a quantitative approach to examine the correlation of between language proficiency and their degrees of acculturative stress, in different aspects.

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This study tends to align well accords with Berry et al.'s (2006)'s research study insofar as language skills were emerged as very significant in determining the CISs' acculturation processes and were associated with exacerbating social stress and academic stress. In addition, it This study provides more deeper qualitative insights into language proficiency's effects on CISs' experiences of career-related stress and psychological stress. As X, who studied TESOL, expressed her a strong desire to achieve native speaker level proficiency and had tried hard to "sound more British". Future studies on language stress can could explore the experiences of international students from studying different subject areas and with different expectations of self and different concepts of effective language use in academia.

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Moreover, The finding that the Chinese international students that reported frustration, a lack of confidence and even feelings of inferiority resulting from their limited language skills, repeated in the former literature, should raise the concern of University support services. For example, universities should take initiate measures to help them CSIs in coping with language difficulties in both social and academic settings, and they would benefit from providing visible and accessible professional mental health support.

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The In terms of the findings on stress related to cultural differences this study also echoed with previous studies. Differences in cultures, ways patterns and norms in socialising of socialising, the gaps of in cultural knowledge, and the a lack of perceived common-interests can make CISs feel cause upset, frustrationed, embarrassment among CISsed (Choi, 1997; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Lin, 1998; Yan and Berliner, 2011; Yang and Clum, 1994. This study also aligned with that of a study (Thurnell-Read, Brown and Long (2018) and their findings regarding on international students' experiences of a British drinking culture. Many that international students may feel excluded and lonely due to their because they cannot relate to or comply with this radically different cultural difference phenomenon.

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However, this study added more The present study adds detail to, s and gives a new perspective on, some of the findings in the existing literature: the severe and "biased" criticism of the Chinese government and of the Chinese political culture from the Western was found to distress and world may frustrate some of the CISs. Future studies should be examining the perceptions of international students when their cultures and or countries were are being criticised. Such experience also requires more Greater attention on should be paid to these international students' dignity and self-esteem from both within and beyond the campuses.

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difference scope with and address discrimination if and when they encounter it (Hunter, 2007; Uhlmann *et al.*, Dasgupta, Elgueta, Greenwald, & Swanson, 2002).

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The Role of Church Engagement in Helping CISs to Manage and Decrease their Acculturative Stress

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Given CISs' face various acculturative stress factors, church engagement, it emerged in this study, can provide substantial benefits to them in coping with these, including providing language practice opportunities, socialising community opportunities, cultural knowledge exchange, and practical and psychological assistance.

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Rose and Campbell (2000) and Thuen (1995) have classified social support into informational support forms and emotional support forms (Ye, 2006).

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Church engagement can serve as an effective form of social overall support to aimed at alleviating acculturative stress, through providing including both informational and emotional support mechanisms.

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In terms of informational support, interacting with local church members over and deliberating with them on different topics can provide them a range of enhancement of English vocabulary, exposure to new local expressions and increased knowledge of diverse areas subjects. Listening to the topic presentations about different cultures and festivals can appear to help them CISs increase their cultural knowledge, and attending Bible discussions and sermons on Sunday can were said to help them in gaining biblical knowledge as it applied to Western culture. The and practical assistance CISs received from church members such as going to hospitals together can help solve their practical problems helped the CISs to feel safer and that they belong.

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In terms of emotional support and coping strategies, church engagement was found to also play a significant role for the CSIs interviewed. According to Bertram et al. (2014) and Ye (2006), receiving social support from friends, families and other social resources can help to lower international students' experiences of acculturative stress. Specifically, the solemn, safe and welcoming atmosphere in of the church settings can allow them made the participants to feel comfortable and relaxed. In addition, the care, help, company and friendships from between and among the CSIs, church members and the other international students who also attended church activities can bring the brought a sense of belonging, and some participants even described the church as a second home and church members as family members.

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Church activities, such as worshipping, playing games, reading the Bible and listening to sermons, can were able to temporarily draw the CSIs' attention away from negative emotions aspects of living in the UK. Therefore, attending church events regularly can be merged as being beneficial in terms of alleviating acculturative stress by via both gaining informational and emotional support mechanisms of support.

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There are also some concerns that were found in the findings.

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Firstly, the participants consistently expressed their that engagement in church activities was a means of acculturating into British culture more broadly, by strengthening their knowledge of British culture and their exposure to and opening them up to new church-related social networks. Such This finding tends to align well with the idea accords with those of Yang's (1998) and Cadge and Ecklund (2007). In the interviews, some participants reported their a ideas contention that to some extent Christianity represented the mainstream core of British culture and even the of Western culture more generally. Therefore, they may regard experiencing They regarded British culture through attending church activities as a major benefit means of

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distinct from those ~~showed at these two of the church churches~~. ~~Holding these churches' value systems as universally relevant across UK society could hinder the CSIs ability to understand and respond to other, opposed value systems which are equally 'British'.~~

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~~The other concern is that one~~ One participant also expressed ~~that~~ international students were labelled ~~and categorised~~ according to their countries in the ~~“International Café”~~. ~~Such experience has not been~~ This finding is not supported ~~by in~~ any previous studies, ~~but~~. ~~Considering the limited literature on the benefits of international students' church engagement,~~ it should be ~~treated as credible and~~ further studied ~~on among more a larger sample of~~ international students. ~~These~~

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~~While the~~ criticism ~~s here is not designed to undermined~~ do not serve to negate the significant role ~~that church church~~ engagement ~~has~~ played in CISs' acculturation ~~in this dissertation, it nevertheless raises significant considerations that~~ but they are to be treated as important findings for the churches and should be considered ~~by them in improving their services.~~

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Implications for Practice

The findings ~~provided have~~ significant implications for practice ~~on and~~ ~~policy pertaining to~~ international students' acculturation and the role of ~~church attendance in reducing CISs' acculturative stress by exploring the personal experience of CISs that attended church events weekly at Bath.~~ This study found that language proficiency issues are major drivers of stress for CISs.

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One implication for practice draw on the findings of acculturative stress CISs reported in terms of language, academic, cultural difference, socialisation, and practical aspect. Firstly, ~~U~~ universities should provide

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more opportunities for CISs and other international students to practise ~~their~~ English and communication skills; ~~once intervention could involve,~~ ~~such as~~ pairing international students with native speakers as language mentors ~~see.~~

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~~Secondly, in response to some~~ ~~concerns about 100% assessment about~~ ~~the nature of course assessment were raised,~~ ~~expressed~~ by some participants, ~~it should be necessary for educators to~~

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~~reexamine~~ Examination and assessment should factor these in to ensure that assessment methods are ~~the assessment to ensure that it is~~ ~~relatively~~ fair and encouraging for all students. ~~CISs may be very~~ knowledgeable in their subjects and may have acquired the skills to apply ~~this knowledge in the labour market but still struggle with certain~~ language-related challenges. Examiners and assessors should seek to find a ~~broad range ways of accrediting knowledge acquisition,~~

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~~Additionally,~~

~~There needs to be~~ more attention ~~paid,~~ to international students' physical and mental health; ~~deploying services that address CISs',~~ ~~and their~~ needs

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~~would specifically~~ would help to ~~consequently~~ reduce the risk of experiencing ~~dire~~ acculturative stress. For instance, universities should make sure that ~~CIS s~~ students ~~could receive~~ know that there is no shame in

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~~accessing enough~~ support ~~regardless of physical or~~ for addressing mental health problems. ~~This could be affected by publishing materials targeted at~~

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~~CISs specifically,~~

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~~A second implication for practice is to assess the~~ The potentially ~~positive~~ (and ~~negative~~) effects of ~~these attending the~~ existing ~~church~~ churches and

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~~their~~ events ~~and other social events provided by universities~~ should be understood and may have practice and policy implications. Potential harm

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~~may come~~ to international students ~~may aggregate their acculturative~~ ~~stress~~ who absorb themselves in an overly Christian model of British culture, and churches and universities both should be cautious of this. ~~In~~

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But conversely, ~~addition~~, universities can find ~~some~~ inspiration from ~~the~~ nature of the ~~church~~ events; ~~these, which~~ provided a warm, friendly and ~~helpful~~ environment for CISs and ~~consequently thus effectively~~ lower CISs' ~~experiences of~~ acculturative stress (Yu and Moskal, 2019).

Universities ~~can~~ could plan coordinated efforts ~~to work with a range of~~ with local ~~church~~ churches and ~~other civil society~~ organisations to provide meaningful social support to ~~all~~ international students (Eckhart, 2014).

Limitations

~~Several methodological and epistemological limitations to this study need to be clarified. There are some limitations in this study:~~

~~One limitation of this dissertation is that it may not be~~ Firstly, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to all CISs who attended ~~church~~ church activities in the UK ~~in terms of the choice of~~ because their choice of ~~church~~ churches, ~~theological creed, participants~~ level of engagement in the religious activities, ~~and church~~ city location and congregation will inevitably influence their experiences (positive or negative) of church attendance and the relationship between attendance and their experiences of acculturative stress.

~~First, only~~ Sampling limitations are relevant too. Only two CISs (who attended ~~just two local Christian church~~ churches weekly), were recruited at the outset ~~in the interviews. In fact, there~~ There is another a "Globe Café" held by ~~the~~ Christian Union of ~~the~~ University of Bath on campus. ~~However, given that the~~ None of the participants were attendant to the Christian Union ~~does not have the contacts of international students who were involved~~ cafe, so it is hard to ~~access~~ infer that the findings here are ~~pertinent to~~ those students. ~~Second, most~~ Most of the participants were

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guests at ~~the~~ “International Café” in Bath, which is just one of the ~~various-many~~ events that local ~~churchchurches~~ hold in ~~a-small~~ the city.

The findings ~~thus may tend to have thus~~ focused on the effects of ~~the~~ “International Café” and cannot ~~be~~ generalised to all ~~churchchurch~~ activities, ~~even in Bath alone, and some other CISs who just attended-~~ church activities a few times.

Thirdly, all ~~the~~ participants were studying at PG level ~~and,~~ the findings may not represent the experiences of UG students ~~and-or~~ A-level students.

~~The other~~ Other limitations ~~results~~ from the timing of ~~this-the~~ study and ~~the~~ pre-existing friendship between some ~~of the~~ participants and ~~myselfe~~.

According to Berry (1997), international students often experience different stages ~~of stress and acculturation~~ when ~~acculturating into-~~ ~~integrating into a~~ non-native culture. ~~However, the~~ The interviews were conducted in the summer, when ~~they-the~~ students were about to finish the academic year. Thus, their answers may have ~~produced-been shaped by a~~ ‘recall-bias’ (McAuley et al., 2018, p. 53) and ~~cannot be generalised to-~~ CISs’ acculturative stress at different stages. ~~they may also be irrelevant to~~ students’ experiences at the beginning of the academic year.

Conclusion

~~Considering the~~ There is an increasing focus ~~among researchers~~ on international students’ acculturation ~~process~~, mental health ~~and~~ ~~and~~ well-being ~~issues~~, ~~the~~ and it is imperative to ~~deepen~~ understanding ~~about-of~~ coping strategies that ~~are~~ effectively ~~in lower-reducing~~ acculturative stress. ~~Such strategies include that~~ of ~~such as churchchurch~~ engagement. ~~The research to date~~ is limited on this.

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so the present study. ~~As the first study to~~ examined the role of ~~ehureh~~church engagement in ~~eooping with~~helping a small sample of CISs to cope with and reduce ~~acculturative stress.~~ ~~This dissertation study~~ found that church engagement ~~it, for the participants studied.~~ ~~could be~~ served as both a critical source of informational and emotional support for CISs.

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Acculturative stress ~~as~~ experienced by CISs can ~~be resulted~~accrue from limited language proficiency, ~~confusion arising from~~ cultural differences, academic challenges, ~~soeialisation social~~ pressures and constraints, practical issues, and personal expectations. ~~The p~~Participants ~~all~~ expressed that the ~~outeomes effects~~ of acculturative stress ~~ranged from~~included physical ~~to and~~ mental health problems such as loneliness, frustration, disappointment, lack of confidence, feelings of inferiority, sleep disorders, and depression. ~~Chureh~~Church activities ~~ean were found to have~~ provided empowering opportunities for CISs to practise ~~their~~ English, ~~to~~ build meaningful social networks, ~~to and~~ increase their levels of cultural knowledge and to experience a sense of belonging in the UK, ~~and care, comfort, company, help, and love those CISs in different ways.~~ Two potentially negative effects of ~~ehureh~~church engagement ~~were that it might aggregate some CISs' acculturative stress through overly emphasising the cultural difference~~are that church engagement may in fact amplify and exacerbate cultural differences, and ~~it that~~ involvement in a specific and unique creed and set of practices might mislead CISs' ~~in their~~ understandings ~~about of~~ what, in reality, is a pluralist and diverse 'W~~w~~estern' culture.

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However,

~~F~~future studies ~~in~~ this area ~~with should draw on~~ a bigger larger-scale sample size ~~in and~~ study engagement in a number of different cities ~~will be significant for deepening the understanding of church engagement and in a wider range of churches.~~ This

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~~In~~ conclusion, ~~this~~ study has highlighted that ~~ehureh~~church engagement ~~can~~ (and in the participants' cases ~~ean does~~) play a positive role in ~~lowering~~

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~~reducing~~ CISs' acculturative stress ~~in terms of language, cultural knowledge,~~
~~social life, practical help, and emotional support.~~ ~~in all its manifestations.~~

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