

## THE PROPOSITION

For PhD candidates, their thesis propositions are an opportunity to publicly express their professional and personal convictions about science and society. In this feature they explain their most thought-provoking proposition. This time, a proposition from Zhihong Lyu, who graduated with a PhD in the Physics and Physical Chemistry of Foods on 14 December.



## 'Making friends with rich people fattens your bank account'

'This proposition is actually based on a *Nature* paper which studied 21 billion Facebook friendships. The study aimed to answer the question why people escape poverty faster in some communities than in others. It showed that in neighbourhoods with higher economic connectedness, so friendships across class or income boundaries, people earned more money later in life.

It is not only about the money. Yes, if you have financial problems or want to start a company, friendships with people of a higher economic status can help you. But it is also about social capital: if you have a high income, it usually means you are successful in your field. Rich friends are often also rich in knowledge and experience.

They can introduce you to other people in their network, which can increase the chance of success in life.

This paper in *Nature* resonated with me. We are living in a society in which we can't succeed through our own efforts alone. You need a team around you. I would like to start my own company in future, and I have accumulated my social capital to prepare the ground. If my "rich friends" are successful in their field, they can help with their experience and connections. And one day, I may also become a "rich friend" for others.' cj