



“Being “Wenzhounese” in Europe: intergenerational experiences and perceptions of education

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Trinity 2024

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MSc in Education

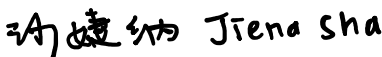
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Acknowledgement

As I reflect on this academic journey, my year at Oxford has been both challenging and transformative. It has provided me with not only in-depth academic knowledge but also enriching experiences that will last a lifetime.

I am filled with profound gratitude for the many individuals who have supported me along the way. First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Professor David Mills. Your guidance and insight have been invaluable throughout my research. Your unwavering support, constructive feedback, and intellectual encouragement have shaped not only this dissertation but also my growth as an educator. Thank you for believing in my potential and for your constant care during my toughest times.

To my family, your love and encouragement have been my foundation. I am eternally grateful for your sacrifices and for being my constant source of inspiration. Special thanks to my older sister, Jieyu (Lexie), who has always been by my side when I needed support and care.

To my friends, thank you for the countless moments of laughter and support. Your companionship has made this challenging year at Oxford not just bearable but truly enjoyable. You remind me of the importance of community and connection. I would like to thank the following friends and groups:

First, I deeply appreciate my friend Tuo Tian. During the Michaelmas term at Oxford, faced with academic pressures and a hectic pace, I often felt lost and discouraged. You unwaveringly believed in me, reminding me that I am a talented individual with great potential, just waiting for my moment to shine.

Next, I am profoundly grateful to my dear friend Aiyang Xu (Gini). During my lowest moments, your presence and comforting words gave me the courage to rise above my challenges. Your energy and enthusiasm rekindled my confidence.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to my cohort friend Shiyu Cui, my classmate and travel companion. Though our time together has been short, your vibrant spirit and optimistic outlook on life have inspired me to embrace a more positive perspective.

Moreover, I am incredibly thankful for my lifelong friends, Danyang Wei, Xinqi Zhan, Jialin Wang, and Yafei Zhang, who have stood by me since elementary

and high school. In moments of sadness and despair, you have provided unwavering support and companionship.

Lastly, I extend my gratitude to all my classmates in the CIE cohort. Whether in class discussions or casual conversations, you have kept my passion for education alive and thriving. I also wish to thank my co-founders in the Future Education Development Association; though we've been together for a short time, we have successfully hosted three meaningful "EDU+" events, and I look forward to more impactful educational initiatives together. Special thanks to each member of the Oxford Dancing Crew and all my friends from OXCSSA—your presence has made my year at Oxford all the more vibrant and meaningful.

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Abstract

Education is highly valued among Chinese immigrant families, with Chinese immigrant students often recognised for their strong academic achievements and labelled as ‘model minorities’. This success is frequently attributed to cultural factors associated with Confucianism, particularly 'tiger parenting' strategies that emphasise high expectations for academic excellence. However, according to Bourdieu (1985; 1986)’s capital theory and Lareau (2011) ’s concerted cultivation, class dynamics may also influence the divergent educational experiences and perceptions of these families.

Most research on Asian and Chinese immigrant education has focused on North America, leaving European contexts, especially the European Wenzhou community, relatively underexplored. Therefore, this study employs a qualitative intergenerational approach to investigate the educational philosophies, experiences, and practices of Wenzhou European immigrant families. Interviews and photo storytelling were conducted with nine families across five countries: Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary.

The findings show that these Wenzhou European immigrant families adopt a relaxed educational approach, shaped by factors such as a lack of mainstream cultural and social capital, the availability of alternative success paths through family entrepreneurship, busyness, faith, and the educational culture of the host countries. Second, educational experiences and practices in both formal and informal education are detailed. Regarding formal education, while strategy of sending children to international schools or studying abroad is commonly used, educational decisions also reflect student preferences. In terms of informal education, practices include a focus on language learning, extracurricular activities, and private tutoring are identified. Finally, the study identifies educational opportunities, such as a holistic developmental focus, more future opportunities in choices, and the ability to serve as cultural bridges, alongside challenges including cultural differences, racial discriminations, and limited parental involvement. This qualitative study enhances and adds depth to the existing literature by investigating the distinct characteristics and specific educational experiences, perceptions, and practices of Wenzhou immigrants in Europe.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

International migration is a multifaceted process driven by numerous factors, significantly impacting both individuals and societies around the world. According to the UN Migration Agency, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a “migrant” as:

any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of: 1) the person's legal status; 2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; 3) what the causes for the movement are; 4) what the length of the stay is (IOM, 2019).

For immigrant families, schools hold considerable importance, not only because they “facilitate the socialisation and acculturation of immigrant children” but also because they are where these families “first encounter in-depth contact with the host culture” (Adams & Kirova, 2007, p.2). Consequently, many immigrant parents place significant trust in the value of education and feel a strong desire for their children to succeed in school within the host society (Terrén & Carrasco, 2007). Additionally, research (such as Louie, 2001; Raleigh & Kao, 2010; Wu, 2022) has shown that education is essential for immigrant families in shaping their aspirations and strategies for the future.

Noticeably, Chinese immigrant students are often recognised for their higher academic performance, being deemed ‘model minorities’ (Wu, 2014). Some research has affirmed that these students frequently achieve higher academic success than their host counterparts (e.g. Louie, 2004). This high academic achievement is often attributed to cultural explanations rooted in Confucianism, where ‘tiger parenting’ strategies are predominantly employed among Chinese immigrant families, who maintain unwavering high expectations for academic excellence (e.g. Chua, 2011). However, it is argued that despite the shared cultural roots and norms among Chinese immigrant families in various host countries (such as North America and Europe), there are divergent educational expectations and experiences within Chinese immigrant communities. For instance, Yiu (2013) argues that Chinese youth in Spain do not exhibit the same high academic drive as their North American counterparts, suggesting that this discrepancy highlights the limitations of purely cultural explanations. Consequently,

while education is intrinsically valued in Chinese culture, these differences might not be solely explained by cultural factors.

Beyond Chinese Confucian culture, social class may also play a significant role in explaining the divergent educational perceptions and experiences of Chinese immigrant students. Influential work by Bourdieu (1985; 1986) and others drawing on his theories, such as Lareau (2011) with her concept of concerted cultivation, suggests that students' differing educational experiences may be influenced by social class. Specifically, middle-class and upper-class parents often employ distinct educational strategies to help their children gain advantages and enhance their competitiveness. In the context of Chinese immigrant research, for example, Louie (2001) suggested that social class significantly impacts the educational experiences and opportunities available to Chinese American immigrant children. Similarly, Wu (2022) demonstrated how social class affects the hierarchical educational goals and family strategies of Chinese immigrants in Luxembourg, ultimately influencing their future prospects.

However, in the context of Chinese families, including those of Chinese migrants and immigrants, some research indicates that regardless of class, both working-class and middle-class parents actively engage in their children's education by utilising different forms of capital. For instance, Peng's (2019) qualitative study on internal migration within China, specifically in Guangdong Province, reveals that internal migrant parents, regardless of their social status, find ways to help their children access urban educational resources despite significant structural barriers, using their proactive agency and strategies. Additionally, Archer and Francis (2006) highlighted that for British Chinese families, irrespective of their current social class, cultural factors—such as the belief that 'Chinese people value education'—have significantly contributed to the formation of a shared diasporic habitus within Chinese communities, where achieving educational success is regarded as normative behaviour for members of this group.

1.2 Rationale

Existing theoretical models often oversimplify the educational philosophies, perceptions, experiences, and practices of Chinese immigrants. For instance, the application of Confucianism tends to generalise these practices, while Bourdieu's theories of social class may not adequately address the complexities of class, race, ethnicity, and migration within

this community. This study emphasises the need for theories to engage with specific contexts and highlights the importance of intersectional analysis to understand these dynamics better.

Moreover, most existing empirical research on the education of Asian and Chinese immigrant families has concentrated on North America, particularly the United States and Canada, with fewer studies conducted in Europe, especially in the UK. As a result, contemporary educational research on Chinese immigrant families in other European contexts remains relatively new and underexplored. The Wenzhou immigrant community, a significant group within Europe, is notably understudied.

Therefore, this research employs a qualitative approach, utilising in-depth interviews complemented by photo storytelling to explore the unique characteristics and nuances of European Wenzhou immigrant families in relation to their educational approaches, experiences, perceptions, and practices.

1.3 Outline of the research

This dissertation is organised into five chapters, each designed to systematically address the research objectives and questions while contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the educational perceptions, experiences, and practices of Wenzhou immigrant groups in Europe. The first chapter provides an overview of the background and rationale for this study. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive literature review, detailing the existing relevant literature on Chinese international immigration and diaspora communities, along with their educational perceptions, experiences and practices, while highlighting the contributions this study aims to make. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, detailing the research paradigm and design, participant selection, data collection methods, analytical strategies employed, ethical considerations, the researcher's positionality and reflexivity, and limitations. In Chapter Four, findings from qualitative interviews are presented in accordance with the research questions and are analysed, connected, and integrated with their implications in relation to existing studies. Lastly, Chapter Five discusses and concludes the dissertation by summarising key findings, addressing limitations, and proposing implications for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature on educational philosophies, perceptions, experiences, and practices within Chinese diaspora communities. The first section examines the international migration of Chinese immigrants, offering a brief historical context of the Chinese diaspora, with a specific focus on the Wenzhounese community. The second section explores how traditional Confucian cultural values influence the educational philosophies, perceptions, experiences, and practices of Chinese immigrants. It discusses Confucian educational values, the academic aspirations and expectations of Chinese immigrant families, the use of ‘tiger parenting’ strategies, and the educational challenges these families face. Finally, the chapter examines how class informs the educational perceptions, experiences, and practices of Chinese immigrant families, drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of capital and Annette Lareau’s concept of concerted cultivation. Through a critical review of previous studies, this research outlines its potential contributions, which will guide the formulation of the research questions.

2.1 International migration: the case of Chinese Diaspora, Wenzhou migrants

2.1.1 Chinese migrants: Chinese Diaspora

According to the International Organisation for Migration Global Data Institute (2023, p.1), ‘diasporas’ are defined as “migrants or descendants of migrants, whose identity and sense of belonging have been shaped by their migration experience and background. They maintain links with their homelands, and to each other, based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country”. The Chinese diaspora started to form worldwide due to mass emigration that began in the late 16th century (Li, 2020). Between the tenth and twelfth centuries, China developed a growing economic interest in Southeast Asia (Guo, 2022). In the early 17th century, the number of overseas Chinese migrants worldwide reached approximately one hundred thousand, mainly concentrated in Southeast Asia (Zhuang, 2011). By the early to mid-19th century, the Industrial Revolution in Britain had reached its peak, establishing British colonialism as a dominant global force, and the economic and social influences of British hegemony began shifting eastward, driven by a heightened global demand for colonial goods and raw materials, which in turn necessitated

the need for mobile and inexpensive labour (Christiansen, 2012; Guo, 2022). These conditions set the stage for a large-scale migration of adaptable labourers from Asia, particularly exported Chinese and Indian Coolies, creating new Chinese diasporas across the Americas, Australia, Oceania, Europe, East Asia, India, and Africa (Zhuang, 2011; Christiansen, 2012). Within European colonialism, Chinese labourers worked in British, French, and Dutch colonies, as well as in their respective colonial societies (Christiansen, 2012). However, since countries and regions outside Southeast Asia were generally hostile towards Chinese labourers in the late 19th century, overseas Chinese remained highly concentrated in Southeast Asia, in which overseas Chinese worldwide were estimated to be around 12 million to 13 million in the year 2010, with the proportion of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia amounted to roughly 90% (Zhuang, 2011).

However, the large-scale migration of Chinese emigrants after the implementation of the Chinese Reform and Opening-up Policy in 1978, generally referred to as ‘new emigrants’ (Song & Liang, 2019), decisively altered the pattern of overseas Chinese being highly concentrated in Southeast Asia (Zhuang, 2011; Lu, 2019; Zhang, 2021). Since then, a significant influx of Chinese immigrants destined in other countries and continents such as Europe can be found. For instance, until 2008, the proportion of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia dropped to 73%, whereas conversely, the percentage of overseas Chinese in Europe increased from less than 1% before 1980 to 5% in 2007 (Zhuang, 2011).

Three potential reasons for emigration after 1978 have been identified: family reunion, student migration, and investment (Song & Liang, 2019). Firstly, family reunification became a trend that gained significant traction after 1978, particularly for those with relatives already living abroad. In ‘qiaoxiang’ (侨乡) regions, hometowns of Chinese sojourners (Douw et al., 2013), including several rural areas in Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang, residents eagerly pursued opportunities to emigrate as soon as they were allowed (Zhang, 1999; Pieke et al., 2004). Secondly, since 1978, the introduction of more liberal policies in 1985, combined with increasing opportunities in destination countries, sparked a ‘study-abroad’ fever, where North America, Europe, and Australia consistently rank among the top destinations for Chinese students (Song & Liang, 2019). Thirdly, beginning in the late 1970s, China’s upper-middle class and the ‘super-rich’ have emerged as a prominent group actively seeking emigration opportunities. In the 21st century, a new wave of emigration has emerged, driven by an

increasing number of wealthy elites immigrating abroad through investment (Lu, 2019). According to the Hurun Report (2016), 29.3% of Chinese high-net-worth individuals indicated a desire to immigrate. Among this group, the top reasons for immigration were children's education (62.8%), improving the living environment (due to pollution) (56.1%), and healthcare (45.9%). All in all, in 2017, according to a report by the Department of Economics and Social Affairs (2017), China was ranked as the fourth area of origin of international migrants, with 10 million Chinese migrants.

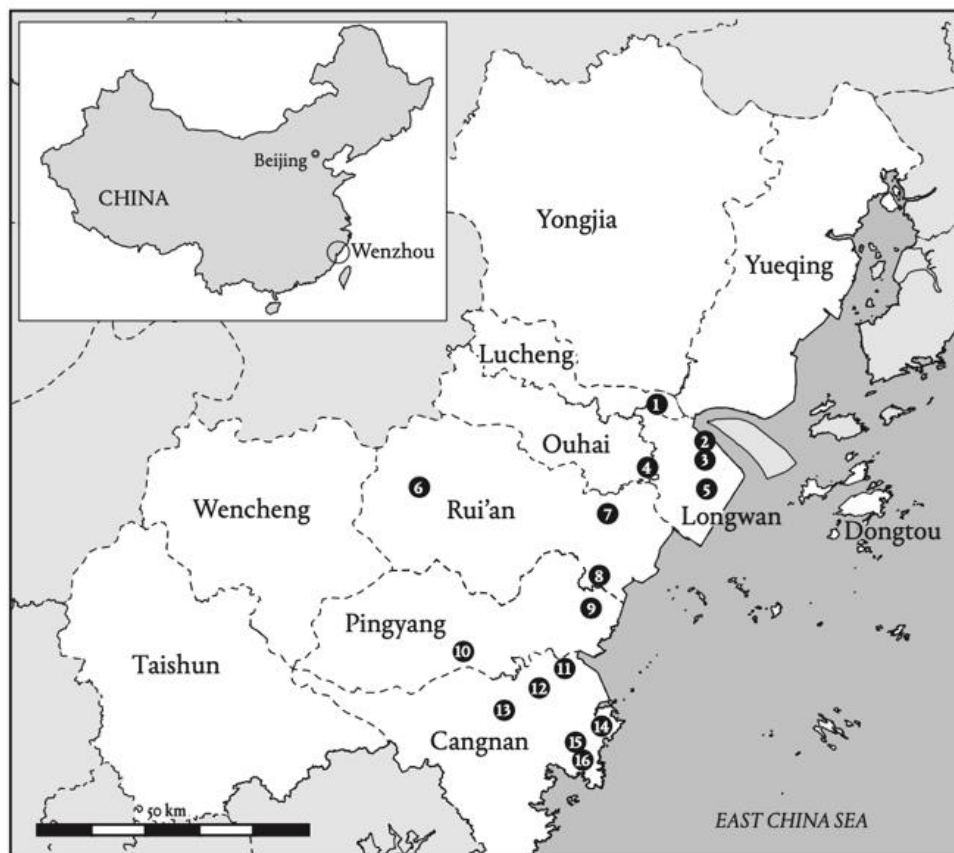
Interestingly, the number of overseas Chinese has surged not only in traditional destinations such as Southeast Asia, North America, and Australia but also in Africa, Latin America, and Europe (Zhang, 2021), suggesting that immigration destinations are no longer limited to developed countries and regions, developing countries and regions are also attracting the attention of Chinese immigrants. For example, Chinese emigrants who settle in Africa have gained international attention, with South Africa being the largest recipient of Chinese migrants (Song & Liang, 2019). According to the 2022 Statistical Yearbook of the Overseas Community Affairs Council of Taiwan, overseas Chinese (including those who emigrated from mainland China, Taiwan and Hongkong) in Africa surged significantly from 0.24 million in 2010 to 1.18 million in 2022 (Overseas Community Affairs Council of ROC, 2022).

Moreover, while provinces with a migratory tradition (such as Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang) continue to direct migrants to countries where their compatriots have already settled, new departure provinces and cities such as the north-eastern provinces of China (Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning), Henan, Hebei, Guangxi, and the urban areas of Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing (Li, 2020).

2.1.2 International migration of Chinese diaspora: departure from Wenzhou

2.1.2.1 The context of Wenzhou, Wenzhou culture and Wenzhounese

Wenzhou is a southeastern coastal city in Zhejiang province, positioned south of Shanghai and northwest of Taiwan. Wenzhou now has jurisdiction over four districts: Lucheng, Longwan, Ou hai, and Dongtou; three cities (county level): Rui'an, Yueqing, and Longgang; and five counties: Yongjia, Pingyang, Cangnan, Wencheng, and Taishun (see Figure 1).



- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Wenzhou City | 9. Kunyang Township |
| 2. Yongzhong Township | 10. Shuitou Township |
| 3. Yongchang Township | 11. Longgang Township |
| 4. Nanbaixiang Township | 12. Qiangcang Township |
| 5. Yongxing Township | 13. Linxi Township |
| 6. Guifeng Township | 14. Bacao Township |
| 7. Xianyan Township | 15. Qianku Township |
| 8. Rui'an City | 16. Jinxiang Township |

Figure 1: Map of Wenzhou

Source: Open Street Map Contributors

Located in a mountainous region, Wenzhou has remained physically isolated from the rest of the country for much of its history, leading to the development of a unique local culture and language that are markedly distinct from those of nearby areas (Wenzhou Municipal People's Government, 2024). Most Wenzhou natives speak 'Wenzhounese', a subdivision of the Wu language family (吴语). Although Shanghainese and Hangzhounese are also part of the Wu language family, speakers from other parts of Zhejiang Province and the rest of China can hardly understand the Wenzhou dialect (Yang, 2020). Consequently, the distinctiveness of the Wenzhou dialect instils a strong sense of identity among the local population (Fewsmith, 2013).

Moreover, due to its significant Christian population, the city has often been referred to as the 'Jerusalem of China' (中國的耶路撒冷) (Cao, 2010; Yang, 2020). For centuries, Wenzhou has been a central hub for Christian missionary work and activities. Prior to 1949, Wenzhou had approximately 115,000 Christians, and following the implementation of the Reform and Opening-Up policy, the Christian population, which had been suppressed after 1949, rapidly revived (Fewsmith, 2013). By 2013, there were at least 700,000 registered Christians, with many more unregistered (Fewsmith, 2013).

In addition to its distinct language and culture, Wenzhou has been a prosperous foreign treaty port, well-recognised for its culture of emigration. Wenzhou migrants are known for their strong entrepreneurial spirit, departing for Europe and the United States to establish restaurants, retail stores, and wholesale businesses in their host countries (Wenzhou Municipal People's Government, 2024). The migration culture of the Wenzhounese will be discussed in the following sections.

2.1.2.2 International migration and migratory waves of Wenzhou migrants

Ma Mung (2009, p.98) regards the Chinese diaspora as "a network of networks, a diaspora of diasporas". This is because the primary historical region for migrations is characterised by a mix of diverse Chinese language dialects (such as Cantonese, Hokkien, and Wenzhounese), in which this linguistic diversity has produced distinct migratory paths, resulting in separate distinct groups that form their own relational, migratory, and economic networks based on shared origins and spoken dialects (Ma Mung, 2009). However, it is argued that distinct local dialects spoken by Chinese migrants on one hand significantly cause barriers to interaction

and communication between different dialect groups, which hinder integration within the Chinese community; on the other hand, the use and preservation of dialects also somewhat impede the Chinese from better integrating into the local society (Zhang, 2021).

Historically, three major waves of emigration from Wenzhou have been identified. The first emigration wave to Japan began in the twentieth century, roughly between the 1910s and 1920s (Li, 2020). Between 3,500 and 4,000 Chinese individuals from the rural areas of Wenzhou and Qingtian went to Japan as small-scale merchants, selling paper umbrellas made in Wenzhou or stone carvings from Qingtian (Zhang, 1995). However, the emigration from Zhejiang province to Japan was suddenly stopped in 1922 due to an economic crisis; shortly thereafter, the Japanese government prohibited further Chinese immigration and expelled Chinese labourers already residing in Japan (Zhang, 1995). As a result of this social unrest and the subsequent Japanese aggressions in China during the 1930s, migration from Zhejiang across the East China Sea came to a stop (Thunø, 2014). Alternately, Europe became a desirable destination for migration (Thunø, 2014). The second emigration wave to Europe started between the 1920s and the mid-1930s, around 1935-1936, several hundred emigrants from the Wenzhou townships of Baimen, Liao, and Ziao ventured abroad as traders to Europe (Thunø, 2014; Li, 2020). The third wave centres around a reunification movement, during which Wenzhou emigrants joined their relatives who had settled abroad since the 1980s (Zhang, 1999).

2.1.2.3 Why Europe?

Although Japan, southeast Asia and western Europe were the three main destinations for Wenzhou migrants, they found Europe particularly as their “virtual virgin territory” (Li, 2014, p. 187), and considered ‘becoming rich in Europe’ as a privilege exclusively for them. Even though Japan is a closer destination for migration, as mentioned above, emigration from Wenzhou was abruptly halted in the 1930s when hostilities erupted between Japan and China. Besides, by the time Wenzhou migrants began emigrating to Southeast Asia, millions from Guangdong and Fujian had already settled there (Li, 2014). This made it difficult for the Wenzhou newcomers, who spoke a distinctive dialect, to establish a profitable niche in an economy dominated by these established communities and the local population. As a result, the number of Wenzhou migrants to Southeast Asia remained small (Li, 2014). Consequently, Europe is a more desirable destination for Wenzhou migrants. Interestingly, they view ‘Europe’ as their destination rather than any specific European country (Li, 2014), as it is

relatively common and easy for them to move between countries, especially shortly after their arrival (Li, 1998).

Xiang Biao's research (2005, 2014) on internal migration from Zhejiang Village to Beijing highlights that the Wenzhou community operates through interpersonal connections ('guanxi') and mutual trust. Similarly, the Wenzhou community in Europe also relies on these connections (Pan, 2019), facilitating a 'chain migration' process (Li, 2014). Utilising a social network based on extended kinship and relationships with fellow migrants, Wenzhou newcomers often begin their work within businesses owned by community members, primarily in catering, tailoring, and leatherworking (Wang, 2020). They typically follow this path until they can establish their own family businesses (Pan, 2019).

Furthermore, Wenzhou migrants are different from other groups of Chinese migrants, such as Dongbei migrants. For example, Wang (2020) indicated that in Paris, Wenzhou migrants often emigrate for economic reasons, originating from rural areas with relatively low cultural capital, whereas the Dongbeinese, who lived in urban areas and were part of the middle class before emigrating from China, face social downgrading upon their arrival in France (Wang, 2020).

2.2 Educational perceptions, experiences, and practices of Chinese immigrant families: informed by Confucianism?

2.2.1 Confucianism and educational practices in China

2.2.1.1 Highly competitive hierarchical educational systems and the importance of effort

For thousands of years, Confucianism has profoundly influenced the social, ethical, and political aspects of Chinese culture, including educational practices. The Chinese education system, shaped by Confucian values, is highly centralised, hierarchical, and competitive, with success defined by passing standardised examinations for upward social mobility (Huang & Gove, 2012). This exam-oriented system can be traced back to the meritocratic *Keju* (科举) civil examination, a key method for selecting government officials (Zhao, 2014; Chen et al., 2020). Rooted in Confucian ideology, it reflects the belief that “one who excels in learning can become an official” (学而优则仕). Confucianism emphasises effort and will as be essential for academic achievement, positing that ultimate success arises from hard work, although innate ability may accelerate learning (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Lam et al., 2002). As Xunzi, a student of Confucius, noted, “effort constitutes the art of study, and effort manifests human quality” (Lee, 1996, p. 32).

2.2.1.2 Collectivism: educational success as a family business and responsibilities

Additionally, within the framework of Confucianism, Chinese culture prioritises collectivism, emphasising the family’s welfare over individual values (Lu & Shih, 1997). This ideology advocates that individuals should enhance their family’s prosperity and vitality, leading many Chinese families to view education as a collective family business (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Huang & Gove, 2012). Two interconnected Confucian constructs— ‘guan’ (管, or ‘govern’) and ‘xiao’ (孝, or ‘filial piety’)—emerge in this context, where ‘guan’ enables parents to shape their children’s behaviour to meet expectations, while ‘xiao’ motivates children to fulfil their parents’ desires (Li, 2004).

‘Guan’ reflects attributes of restrictiveness and control, representing a culturally distinctive indigenous aspect of Chinese parenting that conveys care and love (Tobin et al., 1989; Chao, 1994; Lan et al., 2019). While children are responsible for their educational success, Chinese parents feel responsible for contributing to their children’s educational success (Huang &

Gove, 2012). If parents cannot influence their children's academic performance, they may perceive themselves as failing in their roles (Huang & Gove, 2012). Thus, Chinese parents consider guidance and discipline through 'guan' crucial for helping children adopt socially desirable behaviours (Li, 2004).

'Xiao', referred by Ho (1994) as obeying and honouring one's parents, encompasses ensuring their well-being and maintaining family honour. This virtue manifests in children's respect for and obedience to parental authority, limiting their choices to comply with parental expectations (Huang & Gove, 2012). It is also woven into daily educational practices through parents' authority in educational decision-making, such as majors and career paths (Huang & Gove, 2012). Consequently, Asian students often view high academic performance as a family responsibility that brings honour. A qualitative study by Claridge et al. (2018) indicated that Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students have stronger family ties, with Asian students more frequently citing family responsibilities than their peers, who noted these obligations were not equally shared across ethnicities.

2.2.2 The importance of education: Academic excellence? High academic aspirations and expectations?

2.2.2.1 Tiger parenting strategies?

As previously mentioned, Confucian values serve as behavioural standards for raising the younger generation. However, this cultural heritage influences not only Chinese parents but also Chinese migrant parents in pursuing academic success and setting high expectations. Typically, 'tiger parenting' arises from this Confucian cultural backdrop (e.g. Guo, 2013). The term 'tiger parenting' gained prominence through Amy Chua's (2011) book "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother", in which she, as a Chinese American professor at Yale Law School, detailed her own educational approach to raising her Chinese American daughters. Key characteristics of Chua's tiger parenting include strict parental control, high expectations, and her extreme demands for excellence in both behaviour and academic and extracurricular performances.

Some of the research has affirmed Chua's tiger parenting strategies among Chinese immigrant parents in different contexts. For example, Zhou and Wang (2019) conducted a comparative study investigating the parenting strategies of Chinese immigrant parents in the

United States and Singapore through interviews and participant observation. The findings showed that despite different reception contexts, one with Western culture and the other one with strong Eastern Confucian heritage culture, new Chinese immigrant parents in the United States and Singapore share similar views and expectations regarding their children's education. They are equally concerned about their children's academic achievements and often employ the 'tiger mom' style of overbearing parenting strategies.

Huang and Gove (2015) further explored the impact of Confucianism on ten Chinese immigrant parents in America through semi-structured interviews. All participants emphasised education's importance and the influence of Confucian values, evident in their financial sacrifices for their children's education. Tiger parenting strategies were apparent, with parents maintaining high academic standards, such as not accepting grades below a B, and engaging their children in learning activities to help them internalise expectations.

Contrary to Chua's Chinese American parenting philosophies, other researchers argue that tiger parenting strategies are not predominantly used in Chinese international migrant families. Kim et al. (2013) found in their study of 444 Chinese American families that tiger parenting was not a prevalent style and did not correlate with higher academic performance. Instead, the best developmental outcomes were seen in children with supportive parents.

These findings align with Cheah et al. (2013), who studied first-generation Chinese American immigrant mothers. Their research revealed that these mothers are acutely aware of the differences between American and Chinese parenting contexts. They recognised the strengths of both approaches and admired certain aspects of Western parenting. For example, while they generally prefer strict discipline for compliance, they also value praise and encouragement to build confidence and support social development. Furthermore, after migration, these mothers are more inclined to reduce their focus on academic performance, foster their children's independence, and emphasise overall development.

While education is deeply valued in Chinese culture, the inconsistent findings raise the question of whether variations in educational perceptions and practices can be attributed solely to cultural factors?

2.2.3 Educational challenges and struggles of Chinese immigrant families

2.2.3.1 Racisms and Discriminations

Immigrants adapting to a new and unfamiliar environment often encounter significant stress and uncertainty, facing numerous challenges and barriers in settling into a new country.

Firstly, for immigrant families, their minority status can lead to experiences of racism and discrimination (e.g., Costigan et al., 2010; Li, 2001; Li, 2004; Qin et al., 2008; Guo, 2013; Raffaetà et al., 2016). For instance, Raffaetà et al. (2016) found that Chinese youth in Prato, Italy, faced local segregation and direct discrimination in and out of schools due to their ‘Chineseness’. Even among other ethnic minorities, they were primarily labelled and perceived as the ‘other’.

Model minority stereotyping

Chinese immigrant youth are often referred to as ‘model minorities’ due to their typically high educational achievements and greater upward mobility compared to other groups (Wu, 2014). However, this ‘positive’ stereotype can lead to significant stress, threats, ignorance, and discrimination. While negative stereotypes create fear of confirming those labels, the model minority stereotype generates anxiety over failing to meet high expectations, adversely impacting psychological well-being (Costigan et al., 2010). Chou and Feagin (2017) critique the model minority stereotype, highlighting the racism and discrimination faced by Chinese Americans, often obscured by perceptions of success. They note that Asian Americans experience racism and discrimination from Whites in various forms, including racial teasing in elementary school, stereotyping in college, barriers to workplace advancement, and even violent hate crimes. A qualitative study by Qin et al. (2008) found that about 15% of participants reported mistreatment or bullying for being ‘too smart’, ‘geeks’, or ‘nerdy’. Furthermore, this stereotype overlooks the diversity among Chinese youth. Lee (2015) argues that it obscures the challenges faced by many Chinese American students, particularly those from working-class backgrounds who do not fit the ‘successful’ image.

Academic success as a pathway to overcoming the disadvantaged minority status?

Consequently, due to their minority status, Asian and Chinese immigrants often adopt strategic measures, such as selecting certain majors and career paths, to mitigate potential discrimination and disadvantages while aiming for upward social mobility through marketable credentials. Xie and Goyette (2003) examine the relationship between social

mobility and educational choices among Asian Americans, finding that they generally prioritise education—particularly formal education—as a key pathway to upward mobility. This emphasis is shaped by cultural values, educational expectations, and immigration experiences, where higher educational attainment is viewed as a means to overcome social and economic barriers. The research highlights how Asian American families make strategic educational decisions, often guiding their children toward fields perceived to offer higher economic returns and stability.

This aligns with Li's (2001; 2004) studies on parental expectations among Chinese immigrants in Canada, which reveal that the evolving relationship between parental expectations and children's academic achievement is influenced by three interconnected factors: traditional Chinese Confucian values, the perceived status as minority immigrants, and the challenges of acculturation in Canadian society. Chinese immigrant parents typically hold high expectations for their children's academic success, rooted in cultural beliefs that view education as essential for social mobility and future security. Additionally, these parents believe that Chinese children must outperform their Canadian peers to overcome perceived disadvantages. Consequently, they emphasise academic achievement and moral character, often encouraging science-related careers and cultural integration as strategies to navigate the challenges they face as immigrants.

However, the stereotype of the 'model minority' among Chinese youth in Europe contrasts sharply with that of their American counterparts. Yiu's (2013) longitudinal study of the second generation in Spain revealed that Chinese youths have significantly lower educational aspirations and achievements compared to peers from other nationalities. While facing discrimination in education and the labour market, many Chinese immigrants in Spain find financial success as small business owners, creating an alternative mobility path through entrepreneurship rather than education. Consequently, Chinese youth in Spain adopt 'calibrated ambitions', intentionally lowering their educational aspirations as a strategic response to the challenges within the Spanish educational system. This approach, passed down from immigrant parents, reflects the complexities of adapting to societal barriers and negotiating identity and aspirations among immigrant minorities in Spain.

Additionally, Yiu (2013) found that few Chinese immigrants in Spain come from professional or white-collar backgrounds; instead, most are low-skilled migrants seeking small-scale

entrepreneurial opportunities. Without professional role models and the institutional support needed to pursue educational goals, the Chinese community in Spain has not developed a shared culture that values education as the primary means of achieving social mobility, unlike the Chinese American community.

2.2.3.2 Difficulties in cultural differences and identity formation

Secondly, it is suggested that immigrant families may encounter difficulties with acculturation when adapting to a new country, and in particular immigrant youth, such as 1.5 and second-generation youth, might struggle with negotiating identity and belonging as they try to understand who they are (e.g., Li, 2004; Mleczko, 2010; Pedone, 2011; Liu, 2015; Raffaetà et al., 2016; Robles-Llana, 2018). For instance, Li (2004) recognises that while most of the Chinese immigrant youth in Canada share similar views and expectations of education with their Chinese parents, some struggle with strong emotions and stress as they need to navigate and balance the dual demands of the significant differences between maintaining their cultural heritage (enculturation) and adapting to a new culture (acculturation).

2.2.3.3 Chinese immigrant parents' anxiety of falling behind

Thirdly, Chinese immigrant parents often have significant concerns and anxiety about their children lagging behind their peers in China. Guo (2010) found that in her study of 14 Chinese immigrant parents of preschoolers in New Zealand, many viewed the advanced academic expectations for preschoolers in China as a source of stress. While these parents immigrated to provide a better life for their children, they felt anxious about the slower pace of learning in New Zealand's educational system.

Similarly, Beck and Nyíri (2022) discuss the challenges Chinese parents face when seeking a European-style 'happy education' in Hungary. These parents aim to avoid the competitive pressures of China's rigid education system but often find themselves disappointed by a system that inadequately supports migrant students and does not meet their expectations for a nurturing environment. This situation revives their fears of their children falling behind academically, despite their desire to escape such pressures. The research also highlights a growing 'suzhi anxiety,' where the idealisation of a happy, creative childhood clashes with renewed competition. As a result, this ambivalence leads to a situation where these parents, despite leaving China to avoid intense academic demands, recreate similar pressures by enrolling their children in numerous extracurricular activities. This reflects the broader

struggles of middle-class Chinese parents, who navigate the tension between raising happy children and ensuring competitiveness, even after emigrating.

Educational Involution (内卷) and Jiwa (鸡娃) education

Parental anxiety about falling behind exemplifies the phenomenon of educational ‘involution’, commonly associated with ‘jiwa’ parenting in China. ‘Involution’, in its contemporary meaning, refers to an endless cycle of self-flagellation and meaningless competition (Wang & Ge, 2020), highlighting the fierce rivalry among students and parents. The term ‘jiwa’, literally meaning ‘chicken child,’ originates from the slang ‘打鸡血,’ which describes an unproven practice of injecting chicken blood for energy (Newman, 2021; Chang, 2021; Yang, 2024). Metaphorically, ‘jiwa’ implies instilling motivation in children (Chang, 2021; Newman, 2021). This approach is driven by middle-class ‘Haidian’ moms (Haidian is a central Beijing district, known for its advantageous educational resources), who push their children to excel academically and in extracurricular activities from a young age, creating a high-pressure environment (Chang, 2021; Liang & Chu, 2023; Yang, 2024). Their parenting is rooted in stress, anxiety, and fear of their children falling behind (Global, 2021; Feng, 2021; Newman, 2021), prompting them to seek every possible advantage for future success (Yan, 2021; Yang, 2024).

This section broadly discusses the educational perceptions, experiences, and practices of Chinese immigrant families through a cultural lens, specifically Confucianism. It highlights that the emphasis on academic excellence among Chinese immigrant parents may be influenced by Confucian principles, often resulting in the use of tiger parenting strategies. However, while education is highly valued in Chinese culture, the inconsistent findings raise the question of whether differences in educational perceptions and practices can be attributed solely to cultural influences. Additionally, this section examines three potential educational challenges these families encounter: racism and discrimination stemming from the ‘model minority’ stereotype, cultural differences, and parental anxiety regarding their children falling behind, reflected in the phenomena of ‘involution’ and ‘jiwa’ parenting.

2.3 Educational perceptions, experiences, and practices of Chinese immigrant families: informed by class?

2.3.1 Bourdieu's Capital Theory: maintaining and gaining children's educational advantages?

According to Bourdieu (1985), agents compete for limited resources within specific fields, where 'field' is defined as the formal and informal rules that shape a particular social space, such as education (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). These fields are structured around forms of capital, where capital serves as the currency of the field (Grenfell, 2009). Bourdieu expanded the definition of capital beyond economics to include essential forms for social life, identifying three primary types: economic, social, and cultural (Bourdieu, 1985; 1986).

Economic capital refers to material wealth, such as financial resources and assets (Bourdieu, 1985). Social capital involves leveraging social connections for personal benefit, derived from group membership and relationships (Bourdieu, 1985). Cultural capital is more complex; Bourdieu (1986) describes three states: 1) embodied state—internalised traits of mind and body, including knowledge and skills; 2) objectified state—tangible objects like books and artworks; and 3) institutionalised state—formal recognition from institutions, such as academic credentials. Notably, cultural capital is considered the primary currency in education (Grenfell, 2009). As Gewirtz et al. (1994) noted, parents with higher cultural capital are practical education strategists who are better equipped to leverage social and economic capital to make informed decisions about their children's education.

However, the education market is believed to primarily benefit those who are already advantaged, perpetuating social segregation and reinforcing the privileges of the advantaged social groups (Angus, 2015; Gewirtz et al., 1994). Research shows that parents from privileged backgrounds leverage their resources to provide educational advantages for their children, thereby maintaining their social status (e.g., Reay, 1998; Ball, 2003; Ball, 2012; Lareau, 2011; Gupta, 2022). These studies, influenced by Bourdieu's work, highlight how cultural, economic, and social capital dictate the unequal distribution of educational resources among children from middle-class and working-class families. They demonstrate that children from working-class families are disadvantaged by a system that favours middle-class values and beliefs.

2.3.2 Annette Lareau's concerted cultivation

Drawing on Bourdieu's framework, Annette Lareau (2011) identifies two primary child-rearing approaches: "concerted cultivation" (p.2) and the "accomplishment of natural growth" (p.3). Middle- and upper-class families predominantly use concerted cultivation, where parents actively develop their children's talents and opinions through structured activities, communication, and involvement in institutions. In contrast, working-class and poor families typically adopt the accomplishment of natural growth, characterised by less structured and more autonomous parenting, limited parental involvement, and a focus on obedience and respect for authority, often relying on extended family and community networks.

As a result, children from concerted cultivation backgrounds often develop a "sense of entitlement," while those from working-class families experience an "emerging sense of constraint" (Lareau, 2011, p.6). Lareau argues that these differing approaches contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities by transmitting unequal educational advantages. The natural growth method does not equip children with the skills needed to meet the standards of middle-class institutions, such as schools.

2.3.3 Parental educational support, involvement, strategies and investment through capitals: class-based?

As discussed earlier, educational strategies and practices are closely linked to class privilege, suggesting that the extent of Chinese immigrant parental support in their children's education may be class-based. For instance, Louie (2001) highlighted the complexity within immigrant families, demonstrating that social class significantly shapes the educational experiences and opportunities available to Chinese American children. The findings indicated that, regardless of social class, parents hold high educational aspirations for their children, driven by a mix of optimism and pessimism about their futures. However, Louie noted considerable differences in resources and strategies between working-class and middle-class parents. Middle-class parents typically offer more support through better schooling options and active involvement, while working-class parents, though equally aspirational, face challenges such as long work hours, lack of formal education, and language barriers.

Similarly, class-based educational strategies are evident in Wu (2022), which examines the divergent educational aspirations and family strategies of Chinese immigrant families in Luxembourg. The findings indicate that middle-class professional families invest considerable effort in meticulously planning their children's academic and extracurricular activities to ensure well-rounded futures, where parental economic, cultural, and social capital play a crucial role in enabling these aspirations. In contrast, blue-collar restaurant families are influenced by insecurity and social marginalization. Their ability to seize opportunities is limited by a lack of linguistic, social, and cultural capital, along with the demanding nature of the catering industry. These families often focus on narrow educational goals, driven by the desire for tangible outcomes—such as a stable job in the mainstream economy—and a strong wish for their children to avoid labour-intensive careers.

2.3.4 Complexities of race/ethnicity, class and migration

However, this research argues that race/ethnicity, class and migration add complexities to the divergent educational experiences of Chinese immigrant families. For example, Archer and Francis (2006) examined the relevance of Bourdieu-inspired social class theories for understanding the identities, educational experiences, and achievements of British Chinese students, incorporating a detailed analysis of the racialised aspects of class. They highlighted that race and ethnicity complicate social class positions, emphasising the need to consider how class, ethnicity, and gender interact to shape different forms of capital. The research indicated that a primary strategy for these families to succeed in the educational system was the development of ‘family capital’, where parents became resources by leveraging social, cultural, and economic capital while fostering a collective habitus cantered upward mobility through education. Regardless of their current social class, the belief that ‘Chinese people value education’ was pivotal in creating a diasporic collective habitus among Chinese communities, where educational success is viewed as typical. This strong emphasis on education, along with the strategic use of economic capital, helped both working-class and middle-class families compensate for any perceived deficits in cultural or educational capital.

In their other research (Francis & Archer, 2005), they found that the Chinese community in Britain has developed a distinct form of cultural capital. Many first-generation Chinese immigrants came from impoverished peasant backgrounds with limited education, facing challenges like language barriers and demanding work schedules in the catering industry.

These obstacles hindered their ability to provide the educational support typically recognised as cultural capital by the dominant society. Despite this, British-Chinese children consistently achieve high levels of educational success, even in the face of racial discrimination in the education system. The construction of the ‘value of education’ has emerged as a strategic response to the socio-economic challenges faced by Chinese immigrants in Britain, allowing them to leverage an ethnically specific identity as an alternative form of cultural capital that facilitates academic success and social mobility.

However, Archer and Francis (2006) argued that despite valuing education and achieving high levels of success, British Chinese families, like other ethnic groups, still face risks and inequalities in the job market, influenced by complex factors such as race, class, and gender. They emphasised that capitals are context-specific, and sociological analyses of class should consider the racialised aspects of class experiences, as existing theories often overlook non-white groups. Specifically, theories of privilege must recognise that middle-class minority ethnic families do not enjoy the same privileges as their white counterparts and may not easily fit into traditional class categories due to economic and symbolic disadvantages.

Also, this research critiques Lareau’s (2011) conclusion that the most significant disparities lie between social classes rather than within different racial and ethnic groups (specifically between White and Black families). It argues that she overlooked the substantial differences among various ethnic and racial groups, as well as cultural distinctions. For instance, in contrast to Annette Lareau’s (2011) findings, research on internal migration within China shows that migrant parents, regardless of social status, often have higher educational aspirations and actively utilise their resources to support their children’s education (e.g., Peng, 2019; Xu & Wu, 2017). Peng’s (2019) qualitative study of 23 rural-urban migrants in Guangdong Province revealed that these working-class parents employ five key strategies to help their children access urban education despite significant structural barriers: 1) persistent efforts to secure urban hukou (household registration); 2) enhancing their children’s qualifications for public schools using a point system; 3) leveraging guanxi and tiger parenting techniques for school enrolment; 4) exchanging economic resources for opportunities in elite private schools; and 5) maintaining strong parent-teacher partnerships to boost their children’s educational competitiveness.

This section draws on Bourdieu's capital theory to examine how Chinese immigrant parents support their children's education through various forms of capital, while also utilising Lareau's theory of concerted cultivation to highlight the differing child-rearing approaches between middle- and upper-class parents and working-class families. However, these frameworks primarily address social stratification within Western contexts, particularly Euro-American, where middle-class families are generally characterised by high levels of cultural, social, and economic capital. This research argues that these theories may not fully capture the complexities of Chinese immigrant groups due to their distinct cultural, social, and contextual differences. Consequently, Chinese immigrants often do not fit neatly into traditional Western social class categories, as their economic and cultural capital levels diverge from those typically associated with Western middle or upper classes.

2.4 Research Contributions

This chapter has discussed how the educational philosophies, perceptions, experiences, and practices of Chinese immigrant families are shaped from two perspectives: 1) Confucian culture and 2) social class, using Bourdieu's capital theory and Annette Lareau's concerted cultivation theory as frameworks.

However, the majority of existing empirical research on the education of Asian and Chinese immigrant families has been conducted in North America, particularly in the United States and Canada, with a smaller body of work in Europe, mainly concentrated in the UK. Moreover, much of the educational research on Chinese immigrant families is over a decade old. While these studies have provided valuable insights into this community, the applicability of their findings may be limited due to the passage of time and evolving socio-cultural contexts. Consequently, contemporary educational research on Chinese immigrant families in other European contexts remains a relatively new and underexplored area of inquiry. Notably, despite being one of the significant Chinese immigrant groups in Europe, the Wenzhou immigrant community remains understudied.

Rather than merely addressing a gap in the literature, this research aims to expand upon existing theoretical models that often conceptualise Chinese immigrants' educational philosophies, perceptions, experiences, and practices too broadly. First, the application of Confucianism to explain Chinese immigrants' education frequently leads to an over-

generalisation of their educational practices. Second, as previously discussed, Bourdieu's theories of social class may inadequately capture the complexities of class, race, ethnicity, and migration within the Chinese immigrant community.

My research focusing on the Wenzhou immigrant community is a significant contribution to the existing literature, seeking to explore the particularities and nuances of the educational experiences, perceptions, and practices of 'Wenzhou immigrants' in Europe, thereby distinguishing them from the generalised notion of the 'Chinese immigrant' community. By comparing these Wenzhou immigrants with their Chinese immigrant counterparts, this research aims to investigate whether these families adopt similar competitive educational philosophies and practices aimed at academic excellence.

Three overarching research questions will be explored:

- **What educational philosophies and perceptions do these families hold, and what are the potential reasons for them?**
- **What educational experiences, practices, choices and strategies do these migrant families employ?**
- **What educational opportunities and challenges does migration present for them?**

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods employed in this research. It begins by discussing the underlying philosophical paradigms, followed by a detailed description of the research design, including participant recruitment, data collection strategies, and data analysis procedures. Next, it examines the approaches used to ensure research rigor, and discusses the researcher's positionality, reflexivity, and the ethical issues encountered. The chapter then concludes with a reflection on the study's limitations.

3.1 Research Methodology Paradigms and Research Design

This research is informed by both constructivist and interpretivist paradigms, which together provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex, socially constructed nature of the international migration and educational experiences of Wenzhou immigrants. These philosophical paradigms posit that the subjective creation of meaning-making and knowledge are both individually and socially constructed, recognising that multiple realities are shaped by both individual perceptions and social-cultural contexts (Scotland, 2012; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Given the emphasis on understanding and interpreting Wenzhou immigrants' subjective perceptions and experiences of education, as well as the meanings they attribute to these experiences and educational practices, this study employed a qualitative research design. Specifically, the research methods of semi-structured interviews and story-telling through photos were utilised.

The semi-structured interview method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth, comprehensive, and contextual exploration of the perceptions and experiences of Wenzhou immigrants as they navigate life in Europe (Phakiti et al., 2018). Although semi-structured interviews typically adhere to a pre-designed interview guide centred on a primary topic to ensure a general framework, they offer flexibility and room for exploration, allowing for the emergence of new topics relevant to the research questions (Longhurst, 2003; Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

Moreover, student participants were asked to choose and tell the stories of three photos or pictures that might represent and resonate with their life stages: past, present, and future

respectively. In addition to word-alone interviews, photos provide a visual layer, in which Harper (2002, p.13) noted that images and photos “evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words”, “evoke information, feelings, and memories” and “connect an individual to experiences or eras”. Therefore, the photo story-telling method provides visual narratives that might help this research to enhance data richness, gain deeper understanding and better grasp the significance behind participants’ stories and experiences. Also, it might help participants reflect on their migration and educational experiences, bringing up memories that might not have been mentioned or may have been forgotten during the interviews.

3.2 Participant Selection

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, where researchers make decisions on who to include in the sample based on several inclusion criteria (Oliver, 2006). The criteria for inclusion were: (1) European Wenzhou immigrant students; (2) Students who are obtaining or have obtained a degree for their tertiary education; and (3) Parents of students who meet the criteria mentioned above. The research was primarily based on student interviews, supplemented by several parental interviews through the researcher’s personal networks.

To ensure diversity, the sample included participants of different genders and geographical locations. A total of nine families were recruited, with nine students (an unfortunately unbalanced gender sample of six females and three males) and four parents (three mothers and one father). Four of the families are from Italy, two are from France, one is from Spain, one is from Portugal, and one is from Hungary. Additionally, three students are 1.5-generation (Robles-Llana, 2018) Chinese Europeans who migrated before adolescence or were born in Europe but were often sent back to China at birth or within their first year. Four are second-generation and two are third-generation (see table 1 for the profile of participants)

Profile of participants										
Basic information	Pseudonym	Melody	Emily	Luke	Dylan	Sophie	Chloe	Amy	Sarah	Darren
	Host/destination country	Italy	Italy	Italy	Italy	Hugary	France	France	Spain	Portugal
	Gender	female	female	male	male	female	female	female	female	male
	Age/year	undergraduate year 3	undergraduate year 1	undergraduate year 3	undergraduate year 3	Postgraduated	Postgraduated	Postgraduated	undergraduate year 2	undergraduate year 3
	Gender	female	female	male	male	female	female	female	female	male
	Major	Psychology with Education	Medicine	IT and Management	Physics and Philosophy	Psychology	Luxury brand marketing and international management	Chemistry	Linguistic	Accounting and Finance
	University Base	UK	Italy	UK	UK	UK	France	France	Spain	UK
	Immigration generation status	1.5-generation	1.5-generation	1.5-generation	second generation	third generation	second generation	second generation	second generation	third generation
Family Information	Parent's education level	Father: Secondary diploma Mother: Secondary diploma	Father: Secondary diploma Mother: Secondary diploma	Father: Primary diploma Mother: Secondary diploma	Father: Secondary diploma Mother: Barchelor degree	Father: Secondary diploma Mother: Secondary (not graduated)	Father: Secondary diploma Mother: Secondary diploma	Father: Secondary diploma Mother: Secondary diploma	Father: Secondary diploma Mother: Secondary diploma	Father: Secondary diploma Mother: Secondary diploma
	Parent's occupation	Self-enterprise	Self-enterprise	Self-enterprise	Self-enterprise	Self-enterprise	Self-enterprise	Self-enterprise	Self-enterprise	Self-enterprise
	Parent's occupation Industry	Clothing wholesale trade	Shoe retail	Shoe wholesale, export trade	Trade, wholesale denim	used to own a Chinese restaurant in catering, now food retail and wholesale business	used to work in clothing wholesale industry, now doing catering, Chinese restaurant	Catering	Telecommunications industry	Trade
	Siblings	2 siblings 1 younger brother and 1 younger sister	1 sibling 1yonger brother	1 sibling 1 older sister	1 sibling 1 younger sister	2 siblings 1 older sister and 1 younger sister	2 siblings 1 younger sister and 1 younger brother	4 siblings 1 older sister, 2 younger sisters, 1 younger brother	2 siblings 1 younger sister and 1 younger brother	2 siblings 1 younger sister and 1 younger brother

Table 1: Profile of participants

3.3 Data Collection

As mentioned above, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and supplemented with students' photo story-telling. First, potential students were identified and contacted through the researcher's personal networks and then approached their parents according to their parents' willingness and availability. Interviews were conducted separately between students and their parents. Therefore, two separate interview guides were created in English (see Appendix A, and then translated to Chinese), which were developed based on a thorough review of the literature and the research questions. The parents' interview guide was divided into two parts: 1) their international migration stories and experiences and 2) their children's education. The students' interview guide was divided into two parts as well: 1) their family's international migration stories and experiences, and 2) their educational

experiences. Sample questions included: “Can you tell me your school experiences as a Wenzhou immigrant student in Europe?” and “What are the challenges and opportunities of studying in Europe as a Wenzhou immigrant student?”. At the end of the interviews, student participants are given time to show and tell stories of their chosen photos that represent their past, present and future.

Prior to interviews, a pilot interview was conducted with a social science graduate to evaluate the effectiveness of the interview guide, ensuring that the interview questions elicit the desired information. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, ensuring accessibility for participants located in different regions. And the participants had the choice to speak in Chinese or English, or a combination of both, depending on their willingness and comfortability. Each interview lasted between one to two hours and was video-recorded with participants’ consent. All interviews were transcribed and translated into English to facilitate rigorous analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the interview data, following the six-stage step-by-step approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which consists of: 1) familiarising with the interview data; 2) generating codes; 3) identifying emerging themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) producing the report. After listening and familiarisation with the recordings for three times, a spreadsheet of keynotes of defining themes, according to interview questions was created in Chinese (see Appendix B, as an example).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in strict accordance with ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Ethical approval was obtained from the Department of Education’s Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of data collection. Ethical considerations are addressed in the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics form (see Appendix C), also see Appendix D and E for the information sheet and the consent form used in this research. Participants were provided with a detailed information sheet about the research purpose, their rights as participants, and the voluntary nature of their involvement prior to conducting the research. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants

before interviews were conducted. To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were used, and any potentially identifying information was removed from the research. All data were securely stored in Nexus365 (University of Oxford cloud-based service) which is password protected. Specifically, to ensure confidentiality of both parents and students, as mentioned earlier, they were interviewed separately rather than jointly, allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings freely and openly. Esterberg (2002) suggest that separate individual interviews might facilitate the confidential disclosure of individual narratives without direct influence or pressure from other family members. If conducting joint interviews, research showed how family members might hesitate to speak freely to an interviewer in each other's presence due to concerns that negative opinions or certain topics could hurt feelings and potentially harm relationships (such as Morris, 2001). Throughout the interview process, when students and their parents were asked the same question, I kept reminding myself not to disclose what either party said to the other. If one party directly asked about the other's response, I would politely decline to share.

3.6 Research Rigour

To assess the rigour of research, Guba (1981) summarised four aspects of trustworthiness to examine: 1) credibility: the true value of findings; 2) transferability: the applicability of findings in other contexts; 3) dependability: the consistency and reliability of findings; and 4) confirmability: the objectivity of analysis.

To ensure credibility, I employed the technique of member checking, continuously testing the data and interpretations throughout my analysis process (Guba, 1981). I regularly consulted my participants to verify that their quotes were accurately interpreted and translated. Additionally, to enhance the accuracy of data interpretation, I listened to the recordings of each interview three times: immediately after the interview, during the identification of emerging codes and themes, and before presenting the findings.

Regarding transferability, although this research is informed by constructivist and interpretivist paradigms where generalisability is not the goal, I used 'thick descriptions', particularly keeping participants' extended direct quotes, to enable readers to assess the applicability of the findings in their own contexts (Guba, 1981). For dependability, I documented the detailed research processes in this Methodology section, ensuring they are trackable. Lastly, for confirmability, while it is impossible to interpret data independently of

the researcher under the constructivist paradigm, I employed an important strategy: reflection. I reflected on my positionality in this research and acknowledged its limitations in the following sections.

3.7 Reflexivity and Positionality

I am deeply aware of my positionality, the specific social and cultural standpoints how I perceive the world and my position in relation to this study (Bourke, 2014; Qin, 2016), such as my background, personal experiences, identity, and assumptions, may have shaped every aspect of this research. By embracing a constructivist perspective, this research holds a value-laden stand of axiology (Gonzalez, 2013) in which recognises that knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and participants and the researcher's role in interpreting the data. Therefore, reflexivity, the process of reflecting critically on the potential or actual influence of personal, contextual, and situational factors of researchers on the research (Berger, 2015), is particularly crucial in this context.

3.7.1 Insider and Outsider Dynamics

As a Chinese Wenzhou student, I occupy a unique position that can be described as both an insider and an outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) in relation to my research participants. On the one hand, as a Chinese internal migrant student born in Wenzhou and migrated to Shenzhen, I share a cultural heritage, language, dialect, and similar migration experiences with the participants, positioning me as an insider. This shared background fosters relational intimacy, facilitating trust and open communication during interviews (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Participants may feel more comfortable discussing topics such as collective Wenzhou memories and cultural norms, knowing I understand their perspectives. However, this insider status also presents challenges, particularly in separating my personal perceptions and experiences from those of the participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). During the analysis process, I resonate with Armstrong (2001), finding it difficult to determine whether I am interpreting the actual phenomenon or imposing my own needs onto the participants. Recognising my outsider status is essential to avoid imposing preconceptions on their narratives and to ensure that my personal experiences do not overshadow their voices. It is crucial to appreciate that their perceptions and experiences are distinct and should be understood on their own terms.

On the other hand, there are significant differences between internal and international migration, which places me in an outsider position in my academic role. My life and educational journey may differ significantly from those of my international migrant participants, particularly those whose families have long been in Europe.

To address these issues, several actions were taken. First, I conducted a literature review on Chinese and Wenzhou diaspora communities and their educational practices before the interviews, allowing me to become more familiar with the research group. Additionally, the pilot interview provided valuable feedback for refining the research design. To ensure my participants' voices are prominent, I carefully designed my analytical approach to include rich, direct, and extended quotes from them.

3.7.2 Language

Language plays a critical role in this research (Polkinghorne, 2005; Qu & Dumay, 2011), as the participants—Chinese immigrant students and parents residing in Europe—often navigate a multilingual environment. Interviews were conducted in either Chinese or English, depending on the participants' preference, as these were the languages in which I am fluent with. However, many participants also speak a third European language, which they use in their daily interactions, particularly within educational settings. This introduces a layer of complexity, as certain concepts or experiences may be more naturally expressed in the European language they use, potentially leading to a loss of nuanced meaning when translated into Chinese or English. While I conducted the interviews in Chinese or English, participants were free to use phrases or terms in their European language. When they did, I would ask for clarification or allow them to explain the concept in more detail in either Chinese or English. Alternatively, I would ask for the spelling of the phrases, so I could translate and search their meanings after the interviews.

3.8 Limitations

However, several limitations cannot be ignored. Firstly, given the limited scope of this dissertation, constrained by time and word count, a relatively small sample size was chosen, with only nine families interviewed. Although, as mentioned earlier, generalisation was not the goal of this study, including more families beyond the selected host countries could enrich the data and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the educational perceptions, experiences, and practices of the Wenzhou European diaspora communities. Additionally, as discussed above, under interpretivist and constructivist philosophical underpinnings, knowledge and findings were constructed through interactions between my participants and myself; therefore, my positionality may generate potential biases. While these biases might be unavoidable, it is essential to recognise and acknowledge their impact on the research findings.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings, organised into four sections corresponding to the research questions. The first section provides an overview of the international migration experiences of Wenzhou immigrants in Europe. The second section discusses their educational philosophies, highlighting a relaxed approach influenced by factors such as limited mainstream cultural and social capital, the provision of alternative routes to success through family entrepreneurship, busyness, faith, and the educational culture of host countries. The third section details their educational choices and strategies, noting that while sending children to international schools or studying abroad is common, decisions also reflect student preferences. Informal education practices include a focus on language learning, extracurricular activities, and private tutoring. Finally, the chapter addresses the educational opportunities and challenges of migration, with opportunities for holistic development, more future choices, and cultural bridging, alongside challenges like cultural differences, racial discrimination, and limited parental support.

4.1 International migration and experiences

4.1.1 International migration experiences and stories of Wenzhou migrants in Europe

Most parents of the second-generation students in this research migrated to Europe in their early twenties during the late 1990s, often with the support of relatives. Upon arriving, they typically followed a common trajectory, initially working in a relative's small family business for several years before starting their own enterprises. With the exception of one family whose parents work in the telecommunications industry, the other families primarily work in catering, export trade of clothing, shoes, and textiles, as well as retail and wholesale sectors. They tended to view Europe as a collective destination rather than focusing on any single country, leading some to move through several countries before settling down. Since these first-generation parents migrated at a young age, the education of their next generation was not a primary consideration at the time. All families involved in this study indicated that their migration was primarily motivated by economic factors and the pursuit of a better quality of life. Two recurring phrases emphasised by students when describing their parents' migration experiences were "venturing out" (闯一闯) and "the culture of success through establishing

one's own business" (拥有自己的一番事业), which encapsulate the entrepreneurial spirit of the Wenzhounese. As Luke described:

My parents came to Italy around 1995, during the 1990s. The reason for their move was primarily economic; they were very poor and looking for opportunities. There is a cultural trait among people from Wenzhou where they aspire to build their own business and achieve success. The concept of success is quite important to them, and they came here hoping to succeed.

4.2 Family educational philosophies and perceptions

4.2.1 Relaxed and happy educational approach

All the families in this study embraced a chill, relaxed and happy approach to education. Among the four parents interviewed, while they are more than willing and happy to financially support their children's education, they generally held low academic aspirations and expectations for returns on investment. Most have adopted an educational philosophy of 'allowing things to unfold naturally'(顺其自然). As Sophie's mother suggested that:

I don't insist that you must score 100 or 99. I generally take a more relaxed approach. But the main thing is that the kids are all very capable and perform well in school. So, for example, if you score 85 today, I wouldn't criticise you for being careless or anything like that. That's not how I am. I prefer to let things unfold naturally and always encourage them. Here, the local foreigners usually don't scold their children; they focus on encouraging them, saying, 'You're doing great.' They generally encourage their kids.

Similarly, Dylan's mother noted that:

(When comforting my second child) I told her that college is all about exams and that exams are just part of the process. I told her not to stress herself out. If you don't pass this course today, you can retake and try again next time, and just do your best. The most important thing is that you tried your best and have put in the effort. I said it's not right to be overly emotional just because you didn't perform well despite your hard work. Since you've already worked hard, just relax, leave it to God, and keep studying. So, I told her it's okay if you didn't do well in one area, you can choose another one. You're still young, and you have plenty of time to learn many things.

While they recognise the importance of education, they respect individual differences and believe that academic excellence is not the only path to success. Darren's mother emphasised that what matters most is pursuing one's interests and doing one's best:

We see that some young people experience a lot of pressure from studying, and some even become overwhelmed to the point of crying. I believe learning shouldn't be like that, learning should be a joyful experience. If you find it very difficult and painful, I encourage them to switch to a field they are passionate about, to pursue something they enjoy. For example, when my daughter was struggling with math, I found a tutor for extra help, but she still couldn't keep up. I told her it was okay to switch to a vocational school. You don't have to obtain a prestigious diploma to be successful; everyone has different strengths. Some people may excel at studying, while others might be good at doing business or other fields, and that's perfectly fine. Everyone is unique. I encourage them to follow their interests, and if studying causes unhappiness

and stress, it's okay to switch paths. As long as they are putting in effort, it's alright if they don't do well in exams.

However, this relaxed educational philosophy contrasts sharply with existing literature on Chinese immigrant families, where Amy Chua's (2011) 'tiger parenting' strategies, rooted in traditional Confucian values, are often depicted as the predominant approach among Chinese immigrant communities, particularly in North America and Britain. The high aspirations and expectations for academic excellence commonly observed in research on Chinese immigrant education (e.g., Zhou, 2013; Huang & Gove, 2015; Wang, 2019) were not evident among these Wenzhou immigrant families.

4.2.2 Potential reasons for a relaxed and happy educational approach

1. Lacking mainstream cultural capital and social capital

Firstly, all the student participants indicated that, as their parents were generally first-generation immigrants, they lacked the knowledge, resources and time to support their studies and were therefore hardly involved in their education. As a result, the students had to navigate the education systems and make decisions on their own.

Economic capital

All students noted that their parents were consistently financially supportive of their education, alleviating any financial burdens or concerns during their studies. Several interviewees mentioned that their parents explicitly told them not to worry about money when making decisions, as they were both willing and able to cover tuition and living expenses. Five out of nine students attended international high schools, where tuition fees were significantly higher than those of public schools. Additionally, six out of nine students studied or are currently studying abroad, necessitating substantial family investment in education. Furthermore, all families in this study funded various extracurricular classes and private tutoring from a young age, demonstrating the strong commitment of Wenzhou immigrant parents to support their children financially. As noted by Grenfell (2009), different forms of capital can be interchanged, allowing one type to transform into another. In this context, parents' economic capital can be converted into students' cultural capital (such as knowledge gained through higher education and extracurricular activities), which can later translate into economic capital (such as securing well-paid jobs). However, despite their

substantial economic capital, these parents often lack the mainstream cultural and social capital needed for their children to effectively navigate formal education systems.

Cultural capital

Among the nine families interviewed, only one mother holds a bachelor's degree, while the highest educational attainment of the other parents is a high school diploma. Additionally, as newcomers, they are unfamiliar with the local education systems. Consequently, all student participants indicated that their parents lack the knowledge needed to effectively support their educational pursuits. For example, Sophie noted that she often sought help from teachers, classmates, or her classmates' parents instead of her own, as her parents did not have the necessary knowledge to tutor her:

My parents never really supervise my studies; I had to learn on my own. Their education level wasn't very high, and they didn't speak Hungarian well, so asking them for help was pointless. I think I was pretty self-motivated and not too bad at figuring things out myself. If I didn't understand something, I would ask the teacher or my classmates. I remember in my first year of high school, I struggled with physics and math, I remember going to a classmate's house to study together. His dad was quite knowledgeable, so he would explain things to us, but it wasn't formal tutoring. It was more like, right before exams, we would do a bunch of practice problems, and if there was something we didn't understand, we would ask him for help.

From Sophie's mother's perspective, she expressed a sense of helplessness. While she unconditionally supports her children's education, her lack of essential knowledge and language skills makes her feel unable to provide the necessary help and guidance, leaving them to navigate their educational journey on their own:

Overall, our level of knowledge is relatively low; we're not like some parents with university degrees, master's, or doctorates. We don't have much academic knowledge, so when it comes to educating our children, we haven't imposed many restrictions on them—we've allowed them to develop freely. Personally, I feel that I don't know how to guide them. Moreover, my proficiency in Hungarian is limited; I can only manage to get by, so I'm not very capable in that regard. As for our children's studies, of course, we are more than happy to fully support them if they want to learn. But in terms of guiding their studies, we haven't really been able to lead and guide them, we haven't done much ourselves. It really has all depended on them.

Additionally, Sarah's father mentioned that, due to his unfamiliarity with the Spanish education system and limited knowledge of school options, he was unable to make informed school choices for his daughters:

When they were in elementary school, I sent them to a public school because it was close to home, I really didn't have much knowledge or understanding of schools — whether a school was good or bad. I just thought it was fine as long as I enrolled them somewhere. When it came to middle school, there were actually two schools nearby: one about 300 meters from home and another two kilometres away. The one 300 meters away was a Spanish school, where everything was taught in Spanish. The school two kilometres away, although also a public school, taught all subjects, such as Maths and Science in English except for the Spanish language class. But I didn't know that. They had been studying at the public school for four years before I found out that there was another school where instruction was in English. I quickly transferred them to that school.

Due to their lack of essential cultural capital to support their education, most students indicated that their parents allowed them the freedom to make their own decisions, including choosing their majors and career paths. Emily noted that, since her parents lacked the knowledge to help her make informed choices, she conducted her own research to find the path that suited her best. She recognised that this may explain her parents' more relaxed approach to her education. Interestingly, she suggested that if her parents were in China, where they were more familiar with the education system, they would be more involved in supervising her studies and setting clear goals:

As Chinese parents, they didn't really understand the education system here, so I had to manage many things on my own. I couldn't rely on my parents for much guidance and had to figure things out gradually. [...] When it came to my younger brother, things were better because I had already paved the way—I knew how to make choices and could give him good advice. For example, when it came to choosing a high school, I did the research myself. I consulted with older students, looked for schools with Chinese students, and asked them for information about whether the school would be a good fit for me. But as for my parents, they didn't know anything, so I had to rely on myself. This is also why they were more relaxed—they didn't know enough to set specific goals for us. If we were in China, where parents are more familiar with the education system, they might think that you need to get into a good high school as a stepping-stone to a good university, just like other parents. So, they might push you to study harder and get involuted (juan). But here, without those strict requirements, they didn't have the same expectations.

According to Bourdieu (1986), Wenzhou immigrant families encounter challenges in acquiring two forms of cultural capital: institutionalised and embodied. The institutionalised form involves formal recognition through educational credentials, while the embodied form encompasses lasting traits such as language proficiency, knowledge, and skills gained through socialisation and education. Many of these families hold only high school diplomas

from the Chinese education system, which are not widely recognised in their host countries, complicating their navigation of local education systems. Additionally, language barriers, cultural differences, and limited access to resources hinder the development of embodied cultural capital. For instance, parents' unfamiliarity with local educational systems and social norms prevents them from passing relevant knowledge and skills to their children, thereby hindering the children's ability to make informed educational choices.

Social capital: Western mainstream social capital VS Chinese Wenzhounese social capital

From the interviews, interestingly, it is evident that Chinese migrant parents possess strong social capital within their own Wenzhou community but lack the 'Western' local social capital needed for navigating the formal education systems. Melody explicitly distinguished the 'Chinese Wenzhounese' social capital from the 'Western' social capital:

When I talk about social capital, I'm referring to Western social capital, not Wenzhou social capital. Within the Wenzhou community, my parents are completely fine. But when it comes to school events, like attending parent-teacher meetings, it's more challenging for them. [...] For example, when it came to choosing a university and later career choices, I felt that my parents' network didn't extend to formal institutions that could help me with university admissions. However, my dad had a Chinese friend whose son had previously worked in admissions at Cambridge. We connected on WeChat, and I did a mock interview with him for Cambridge. He gave me some advice, which I found quite helpful.

Regarding 'Western' social capital within formal education systems, most students noted that their parents, due to language barriers and time constraints, lacked strong connections with teachers and generally only contacted them when absolutely necessary. For example, after elementary school, because they performed well academically and did not raise any concerns, their parents rarely, if ever, attended parent-teacher meetings. Among the parents interviewed, Dylan's mother was one of the most engaged, she said:

When it came to parent-teacher meetings, the parents of other Chinese students were nowhere to be found. The first reason is the language barrier, and the second is that they are very busy and consider these meetings to be meaningless. So, from elementary to middle school, I hardly saw any Chinese parents attending these meetings, but we always went. After the meetings, we would communicate with those Chinese parents and tell them what was discussed. As a result, we had more interaction with non-Chinese local parents. [...] Because the children were well-behaved and their grades were good, as soon as we sat down, they would say there was no need for a meeting and that we could save time for the other parents. They would tell us that our child was doing very well and that there was nothing to discuss.

So, in the following years, I almost stopped scheduling parent-teacher meetings with the teachers.

Additionally, when asked whether he regularly attended parent-teacher meetings, Sarah's father reflected that his involvement in his children's education was significantly less than that of his foreign counterparts:

I have attended parent-teacher meetings, but very rarely. When I did go, they talked about too many things, it was too scattered, you know? So, I didn't attend often. But my foreign friends would meet with the tutors at least three to four times each semester to discuss their children's education. As for us, we would only have such a conversation once every three years, completely neglecting this educational aspect.

However, within the Chinese Wenzhou community, parents possess a certain level of social capital that can support their children's education and future opportunities. For instance, Sarah noted that she was able to transfer schools with the help of a cover letter written by one of her mother's Chinese friends. Many students also mentioned that their parents, as business owners, could connect them with internships in Business and Finance through their Chinese networks. However, this social capital was primarily beneficial for students pursuing careers in Business, Accounting, and Finance, leaving those interested in fields like Psychology or Medicine to navigate their paths independently and seek assistance from their own networks. Emily mentioned that her parents found it easy to secure an internship for her younger brother, who was studying Economics, but struggled to do the same for her as a Medical student:

(Because) there are relatively few Chinese students studying Medicine, finding internships related to my field depends mostly on myself, and my teachers. My parents basically are unable to find internship resources in this area. But for example, my brother, who is studying Economics, might have access to more resources because Economics is more widely applicable, and my parents can use their connections to help him find opportunities.

While Wenzhou immigrant families possess strong intra-community social capital within their Wenzhou network, they lack the mainstream social capital needed to navigate their Western host societies. According to Bourdieu (1985, 1986), this situation illustrates the possession of social capital specific to one context/field (the Chinese Wenzhou community) while lacking the necessary capital for another context (the broader Western society). Furthermore, the value of social capital varies depending on the field in which it operates

(Bourdieu, 1985, 1986). For these families, the social capital they hold within their ethnic community may have limited value for integrating into mainstream educational systems, as it does not afford the same access to resources, information, and opportunities.

2. Alternative path to success: family's entrepreneurial culture

Another reason for the 'laid-back' educational approach of these Wenzhou immigrant parents was their family's entrepreneurial culture. Notably, all the families in this study owned their own businesses; rather than viewing education as the sole pathway to success, they tended to offer their children alternative routes to success through these family enterprises. Darren's mother brought up an interesting concept of 'taking over the family business' (继承家业):

(Darren) His father, who is involved in family business, mentioned that regardless of the field of study, (Darren) will eventually end up becoming a business entrepreneur in the future. He emphasised the importance of gaining broad experiences, learning from diverse environments, and interacting with different people and situations, as these are valuable life experiences. [...] (Also) many of the Chinese friends we have met abroad, who are also involved in business, are less involved with their children's education. Many of them send their children abroad for education, with the expectation that they will return to take over the family business.

Luke's narrative echoed this finding, as his parents' family business offered him an alternative option: he could help with the business if he was unable to continue his education or find a job in the future:

My parents were completely unfamiliar with the education system, so from high school to university, I made all the decisions myself. They didn't have the time, nor did they want to manage these things—they felt it was fine for me to decide on my own. My parents gave me a lot of freedom in my studies and future choices, respecting my opinions and not forcing me to do something I didn't like. They never insisted that I must become a doctor or a lawyer. They just said if you enjoy studying, then study; if you don't, then don't. You can go to work instead. So, my parents had a more hands-off approach—if I could continue studying then I continue, but if not, I could always go back and help with the family business.

Interestingly, despite facing similar disadvantages—such as a lack of essential cultural and educational capital—these Wenzhou European immigrant families present a contrasting picture compared to the Chinese British immigrants studied by Archer and Francis (Francis & Archer, 2005; Archer & Francis, 2006). Archer and Francis argued that, regardless of their current social class, the belief that 'Chinese people value education' significantly contributed

to a shared diasporic habitus within Chinese communities, where educational achievement is seen as a defining characteristic. This emphasis on education, combined with strategic use of economic capital, enabled both working-class and middle-class families to mitigate perceived deficiencies in cultural or educational capital. Additionally, this focus on the 'value of education' has emerged as a strategic response to challenging socio-economic conditions—such as language barriers and long working hours in the catering industry—allowing Chinese immigrants in Britain to cultivate a culturally specific form of capital that promotes both academic success and social mobility.

In contrast, the collective emphasis on education is not evident among Wenzhou European immigrant families. Rather than prioritising formal education, these parents appear to offer their children an alternative route to upward social mobility through family businesses. This finding aligns with Yiu's (2013) research on Chinese immigrant youths in Spain, which suggests that, in the face of discrimination within both the education system and the labour market, Chinese immigrants in Spain have attained temporary financial success as small business owners, thereby establishing entrepreneurship rather than education as a viable alternative path to social mobility.

3. Businesses and Busyness

Busyness might be another reason why these parents embrace a more relaxed educational approach. As all the student participants mentioned, their parents were busy with their own businesses when they were young and therefore lacked the time to be involved in their education. Notably, four out of the nine student participants are 1.5-generation Chinese immigrants. These students were either sent back to China after being born in their host countries or migrated before adolescence, leaving them 'left behind' with their grandparents and experiencing long separations from their parents.

Surprisingly, this approach was common among Wenzhou immigrant parents in the early stages of establishing their businesses. From a parental perspective, Sophie's mother remarked:

Many Wenzhounese do business here, they often send their children back to China. Then they stay here to run their businesses while their children are raised in China, maybe by their grandparents or a nanny. (Because) They are busy, and believe that

they won't stay here for a long time; they just want to make some money and then go back.

Student participants born and raised in the host countries also noted their parents' busyness with their businesses, which often resulted in them being cared for by their grandparents or nannies. Sarah recalled how her parents' demanding work schedules during her childhood left them little time to engage in her education:

When my sister and I were still in school, both my mom and dad had to go to Madrid to run their shop, so they were never home during the day. We had a nanny who lived with us and took care of cooking and cleaning. As a result, my parents didn't supervise us much. They would leave home around 8 or 9 in the morning and return around 8 or 9 in the evening, so they were out all day.

4. Faith in God

Since seven out of nine families in this research were third or fourth-generation Christian families, their relaxed and 'letting-go' education approach might be influenced by their faith in God. Dylan's mother shared how she comforted her second child while preparing for entrance exams:

During her fifth year of high school, she experienced quite a bit of emotional stress. We continually advised her to pray and seek God's guidance. My message was to avoid putting too much pressure on herself. Putting in your best effort and then leave the rest to God. Entrusting it to God doesn't mean giving up; rather, it means you've done your best.

Similarly, Sophie's mother emphasised that God's protection and guidance have been crucial in shaping who their children are today:

We have believed in God since we were young, and the children have been going to church from a young age as well. I am very grateful that the children grew up in church, with God's guidance and protection along the way. This steady and peaceful journey is also due to God's safeguarding and care.

5. Influenced by host countries' educational culture

Finally, these parents emphasised that their parenting philosophies were influenced by the local cultural environments, observing that many other European parents also adopted a relaxed approach to their children's education. For instance, Sophie's mother said that:

In Hungary, the lifestyle for European children is really relaxing. They finish their classes around 1:00 PM, and then they just play at school until 3:00 PM. If they have a little bit of homework, they can finish it at school, and when they get home, there's nothing else to do—just play. [...] Many Chinese families here send their kids to Chinese school on the weekends. My neighbour once asked, 'How can you do that? Kids need to rest; how can they handle it? Don't they already study from Monday to Friday? The weekend is meant for resting.' So when many Chinese kids were going to Chinese school, we asked our children if they wanted to go, and they said no, so we didn't force them.

This aligns with the findings of Cheah et al. (2013), which highlight changes in parenting among first-generation Chinese American immigrant mothers following migration. While these mothers traditionally favoured strict discipline to ensure their children adhered to rules, they also recognised the importance of praise and encouragement in building confidence and fostering social development. Notably, after migrating, these mothers placed less emphasis on academic performance, encouraged their children's independence, and focused more on their overall development.

Some parents acknowledged that if they were in China, given the competitive nature of the Chinese education system, they might also have participated in the intense pressure to succeed. For example, Dylan's mother suggested that:

In Italy, you'll notice that there isn't the same competitive mindset among children as there is in China. In China, if someone is ahead of you, you feel the need to catch up to them. [...] I think the education systems in China and abroad are completely different. In China, it's more intense and pressurised, where you have to learn everything yourself. But abroad, it's more relaxed. [...] Of course, the environment influences my thinking. For example, the way foreigners educate their children—they don't pressure them or create a competitive mentality. They let their kids do what they enjoy, and they're very relaxed. We adopt the same approach. If everyone around me was pushing their kids to study hard, I might do the same because you're influenced by your surroundings.

Similarly, Sarah's father said:

In China, if everyone around you is highly competitive, you would likely get caught up in that pressure as well. (But) if you're abroad, where everyone has a laid-back attitude, and you will think sending the kids to public school is enough.

Question to ask: Getting more competitive?

However, some families noted that it is becoming more competitive for the younger generations. For instance, more and more parents are sending their children to private schools for a better education. Emily suggested:

Younger parents nowadays may have higher expectations. As people gradually begin to understand the education system and as times change, they start to plan which path is best for their children. For my generation, we were all still figuring things out; back then, people didn't really know and understand much. But now, people have gradually become more aware and have started to involute (juan), trying to provide their children with a better education. For example, when I was younger, fewer people attended private schools, but that number has gradually increased. Nowadays, many parents enrol their children in private schools starting from kindergarten because they believe it offers a better education. Once people became aware of the existence of private schools, they began to plan and send their children to better schools.

Additionally, Sarah's father reflected that he was more involved with his youngest child, having gained experience through parenting his older daughters. He mentioned that they had already paved a route for the youngest. Nevertheless, he expressed his intention to send his youngest son to a private school, believing it would provide better educational quality and a more favourable peer group:

Since there was no prior experience, the first one was a trial-and-error process, so I still feel quite guilty that we didn't involve the eldest's education as well as we could have. The second one was very self-disciplined and performed extremely well academically, so whether she was in a private or public school, as long as she wanted something, I was okay with it. But with the third one, because we had some experience from the first two, we were able to manage his education better and be more involved in his studies. [...] In the past, my sister placed a lot of importance on her children's education. Although she didn't earn as much as I did, her children attended private school from a young age. I didn't understand it at that time—I thought that a child's success depended on their own efforts and sending them to a private school wouldn't necessarily solve anything, especially since private schools cost around 1,500 euros per child each month. But now I think her approach was correct. Sending children to better schools allows them to learn alongside classmates from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. When they grow up, they might form friendships with the children of entrepreneurs, and their conversations could potentially lead to deeper insights.

4.3 Educational experiences, choices, strategies and practices

4.3.1 Formal education

Six out of the nine students in this research are either currently pursuing or have recently completed their tertiary education in the UK. Among these six, five attended international high schools. The remaining three participants have been enrolled in the local public school system since kindergarten and are now pursuing their undergraduate studies at European state universities. For those who attended international schools, their parents generally placed a higher value on education, believing that the quality of education at international schools and overseas universities was better. For example, Luke said:

My parents wanted to send me abroad to study, like to the UK, because they thought the universities there were better. So, when I was in middle school, they transferred me to an international school in Rome. This British school used English as the language of instruction, and that's when I started learning English.

However, these school choices were not solely made by the parents; in most cases, the students played a significant role in the decision-making process. For instance, Luke mentioned that his older sister opted to remain within the Italian public education system because she did not want to learn a new language:

Interviewer: Why did your parents choose to send one child to an international school and leave the other in a public school?

Luke: (I think it's) a matter of personal choice. My sister might not have wanted to learn English or start from scratch. I was more interested in exploring, and since we had immigrated here, I thought learning a new language would be easier. (Many of the choices) were made for my future and my own benefit. When I was younger, I felt that it would be useful for me, so I went for it.

Similarly, Sarah's father mentioned that he had asked Sarah whether she would be interested in transferring to an international school and studying abroad in an English-speaking country, either the UK or US the future. But Sarah refused her father's proposal because:

In my third year of junior high, my dad did mention the idea of going abroad to me. However, I wasn't very interested. At that time, I felt that the U.S. was a bit unsafe, and I didn't want to go to the UK because of Brexit, making visa processes very complicated. Additionally, the pandemic started in my fourth year of junior high, I we didn't consider it any further.

4.3.2 Informal education

When asked if their parents or they themselves employed specific educational strategies to gain or maintain academic advantages, most responded that no explicit strategies were used. However, these families did engage in various educational practices, including language learning, extracurricular activities and private tutoring, even if these were not solely aimed at academic improvement.

1. Language learning: the importance of Mandarin and English

Firstly, all students indicated that they were enrolled in Chinese schools from a young age. For these migrant parents, being Chinese and proficient in Mandarin is highly valued. Some parents even mentioned that while other interest classes may be optional, learning Mandarin is considered mandatory. For example, Dylan's mother said:

When they were young, learning Chinese was a must. I told them that whether they were born in China or abroad, their appearance doesn't change their nationality, and Mandarin is very important. Although I speak Wenzhou dialect with their father at home, we use Mandarin when talking to the children. I said that if you don't even speak your own country's language and speak Italian at home, that's not right. When you go to China, it's ridiculous if you look Chinese but can't speak Chinese.

Additionally, preserving Chinese culture is frequently cited by both students and parents as another reason for learning Mandarin. Melody said:

On one hand, the parents hope that their children will speak Chinese to facilitate better communication. On the other hand, they also wish to preserve some aspects of traditional Chinese culture. I think Wenzhou people are quite traditional. When pastors from abroad, such as those from the US, come here to participate in church camps, they often express their admiration, noting that the level of Chinese here is very high and that everyone seems very 'Chinese'. They pointed out that ABCs (American-Born Chinese) or BBCs (British-Born Chinese) they encountered in the US, or the UK often don't speak Chinese well and have become quite local.

In addition to Chinese, families emphasised the importance of learning English. Research such as Liu (2016) highlighted that investment in children's English language education by purchasing English reading materials and enrolling them in summer schools was predominant strategy used among Chinese middle-class parents. Similarly, Zhang (2020) found that Chinese middle-class parents emphasised the importance of learning English as a means of acquiring cultural capital. Additionally, these parents viewed proficiency in English as a

cultural code that signifies the quality (*suzhi*) of their social class and helps to differentiate their children.

Many stated that proficiency in English, as an international language, opens up numerous opportunities. Most of the interviewed students attended international schools or participated in additional English-related classes and activities, such as summer camps and private tutoring. Emily mentioned:

I think Chinese parents want their children to learn English well because they believe that mastering English will bring more opportunities. My parents think this way too. However, for Italians, there isn't the same demand; they don't insist that their children must learn English well. But Chinese parents believe that learning English well builds confidence, so they prefer to send their children to private schools where they can learn English better. This way, in the future, their children can explore opportunities elsewhere and not be limited to staying in Italy.

Also, Sophie's mother suggested:

Many Chinese parents send their children to American schools here because, at that time, many Chinese aspired to go to the United States and wanted to learn English. Since only able to speak Chinese is limiting, they believe that once you learn English, you can go anywhere in the world. That's why English is so highly desired, and many Chinese parents send their children to English-speaking schools.

2. Extra-curriculum

Secondly, all students had taken a range of extra-curricular interest classes, namely piano, swimming, dancing, drawing and basketball. Interestingly, Liu (2016) noted that piano, followed by violin and painting, are the most popular extracurricular classes among Chinese middle-class parents. For example, Sarah recalled her weekly weekend schedule as:

Since Chinese school was in the morning, dance class was from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM in the afternoon. During the midday break, I would eat at the Chinese school. But my mom noticed that there was still some time between 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM, so she started sending me to piano lessons. After a few classes, I realised I wasn't very interested in piano, so I told her I didn't want to continue, and I stopped. Later, I started taking drawing classes instead. [...] In sixth grade, I began to enjoy listening to music, and my mom thought I liked singing, so she enrolled me in singing lessons. But I only attended a few classes before stopping as well.

However, Sarah's father mentioned that they did not pressure her to continue with these extracurricular classes if she lost interest. As suggested by the other three mothers, the reason

for enrolling their children in various extracurricular classes was to encourage them to learn more beyond academics, allowing them to gain skills in different fields and develop additional interests and talents. Dylan's mother said that:

As for swimming, I said it is essential. They started learning to swim at the age of three because I believe it's a survival skill that must be learned, not just for fitness but for survival. [...] When it comes to playing the piano, they started learning it in elementary school. There was a bit of pressure at that time—they didn't really enjoy it. But I believe that music helps stimulate the brain. For instance, when you're using your left hand, it activates the right side of your brain. So, I told them that learning piano is beneficial for their brain development. However, I don't force them to reach a certain level like other kids who say they're at a particular level. My point is that whether they learn well or not is not important; what matters is that they are learning.

While students noted that their parents did not intentionally implement educational strategies to give them an advantage, some took the initiative to engage in extracurricular activities and seek internships to enhance their future opportunities. For example, Melody said:

In high school, I was quite clear that I wanted to attend university elsewhere, like in the United States, where it's important to participate in many activities, not just focus on grades. So, I joined many school clubs, such as the journalist club, where I wrote articles and blogs, and I also participated in Model United Nations. I tried to get involved in many of the school's activities, which I found quite enriching. [...] I also took courses on Coursera, I found really helpful. I think these courses provided some valuable psychology knowledge and helped with my university applications at that time.

3. Private supplementary tutoring

Nearly half of the interviewees reported receiving private academic tutoring, others indicated they had never sought private tutoring beyond their schoolwork. Zhang's (2020) study on Chinese educational strategies indicates that middle-class parents are more likely to invest heavily in their children's private supplementary tutoring, often driven by anxiety, competition, and stress related to upward social mobility. Similarly, Sriprakash et al. (2016) found that Chinese immigrant parents in Australia view private supplementary tutoring as a key middle-class strategy to secure their children's academic success.

However, this research found that private tutoring was only used when students needed extra support. For example, Melody mentioned that when she first arrived in Italy, she had a private tutor to assist with homework and catch up in certain subjects. Sarah noted that after

transferring to a bilingual school with English as the medium of instruction, her grades fell significantly, prompting her mother to hire an English tutor to help her catch up.

Drawing on Lareau's (2011) theoretical framework of concerted cultivation, it is notable that Wenzhou immigrant parents often adopt a middle-class child-rearing style characterised by structured activities and active involvement. However, their overall relaxed and hands-off approach aligns more closely with Lareau's concept of the 'accomplishment of natural growth,' typically associated with working-class parents. This paradox raises questions about the fit of the Wenzhou European educational approach within Lareau's framework and challenges its applicability to Wenzhou European community, as it overlooks the complexities of class, race/ethnicity, and migration.

4.3.3 Shifting educational responsibilities to older siblings

However, notably, when it comes to the education of younger siblings, some indicated that the responsibility often shifts from the parents to the older siblings. Melody noted that:

As the eldest sibling, when something happened with my younger brother or sister, I had to take on the responsibility of a parent and help them communicate with the school instead of my parents.

Similarly, Amy shared that her family largely depends on her eldest sister for educational decisions. As the oldest sibling, her sister frequently assists the younger ones in making choices, particularly when their parents are unable to provide informed guidance. This positions her sister as a crucial figure in their education. Amy also remarked on her sister's active role in helping their younger sister select her major:

Amy: My (younger) sister didn't have a specific job or industry in mind that she wanted to pursue. In France, Accounting is a good major because not many people study it, but it's easier to find a job, and the salary is relatively high, so she chose that.

Interviewer: Who help her to choose it?

Amy: It was mainly my older sister. She then communicated with my parents and explained the reasons to them. My older sister had the final decision-making authority.

This study offers a contrasting view, or at least partial perspective of Confucian ideologies, which traditionally frame education as a collective family responsibility (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Huang & Gove, 2012). While older siblings often assist in educational decisions for younger siblings, suggesting a shared responsibility, this contrasts with Huang and Gove's (2012; 2015) findings on Chinese American immigrant parents, who feel a strong obligation to manage their children's academic success. These parents typically maintain authority over educational choices, including majors and career paths. In contrast, Wenzhou European families adopt a more relaxed approach, granting their children greater freedom in academic and career decisions, leading to increased independence. Consequently, key Confucian concepts like 'guan' and 'xiao'—which emphasise parental regulation and children's duty to fulfil parental expectations—are less evident among these immigrant families.

4.4 Educational opportunities and challenges

Chloe's photo/image storytelling provides an overview of the double-edged consequences that international migration presents, both educational opportunities and challenges that these Chinese migrant students had faced. She chose an image of a maze, where starting from the red arrow on the left side and navigate through the maze to reach one of three possible endpoints. She explained:

(Before) I didn't know what I wanted to do in the future, and my parents had just arrived in France, so they couldn't offer much help. So, I had to make many decisions on my own. But it's like this maze—there are many possibilities, each path is different, and your choices ultimately shape who you become today.

4.4.1 Educational opportunities

1. Comprehensive development

Firstly, many student participant expressed gratitude for being raised in Europe, contrasting it with the highly competitive and demanding Chinese education system. They appreciated the more relaxed educational environment and happier childhoods, which emphasised holistic development over mere academic achievements. Like Darren said:

You don't have to study in the highly competitive environment found in China; instead, you can enjoy your childhood as it should be. I think one of the advantages of being abroad is that there is a greater focus on children's mental health. People also place more importance on social interactions and interpersonal relationships, with a stronger emphasis on developing soft skills.

2. More future opportunities and possibilities

Secondly, many students noted that being immigrants offered them greater flexibility and more opportunities for the future. Emily remarked that her horizons would not have expanded had her family not migrated to Europe:

I think that, in many cases, your horizons might not be as broad. In Wenzhou, for example, people tend to follow the same path—focusing on studying hard for the college entrance exam and getting into a good university. The goal is very much centered around academics. (If I were in China), I would probably be like everyone else there, following the usual path of finding a job, getting married, and so on. I think there would be more limitations. Many of the opportunities I have encountered now would be much fewer if I were in China. Compared to China, I think there's more freedom here. Because of the cultural background and the extended contact with people here, you become more open-minded.

3. Being a Cultural bridge

Thirdly, some mentioned that being raised in two cultures allowed them to serve as a cultural bridge between China and their host countries. For example, Melody said:

I've noticed that the mental well-being of Chinese people, especially second-generation Chinese and their parents, is greatly impacted by the cultural tension or gap they experience. However, there aren't adequate resources available to provide them with psychological counselling. For example, when facing these cultural tensions and gaps, if I were to seek help from an Italian or a white person, they wouldn't be able to understand the emotional state and harm caused by these cultural conflicts. That's why I believe it's important to have people with a similar background who can understand their feelings and provide professional services and counselling.

However, she also highlighted that bridging the cultural gap could lead to significant challenges if not navigated successfully:

But the prerequisite is that you first need to bridge this gap yourself—you need to navigate it successfully. Otherwise, it can be a real struggle. Once you understand the differences between the two cultures, you'll be better equipped to link them together, which can become an advantage.

4.4.2 Educational challenges

1. Cultural differences: "there is still a gap"

First, the primary challenge highlighted by the students was cultural differences. All participants acknowledged the significant gap between China and their host countries, expressing stronger connections to Chinese culture and friendships. Emily, a 1.5 generation Chinese Italian immigrant suggested:

Regarding identity, I definitely feel like an outsider (in Italy) because I look different from them, and I think our cultures are different. Especially as someone who has lived in China, it's different for me. My younger brother, who was born here, might not feel it as strongly, but because I grew up in China and received some education there, there are some significant differences. [...] I definitely identify as Chinese. Even though I've lived here for so long, my sense of identity as Chinese is quite strong, especially compared to others who were born and raised here and might feel more Italian. [...] I currently have Chinese citizenship, however, even if I were to change my nationality, I would still see myself as Chinese. Even if I became an Italian citizen, that's something I don't think would change.

Sarah, a second-generation Chinese Spanish immigrant also noted that:

(Although) I have more foreign friends here (in Spain), I still feel the differences whenever I'm with them. Foreigners think and act differently, and there are cultural differences. [...] It's easier to talk with Chinese people because, after all, we're all Chinese, and our ways of thinking are more similar.

Likewise, a second-generation Chinese Italian immigrant Dylan said:

Although I didn't experience much culture shock, because my skin colour is different and the culture is different, when I first went to elementary school and even up until now, even though I feel like I've integrated quite well in Italy, there's always something that feels a bit different. There's still a gap between Italians and Chinese people.

Furthermore, some noted that they need to make an effort to adapt quickly to fit in the local culture and groups. For instance, Luke mentioned:

I think when you first arrive, you definitely need to adapt; otherwise, you won't be able to make friends. When I was younger, attending state schools, most of the students were Italian. At first, you definitely have to make an effort to make them feel like you are one of them, and only later can you start to show your diversity.

2. Racial discriminations

Second, although most students in this study reported generally positive experiences at school and did not personally encounter racism, some mentioned that their friends or siblings attending public schools faced discrimination based on their race or ethnicity. Sarah mentioned how her younger brother was discriminated at schools by calling him "Chinito" in Spanish:

Sometimes my younger brother would come home and say that because of his race, some people would call him 'chinito', which means 'Chinese people' in Spanish but carries a derogatory connotation.

Also, after returning to Italy, Melody recalled experiencing discrimination due to her Chinese ethnicity. As a coping mechanism, she aimed to excel academically, becoming a straight-A student to avoid discrimination and meet her parents' and teachers' expectations. She said:

When I first arrived, I experienced some negative incidents related to my identity as a newly arrived Chinese in Italy. My English and Italian were poor at the time, and I faced some discrimination and racism. However, I feel that my experiences in international school were much better compared to some of my friends. My coping mechanism for dealing with all the pressure, culture shock, and the need to meet others' expectations was to become a straight-A student. I believed that by excelling academically, I would avoid discrimination, at least within the school. I also felt that I was meeting my parents' expectations, knowing that they wanted me to quickly adapt to this new environment after returning to live with them. The teachers also had expectations, so I worked hard.

3. Lack of parental involvement and support

When asked whether her parents were involved when she faced discrimination, she said she did not recall any intervention from them. Even if she had told her parents, she believed they would not have been able to intervene much. This highlights the third challenge discussed earlier—the lack of parental involvement and support, which was faced by most migrant students. Melody well-summarised the challenges faced by most Wenzhou immigrant families in supporting their children's education, stating,

The issue faced by most second-generation Chinese immigrants is that their parents may not have strong language skills to begin with and since I attended an international school, their language abilities were even more limited, as their Italian is better than their English. But even then, many parents aren't very proficient in Italian either. So, whether attending an international school or a local school, the

children have to navigate the new educational system on their own. The parents lack cultural and social capital, so the children must face a completely new system and its challenges by themselves. What Chinese parents can mostly provide, like in my case attending an international school, is financial support. But when it comes to cultural and social aspects, you have to figure it out on your own and communicate with the school yourself. [...] However, I think my mom did her best to do what she could. For example, during the first year, she attended parent-teacher meetings and would bring a friend who was relatively proficient in both English and Italian to help her. She did her best with what she could do. but eventually, as she felt that I had adapted well, she stopped attending those meetings.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the findings

In response to the three research questions, this study explored three central themes: (1) the educational philosophies and perceptions of Wenzhou European immigrant families and the underlying reasons for their approach; (2) the educational experiences, choices, strategies, and practices these migrant families employ in both formal and informal education; and (3) the potential educational opportunities and challenges that migration presents.

Firstly, the findings indicate that these Wenzhou immigrant parents often adopt a relaxed and laid-back approach to education. Five potential reasons for this approach were identified: 1) a lack of recognised Western mainstream cultural and social capital to navigate the formal education systems; 2) the provision of alternative paths to success through family entrepreneurship; 3) busyness with their businesses; 4) influences from their faith; and 5) the host countries' educational culture and environment.

Secondly, the findings highlight the educational experiences, choices, strategies, and practices used by these families in formal and informal education. In terms of formal education, sending children to international schools or studying abroad was a common strategy. However, the findings also suggest that educational and school choices were not solely determined by the parents but also involved the students' preferences. Regarding informal education, although participants reported that their parents did not explicitly use educational strategies to provide advantages, several practices were still evident. These included: 1) an emphasis on language learning, particularly Mandarin and English; 2) participation in various extracurricular activities; 3) and the use of private supplementary tutoring. Additionally, a noteworthy finding was that the educational responsibilities for younger siblings often shifted from parents to older siblings, who assumed a parental role in influencing their younger siblings' educational choices.

Lastly, the study revealed three key educational opportunities and three significant challenges. In terms of opportunities, students reported experiencing a more relaxed educational environment and a more fulfilling childhood that emphasised holistic development rather than mere academic achievement. Additionally, immigration has broadened their horizons, which provided them with more future possibilities and

opportunities. Also, growing up in bicultural environments enabled them to act as cultural bridges between China and their host countries. Conversely, three primary educational challenges were also identified: cultural differences, racial discrimination, and a lack of parental involvement and support.

5.2 General Discussion

The relaxed educational approach of Wenzhou European immigrant parents seems to contrast with the competitive ‘tiger parenting’ strategies prevalent in literature on Chinese immigrant families, such as those described by Amy Chua (2011). While existing research often emphasises high academic expectations within Chinese immigrant communities (e.g., Zhou, 2013; Huang & Gove, 2015; Wang, 2019), these aspirations are less evident among Wenzhou European immigrant families. Although these Wenzhou immigrants face challenges similar to those of Chinese British families (Francis & Archer, 2005; Archer & Francis, 2006), they provide their children with an entrepreneurial ‘Plan B’ for success rather than prioritising education as the sole path to upward mobility. Additionally, factors like religion significantly influence their child-rearing practices, an area not extensively covered in current literature on Chinese immigrant education.

Also, this study presents a contrasting, or at least nuanced, perspective on Confucian ideologies regarding Chinese immigrant educational approaches. Traditionally, Confucianism views education as a collective family responsibility (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Huang & Gove, 2012). Within this Wenzhou European immigrant community, older siblings often assist younger ones in educational decisions, indicating this shared family obligation. However, this differs from Huang and Gove’s (2012; 2015) findings on Chinese American immigrant parents, who feel a strong duty to oversee their children’s academic success and maintain authority over their educational choices, including majors and career paths. In contrast, Wenzhou European families adopt a more relaxed approach, allowing their children greater freedom in academic and career decisions, which fosters increased independence. As a result, key Confucian concepts like ‘guan’ and ‘xiao’—which emphasise parental regulation and children’s duty to meet parental expectations—are less prominent among these immigrant families.

Consequently, although the Confucianism framework offers meaningful implications for Chinese parenting and Chinese immigrant parenting on educational parenting and practices in general, it might not be fully applicable and explainable for the educational perceptions and practices of the Wenzhou European immigrant community. This study critiques the existing literature on Chinese immigrant parenting and education as being overly broad and generalised, failing to account for the context, specificity, and particularity of different Chinese immigrant groups.

Furthermore, this study builds on Bourdieuan social class theories to explore the educational experiences, perceptions, and practices of Wenzhou European immigrants, highlighting the need for these theories to engage with specific cultural, social, and contextual nuances. While Bourdieu's framework provides valuable insights, it may not fully capture the unique cultural, social, and contextual nuances of this group. Although these families identify as middle-class (both in self-perception and household income), they acknowledge that a lack of cultural and mainstream social capital affects their engagement in their children's education.

As Archer and Francis (2006) emphasise, capital is context-specific, and sociological analyses of class must consider the racialised dimensions of class experiences, particularly for non-white groups. Thus, theories of privilege must recognise that middle-class ethnic minority families encounter different challenges compared to their white counterparts, leading to economic and symbolic disadvantages. This study prompts a re-evaluation of where Chinese immigrant families, particularly Wenzhou European families, fit within these theoretical frameworks.

Moreover, by applying Lareau's (2011) framework of concerted cultivation to the informal educational practices of Wenzhou immigrant families, it becomes evident that these parents often adopt a middle-class 'concerted cultivation' approach characterised by structured activities and active involvement. At the same time, their generally more relaxed and less interventionist style resonates with Lareau's concept of the 'accomplishment of natural growth', typically associated with working-class families. This duality encourages a dialogue about how the parenting styles of Wenzhou European families can inform Lareau's framework and suggests that it may need to be adapted to better capture the complexities of class, race/ethnicity, and migration within this unique community. All in all, this research argued the limits of existing models, suggesting the reason why theory needs to be in

dialogue with specific contexts and situations, as well as the importance of intersectional analysis.

5.3 Limitations, Implications and Recommendations for further research

However, several limitations must be acknowledged due to the scope of this dissertation, which also provides recommendations for future research. First, given the small sample size and specific demographics of the participants, the findings are not intended to be generalised to the broader population of Chinese immigrants, who exhibit significant diversity. While this study offers insights into the perceptions and educational practices of Wenzhou European immigrants, its applicability to other Chinese immigrants, including those from varied backgrounds or geographical origins in Europe, may be limited. Future research should explore key demographic variables—such as social class, immigration status, generational status, education levels, place of origin, and duration in host countries—to enhance our understanding of both Chinese and Wenzhou immigrant experiences.

Second, this study primarily focuses on Wenzhou immigrants in Europe as a whole. However, there may be subtle differences within this group based on the host country. For example, the educational experiences, perceptions, and practices of Wenzhou immigrants in Italy might differ from those of Wenzhou immigrants in France. These differences could be influenced by the distinct immigration histories and cultural contexts of the respective destination countries. Future research could, therefore, benefit from examining the similarities and differences within the Wenzhou immigrant community across different European countries.

Third, as discussed in the findings, the educational experiences, perceptions, and practices among Wenzhou immigrant parents are continuously evolving. For example, parents are becoming more engaged and competitive concerning the education of their younger children compared to their elder ones. Thus, a longitudinal, family-based study could be useful for capturing the long-term and dynamic nature of educational practices among this group.

Despite these limitations, a key strength of this research is its focus on the Wenzhou community. This qualitative study complements and enriches the existing literature by examining the unique characteristics and specificities of the educational experiences,

perceptions, and practices of Wenzhou immigrants in Europe, distinguishing them from the broader Chinese immigrant community.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guides

Interview guide and questions- Parents [Being “Wenzhounese” in Europe: intergenerational experiences and perceptions of education]

Part 1: International migration

- **Basic background information**
 - Individual information (e.g. age, occupation, education backgrounds etc.)
 - Family information (e.g. siblings, number of children etc.)
- **Can you tell me about why you decide to migrate?**
- **Why and how you choose your destination country and region?**
- **What are your migration experiences/stories?**
- **What are the lived experiences as migrants in EU countries?** (before, during and after migration)
 - **What are the opportunities and challenges you have as migrants in EU countries?**
 - **What are the similarities and differences between your origin country and your destination country?**

Part 2: Children’s Education

- **Parents’ educational choices and strategies**
 - **What educational choices you have made for your children?**
 - **What are the reasons for making these choices?**
 - **How these choices have been affected by your decision of international migration?**
 - **What are the difficulties you have when making these choices?**
 - **Have you used any strategy to help your children to gain and stay educationally advantaged and competitive? What are they and why?**
- **Education aspirations**
 - **What are the education aspirations you have for your children?**
 - **Have the education aspirations changed before and after migration? Why? What are the potential reasons?**
- **How your and your children’s educational experiences as Wenzhou migrants affect communities in both origin and destination countries?**

Interview guide and questions- Students

[Being “Wenzhounese” in Europe: intergenerational experiences and perceptions of education]

Part 1 International migration

- **Basic background information**
 - Individual information (age, education backgrounds, major, which year etc.)
 - Family information (siblings etc.)
- **What are your migration experiences/stories?**
- **What are the lived experiences as migrants in EU countries?** (before, during and after migration)

Part 2 Educational experiences

- **Educational choices and strategies**
 - **What are the school experiences as a Wenzhounese migrant student in EU countries?** (at primary, secondary and tertiary levels)
 - **What informal education have you received? and how do you feel?** (e.g. language institutions? Exchange programs? Private tutoring?)
 - **Have you and your parents used any strategy to help yourselves to gain and stay educationally advantaged and competitive? What are they and why?**
 - **What are the similarities and differences of studying in your origin country and your destination country? If you have any**
 - **What are the challenges (e.g. language) and opportunities of studying in the EU as a Wenzhou migrant student?**
 - **How your parents’ choice of migration affects your choices of schools, universities, future career paths and opportunities?**
- **Education aspirations**
 - **What are the education aspirations you have for yourselves? (e.g. the purposes of education)**
 - **Have the education aspirations changed before and after migration? Why? What are the potential reasons?**
- **How your educational experiences as Wenzhou EU migrants affect communities in both origin and destination countries?**

Part 3 Story-telling of your chosen photos

Choose three photos that most represent your past, present and future; Can you tell me the reasons for choosing these photos? And what are the stories behind each photo?

- Past: your educational migration experience in the past
- Present: your current educational experience
- Future: What your educational or occupational future looks like?

Appendix C: CEREC Ethical Approval

Subject: CUREC 1B: Being “Wenzhounese” in the EU: intergenerational experiences and perceptions of education
Date: Friday, 3 May 2024 at 15:23:51 China Standard Time
From: Student CUREC
To: [REDACTED]
CC: [REDACTED]
Attachments: image001.png

Dear Jiena,

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your CUREC 1B application entitled ‘*Being “Wenzhounese” in the EU: intergenerational experiences and perceptions of education*’. The application was reviewed and approved by [REDACTED], your supervisor. No further approval from the Education DREC is required for applications reviewed under the CUREC 1B process. As such, the project will not receive a formal letter of ethical approval from the SSH IDREC.

The ethics reference for your application is **C1B-24HT-Educ-031**. Please add this reference to your CUREC 1B form and include it on documents for the research participants such as the participant information sheet.

Please note that this is contingent on the research project adhering to the criteria set out in the [CUREC 1B guidance](#). Please ensure, therefore, that you comply with the conditions of this process and, should anything change in the course of the project, you should discuss this with your supervisor to determine whether this requires further review and approval by the Education DREC.

Appendix D: Information Sheet (English and Chinese)

[Being “Wenzhounese” in Europe: intergenerational experiences and perceptions of education]

作为欧洲国家的“温州人”：跨代教育经历与观念

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

研究信息表

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference: [C1B-24HT-Educ-031]

1. Introductory paragraph 介绍

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me/us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

您被邀请参与此研究项目。在您决定之前，了解为什么进行此研究以及它将涉及什么是很重要的。请花时间仔细阅读以下信息，并与他人讨论（如果您愿意）。如果有任何不清楚的地方或想了解更多信息，请随时向我们提问。请您花时间决定您是否愿意参与。

2. Why is this research being conducted? 为什么进行此研究?

Aim and Objective 研究目标和目的

The overall aim of this research: an exploration of international migration of “Wenzhounese” in European countries, and their lived experiences and perceptions of education through a qualitative intergenerational approach.

本研究的总体目标是：通过质性跨代方法，探索和探讨“温州人”在欧洲国家的国际移民现象及其生活经历和对教育的看法。

Background and Rationale 研究背景和原因

As a Wenzhou undergraduate in London, I have met a variety of Wenzhou migrant undergraduate and or postgraduate students from European countries, mainly from Italy, France, Portugal, Spain, and Hungary. This research explores the international migration and educational experiences of the Wenzhounese through a qualitative intergenerational approach. The aim is to understand the motives and factors driving international migration, and the lived migrant experiences of Wenzhou migrant parents and students (undergraduates/postgraduates/students who graduated and have started to work for 2-3 years) based across Europe.

作为一名在伦敦的温州籍本科生，我遇到了来自欧盟国家的各种温州移民本科生和研究生，主要来自意大利、法国、葡萄牙、西班牙和匈牙利。本研究通过定性跨代方法，探讨温州人的国

际移民和教育经历。研究的目的是了解驱动国际移民的动机和因素，以及温州移民父母和学生（包括本科生、研究生、已毕业并开始工作 2-3 年的学生）在欧洲各地的移民生活经历和对教育的看法。

There are **three overarching research questions** will be investigated in this research:

- **What educational philosophies and perceptions do these families hold, and what are the potential reasons for them?**
- **What educational experiences, practices, choices and strategies do these migrant families employ?**
- **What educational opportunities and challenges does migration present for them?**

本研究将探讨三个总体研究问题：

- 这些家庭持有怎样的教育理念和观念，潜在的原因是什么？
- 这些移民家庭采用了哪些教育经验、实践、选择和策略？
- 移民给他们带来了哪些教育机会和挑战？

3. Why have I been invited to take part? 为什么我被邀请参加此研究？

Inclusion Criteria

- European Wenzhounese migrants
- Students who are obtaining/have obtained a degree for their tertiary education;
- Parents of those students meet the criteria mentioned above

参与标准：

- 欧洲国家的温州移民
- 正在获得/已获得高等教育学位的学生
- 这些学生的父母符合上述标准

4. Do I have to take part? 我一定需要参加吗？

No. It is up to you to decide whether to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the research, without giving a reason, and without negative consequences, by advising me or us of this decision. The deadline by which you can withdraw any information you have contributed to the research is 31/08/2024. If you decide to withdraw, any data that has already been collected will be deleted.

不，是否参加由您决定。您可以通过通知我/我们退出研究，而无需给出理由且不会有负面后果。您可以在 2024 年 8 月 31 日之前撤回您对研究的任何贡献信息。如果您决定退出，已经收集的数据将被删除。

5. What will happen to me if I take part in the research? 如果我同意参加此研究，将会发生什么？

- **Where the research will take place:** Qualitative intergenerational research will be conducted through semi-structured interviews online via Zoom or Teams.
- **How consent will be taken:** You will first need to read this information sheet in order to be fully informed about my research project; Also, you have to consent to be involved by

signing the written consent form to make sure you have understood the main points about taking part in the research and for there to be a record of your consent.

- **How long you will be involved:** You will be involved until the research ends, the deadline is 31/08/2024.
- **Activities will be included:**
 - **Semi-structured interviews**
 - **Creative Research method: Story-telling of three photos** that represent your educational experiences of the past, present and future
- **What will be recorded:** with your consent, I would like to audio and video record you because during interviews you are asked to show and present your photos while telling your stories. But, you can switch off your camera after presenting your stories and photos, and your information will be audio recorded for recording the conversation.
- **How often you will need to participate and for how long each time:** You will be interviewed once, and each interview will last around 1-1.5 hours. However, if follow-up interviews will be necessary, e.g. additional useful information or relevant questions are raised, the follow-up sessions will last around 1 hour. But you have the right to refuse to take part in.
 - You can ask to pause or stop the research activities at any time, and for longer sessions, you will be offered regular breaks.
- **研究地点:** 通过 Zoom 或 Teams 在线进行半结构化采访, 以进行定性跨代研究。
- **如何获取同意:** 您首先需要阅读这份信息表, 以全面了解我的研究项目; 您还需要通过签署书面同意书来确认您已理解参与研究的主要内容, 并记录您的同意。
- **参与时间:** 您将参与研究直到研究结束, 截止日期为 2024 年 8 月 31 日。
- **活动内容:** 半结构化采访
- **记录内容:** 在您同意的情况下, 我希望能对此采访进行录音和录像, 以便可以更加完整的记录。
- **参与频率和每次持续时间:** 您将接受一次采访, 每次采访将持续约 1-1.5 小时。然而, 如果需要进行后续采访, 例如提出额外有用的信息或相关问题, 后续会议将持续约 1 小时。但您有权拒绝参加。
 - 您可以随时要求暂停或停止研究活动, 对于较长的会议, 将提供定期休息。

6. What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part? 潜在的风险有哪些?

I do not believe so, but if you feel uncomfortable during interviews, you are entitled to stop at any point. Here are some potential disadvantages and risks:

- **Time Commitment:**
 - investment of time, which may be burdensome
 - Mitigation: Clearly communicate the expected duration of involvement and offer flexible scheduling options.
- **Data Misuses:**

- There is a risk that data, once published, could be used by others in ways that harm the participant group, such as by reinforcing stereotypes or leading to discrimination.
- Mitigation: Carefully consider the implications of publishing certain data and apply data minimization principles.
- Loss of Anonymity in Small or Specific Groups:
 - Research might involve small communities or specific professional groups, anonymity can be hard to ensure, even with data anonymization.
 - Mitigation: Using aggregate data where possible, and be transparent about the limits of anonymity in such contexts; Additionally, in the findings section of my dissertation, I will not disclose your real name, instead pseudonym will be used, thereby enhancing your anonymity.

我不认为会有问题，但如果您在采访过程中感到不适，您有权在任何时候停止。以下是一些潜在的劣势和风险：

- 时间投入：
 - 您需要投入时间，这可能会造成负担
 - 缓解措施：明确沟通参与的预期时长，并提供灵活的安排选项
- 数据滥用：
 - 数据一旦发布，可能被他人以对参与者群体有害的方式使用，例如加强刻板印象或导致歧视。
 - 缓解措施：仔细考虑发布某些数据的影响，应用数据最小化原则。
- 研究可能涉及小社区或特定职业群体
 - 即使数据匿名化也难以确保匿名性
 - 缓解措施：尽可能使用汇总数据，并透明说明在此类环境中匿名性的限制；此外，在我的论文结果部分不会披露您的真实姓名，而是使用化名，从而增强您的匿名性。

7. Are there any benefits in taking part? 参与会有什么好处？

While there are no immediate benefits for you participating in the research, it is hoped that this research will lead to greater understanding of the European “Wenzhounese” migrants. And your participation in this research is hoped to fill in the current existing literature research gap and making contribution to obtain increased exposure for this migrant group, thereby allowing their stories to become more widely known.

尽管参与研究对您没有直接好处，但希望这项研究能加深对欧洲“温州人”移民的理解。您的参与有望填补当前文献研究的空白，并为提高这一移民群体的曝光度做出贡献，从而使他们的故事更加广为人知。

8. What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research objectives? 将会收集什么信息，以及为什么收集这些信息，对于实现研究目标有何相关性？

- Please refer to the interview guide/schedule as a reference for what information will be collected, in which it is developed and based on the five overarching questions of the research.
 - Overall interview guide/schedule will be sent to you beforehand, so that you will have an overview of the interviews you will be asked.
 - Your interview transcripts constitute my research data and the information collected will be anonymised.
 - All the data (including identifiable data- also consent forms) collected will be confidential and your real name and any significant identifying features will not be used in the research report.
 - Consent forms and research data will have to be retained for a minimum period of 3 years after publication and public release. And any records of the conversation and the rest of the identifiable information will be destroyed once the research is ended and dissertation is submitted.
 - All the data will be saved on Nexus365 (University of Oxford cloud-based service) which will be password protected, and only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the research data.
 - If you would like to know the research results, I will be happy to arrange meetings to share with you.
- 请参考采访问题，以了解将收集哪些信息，这些信息是基于研究的五个总体问题制定的。总体采访问题将在采访前发送给您，以便您对采访内容有一个概述。
 - 您的采访记录将构成我的研究数据，所收集的信息将被匿名化。所有数据（包括可识别数据和同意书）将是保密的，您的真实姓名和任何显著的识别特征不会在研究报告中使用。
 - 同意书和研究数据将在出版和公开发布后保留至少三年。研究结束并提交论文后，所有对话记录和其他可识别信息将被销毁。
 - 所有数据将保存在 Nexus365（牛津大学基于云的服务）上，该服务受密码保护，只有研究人员和其指导老师可以访问研究数据。
 - 如果您希望了解研究结果，我很乐意安排会议与您分享。

9. Will the research be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other research outputs? 研究会被发表吗？我会从任何出版或其他研究成果中被识别出来吗？

The findings from the research will be written up in a dissertation. A copy of my dissertation will be deposited both in print and online in the [Oxford University Research Archive](#) where it will be publicly available to facilitate its use in future research.

I would like your permission to use direct quotations, and for your name to be attributed to these, but without identifying you in any research outputs.

研究结果将被写入我的毕业论文。我的毕业论文副本将以印刷和在线形式存档在牛津大学研究档案中 [Oxford University Research Archive](https://www.ox.ac.uk/research-archives), 以便于未来研究的使用。

我希望获得您的许可, 在任何研究成果中使用直接引用并署上您的名字, 但不会识别您的身份。

10. Data Protection 数据保护

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the research. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from the University's Information Compliance website at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

牛津大学是您的个人数据的数据控制者, 因此将决定如何在研究中使用您的个人数据。大学将出于上述研究目的处理您的个人数据。研究是一项为公共利益而进行的任务。有关您的个人数据权利的更多信息, 请访问大学的信息合规网站:
<https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>

11. Who has reviewed this research? 谁审查了此研究?

The application was reviewed and approved by my supervisor on behalf of the Departmental of Education's Research Ethics Committee. (Ethics reference: C1B-24HT-Educ-031).

本申请由我的指导老师, 教育系研究伦理委员会审核并批准。(参考号: C1B-24HT-Educ-031)

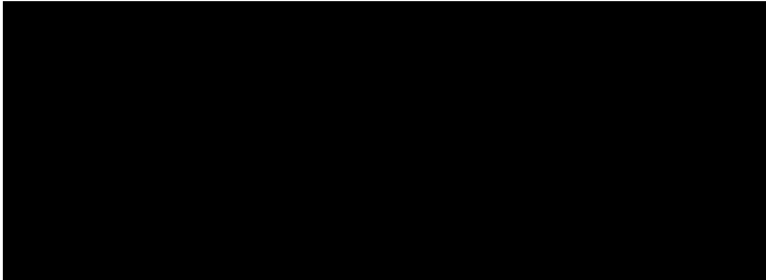
12. Who do I contact if I have a concern about the research or I wish to complain? 如果我对研究有疑问或希望投诉, 我应该联系谁?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research, please contact [REDACTED] and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the University of Oxford Research Governance, Ethics & Assurance (RGEA) team at rgea.complaints@admin.ox.ac.uk or on 01865 616480.

如果您对研究的任何方面有疑虑, 请联系 [REDACTED], 我们将尽力回答您的问题。我们将在 10 个工作日内确认您的疑虑, 并给您一个处理方法的指示。如果您仍然不满意或希望正式投诉, 请联系牛津大学研究治理伦理与保证 (RGEA) 团队, 邮箱: rgea.complaints@admin.ox.ac.uk, 电话: 01865 616480。

13. Further Information and Contact Details 进一步信息和联系方式

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:



Appendix E: Consent Form

Consent to take part in [Being “Wenzhounese” in Europe: intergenerational experiences and perceptions of education] 作为欧洲国家的“温州人”：跨代教育经历与观念

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) approval reference: C1B-24HT-Educ-031

Purpose of Study: An exploration of international migration of “Wenzhounese” in European countries, and their experiences and perceptions of education through a qualitative intergenerational approach.

研究目的：通过定性跨代方法，探讨“温州人”在欧洲国家的国际移民及其教育经历和观念

如果您同意以下声明，请在每个框内打勾：

Please initial each box if you agree with the statement

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet version or the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

我确认我已阅读并理解上述研究的信息表版本。我有机会考虑这些信息、提出问题并得到了满意的答复。

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point until 31/08/2024 without giving any reason.

我了解我的参与是自愿的，我可以在任何时候退出，直到 2024 年 8 月 31 日，无需提供任何理由。

I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.

我了解谁将有权访问提供的个人数据、数据将如何存储以及在项目结束时数据将会如何处理。

I understand that I will not be identifiable from any publications or reports for specific organisations, presentations, videos, websites.

我了解在任何出版物或报告中，我将不会被识别出来，具体的组织、演示、视频、网站等也是如此。

I consent to being audio recorded and video recorded.

我同意被录音和录像。

Use of quotations: Please indicate your preference (select *one* option):

采访引用使用：请表明您的偏好（选择一个选项）：

a) I do not wish to be quoted. 我不希望被引用 或者

b) I agree to the use of quotations in research outputs if I am not identifiable. 如果我的身份不会被识别，我同意在研究成果中使用引用

I give permission for you to contact me again to clarify information.
我同意您再次联系我以澄清信息。

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.
我了解如何提出疑虑或投诉。

I agree to take part.¹
我同意参与。

<hr/>	<u>dd / mm / yyyy</u>	<hr/>
Name of participant 参与者姓名	Date 日期	Signature 签名
<hr/>	<u>dd / mm / yyyy</u>	<hr/>
Name of person taking consent 同意书接受人姓名	Date ² 日期	Signature 签名

¹ I hereby assign to the researcher all copyright in my contribution for use in all work stemming from this project and future projects. 我在此将我对本研究贡献的所有版权转让给研究人员，以便用于本项目及未来项目的所有工作。

² To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant. Once this has been signed by both parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form. The original signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents, which must be kept in a secure location. 应在参与者在场的情况下签署并注明日期。一旦双方签署并注明日期，参与者应收到一份签署和注明日期的参与者同意书副本。原始的签署和注明日期的同意书应与项目的主要文件一起保存，这些文件必须保存在安全的位置。