12. Entrepreneurial intentions of immigrant Chinese students in Ireland

*Antoinette Flynn, Naomi Birdthistle and
Boyu Fang*

INTRODUCTION

International students, as a special group of immigrants, play an important role in entrepreneurial activities worldwide. Davey et al. (2011), found that international students from developing and emerging economies are more likely to be entrepreneurs than native industrialized European students. Indeed, 44 per cent of Silicon Valley start-ups have an immigrant founder, and most of them have American university degrees (Huet, 2016). The benefits are not limited to the host country as returning international students with a high attitudinal level of entrepreneurship benefit the economy of their motherland (Acs, 2006; Beugelsdijk and Noorderhaven, 2004).

According to the Centre for China and Globalization (2018) report, in excess of 70 per cent of Chinese students returned to China, after an overseas graduation, for family reasons. More specifically in 2014, nearly 12.3 per cent of returned Chinese students chose to become entrepreneurs (Centre for China and Globalization, 2015). A problem that faces the Chinese government is how to provide enough and suitable job opportunities for those students when they return from abroad. This chapter seeks to explain the entrepreneurial intentions (EI) of Chinese students studying in Ireland, in order to recommend self-employment as a career option for the returning Chinese students. The Chinese student population in Ireland is vibrant, with 2700 Chinese students studying at third level and another 2400 Chinese students studying the English language (Coonan, 2015). With Brexit underway, O'Brien (2017) believes that this will spark a surge in Chinese applicants for Irish universities, as Malta and Ireland will be the only English-speaking countries in the European Union (EU).

Entrepreneurship Education in China

Since the start of the new millennium, the Chinese government has made concerted efforts to stimulate its SME sector. It has introduced new laws such as legislating for business ownership (Chen, 2001; Di, 2002), new

funding initiatives, and new policies and regulations have been established (Li, 2002). As a nation, China has begun to embrace entrepreneurship, as it has risen in global entrepreneurship rankings from 11th place in 2002 to second place in 2012 (Fong, 2013). Correspondingly, higher education institutions saw the value of offering students the opportunity to participate in business plan competitions and this was their focus in the late 1990s (Li, 2002; Li et al., 2016). Li et al. (2016) and Yu (2018), highlight that officially entrepreneurship education was first offered in April 2002 when the China Ministry of Education piloted an entrepreneurship programme at nine universities.

Though still in its infancy, the forms and types of entrepreneurship education being offered by higher education institutions in China have been found to be lacking (Li et al., 2016), and four pitfalls in the way entrepreneurship programmes are delivered in China and they include an unsound curriculum design; the lack of applied teaching (still adopting the traditional 'closed teaching model' (ibid., p.205)); teachers who do not possess the necessary knowledge and/or experience of entrepreneurship and therefore are unqualified; and a poorly established ecosystem that fails to offer the necessary support mechanisms for entrepreneurship. This is also echoed by Li and Li (2015, p.27) who state that even though China is ranked highly for entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education is '*not mature enough to meet the needs of entrepreneurial practice*'. One of the reasons why Chinese students go overseas and study entrepreneurship is because of the aforementioned issues and because it is still a relatively new phenomenon in Chinese higher education institutions (Li et al., 2003). It will take some time for the Chinese education system to catch up with its Western counterparts, but the Chinese government and the educational institutions in China are taking steps to overcome these weaknesses.

Chinese Students Studying in Ireland

In this chapter, we explore Chinese students' EI in Irish third level education institutions, which highlights the influence of their Irish entrepreneurial education experience. According to the Centre for China and Globalization (2018) the discipline areas that Chinese students are studying have changed so that more students are now studying business management, foreign language and literature, and education, as China has created more demand for professionals in such fields. The number of students studying engineering, computer science and information technology (IT), maths and statistics and social sciences has declined. The report also identified the destinations of interest of Chinese students and concludes

that a total of 432 000 Chinese students who studied abroad returned to China, which was 4 per cent higher year on year than 2015.

From an Irish perspective, the Irish government has developed a strategy whereby it aims to grow the economic value of international education to €2.1 billion (an increase of 33 per cent) by 2020 and China is seen as the means of achieving this (McGuire and Power, 2016). Though small, the number of Chinese students in full-time education in Ireland is ever-increasing. According to the Higher Education Authority for Ireland, in the 2012–2013 academic year there were 1596 Chinese students in full-time education and that grew to 1706 in 2013–2014 and grew slightly in 2014–2015 to 1745 (Healy, 2015). Post-2015, the numbers grew significantly as McGuire and Power (2016) found that there was a 17 per cent average growth in the number of Chinese students between 2014 and 2016 and that in 2016 there were 3330 Chinese students studying in higher education institutions in Ireland, which was a 22 per cent rise from 2015 when there were 2700 Chinese students studying in Ireland (Coonan, 2015). In 2016–2017 there was a slight decline in the number of Chinese students studying in Ireland, that is, 2153 (Donnelly, 2017) but moves are afoot to increase these numbers. For example, in March 2018 over 100 delegates attended the Ireland–China Education Forum, which aimed at promoting exchanges and cooperation between Irish and Chinese universities (Xinhua, 2018). Given the growing numbers of Chinese students studying in Ireland and support being provided by both governments, we examine Chinese students' entrepreneurial intentions through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), to explore whether these Chinese students benefit from their Irish entrepreneurial education experience in Ireland, addressing a clear gap in the entrepreneurial intentions literature. This chapter further aims to contribute to the discourse on entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions from the perspective of Chinese students who have studied in Ireland. While there is a plethora of studies on both these concepts separately, there is a lack of empirical studies that focuses on the entrepreneurial intentions of Chinese students who have studied in Ireland. This chapter addresses that gap with quantitative evidence that sheds further light on the entrepreneurial spirit of Chinese students overseas.

According to the TPB, intentions are presumed to reflect the motivational factors that influence behaviour and are interpreted as a metric of willingness and potential effort exerted to execute a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). But, how well does intention predict behaviour? It is dependent on the capacity to control decision-making and the brevity of the timeline between intention and action. While students are not yet at the point of making decisions or taking entrepreneurial action, they are developing

Source: Ajzen (1991).

Figure 12.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour

their professional intentions. This group accords well with the TPB, as it allows for the examination of motivations (desires, satisfaction) and inhibitors (capacity, fear of social condemnation) (Goss, 2005).

The TPB is designed around three elements that determine an individual's intention to have different behaviours (Ajzen, 1991). EI are the direct indication of an individual's readiness to perform entrepreneurial activities. The three elements are 'attitude toward the act', 'subjective norms', and the individual's 'perceived behavioural control' (see Figure 12.1). Attitude towards the act refers to perceptions of personal desirability to perform that specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). A person's attitude towards the behaviour represents an evaluation that has been performed on that behaviour and its outcome (Nguyen, 2017). Considering EI, 'attitude towards an act' can be revealed in their professional values/beliefs and how they imagine entrepreneurship will meet their needs. In Yang's (2013) study conducted in China, it was confirmed that attitude represented the most effective predictor of EI. Furthermore, many studies confirm the positive relationship between attitude and behavioural intention (Kolvereid, 1997; Krueger et al., 2000; Tegtmeier, 2012; Yang, 2013).

The 'perceived subjective norms' refers to the apparent social pressure felt to accomplish (or not) a particular goal. TPB assumes that subjective norms are a function of beliefs and thus the subjective norm will influence the intention to perform that behaviour (Nguyen, 2017). Others, such as Wu and Wu (2008), Tegtmeier (2012) and Zhang et al. (2015), have confirmed that subjective norms are positively related to intention. With regard to EI, when business formation is seen as a desirable social action,

then it intensifies intentions. Here, for international students the ‘perceived subjective norm’ encompasses the perceived approval/disapproval of others whose judgement matters to students (like parents) and by the perceived desirability of entrepreneurship (Shapero and Sokol, 1982). The ‘perceived subjective norms’ are also influenced by the social environment, such as family background, institutional environment and received education.

Finally, the ‘perceived behavioural control’ element refers to the perception of how easy/difficult the behaviour appears to be (Ajzen, 1991). The level of difficulty is lessened in the presence of adequate resources and opportunities and having the confidence in their perceived capacity to start a business (Ajzen and Madden, 1986). Researchers such as Ajzen and Driver (1992) and Mathieson (1991) have proven that there is a positive relationship between perceived behaviour control and behavioural intention, whilst others, such as Souitaris et al. (2007), van Gelderen et al. (2008), Yang (2013) and Zhang et al. (2015), have found a significant relationship between perceived behavioural control and entrepreneurial intention.

Considering this review, the over-arching research question is how well does the TPB explain the Entrepreneurial Intentions of Chinese International Students (EICIS) in Ireland? The research questions are examined by focusing on the TPB and how its three features combine to influence EI, as per Figure 12.1. The study also examines to see if there is a gender difference in Chinese students’ entrepreneurial intentions as Yang (2013) found that gender and parental occupation had a significant impact on entrepreneurial attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and entrepreneurial intention. Examining this immigrant group is germane as increasingly, more and more Chinese students have chosen to study abroad and have been identified as crucial to the entrepreneurship and creativity in China and the host countries (Gao, 2015). The gender differences among Chinese students highlighted by Yang (2013) inspired a gendered analysis of entrepreneurial intentions in this chapter. The broad research questions are formalized as hypotheses as follows:

H1a: The ‘attitude towards the act’ inputs to the TPB are associated with the EICIS.

H1b: The ‘attitude towards the act’ inputs to the TPB are associated with the EICIS, irrespective of gender.

H2a: The ‘perceived behavioural control’ inputs to the TPB are associated with the EICIS.

H2b: The ‘perceived behavioural control’ inputs to the TPB are associated with the EICIS, irrespective of gender.

H3a: The ‘subjective norms’ inputs to the TPB are associated with the EICIS.

H3b: The ‘subjective norms’ inputs to the TPB are positively associated with the EICIS, irrespective of gender.

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this chapter is on the EICIS studying in Ireland at third level. Through the TPB framework, international students’ EI are studied in a threefold approach, according to their attitudes to entrepreneurship, their social context and their personal perceived behaviour control factors. This study gathered data by distributing a TPB-based questionnaire (25 close-ended questions in total) to the identified population in line with the questionnaire design of the Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students’ Survey (GUESSS) Ireland (Clinton and Lyons, 2016). The questionnaire asked participants about their EI (‘attitudes toward the act’) including their career plans (variable Career). The survey asked four questions about entrepreneurial competencies and asked the respondents to rate themselves (variable Competency). It then asked them to rate their perception of the importance of business founders (variable Founder). Under the ‘perceived behaviour control’ section, the questionnaire asks about the respondents’ entrepreneurial motivation and their demographic details. Finally, in relation to the ‘subjective norms’, the participants are asked about their institutions’ entrepreneurial atmosphere, institutions’ support for entrepreneurship, their participation in entrepreneurship courses and pedagogical aspects used in entrepreneurship education delivered in an Irish higher education institution. Other questions capture the respondents’ parents’ occupation, their family business situation and their families’ reaction to their pursuit of entrepreneurship.

To capture the three elements of the TPB, a variety of questions were posed to the respondents. To gather demographic data related to age, gender, home region, institution, education level, field of study and measures of EI, respondents were asked to choose from a range of answers provided. Other questions used a Likert scale from 1 to 7 and their internal reliability was tested. For example, in the case of three questions with multiple parts (Q14, Q19, Q23), the corresponding Cronbach alpha coefficients are $Q14 = \alpha 0.938$, $Q19 = \alpha 0.960$ and $Q23 = \alpha 0.888$ respectively.

Though not reported here in detail, all the reliability analysis results are over 0.700, therefore the measures for these sub-scale questions are considered reliable. Some of the questions in the survey were combined to create an overall score variable (for example, three separate questions on career expectations were combined to create the career expectations score).

In relation to the efficacy of the questionnaire dissemination, all the questions were written in both English and Chinese, which was subsequently translated into English to optimize comprehension and participation. The survey was created on WenJuanXing (the Chinese version of Survey Monkey) as the target group was familiar with it, and it offers adequate functions to complete this research. The questionnaire was distributed through the WeChat social media platform and through leveraging other social networks like the Chinese Students and Scholars Association where invitations were sent to existing contacts to complete the questionnaire and to recruit more participants, a method which incorporated the snowball approach to gathering respondents. The final complete sample consists of 122 respondents (40 per cent response rate), which is under the 200 respondents (Boomsma, 1982; Memon et al., 2017) necessary to successfully apply structural equation modelling (as per the methodological approach by Yang, 2013). The preliminary analysis of the sample included a range of tests (multicollinearity, with Variance Inflation Factors between 1.07 and 1.37, and homoscedasticity, with normal plot of residuals) to assess whether the assumptions of linear regressions hold for this data (Field, 2013). The tests confirm that an ordinary least squares regression is an appropriate method to establish the causal relationship between the three key features of TPB and entrepreneurial intentions, controlling for gender and age in this situation. The inability to employ structural equation modelling here may limit the comparability of the findings with others in the literature. Given the small sample, the research model employed here is shown as:

$$\begin{aligned} INTENT = & \alpha_0 + \beta_1 Career + \beta_2 Competency + \beta_3 Founder + \beta_4 Educationlevel \\ & + \beta_5 SubjectStudy + \beta_6 HomeRegion + \beta_7 Institution + \\ & \beta_8 EMScore + \beta_9 FamilyBusiness + \beta_{10} CampusEnviron + \\ & \beta_{11} CampusSupport + \beta_{12} EntreEducA + \beta_{13} EntreEducC + \\ & \beta_{14} ParentOccup + \beta_{15} FamilyReact + \beta_{16} Age + \beta_{17} Gender \end{aligned}$$

Sample Description

The final sample consists of 122 respondents living and studying in Ireland, who are all of Chinese origin and originate from all parts of mainland China, with the majority coming from the east and south of China (20.49

per cent and 17.21 per cent respectively). The percentage of respondents coming from the other regions was similar to each other, with 14.75 per cent from the central region and 13.93 per cent from northern China and a further 13.93 per cent from north-eastern China. This distribution is in accordance with Huang (1996) who found that Chinese people from the eastern and southern regions are more likely to emigrate than other areas, and people from the inland west region are the least likely to emigrate to other countries. Furthermore, Bickenbach et al. (2014), highlight that the EI of students on mainland China and Hong Kong are quite different due to institutional, governance and educational differences between the two areas. Overall, the sample of 122 students came from 10 cities in Ireland (45 respondents are from Limerick in the west and 51 respondents are from Dublin, in the east) and from more than 15 higher education institutions. Most participants belong to the 21–23 age bracket. Regarding gender, 41 per cent were male and 59 per cent were female.

A cross-analysis of participants' age and their EI indicates that from ages 18 to 29, there is a tendency for participants' EI to increase with maturity. In the age bracket of 27–29, participants' EI reaches its peak. Over 30 years old, the EI dramatically decreases and respondents show reduced interest in becoming entrepreneurs. The sample includes a small number of respondents over 30 so any conclusions around age are tentative only. In relation to their studies, the majority are postgraduate students (70 per cent), which includes 9 per cent who are completing their PhD; the remaining students were either undergraduates (26 per cent) or students not studying at degree level (4 per cent) but who are taking some modules for credit in Irish third level institutions.

An analysis of the respondents' study disciplines shows that most of the respondents are studying Law and Business (35.25 per cent), which concurs with the findings of the Centre for China and Globalization (2018). The next group are those who study engineering (26 per cent). The percentages of the other three study fields (Arts and Humanities, Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Social Sciences) are very similar, all of them at nearly 10 per cent. Respondents who study human medicine and health sciences comprise a small number, which count for only 5 per cent. Chinese students studying in Ireland are mainly found at third level rather than second level unlike other immigrant students in Ireland (Fitzsimons et al., 2003; Cooney, 2008; Danaher and Slattery, 2015). More importantly, irrespective of their tertiary degree level, they are imminently facing their future career choices and honing their EI. In short, the respondents are mainly early twenties postgraduate students with social science degrees (including humanities and business) and the sample is almost gender balanced.

ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS (EI) FINDINGS

The respondents' EI are captured across six sub-dimensional questions. Most respondents tend to hold a neutral position on the EI issue. For a lot of these students, they are vaguely interested in becoming an entrepreneur, but currently, they are not well prepared, or they are not determined to be an entrepreneur. From Figure 12.2, males in the sample have a higher EI score than females. This is further examined in Table 12.1 and the results indicate that there is a significant difference between male and female respondents in relation to EI (F stat = 4.145; $p = 0.044$ ($p < 0.05$)).

Figure 12.2 Mean scores of the components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Entrepreneurial Intention Scores of Chinese students studying in Ireland for the full sample ($n = 122$) and the gender-based sub-samples (males, $n = 50$ and females, $n = 72$)

Table 12.1 Statistical comparisons of the mean scores of the components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Entrepreneurial Intention scores of Chinese students studying in Ireland, between gender groups (males, $n = 50$ and females, $n = 72$)

Variable	F Stat	Sig.
Intention Score	4.145	.044**
Career Expectations Score	3.809	.053*
EM Score	.679	.412
Founder Score	.238	.626
Competency Score	.154	.695
Parent Occupation Score	.689	.408

Note: ** Significant at the 0.05 level; * Significant at the 0.10 per cent level.

This pattern is repeated for the career expectations score, with male respondents more intent about their future career than their female counterparts (Figure 12.2) and there is a significant difference ($F \text{ stat} = 3.809$; $p = 0.053$ ($p < 0.01$)). Male respondents demonstrated higher scores for entrepreneurial motivation, competencies and parental occupation but the difference is not significant. This exploratory analysis suggests that further analysis should involve a gender perspective when exploring the TPB.

An examination of the correlation of variables (Table 12.2) reveals that the intention score is most positively correlated with career expectations in line with Douglas and Shepherd (2002) who found that a person's self-employed intention would be influenced by their final career choice. Gender is also correlated to intentions, confirming the results shown in Table 12.1. Three other variables are correlated to intentions to differing degrees: Competency Score, Founder Score and Entrepreneurial Motivations (EM) Score. Among the independent variables, the Competency Score variable is related to three other independent variables, Career Expectations Score, Founder Score and EM Score.

The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 12.3. The findings show that the respondents' EMs (under their perceived behavioural control), the respondents' perceived entrepreneurial competencies (in their attitude toward the act), and the respondents' career expectations (part of their attitude toward the act) influence their EI. Therefore, we can reasonably accept hypothesis H1a, that the EICIS are explained by the 'attitude towards the act' input to the TPB. This confirms Yang (2013) who also found that 'attitude towards the act' is the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intentions.

There is also weak evidence to support the hypothesis H2a, that the 'perceived behavioural control' input to the TPB (in relation to the EM score) is associated with the EICIS. No other variable in the 'perceived behavioural control' cluster of variables influences EI. Yang (2013) found that 'perceived behavioural control' is the weakest predictor of entrepreneurial intentions, similar to the findings here. In relation to the 'subjective norms', hypothesis H3a is completely unsupported and we strongly reject the contention that the 'subjective norms' inputs to the TPB are linked to the EICIS. This result is contrary to the findings of Yang (2013), albeit direct comparisons are hampered by differences in methodologies and samples.

When analysed across genders, the respondents' career expectations are notably the only common framework factor across both sexes; otherwise these results are gender specific. The gender differences among Chinese students were confirmed by Yang (2013) and have motivated the gender analysis in this chapter. Here, the gender analysis in Table 12.3 revealed

Table 12.2 Correlations of the components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Entrepreneurial Intention scores of Chinese students studying in Ireland, for the full sample (n = 122)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Intention Score	1							
Career Expectations Score	.542*** Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	1						
Age	.000 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	-.017	1					
Gender	.856 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.428		1				
EM Score	.183** Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.175	.110					
Founder Score	.044 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.053	.228	.075	1			
	.365*** Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.060	-.059	.412				
	.000 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.511	.519	-.045	.051	1		
	.201*** Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	-.014	-.045	.579			
	.026 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.320	.877	.626	.315***	.372***	1	
Competency Score	.432*** Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.239***	-.091	.036	.000	.000		
	.000 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.320	.695	.099	.012	1	
Parent Occupation	-.109 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	-.002	.176	.076	-.044	.277		
	.233 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed)	.986	.053	.408	.631	.897		

Notes:
*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); ** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Variables are explained in Table 12.1.

Table 12.3 *Ordinary regression analysis of the components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour on the Entrepreneurial Intentions of Chinese students studying in Ireland, for the full sample (n = 122) and the gender-based sub-samples (males, n = 50 and females, n = 72)*

Variables (Model 1)	Full Sample (n = 122)	Males (n = 50)	Females (n = 72)	TPB
(Constant)	-.344	6.548	-4.612	
Career	.925***	1.323***	.802***	Attitude toward the act
Competency	.338**	-.164	.760***	
Founder	.206	.232	.146	
EducationLevel	.102	-.985	1.400	Perceived Behaviour Control
SubjectStudy	-.312	-.973	-.096	
HomeRegion	-.456	-.570	-.432	
Institution	-.220	-.220	-.129	
EMScore	.279***	.455***	.169	
FamilyBusiness	.038	.287	-.245	Subjective Norms
CampusEnviron	.840	.040	1.826**	
CampusSupport	.118	.167	.086	
EntreEducA	-1.219	-.074	-3.442**	
EntreEducC	-.041	.014	-.191*	
ParentOccup	-.745	-.227	-1.430*	
FamilyReaction	-.535	-1.037	-.300	
Age	.458	-.288	1.342	Control
Gender	.469	-	-	

Notes:

*** Significant at the 0.01 level; ** Significant at the 0.05 level; * Significant at the 0.10 level.

Variables are explained in Table 12.1.

that the perceived entrepreneurial competencies are significant for female students and entrepreneurial motives are significant for males only. This is the only gender difference in the 'attitude toward the act'. Therefore, we can reject H1b that the 'attitude towards the act' inputs to the TPB are associated with the EICIS, irrespective of gender.

The EI for male Chinese immigrant students are more positively stimulated by their 'attitude toward the act' and their 'perceived behaviour control' than their female counterparts. Therefore, there is some evidence to reject H2b and conclude that the EI of the Chinese students are gendered, with the 'perceived behavioural control' as an input to the TPB framework for male Chinese students only. Therefore, we reject H2b, the 'perceived

behavioural control' inputs to the TPB are associated with the EICIS, irrespective of gender. For female respondents, some variables (entrepreneurial education and parents' occupation) in the 'subjective norms' group are significantly negatively related to the EI, a result that is surprising as we expected the relationship to be positive in the main. However, Jin et al. (2007) suggest that Chinese females stereotypically remain in the background and rather than proactively contributing to the world of business, which would explain the negative link between female EI and subjective norms. Therefore, we reject H3b that there is no gender difference for 'perceived subjective norms' for female and male Chinese students. Primarily, we conclude that female intentions are influenced by their 'attitude toward the act' and their 'perceived subjective norms', albeit not in the direction expected. Overall, as the outcomes vary across gender, we acknowledge that the influences on EI are gendered for Chinese students, which echoes the findings of Yang (2013), despite the methodological differences.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We concluded that the TPB somewhat differently explains the EI of Chinese students who study in Ireland. The respondents' EI strongly influenced their career choice, under the 'attitude towards the act' predictor of entrepreneurship. However, the higher the female competency perception is, the stronger their intentions are – this is not true for male students. EMs are relevant for Chinese male students only. The higher their EM score is, the stronger the male EI are. The perceived subjective norms (campus environment, entrepreneurial education and parental occupation) are only relevant for female students, albeit not always positively. These gender differences are similar to the findings of Yang (2013) and suggest that Chinese societal norms around entrepreneurship are driven by gender biases. Overall, the EI of the Chinese students are not very strong despite nearly 40 per cent of respondents agreeing that they are going to create their own business in the future. From a theoretical perspective, the importance of gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions among Chinese students has greater significance than previous research has shown. Using the linear regression methodology, we shine a light on the gender differences that manifest within the various components of the three main inputs to the TPB. We recommend that future research should examine in more depth the components of entrepreneurial intentions through a gendered lens.

We recommend that policy makers and government authorities should continue to reform the entrepreneurial environment in China, to resolve the realistic difficulties student entrepreneurs would face (such as external

capital resource, business information), build fair market access and ensure the student entrepreneurs can be reasonably rewarded by the market, irrespective of gender. These policy changes would improve the overall level of EI among Chinese students as, according to Minniti (2008), government policy shapes the institutional environment in which entrepreneurial decisions are made and directly influences individuals' entrepreneurial motivations.

Secondly, Irish third level institutions should promote entrepreneurial activity as a gender-neutral career choice and build gender equality awareness into entrepreneurial education delivery and entrepreneurial environment development. As the entrepreneurial education participation rate of Chinese students in Ireland is at a relatively low level (56.56 per cent have not received any kind of entrepreneurial education), we recommend that incentives be put in place to encourage more international students to get involved in entrepreneurial modules or events. This initiative could be jointly supported by the Chinese government, through additional financial support when entrepreneurial modules are passed when studying overseas. Irish institutions should strengthen the promotion of entrepreneurship education among international students, integrating entrepreneurial education content with the targeted international students' cultural background, and encouraging international students to get involved with the local entrepreneurial groups and networks. For example, an international student entrepreneurial club could offer a platform to exchange business ideas and resources.

Thirdly, to improve the students' entrepreneurial competencies, the university campus careers office should pay attention to the students' entrepreneurial competencies and how to develop those skills. The provision of targeted entrepreneurship career guidance will prompt international students to seriously consider being self-employed as a viable career option. Lastly, Chinese students should reflect on their own entrepreneurial motivations, and think and act accordingly. In this survey, very few respondents have shown a willingness to take over their family businesses. However, being an entrepreneur does not automatically imply an individual 'must' create their own business. If it is possible, taking over the family business is an alternative entrepreneurial role for these Chinese students (Sieger et al., 2016).

This chapter has provided more insight into Chinese students' EI and their perceived career pathways, which should help immigrant entrepreneurship researchers understand the EIs of international students. In line with Ajzen's (1991) TPB, we identify three specific factors that would impact a Chinese person's EI while studying overseas: they are the respondents' perceived entrepreneurial competencies, their entrepreneurial career

goals and their entrepreneurial motives. For the Chinese government bodies, this study increases their comprehension about their overseas students' present EI in relation to setting up businesses in host countries, which would eventually spread the entrepreneurship spirit in China. On the Irish side, it would assist the relevant government departments to introduce more favourable policies for those potential international entrepreneurs and encourage them to contribute more to Ireland's SME sector. Finally, future research is necessary on this topic, as Tomovska Misoska et al. (2016) and Liñán and Fayolle (2015) suggest that students' EI evolve over time. A longitudinal study would follow the participants' intentions and then real entrepreneurial behaviours. Also, parallel studies of other student ethnic groups would improve our understanding of the international students' EI in Ireland, like Yemini and Yeheskel's study in Israel (2011).

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