

Supplementary Material

'Struggling like fish out of water': A qualitative case study of Chinese international students' acculturative stress in the UK"

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1 Supplementary Information

Appendix 1. Interview Question List

PART ONE. Demography

May I ask you some questions about yourself?

- 1) Could you tell me how long have you been in the UK?
- 2) May I ask what is your major now? Does what you learn in your master's programme differ greatly from your undergraduate studies?
- 3) May I ask whether it is the first time you have visited another country to further your studies? / Have you ever lived abroad for a while before? If your answer is yes, could you please tell me how long?
- 4) There is another question that I am particularly interested in, which is: have you received cultural adaptation training before you came here?
- 5) If you do not mind, may I ask how much did you score on your last IELTS exam?
- 6) Do you mind telling me how long it took you to adapt yourself to the life here? Or you could just say you still haven't adapted to your life in the UK.

PART TWO. Wellbeing

1) May I ask you to draw a curve to show how you felt after your arrival in the UK?

PART THREE. Acculturative Stressors

Language Barriers

1) Did you find that the local people speak too quickly?

How do you find communicating with native English speakers?

[Follow-up prompts: Why is that? Is there a difference in communicating with different speakers?]

2) Is it hard for you to catch up with what your tutor says in class?

How do you find communicating in class, in terms of the tutor's communication?

How about your own communication?

[Follow-up prompts: Why is that? Could you tell me more, etc.]

Perceived Sociocultural Difference

1) Since you've been in the UK for several months, what are the sociocultural differences between China and the UK in your opinion? If you don't mind, could you please give some specific examples?

2) What do you think about cultural shock? Is it hard for you to overcome?

Could you tell me how you reacted to these differences when you arrived in the UK?

[Follow-up prompts: How did that make you feel? What did you do as a result?]

Academic Integration

- 1) How do you feel about writing academic essays or reports?
- 2) How do you feel about reading journal papers or academic articles?
- 3) How do you feel about your academic performance so far?

Social Integration

- 1) How do you feel socialising with the local people?
 - [Follow-up prompts: Do you enjoy making local friends here? How many local friends have you made?]
- 2) May I ask if you have you have gotten used to living in your city? For example, do you know where to shop and how to use public transportation?

Homesickness

- 1) How do you feel about living in the UK? How do you feel about being far from home?
- 2) How is your life in study away from your home country? Has it influence your life and studies?

PART FOUR. Intercultural Mentoring

- 1) Could you please tell me if you have ever received wellbeing support from your university? Or from your school department?
- 2) How do you feel if your university provides you with intercultural mentoring? [Scenario: When you arrive in the UK, your university offers you the support of a UK native mentor, whose job is to help you understand the culture of the country and the university. You are given the chance to meet with your mentor regularly in the first term.]
- 3) Could you tell me what you think would be helpful about this, or not, and why?
- 4) If there were intercultural mentoring programmes in your school, would you like to participate in? [Follow-up prompts: What could be done to make a system like this work well? What are the potential difficulties, challenges or barriers that would need to be avoided?]

Appendix 3. Interview Sample (Excerpts)

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采访者: 首先我想问一下,在日常生活中与以英语为母语的人交流,您感觉有困难吗?我们先聊聊日常生活中的情况,您会不会觉得他们说的太快了呢?

Interviewer: First of all, I'd like to ask, do you have any difficulties understanding native English speakers in daily conversations? Let's talk about daily life situations first. Do you feel that they speak too fast?

被采访者:这个看情况,这个真的分人,就是有的 native speaker,他们碰到你亚洲面孔,他其实会说话说的很慢的,就是说他会尽量让你去明白,然后有的时候他也会重复,但有的就是偏年轻一辈的或者什么的那些,就是说那些他不注重这个东西了,他说话就会特别快,然后一下子过去了。

Interviewee: It depends on the situation and varies from person to person. Some native speakers, when they see an Asian face, actually speak quite slowly. They try their best to make you understand, and sometimes they will repeat themselves. However, others, especially the younger ones, don't pay much attention to this. They speak very fast, and the words just fly by.

采访者:在这种情况下,比如对方因为是日常交流而说话特别快,我们通常是会尝试自己猜测对方的话,还是会说:"抱歉,我没太听清楚。您能再说一遍吗?"我们一般是采取哪种方式呢?

Interviewer: Ok, I know your feeling. So, in situations like these, where someone speaks very quickly because it's a part of everyday life, do we tend to guess what was said, or do we say, "I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch that. Could you please repeat it?" Which is more common for us?

被采访者:这个就是有时候他说快是快,如果有必要一定要跟她交流的话,他说话的意思还是能明白的,就是说快是快的就是可能不能听懂完全的句子,但大概意思也都明白,但是如果没有必要去跟他交流吗?他快那不理他就好了。

Interviewee: Even though they speak fast, if I really need to communicate with them, I can still understand the meaning of what they're saying. I might not be able to catch every single word, but I can grasp the general idea. However, if there's no need to interact with them, I just ignore it when they speak quickly.

采访者:好的,接下来我想问一下,当我们在处理一些必要的事务时,比如在警察局注册、在 info 咨询问题、或是在银行开户,在这些情况下,我们会遇到沟通上的困难吗?

Interviewer: Okay, when conducting essential tasks such as registering at the police station, seeking information at the info desk, or opening a bank account, do we encounter any communication difficulties?

被采访者:这个没可能。他们比如说警察局还有 info 还有 reception 什么的,这些地方我感觉他们其实对我们还算比较友好的,他们说话都是控制在一定的速度上,我也不知道是不是他们个人比较慢的原因,但至少都听得还挺明白的。

Interviewee: That's not possible. For example, at places like the police station, information desks, and receptions, I feel they are quite friendly toward us. They keep their speech at a controlled pace. I'm not sure if it's because they are naturally slow speakers, but I can understand them quite clearly.

采访者:好的,那我们再聊一聊关于学习方面吧,在课堂上,你有没有觉得很难跟上老师讲的内容?我指的是我们上的那种讲座式的课程。

Interviewer: Alright, let's talk a bit more about studying. In class, have you ever found it difficult to keep up with what the lecturers is saying? I'm referring to the lecture-style courses we attend.

被采访者:那个 lecture 其实还好,个别老师他那个语速有点特别快,就是你不一定会跟得上,但是他那个 PPT 什么的做的特别好,所以你大概能理解他的意思也算是跟得上。

Interviewee: The lectures are generally alright, but some lecturers speak too fast, making it difficult to keep up at times. However, their PowerPoint slides are very well-designed, which helps me understand the main ideas and follow the content despite the speed.

采访者: 其实我们还是属于一个可以跟得上的状态的,您觉得课前预习有关系吗?或者是不是因为您的英语能力确实不错呢?

Interviewer: It's great that you were able to keep up with the lectures overall. Do you think this is because you previewed the materials beforehand, or do you feel your English proficiency is quite good?

被采访者: 预习的会好一点,没预习嘛,确实有的地方临时的还是有一点困难。

Interviewee: Yes, definitely. Previewing the materials does make it easier to follow the lectures. Without it, I do find it a bit challenging at times to keep up with certain parts on the spot.

采访者:好的,那么在学习过程中,我们难免会遇到一些问题。在听完一节讲座后,你发现有个小问题不太明白,你通常会怎么处理呢?是会直接向老师当面请教,还是事后通过邮件向老师询问?或者你可能会自己回去查阅一些中文资料来解决问题?还是说你可能会选择暂时忽略这个问题呢?

Interviewer: Okay, and when you encounter a question or a point of confusion while studying, such as after attending a lecture, how do you typically handle it? Do you ask the lecturers directly, email them later, try to find answers on your own, or sometimes just ignore it?

被采访者:一般预习的话就自己直接自己查资料,然后如果就是课上的问题的话就是课下问老师。

Interviewee: Well, it depends. If it's during the preview, I usually search online or read relevant research studies. If it's a question that comes up during the class, I tend to ask the lecturer after the session.

采访者: 从你的回答中能感受到, 你还是乐于与老师沟通, 不会产生抵触情绪, 对吗?

Interviewer: Based on your response, it seems you are generally open to communicating with your tutors and feel no resistance to doing so, right?

被采访者:没有必要抵触嘛!

Interviewee: Absolutely! There's no need to feel reluctant.

采访者:好的,我们再来讨论一下关于写论文方面的事情,您觉得撰写学术论文对您是一个有挑战的任务么,会不会觉得有点吃力呢?

Interviewer: Got it. Let us talk about writing an essay or dissertation. May I ask, do you think writing in English for you is challenging work? Do you feel a little hard when you do this? How do you feel about writing academic essays or reports?

被采访者:这个撰写论文对我来说是一个挑战,但这个东西就要追根溯源到我小时候写日记的时候了,我小时候写日记都有困难,这个写论文自然也是有困难的。

Interviewee: Writing a dissertation is indeed a challenge for me. But this issue can be traced back to my childhood when I had difficulties writing diaries. Since I struggled with writing diaries as a child, it's natural that I also find it challenging to write a dissertation now.

采访者:那么让我们来比较一下,您在本科时写中文毕业论文和现在在英国写英文硕士论文的感受。您 觉得写英文论文和中文论文有什么不同吗?是觉得差不多,还是因为是用英语写作,所以感觉更有挑战 性呢?

Interviewer: Let's compare your experiences writing your undergraduate thesis in Chinese and your master's dissertation in English here in the UK. Do you find writing in English more challenging than in Chinese, or do they feel similar to you?

被采访者:我觉得难度系数差不太多,这边他会更注重一个你的英语语法的问题,这个英语语法的问题,就是说词汇的多样性,在国内的论文就没有这个前提,比如说这个时候用这个词,下一句最好不要用那个词,最后换一个词。像这种东西在国内,它好像没有这个要求。

Interviewee: I think the difficulty level is pretty much the same for both. However, English academic writing tends to emphasise grammatical issues, particularly lexical diversity. For example, if you use a certain word in one sentence, it's better to avoid using the same word in the next sentence; instead, you could use a different word. This kind of requirement doesn't seem to exist in Chinese academic writing.

采访者:好的,我们再聊一聊阅读期刊论文这个话题。在写毕业论文之前,我们肯定需要阅读大量的相关文献资料。那么在阅读这些文献的过程中,你有什么感想或体会吗?或者说,你遇到过什么样的问题或者困难么?

Interviewer: I know what you mean. And let us talk about reading. You know, before we start to write our dissertation, we should read lots of research studies to build our structures. How do you feel about reading journal papers or academic articles?

被采访者:阅读期刊的的时候,实际上在语言课的时候,老师有教过一套怎么快速阅读,怎么快速查找你需要的资料的方法。但是真正等到阅读的时候,就会发现实际上有的时候这些期刊里所需要的一些东西还是有点难挖掘的。临时要整合成有用的信息还是有一定难度的,毕竟人家的语言习惯和你的专业水平都会影响这些东西。

Interviewee: In the pre-sessional language course, the tutor taught us some methods for quickly reading and finding the necessary materials. However, when I actually started reading journals, I found that it can be a bit

difficult to extract the needed information from these journals. Integrating this information into useful content on short notice also poses some challenges, as the authors' language habits and my own professional level can affect the understanding of these materials. Sometimes, this really frustrates me.

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采访者:好的,您现在对目前所取得的学习成绩还算满意么?如果满分是五分,您给自己打几分呢?

Interviewer: How do you feel about your academic performance so far? If you had to rate it on a scale from 1 to 5, what score would you give yourself?

被采访者: 3.5 分

Interviewee: 3.5 points

采访者: 是不是对自己要求太高了呢?

Interviewer: Do you think you're being too hard on yourself? As far as I know, your academic performance is distinction, so why did you only give yourself a 3.5?

被采访者:没有,并没有那么优秀,因为考试的时候太平和了,太平和了也不太好,也没有那种兴奋的感觉,我也不知道这边考试,竟然和平时的作业那么类似。

Interviewee: No, not really exceptional, because the exam was too peaceful, almost too peaceful, which wasn't ideal. It lacked that sense of excitement. I also didn't expect that the exam would be so similar to our regular homework assignments.

采访者:好的,我们再聊一聊就是社会文化差异方面,我们在英国生活学习的这几个月以来,您觉得中英之间的社会文化差异大吗?具体是什么呢?如果不介意的话,我们可以举几个例子来说聊一聊吗?

Interviewer: Since you've been in the UK for several months, what are the sociocultural differences between China and UK in your own opinions? If you don't mind, could you please give some specific examples?

被采访者:这个文化差异,那太大了。这边男的穿女装上学,这边它对各种异类文化的接受程度是不太一样,比较年长的那些人,他对待亚洲人的态度其实都算比较温和的,见到你基本上大家看看几眼就会相互点头问个好,打个招呼什么的。但是对年青人这方面就是就要看了,感觉稍微受教育程度高一点的可以稍微好一点。然后,这里有一个很特别的地方,他们上班很准时,下班也很准时。比如说规定工作

八小时,八小时之内的话,我是在解决我的事情,但八小时之后一分钟我也不拖,也不理你了,比如说 5:30 下班,我 5:29 的电话,我就只接一分钟。

Interviewee: Speaking of cultural differences, they're quite marked here. For example, it's not unusual to see men wearing women's clothing to school, showcasing a broad acceptance of diverse cultures. Typically, the older generation here is quite kind to Asians; they'll give you a few nods and friendly greetings when they see you. The younger generation's reactions vary, though. Those with higher education seem more respectful. Another notable aspect is their punctuality at work. People here are extremely punctual, starting and finishing exactly on time. For instance, if their working hours are strictly from 9 to 5, they diligently attend to their duties during these hours but won't linger a minute past their shift's end. If you call them at 4:59, they'll speak to you for just a minute.

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采访者:关于这种文化冲击,您是如何看待的呢?生活在这里一段时间后,您采取了哪些方法来应对这种冲击呢?您觉得克服这些文化差异困难吗?

Interviewer: How do you view the culture shock experienced here? After living in this country for a while, could you share the strategies you've used to cope with them? Do you find these cultural differences challenging to overcome?

被采访者:这个还行吧,就是平时多看、多观察,多思考,少说话就好。

Interviewee: I tend to observe a lot, think deeply, and speak less.

采访者: 嗯,好的,我还想问一下,您是怎样与当地人建立联系或者交往的呢?或者说就是您结交了几个当地朋友呢?

Interviewer: Alright, could you tell me more about how you interact with the locals here? How many local friends have you made?

被采访者: 当地人结交的倒没那么多,主要是跟老师,还有就是偶尔熟的人交流,平时见面的人交流一下,而且也不一定是当地人,也还有其他的外国人啊,黑人啊,还有白人什么的。

Interviewee: I haven't made many local friends, actually. Most of my interactions are with teachers and occasionally with acquaintances during activities. We chat when we see each other, but my circle isn't limited to just locals; it includes people from various countries, such as Africa, Europe, and so on.

采访者: 您喜欢结交外国朋友么?

Interviewer: Do you enjoy making local friends here?

被采访者:其实不是特别喜欢。在学习上结交外国朋友的话,可能会觉得能锻炼一下自己的口语什么的,但是在很多学术上的问题上,我会发现实际上自己比他们还是好很多的。

Interviewee: Honestly, I'm not particularly fond of making friends with foreigners. While befriending them can improve my spoken English, I often find that I perform better academically than many of them.

采访者:除了学习之外,如果有机会结交当地朋友,你愿意这样做吗?

Interviewer: Apart from studying, if you have the opportunity to make friends with locals, would you be willing to do so?

被采访者:这个还不错,生活中结交还是很愿意的。

Interviewee: That's a nice idea. I'm quite willing to make local friends in daily life.

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采访者:好的,您现在对这里的生活习惯了吗?比如购物的地方和如何使用公共交通,这些您都已经非常熟悉了吧?我们来聊聊,您对您目前的居住环境满意吗?

Interviewer: Have you gotten used to living here? For example, are you familiar with shopping locations and using public transportation? Let's talk about your current living environment. Do you like it here?

被采访者:这边外卖不好点,娱乐设施少一点

Interviewee: Yes, I'm quite familiar with the environment now. Except that it's not easy to order good takeaway and there are fewer entertainment options, I think everything else is fine.

采访者:好的,我们接下来问一个稍微有一点伤感的问题,你觉得远离家乡是一种怎样的体验?我的意思是,你会感到孤单或难过吗?会经常想念父母、朋友或家乡吗?

Interviewer: May I ask how you feel about living in the UK? How do you think about being far from home? I mean, do you ever feel lonely or sad, perhaps missing your parents, friends, or hometown?

被采访者: 想啊, 当然想。

Interviewee: Definitely, I miss my hometown so much. There are so many things I miss.

采访者: 那这种思乡之情会让您感到孤独或有些沮丧吗?

Interviewer: So, does this homesickness make you feel lonely or depressed?

被采访者:还行吧,这个既来之则安之。你在这边该吃饭吃饭,该睡觉睡觉都能做到,然后跟家人可以经常视频,是吧,然后你在家里实际上你也呆不了太久。呆了超过三天家人会烦你。

Interviewee: It's alright. When in Rome, do as the Romans do. I keep up with my regular routines like eating and sleeping, and I frequently video call my family. Actually, if I were at home for too long, my family might start to find me a bit much. Everyone needs their space sometimes.

采访者: 真的是很真实了,我们如何看待在另外一个国家生活呢?

Interviewer: That's very true to life. How do you feel about living in another country? How has your experience been, studying away from your home country?

被采访者:其实我觉得待在哪里主要是看你对环境的适应性和那个环境它到底能不能给你提供一些保障有没有你所需要的东西。首先认识了,如果你在一个环境当中是吧,要么被病毒弄死,要么被恐怖分子给弄死,那就很不划算。看一个国家,他对人民生活尤其是外来居民的保障程度和接纳程度,然后另一方面它到底有没有你需要的东西,比如说你在这边读书,大部分人需要的他就是一个文凭,就是说一个学历,或者说眼界和知识,这些东西里有没有自己需要的东西,如果你能在这里得到你需要的东西,我觉得也不错。在哪只要不是说对你有什么特别大的什么终生影响,我觉得还可以。

Interviewee: Actually, I think where a person chooses to stay mainly depends on two factors: first, your adaptability to the environment; second, whether that environment can provide what you need. First of all, if you are in an environment where you could be killed by a virus or a terrorist at any time, it's not worth it. To judge a country, look at its level of protection and acceptance of people's lives, especially foreign residents. On the other hand, see if it can provide what you need. For example, most people who come here to study need a degree, or to broaden their horizons and gain knowledge. If you can get what you need here, I think it's not bad. As long as it doesn't have a lifelong impact on you, I think it's okay to be anywhere.

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采访者: 思乡之情有没有影响了您的生活和学习呢?

Interviewer: Has homesickness affected your life and studies?

被采访者: 还是有点影响的,有时候毕竟和国内有时差,这个时差有时候不好控制

Interviewee: It has had a bit of an impact, especially with the time difference between here and home, which sometimes makes it hard to manage my schedule.

采访者: 你有没有曾经接受过学校提供的心理方面的干预或者指导呢?

Interviewer: Could you please tell me if you have ever received wellbeing support from the university or from your school?

被采访者:我们学校应该也算是有,因为我们学校有 personal tutor 这种的,然后 wellbeing 的方向英国也算是有一些,但是 peer mentoring 我觉得应该是没有的。我觉得这个东西它他可能有存在的一定的价值,但是如果要说它到底能有多持久的话,一方面你得看,是吧,这个 mentor 他有没有这个意愿,他有多少 mentor,而且这个东西就是,尤其是对一年制的硕士研究生来说的话,他可能找不到学长,或者说只能找一些本科生或者说博士生,他们可能都有各自的任务,他们还会拿出这个时间来嘛?另一方面吧,得看 mentee 的接受程度,就是作为一个 mentee 愿意去接受这些指导什么的么?如果需要自然会有办法去找的,比如说虽然说我们之前上过语言班,对不对。但实际上学校里面正课时间,in sessional 的课程,这种东西就是在就是学期内,他也有语言班,专门就给你讲一些英国特定的语言习惯,交流文化啦,就是说会有老师,而且他会用很慢的语速做朋友一样一对一的慢慢的跟你交流这个东西。所以说愿意去找也找的到,那不愿意去找它就那里放着呢。而且我们学校也是有 wellbeing 那些东西的,他之前也发过什么邮件,什么广告什么的。也是知道一些的,但这个东西它具体能发挥多大作用,我觉得可以有,但是的具体能够存在多久并发挥多大作用,不是很明白,不是很清楚。

Interviewee: I'm not entirely sure if our university offers peer mentoring specifically, as I haven't participated in such a programme. However, we do have personal tutors and wellbeing programmes, which suggests some support structures are in place. The real challenge, especially for one-year master's programmes, is finding suitable mentors. It might be hard for such students to find senior peers, and while it's possible to connect with undergraduate or Ph.D. students, these groups often have their own commitments and might not always have the time to mentor effectively. Additionally, the success of any mentoring depends largely on the willingness of both mentors and mentees. Mentors need to be sincerely interested and available, and mentees must be receptive to the guidance offered. The university does run in-sessional courses that cover specific UK linguistic habits and cultural communication, which are taught by friendly tutors who engage at a pace comfortable for students. These are useful, and the university actively promotes them through emails and other communications. While these services are beneficial, the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of such mentoring programmes are uncertain. There's a need to evaluate not just the availability but also the actual impact of these services on students' academic and personal development.

采访者: 如果学院或大学有跨文化指导项目, 你愿意参加吗?

Interviewer: If there were intercultural mentoring programmes at your school or university, would you be interested in participating?

被采访者:有的话我觉得是可以的。

Interviewee: Yes, I think I would.

采访者: 如果您参加的话, 您希望谁来做您的导师呢?

Interviewer: If you do participate, who would you prefer to be your mentor?

被采访者: 同胞吧我觉得。毕竟有的问题他涉及到生活思路的转换,这个东西的话同胞会好一点。毕竟有的外国人他确实是不了解,他还会觉得 you are crazy。但是如果拥有一个同胞的前辈来讲这个问题的话,他肯定会告诉我,他有的问题它就存在了,我需要怎么去看待它。人家 native speaker,他本身就在这里,他的文化包容性也不会那么强,我问他这些问题跟没关系一样的,搞不好会更尴尬。

Interviewee: I would prefer co-nationals, I think. Some issues involve a shift in the way we think about life, and compatriots are likely to understand better. Often, foreigners simply don't get it, and might even think you're crazy. But if a fellow compatriot who has been through similar experiences explains it, they can acknowledge the issue's existence and guide me on how to deal with it. Native speakers, being from here, might not have the same cultural sensitivity, and asking them might lead to misunderstanding or make things more awkward.

采访者:如果我们要建立这样的一个机制,您觉得我们应该做一些什么样子的准备呢?比如说我们应该怎么找指导者呢?或者说我们应该怎么做才能让这个活动变得更好呢?

Interviewer: Could you help me think further about what preparations should be made if we were to establish such a system? What potential difficulties, challenges, or barriers would need to be addressed to make a mentoring system like this work well? For example, how should we go about finding mentors? Or what can we do to ensure that this programme is successful?

被采访者:其实在企业里面它是有这种制度的,但很多外企呀,对主要是外企,它其实是有这种制度,新晋员工进去入职之后,它会有个一两年的,或者说高一级的,比如 manager 什么的,它会有一对一的导师制,就这种。来带你去适应这种环境,但是人家做这个东西他是有额外的 bonus 的,或者说奖金什么的。但是我们学校里面可能奖金可能性不太强,但是如果在这方面能就是说如果有这方面的相关的评

价机制,或者说就是作为学生以后进入社会的一个参考的评价什么的,就是说能给他的简历加分什么的,我觉得可能会有更多人愿意参与,毕竟这种事情会相对于其他的兼职来说稍微简单一点。

Interviewee: In the corporate sector, particularly in foreign companies, there's already such a system in place. New employees, upon joining, often have a one-to-two-year mentorship with a higher-level manager, like a one-on-one mentorship system designed to help them adapt to the environment. Additionally, mentors usually receive an extra bonus for their guidance. In our university, however, offering such bonuses might not be feasible. Yet, if there were a relevant evaluation mechanism that could serve as a reference for students entering the workforce, perhaps by enhancing their resumes or add points to a student's resume when they enter society in the future, I believe more people would be willing to participate. Being a mentor is relatively easier compared to other part-time jobs, and could be quite rewarding.

2 Supplementary Figures and Tables

2.1 Supplementary Figures

Appendix 2. Emotional Lines

















