

CROSSING BORDERS, CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY
OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS AT A CANADIAN

UNIVERSITY

by

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MA, The University of Alberta, 2010

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(Educational Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

June 2017

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Abstract

This study explores how international Chinese graduate students, especially those contemplating immigrating and who therefore fall into a fuzzy international student /immigrant category, (re)construct their identities through their social experiences at a Canadian university.

Theoretically, discourses on migration, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and diaspora and on Chineseness are employed. Students who are diasporic orientated tend to feel more patriotic than they are back home and have a strong identification with being citizens of the Peoples Republic of China. Cosmopolitan oriented students on the other hand are decentered and don't have a strong attachment to any particular identity, so they feel neither Chinese nor Canadian. Finally, transnational orientated students identify strongly as both Chinese and Canadian.

Methodologically, the study employs qualitative case study, with semi-structured in-depth interviews as the main data collection tool and reviewing postings on social media as a triangulating strategy. Five Chinese graduate students, each being a case, from diverse backgrounds studying in Canada on study permits constitute a collective case study. My findings suggest that all participants inhabit in transnational social field by maintaining transnational ties and relations with home country via social media. However, students with clear an immigration agenda are more likely to have extended social circles to transit from students to permanent residents, whereas those have not yet decided their future plans have smaller social circles that evolve around life in university and within academia. Chinese students develop complex and hybridized identities in Canada, from diasporic-oriented, to both diasporic and cosmopolitan oriented, to extremely transnational and cosmopolitan oriented. Where exactly their identities locate in the continuum largely depends on participants' upbringing, disposition and life

experiences: the more participants mingle with a mixed group of people, expose themselves to various cultures, the more they become transnational and cosmopolitan oriented, tolerant and appreciative of differences and less attached to clear-bounded identities.

Lay Summary

In this thesis, I have explored Chinese international graduate students (re)construct identities through their social experiences at a Canadian university, particularly approaching them from the perspective of potential immigrants, taking into consideration of the fuzziness or ambivalence of the category of international students/immigrants. My research challenges the view of seeing international students in general and Chinese students in particular as homogeneous and fixed, and it contributes to the understanding of the complex identity formation of Chinese international students.

Preface

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author Ran Xiang. The fieldwork reported in Chapter 5 was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate Number H15-00629.

A theoretical piece based on the section 3.3 Migration and Diaspora was accepted by the e-book titled *Reading the Pacific Rim* by the Institute of Interdisciplinary Inquiry ISBN: 978-0-473-39249-9

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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to lots of people who have helped and encouraged me during my thesis process.

First, I would love to extend my sincere gratitude towards my supervisor Dr. Handel Wright, my committee members Dr. Pierre Walter and Dr. Chris Lee, my external examiner Dr. Amy Metcalfe. The thesis will not reach its final shape without their advice and guidance.

Also, I want to thank professor emeritus Laifang Leung for her encouragement and support, ever since I knew her from University of Alberta in 2007, Dr. Rob Tierney for the opportunity to work with him and for trusting me, at times more so than I do with myself, and Dr. Ee Seul Yoon and Dr. Moonyoung Park, both of whom I just got to know but were very encouraging and helpful.

In addition, I want to thank all the participants who have shared with me their stories and time. I will not be able to finish the thesis without their input.

I was friends with my husband long before he became my husband and he has never stopped being my friend. Of all the people I've met in life, he is that one person who is most similar to me. We got married last year and during the course of my MA, we spent more time apart than we were together. I don't know how many husbands would be willing to start off married life like this and I do know that few wives as lucky as I am. I thank him for loving me the way I am, for marrying me, for staying married to me, and for supporting me both emotionally and financially and for the way he is.

Writing a thesis can produce a lot of anxiety and as a naturally very anxious person, I always bug people, on or offline. A very special thank you to people who befriended me despite my anxiety, Xin Xu, Yao Xiao, Er Er, Tifa, Zhe Xi, Jia Yu, Shuiqing, Jing Zhao, Yidan Zhu, Haoyun Li, Aaron Goldstein, Yan Zhou and Liangxu Zhu.

Dedication

To Chinese international students

in Canada and beyond

Chapter 1: Introduction

According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the number of students pursuing higher education abroad has been increasing since 2002. While the US and the UK remain the largest international students host countries, Canada has gained increasing popularity, ranking 7th amongst the most popular destinations worldwide. International student enrollment in Canada grew from 136,000 in 2001 to 265,000 in 2012, an increase of 94% (Canadian Bureau of International Education, 2012). Particularly, BC has the second largest number of international students across Canada, with 26,647 of them studying in the province in 2012. International students in Canada generated 8 billion dollars in revenue in 2010, which translated to 4.9 billion dollars worth of contribution to GDP. The top five source countries for Canada in 2012 were China (22%), India (12%), Korea (8%), France (5%) and the US (5%) (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services and Agencies of BC, 2013).

According to *Annual Report on Chinese International Migration 2014*, the total number of overseas Chinese has reached 50 million, with the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand as the four major hosting countries. Particularly, investor immigration has gained popularity, especially to the US and Canada. In 2010, 772 people from China were granted EB-5 visa, and the number has gone up to 2408 in 2011 and 6124 in 2012 (Wang, 2014, p. 23). Along with the investor immigration comes the craze of property buying in the US, Canada, Australia and the UK. The major motivation for the investors, besides safeguarding their assets, is clean environment and better education for their children. In terms of human migration flow, China has experienced increasing “immigration deficit”: in 2013, Chinese emigrants have reached 9.342 million, ranking the fourth largest immigrant source country in the world, whereas immigrants to China were less than 90 thousand (Wang, 2014, p. 21).

Chinese students who have studied in Europe and North America are ten times more than students who come to study in China. From 1978 to 2012, Chinese overseas students have reached 2.64 million and China has become the largest international students sourcing country in the world, with the US, Australia, Japan, the UK, and Canada receiving 74% of its students (p. 29). By 2014, the total number of Chinese international students has reached 3.52 million, while the number of students who have returned China after their studies is 1.81 million (Wang, Miao, Zheng, 2014, p.13-15). According to a survey by MyCos (cited in Wang, Miao, Zheng, p. 92), from year 2011 to 2014, 61% of the Chinese international students who are studying in North America want to find employment (temporary and long term) locally, which is higher than students who were studying in Europe (33%), Oceania (52%) and Asia (43%). Specifically in Canada, 51% of the international students plan to apply for permanent resident after they graduate (CBIE, 2014). The total number of Chinese overseas students has reached 459,800 in 2014 and accumulative number of Chinese overseas students since 1978 is 35,184,000 (*Annual Report on the Development of Chinese Returnees 2013*, Wang & Miao). Of all the returning students, those who have studied in the UK ranked the most and those who have studied in Canada ranked the least. The reason presumably is that Canada has more welcoming immigration policy towards international students (Study Abroad Services, 2015).

These statistics paint the picture of a vibrant group of temporary residents who have not only brought cultural diversity to Canadian university campuses, but have also contributed to economic development. The newer trend also suggests that for most immigrant receiving countries, international students have increasingly become a major source of immigrants. More than half of the international students study at the post-secondary level, which means that they spend a relatively long period of time in Canada. They face the challenges of adjusting to a new

culture, meeting demanding academic requirements, and managing their lives in an unfamiliar environment. Although their major duty is to study, the life of an international student is much more than classroom learning. They may participate in various campus events, make friends, volunteer or work part-time jobs, and travel back to their home countries or to other countries during breaks. Most international students regard their study abroad experiences to be enlightening and definable periods of their lives.

International students are a unique group of people: they possess strong academic credentials and they are on their way to becoming skilled professionals or academics. They face pressure from demanding schoolwork, relationship dilemmas, gloomy job market, and financial constraints. All of these happen in a foreign environment as they migrate from their home country to Canada. According to Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent and Roth (2012), the binary classification of “international student” vs “domestic student” is merely an administrative one since it fails to capture the diversity within the student body. They further contend that international students who have attended private high school in their home country and who have finished high school in Canada are more similar to domestic students in terms of adjustment, whereas recent immigrants, technically classified as “domestic students”, share similar experiences to international students who have just arrived on campus (p. 15).

A large amount of research has been done on international students’ experiences in the US, which is reflected in the statistics that it is still the most popular destination for international students. For the research subjects, the majority of the literature centered on the post-secondary international students registered in four-year degree granting programs at universities. The research on students enrolled in secondary schools, trade schools, language schools, and graduate schools constituted a rather smaller share. Student experiences can be categorized into two

groups: academic experiences and social experiences. A large portion of the literature tackles the identity issue students face within academic settings, for example, disciplinary identity construction, language related issue, relationship with supervisors, etc. My research aims to approach Chinese international students from the perspective of potential migrants, trying to unravel their social experience and how it affects their identity construction and life trajectory. I intend to only look at graduate students, because they possess more credentials and experiences as potential immigrants and they are more mature. Their social experiences and identity construction are different from students who are younger, say high school students. My research challenges the view of seeing international students, Chinese graduate students in particular, as a homogeneous group and seeing their identities as single-dimensional and static. In doing so, I hope to shed light on social experiences of international students and contribute to the literature on identity construction of international students-turned-immigrants.

1.1 Research Questions

In Eva Mackey's book *The House of Difference*, she argues that Canada needs a national identity to differentiate it from the US, an identity based on the notion of tolerance (2002, p.13). Compared to its southern neighbor, Canada is portrayed as a feminine figure, tolerating immigrants, Indigenous people, and refugees, whereas the US is more of a masculine figure that possesses homogenizing power over its people. As transient migrants, international students come from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. I want to know how leaving home and moving to a new environment affects their identity shaping.

Wong (2008) contends that immigrants in Canada develop networks and activities that span both their home and the host country, that transnationalism ties into the multiculturalism discourse and that it encourages transnational social identities (p. 82-83). International students,

unlike immigrants, are temporary residents who are supposed to leave the host country after their studies, but they also have the option to work in Canada (with a valid postgraduate work permit) and to become immigrants. Thus international students possess similar qualities to the ones immigrants possess. They are in an in-between position and I want to find out if the transnational identities they form affect their life choices after graduation.

Social experiences refer to non-academic experiences such as cultural activities, friendship, internships, and voluntary or community services. In transnational discourse, the concept of social field -- a transnational social group that consists of migrants and non-migrants who engage in sociocultural and economic activities -- is used to explain meaning-making of international students (Kashyap, 2010). Kegan uses the term “self authorship” to explain that students can also take initiative to develop identity, beliefs and social relationships to meet the needs of adult life (cited in Glass, 2012). When international students engage in a variety of social activities with different groups of people, their senses of identity and belonging will also shift.

My overarching research question is: How do Chinese graduate students (re)construct identities through their social experiences at a Canadian university? To better answer this question, I have three subordinate questions:

First, Chinese graduate students migrate from their home country to study in Vancouver, one of the most multicultural cities in Canada. How does leaving home and moving into a new environment affect their identity (re)construction?

Second, as students are more engaged in campus life, making new friends, participating in various cultural, athletic and voluntary activities, how do they see these social experiences playing a role in their identity formation?

Third, how does Chinese graduate students' study experience in Canada affect their life trajectory after they graduate?

1.2 Background of the Researcher

My interest in researching Chinese graduate students largely stems from my own experience as a Chinese graduate student and my work experience with an educational NGO that promotes educational exchange between Chinese and American high schools. I first came to Canada in 2006, when I just finished my undergrad and was about to start the MA program in Comparative Literature at University of Alberta. I did not know anybody in Edmonton when I first arrived, so I had to actively expand my social network, meeting new people and making friends, to survive the Edmonton winter. I made friends with co-nationals, host nationals, other international students, people I met at workshops etc. I enjoyed all these encounters because diversity is something that I value and respect, and coming to Canada has provided me the opportunity to embrace diversity, on some many different levels, for which I am forever grateful. I do not see difference as an exotic otherness to be consumed, but rather, I realize it is a natural existence. There were fewer minorities living in Edmonton back then; nonetheless, I did not feel excluded as a Chinese. On the contrary, I felt people demonstrated friendliness or hospitality towards people from other cultures. Once I was asked to house-sit for a professor who had taught me in one course and I lived in his house for a month and got paid. I did it several times because he said, "well, we trust you." Another example is that I met an African lady at a library workshop and it was close to Christmas and we were the only two people showed up. We were talking and she invited me to spend Christmas with her. I did come to her house and got tagged along to another trip to a Cree family in North Alberta. As a result of my own experiences back then, I felt that I was detached from any particular identity, Chinese or otherwise, because I

realize that people, despite differences, share more in common. I do think I became more transnational and cosmopolitan oriented.

I came back to Vancouver 2014 for my second MA in Educational Studies and I applied for immigration during the course of my study. Immigration is a common choice of many international students, and because of the number of Chinese international students in Canada, it seems to be even more popular among Chinese students. I know a doctoral student who was on Chinese government scholarship back in Edmonton, and as a condition, the recipient needs to work in China for two years upon graduation. But after she graduated, she decided to stay in Canada and had to settle the scholarship dispute with the funding agency. When I asked another friend about the reason why he immigrated, he simply said, “The system is better here.” Some have decided to immigrate early on and some have decided later on. For most international students, gaining mobility is another major concern. Immigration will enhance people’s mobility, both in terms of travel convenience and career prospective. Personally, the fact that I want to do a PhD and pursue an academic career is the most important reason. The simple lifestyle is another reason. I do not have to worry too much about “being successful” or succumbing to the societal pressure of getting married and having kids by a certain age. Being away from home certainly entails loneliness at times, but it also entails freedom and space. My family are supportive of my decision, which makes the process a lot easier.

My own experiences, then and now, have prompted my interests in researching about this topic, but at the same time, I am cautious not to project my thoughts and ideas onto my participants. As a researcher, I am a social constructivist who believes that reality is socially constructed and knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and the participants.

1.3 Important Concepts and Methodology

The theoretical concept central to my thesis is Hall's conception of identity and I draw upon theories link to migration--transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and diaspora--to inform my study. Hall assumes an anti-essentialist view on identity: "The concept of identity deployed here is, therefore not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one....It accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured: never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (p. 4). For my research, I see transnationalism as a form of cultural reproduction and the formation of transnational networks and communities. An identity characterized by transnational consciousness denotes dual or multiple identifications—"awareness of decentered attachment and of being both "here and there" (Vertovec and Cohen, 1999, p. xxi). The cosmopolitanism I am using in my study is a dispositional orientation or a competence, a mode of engaging with the world, which is somewhat similar to Hiebert's idea of "everyday cosmopolitanism" (2002, p. 212). I use cosmopolitanism as an outlook, particularly an outlook that stresses on openness to/appreciation of difference that may or may not be related to a privileged elite class. I see diaspora as a type of consciousness. For Chinese who are staying overseas, an identity characterized by diasporic consciousness refers to identification with either the cultural concept, "a feeling of connectedness with sense of being the bearers of a cultural heritage handed down from their ancestors, of being essentially separate from non-Chinese" (Wu, quoted in Ang, 2001, p. 48) or the political concept of being citizens of People's Republic of China and the experiences of discrimination.

In carrying out my research, I use qualitative case study as my methodology. I have purposefully selected five participants and each participant constitutes a case. Because of my

background in literature, I have a penchant for stories and I choose to present my findings in the form of vignette. I have used semi-structured in-depth interview as the main data collection tool, with reviewing postings on social media as a triangulating strategy.

1.4 Chapter Breakdown

Following the chapter of introduction is literature review, where I review articles on identity and experiences both for international students and for immigrants. In the theoretical framework chapter, I outline three major discourses on migration, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and diaspora and theories on Chineseness to form my own theoretical positions. The next chapter is methodology where I describe in detail my paradigmatic stance, research design, and specific methods used for data collection. When presenting my data, I include a vignette for each participant, followed by a cross-case analysis where I bring theory to inform the thematic analysis. The last chapter is conclusion, in which I answer my main research question, summarize my arguments and relate my study back to the broad concept of education and migration.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As my thesis approaches international students from the perspective of potential immigrants, the literature review is divided into two sections, one that deals with identity issues related to international students, and the other that deals with transitioning and identity construction related to immigrants. Across these two sections, I have selected papers published after year 2000 to capture the most recent picture of the international students/immigrants group. Globalization and technology have greatly changed how people relate to each other, so the experiences of international students studying in foreign countries or immigrants moving to host countries nowadays differ greatly from the experiences twenty years ago.

2.1 Identity Construction of International Students

There is a myriad of literature on international students' experiences and their identity construction in foreign countries. I have intentionally used the key word "international students" for a wider coverage of the topic. The research subjects need to be international students who attend post-secondary institutions. I did not include research done on secondary school students (Bihn, 2014; Arnott, 2012) since high school students are younger and their identity construction and experiences are different from undergraduate or graduate students.

After reading through the selected pieces, I categorized them thematically into three groups, namely, identity construction related to *language or discourse*, identity construction related to *border-crossing and migration* and identity construction related to *social experiences*. The first group of researchers are concerned with the issue of how English functions as an important agent in forming academic identity, disciplinary identity, or social identity for international students in a foreign environment. Across all studies in this group, proficiency in English is considered a key factor in shaping international students' experiences. The research all

suggest that international graduate students encounter difficulty in navigating second language learning environment, thus are considered less qualified than their peers. Students feel “handicapped” (Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009), “stifled” (Prabhakar, 2014) and “deficient” (Ortactepe, 2011) when expressing their ideas in both social settings and academic settings and their academic ability is hindered due to language inadequacy. While the researchers share similar findings, their specific angles and approaches vary.

Taking into account gender and ethnicity, Hsieh (2006) particularly focuses on identity negotiation of female Chinese graduate students in the US. She contends that female Chinese students, due to philosophical traditions of Confucianism that encourage harmonious intrapersonal relationships, experience the most difficult time in negotiating their identity in a second-language higher education environment (p. 3). Her findings on the impact of traditional values on Chinese students are endorsed by similar research on Korean students’ oral participation in class (Lee, cited in Tremmel, 2014). Additionally, Halic, Greenberg and Paulus (2009) have discovered that international graduate students encounter difficulty in navigating the linguistic diversity within the university community. Regarding English both as a barrier and a channel of access, students are anxious to rebuild reputation and regain experiences in their academic community (p. 91). However, the researchers treat international graduate students as a homogeneous group without making the distinction between Master students and PhD students. Compared to master students, PhD students are more interested in pursuing academic career, so they pursue and value academic identity differently.

The other researchers, by using a discourse analysis approach, focus on issues beyond language-centered identity formation to the broad arena of how identity is shaped by various discourses and in various contexts. For example, Tremmel (2014) argues that students’

disciplinary identities are constructed across discipline (interaction with supervisor), non-discipline (ESL classes) and personal contexts (life stories) and are affected by the familial environment and the way students are educated by their parents. Additionally, Prabhakar (2014) discovers that international students form a W shape discourse: they develop a discourse of silence and disengagement when they just arrive in the US due to language constraint; after adjusting to life in the new environment, most students develop a new discourse of empowerment and upon graduation, they retrieve to the discourse of doubt. Students' discourse in the social world matches up with their discourse in the academic world.

Using the notion of conceptual socialization, Ortactepe (2011) argues that there is an interplay between social development and linguistic development of Turkish PhD students in the US. She maintains that the socialization aspect of language learning entails gaining membership to the scholarly community, acquiring social capital, and reconstructing social identity, while the linguistic aspect of language learning rests on learners' own investment rather than extended social network (pp. 325-31). In support of her research, Ortactepe adopts a rather sophisticated design of longitudinal parallel mixed method where a qualitative method is used to examine the content (social) side of socialization and a quantitative method for the skill (linguistic) side.

The second group of authors are concerned with identity construction related to migration or border-crossing, using theories of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, while paying attention to how gender (Hardy, 2012), nationality, place and space (Walker, 2014; Li, 2006), and race (Lewis, 2013) further complicate the process. They tend to see students situated somewhere between educational tourists (Huang, 2008), international sojourners (Brown, 2009b) and immigrants (Moore, 2008), thus examining their identity formation in the full cycle of students' mobility: in their home country, arriving at the host country, going back to home

country (to visit) and eventually becoming immigrants at the host country. They all point to the fact that international students develop hybridized identities in the host country, which either diminishes or heightens their sense of national identity, and that various factors influence the identity shaping process of international students. They also suggest that students' interaction with different social groups, co-nationals or host-nationals, affect their formation of hybridized identity.

Walker (2014) specifically looks at how regional peculiarities of the southern US affect international students' identities at the University of Mississippi. Southern states are the least chosen of US destinations for international students, the peculiarities of which include southern hospitality, food style, hunting and gun culture, and religious atmosphere. She maintains that international students build intercultural identity as they are more assimilated into the Southern environment and some consider themselves to be global citizens as a result of acculturation. However, students do have a negative impression of the region of being less developed and more discriminatory before arriving at the university.

Simonis (2012) emphasizes the feeling of displacement and homelessness that results from forming a hybridized identity. She contends that the degree of hybridity varies according to how much students identify with the host culture. Since their hybridized identities are not accepted in the home country, students possess increased feelings of displacement and homelessness when they go back (p. 48). Therefore, social support in both host and home country is necessary for safe transitions (pp. 48-52). Particularly focusing on the identity formation of international students with families, Margono Slamet (2013) investigates how his own family members are affected by their transnational journeys between the US and Indonesia. He uses books, primarily children's literature, as boundary objects to address the cultural

dilemmas transnational families face amidst geographical, cultural and emotional boundaries. He argues that boundary crossing is an educational as well as a cultural experience for his family since it changes the values they inherit from their home country and the ways they relate to others (p. 153). This research addresses the community of mature students with families and stresses the importance of book sharing between parents and kids as a means for them to navigate different cultures (p. 84).

Both Huang (2008) and Brown (2009) focus on international students' experiences in the UK from the educational tourist/ sojourner perspective: Huang explores the factors that constitute positive educational experiences for international students by using surveys, whereas Brown illustrates the transformative nature of international students' sojourn using ethnography. According to Huang, academic performance and social interactions with host-nationals are most conducive to forming positive educational experiences (p. 1011). Besides academic achievement, international students have high expectations of knowing British culture and forming meaningful friendship with host nationals, but lacking bonding tools, most students are socially inactive in the university (pp. 1013-1014). Brown, on the other hand, asserts that the sojourner experiences have dramatically changed the personal and cultural outlook of international graduate students, in that they become more open-minded to cultural differences, more independent and individualistic in pursuing their dreams, and start to reject fixed gender roles in their home cultures (p. 518).

Along the same lines, Koehne (2005) maintains that international students in Australia construct storylines about who they are, storylines that are developed through reconstruction as a site of multiple subjectivities, as hybridity, or as resistance to stereotypes (p.106). Being away from familial and cultural expectations, students take advantage of the freedom in reinventing

themselves. However, the sense of freedom is contrasted with the sense of alienation and otherness (p. 116). At the same time, students reject being perceived as customers who consume the brand name of their institution.

In uncovering transnational identities formation for Asian students in Canada, Li (2006) and Ghosh & Wang (2003) adopt case study and narrative inquiry approaches to provide detailed analysis of personal narratives. Although people's backgrounds vary, all participants in these two studies form memories and identities tied to "place" and they are in constant struggle to figure out where they belong, where home is, and what home means to them. Ghosh and Wang analyze their own autobiographical stories traversing between Canada and their home countries. While they enjoy freedom and adventure in Canada, they also fear they will lose their cultural identity or being seen as "the other". Considering themselves as transnationals, Ghosh and Wang form hybrid identities after living in Canada for a while. Li narrates stories of three Chinese undergraduates and they regard home as physical place, as relationships tied to loved ones and as life journey.

Moore (2008) particularly looks at student-migrants, examining their choosing and imagining, transition and transformation associated with place and home. The relationships and networks, including romantic, familial, religious, and friendship, participants developed are major motivations for them to stay permanently in Canada. She also suggests that active engagement of various communities on and off campus is conducive to students' success.

Regarding race, racial identities, and racialization in the US, Lewis (2013) maintains that international students' experiences vary a great deal depending on the national context in which they grew up, but that all participants notice a heightened sense of race in the US, where they are being labeled into certain racial categories and are being othered (pp. 190-93). Other aspects of

their identities, such as nationality, class, gender, and ethnicity also shape how students experience race in the US.

Similarly, Hardy (2012) examines how international graduate students negotiate national and gendered identities, how these two categories intersect, and how such barriers are sustained or challenged in the US (p. 4). Hardy argues that students reestablish national identities as they interact with different social networks: some have a stronger sense of national identity, some have a conflicted view of their national identity, and some develop a cosmopolitan view of “international” identity (p. 13). Both male and female students are challenged by social norms in the US regarding gender and religious practices.

There is not much research done in the area of identity construction through social experiences: I was only able to find two recent studies on this issue. Carpenter (2009) focuses on Korean international graduate students’ identity construction through the use of internet and Kashyap (2010) looks at social experiences and international students’ identity construction in the US. The other authors concentrate on the challenges students face and the different ways they engage in social experiences: social network as a community of practice (Huang, 2008; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009), social experiences related to students’ learning and development (Glass, 2012), social interaction patterns (Brown, 2009a; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013), and challenges students face in their social lives (Guidry Lacina, 2002).

Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) have identified four social interaction patterns among international students: self-segregation, exclusive global mixing, inclusive global mixing and host interaction. Self-segregation refers to international students socializing with co-nationals; exclusive global mixing refers to socializing with co-nationals and other internationals, excluding host nationals; inclusive global mixing is the most inclusive form of interaction, which

refers to socializing with a mix of co-nationals, internationals, and host nationals; host interactors are students who only socialize with host nationals since they seek to assimilate into the dominant culture (p. 413). The majority of the participants are exclusive global mixers; self-segregators and inclusive global mixers are roughly the same in number; and host interactors constitute the smallest share. Contrary to the common belief that international students need to interact with host nationals to integrate into the host culture, this study asserts that international students form social networks with wide geographical reach among themselves, from which they benefit even after graduation. They further critique that host nationals frequently exclude themselves from the global network, thus losing important social capital (pp. 428-429). Similar to Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood's (2013) stance, Montgomery and McDowell (2009) challenge the view that international students need to develop social and academic exchange with UK students to gain better university experiences. They contend that members of the international students form a "community of practice" where they share experiences, provide support to each other -- academic and social -- and gain friendship. The international network they form provides them with social capital.

While the majority of the research focuses on international students being disadvantaged due to language inadequacy and adjustment issues, Rose-Redwoods' (2013) and Montgomery and McDowell's (2009) piece of research provide a counter discourse regarding international students' experiences at foreign universities as positive, self-sufficient and resourceful. These authors have tapped into the dynamics within the international students group to investigate how they gain social resources by forming their own community.

Lacina (2002), on the other hand, contends that international students experience loss of social status as they begin their studies in the US (p. 21). They face different challenges in their

social lives: some students have difficulties understanding dialects and slangs, some feel social pressure about their religious beliefs, and many hold misunderstandings against seeking counseling. She asserts that in order to retain and attract more international students, universities should plan activities and encourage social interactions between international students and American students (p. 26). Regarding what kind of experience contributes to students' learning and development, Glass (2012) argues that students who participate in leadership programs or community service, who interact with people from various backgrounds, and who take courses on race and ethnicity report greater development and more positive perception of campus climate.

Carpenter (2009) specifically looks at how technology and online space, in this case use of Internet, affect identity construction of Korean international graduate students in Canada. In terms of their experiences, most students report feelings of alienation and marginalization in academic contexts, but they also become more global-minded and cosmopolitan. Students use the internet to maintain existing identities such as Korean cultural and national identities by socializing on Korean-content websites, while also using the internet to develop and explore new identities in the Canadian context. The Internet is used as a tool for students to deal with difficulties they experience in reality and to extend their life offline (pp. 114-116).

Kayshap (2010) sees international students as a heterogeneous group and each individual has different social experience and identity formation, but participants share things in common. Regardless of how much they identify with the dominant culture in the US, they still identify with their country of origin. Most students become more open and extroverted as they are more engaged with their peers and other international students. All participants expect not only academic learning experiences, but also working experiences in the US after graduation. Similar to other research findings, Kayshap (2010) argues that international students are unable to form

deep and meaningful friendship with their American peers because they do not share common interests or cultural backgrounds.

2.2 Identity Construction of Immigrants

The articles in this section shed light on the continuum of experiences of international students/immigrants, from internationals transitioning to immigrants, newly landed immigrants to first and second generation of immigrants.

Kelly (2012) and Hazen and Alberts (2006) both deal with the transitioning experiences of international students becoming immigrants, the factors contributed to their decisions, challenges they face during transition and strategies they use to navigate the process. They both point to the complex reasons why people choose to become immigrants and the volatility of their decisions, among which economic reasons such as career opportunities are the decisive factors for their future plans. Focusing on the Canadian context, Kelly (2012) argues that the major motivations to study in Canada are cheaper tuition, family or friend connections in Canada, reputation and quality of Canadian education and diversity of culture (p. 24). The reasons to remain in Canada upon graduation are varied, but the top reasons are favorable immigration policies, to avoid political instability and bad economic condition back home and to lowering tuition for advanced studies (such as the PhD). The challenges people face transitioning to permanent residents are initial cultural adaptation, difficulty finding professional jobs related to their field of study, lack of support navigating the PR application process and their strategies to navigate the process are gaining co-op work experiences and expanding social network to gain more social capital.

Hazen and Alberts' study (2006) from the US perspective yielded similar results. They argue that few international students come to the US with the intention to stay permanently.

Instead, a combined factors of societal, professional and personal reasons influence students in an ongoing decision making process, with 36% of students changing their mind in the middle of study about immigration. Economic and professional factors, career opportunities, standard of living, are strong incentives for students to stay in the US, while personal and societal factors, friends and families, familiarity of environment, motivate them to go back home (201).

The second group of authors deal with identities and experiences of international students soon after they become immigrants. Yang and Qiu (2010) investigate the experiences of a group of Chinese scholars at an Australian university who have finished their doctorates and stayed in Australia to pursue their academic career, people who known as “knowledge workers” or “knowledge diaspora” (p. 19). This is one of the possible trajectories of the graduate students in my study, especially for the doctoral students. Yang and Rui (2010) contend that although they admit that cultural integration and language proficiency are the most challenging areas and that they are not fully integrated into the Australian society, they are content with life in Australia in general and have formed extended social networks with both Chinese and non-Chinese. While accepting Chinese as part of their self-identity, they form hybridized identities that combine Chinese spiritual traditions and western secular knowledge (p. 26). They regard their educational and work experiences back in China as an advantage and actively engage in collaboration between Chinese and Australian universities. Conversely, based on a four-year longitudinal ethnographic study of one male Chinese immigrant in Toronto, Han (2012) claims that the immigrant is disempowered in the host society because of his language ability and that language constitutes “an important terrain upon which socioeconomic inequality and immigrant identity are negotiated, resisted but reproduced” (p. 136).

Adopting a qualitative case study method, Chang (2010) aims to explore the acculturation experiences and sense of identity of Taiwanese Chinese international students and permanent residents in the US. Their initial identities are characterized by practicality and collectivity, surviving and adapting. Chang (2010) further contends that individuals' identities still develop after they immigrate, in the areas of values and beliefs, characterized by a hybridized identity of retaining Taiwanese culture and adopting US culture (p. v).

The initial experience and identity construction of international students and permanent residents are quite similar, but in the long run, international-students-turned-immigrants, who are equipped with language skills and social networks, better adjust to life in the host country than immigrants who come directly from their home countries.

The third group of authors are concerned with identity construction and negotiation of the first and the second generation of immigrants long after they have immigrated to Canada. Regarding first generation Bulgarian immigrants, Yankova and Andreev (2012) maintain that Bulgarians are motivated by escaping political and economic hardship back home to come to Canada and the most challenging part after landing is to find jobs that match their educational and professional background (p. 45). Their close bonds with homeland and feeling of incomplete acceptance result in belated sense of belonging and Bulgarian cuisine, language, holidays are vital aspects in forming sense of identity.

However, for the second-generation Chinese immigrants in Toronto, the category of Chinese-Canadian implies immense ambiguity in relation to race, ethnicity and language. Huynh (2009) argues that economically privileged Chinese women are more likely to identify with this category, whereas Chinese men are much less comfortable, using humor to assert their masculinity.

2.3 Summary

After reviewing the relevant literature, it is clear that this field aims to provide deeper understanding of the lived experiences of international students/immigrants and their identity (re)construction; therefore, most researchers adopt qualitative methodology. As for the specific methods, a combined method of case study, phenomenology, discourse analysis, narrative inquiry and ethnography are used for conducting research. Mixed method is also appropriate for complex research questions that provide depth as well as breadth from the data, but the downside is that it generates a huge amount of data, which prolongs the research process. It is also noteworthy that the majority of the authors are the insiders of the group being studied, which indicates that researchers are self-reflexive about the issues related to international students/immigrants. The researchers use an emic perspective to their advantage in that they provide detached yet critical analysis of the data by bonding with the interviewees.

The researchers share the common view of identity as multiple, changing and contested. Additionally, researchers tend to analyze identity formation over a long period of time, often starting from the moment when students prepare to leave the home country, to when they come to the host country for studying, to when they go back home to visit, and eventually to when students become immigrants. Regarding the role of international students, the researchers argue that it rests somewhere between educational tourists and immigrants and that the identity reconstruction during their stay at the host country affects how students position themselves afterwards. The most common discourse for both international graduate students and immigrants position them as marginalized and othered, inadequate in language skills and social skills. However, a small group of researchers challenge this common assumption by seeing them as self-sufficient and resourceful in forming their own community and gaining social capital. Some

researchers tend to view international students as a homogeneous group, without considering their various ethnic, cultural, social and national backgrounds, while others view them as a heterogeneous group, maintaining that there is no unified international student experience. A combined factors of societal, professional and personal reasons influence people's decision about migration, with economic reason, career opportunity as the prominent reason. The international students-turned-immigrants, equipped with language skills and social networks, better adjust to life in the host country than immigrants who come directly from their home country. The majority of the research is done in North America, Europe and Australia, while other areas remain under-researched. Existing literature sees international students and immigrants as two separate categories, very little has taken into account the ambivalence of these two categories, especially in relation to identity (re)construction through *social* experiences in Canada, which my research intends to investigate.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents with the theories that inform my study. As international students bear resemblance to immigrants in that they engage in transnational practices, I am using theories of migration as my theoretical framework. There are three major discourses on migration, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and diaspora, which are inter-related, but each discourse harbors a variety of ideals across different disciplines and is contested within the discourse. Since my thesis focuses on Chinese graduate students, I also include theories on Chineseness. The theories that inform my study intersect with these discourses, so I will outline the major trends in each discourse and formulate my own theoretical positions.

3.1 Migration and Transnationalism

Globalization signifies “a compression of time and space, of the world, and to the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole...”(Chan, 2002, p. 192). Transnationalism overlaps globalization but is limited in scope. While “globalization implies more abstract, less institutionalized and less intentional processes occurring without reference to nations”, “transnational processes are anchored in and transcend one or more nation-states” (Kearney, 1999, p. 521). Appadurai (1999, p. 464) uses the concept of deterritorialization to refer to transnational organizations that “operate in ways that transcend specific territorial boundaries and identities”:

As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic projects, the *ethno* in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalized quality...The landscapes of group identity—ethnoscape—around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer

tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous. (1999, p. 463)

Basch and her colleagues (quoted in Faist, 1999, p. 40) have defined transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders...” According to Vertovec and Cohen (1999), there are five major trends within the general transnationalism framework, namely, transnationalism as the reconstruction of locality, transnationalism as the movement of capital, transnationalism as a mode of cultural reproduction, transnationalism as a site for political engagement and the making of transnational communities and networks. There is a tendency to conceive transnationalism as an expression of resistance from below and as a counter-hegemonic space, but as transnationalism is a multifaceted and multi-local process, the totalizing emancipatory view of transnationalism is problematic (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998, p. 5). Mahler (2007, p.195) sees transnationalism as a useful framework not just for understanding transnational migration, but also for “bridging migration to myriad of other activities that cross borders”. For my research, I see transnationalism as cultural reproduction and the formation of transnational networks and communities.

Transnationalism challenges the nation-state paradigm, a paradigm that links identity to specific space, as transnationalism has changed the way people relate to space by “creating social fields that connect and position some actor in more than one country” (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999, p. xxii). Similarly, Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1999) define transnationalism as transmigrants who build social field that link their home country and their host country (p. 26).

Transmigrants are immigrants whose lives depend on multiple connections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in more than one nation-state (Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1999, p. 73). Their conceptualization of transnationalism lies on the following premises: first, changing condition of global capitalism shapes the migrants' experience; second, transnationalism is grounded in the daily lives and social relationships of migrants; third, transmigrants face complex identity constructs; last, transmigrants confront hegemonic contexts that compel researchers to reconsider concepts of race and ethnicity, culture and society (p. 30). Simultaneity—one possesses feelings attached both to destination and origin and one can be at more than one place—is the defining character of transnationalism (Chan, 2002, p. 192). Another characteristic of transnationalism is the development of transnational ties, a form of social relationship that “though grounded in empirical realities, also transcends international borders” (Mahler, 2007, p. 197). Transnational social spaces constituted by various forms of resources, refers to “sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders of multiple national-states, ranging from weakly and highly institutionalized forms”, and migrants in transnational spaces often maintain significant social and symbolic links across borders (Faist, 2007, p. 233-34). Arguably, the most frequently used term is “transnational social field”, which refers to:

A set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed... National social fields are those that stay within national boundaries while transnational social fields connect actors through direct and indirect relations across borders (Levitt and Schiller, 2004, quoted in Mahler, 2007, p. 203)

Levitt and Schiller (2007, p. 157) further contend that a transnational social field perspective on society accommodates the fact that migrants integrate into host societies while maintaining homeland ties by distinguishing between *ways of being* and *ways of belonging*. Ways of being refers to “the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions” (p. 163), whereas ways of belonging refers to “practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group”(p. 164). According to Levitt and Schiller (2007), individuals can be present in a social field, but not identify with the cultural politics of that field; in contrast, people may possess strong identification to their home culture through memory and nostalgia (p. 164). Individuals within transnational social fields combine *ways of being* and *ways of belonging* based on different contexts: if people engage in social practices that cross borders as a regular feature, then they exhibit transnational ways of being, but if they highlight the cultural identities associated with the practice, then they exhibit a transnational way of belonging (p. 164).

Theoretically, a transnational way of belonging captures the identity formation in the transnational context. Guarnizo and Smith (1998, p. 21) assert that identity formation in transnational social spaces can be understood as “a dialectic of embedding and dis-embedding which overtime, involves an unavoidable encumbering, dis-encumbering and re-encumbering of situated selves” (p. 21). In the process of identity formation, as argued by Levitt and Schiller (2007, p. 157), assimilation and enduring transnational engagement are neither incompatible nor binary opposites. An identity characterized by transnational consciousness denotes dual or multiple identifications—“awareness of decentered attachment and of being both “here and there” (Vertovec and Cohen, 1999, p. xxi).

3.2 Migration and Cosmopolitanism

Fine and Cohen (2002, p. 137) identify “four moments” in the genealogy of the term cosmopolitanism: Zeno’s moment in the ancient world, Kant’s moment in Enlightenment period, Arendt’s moment of post-totalitarian thought and Nussbaum’s moment of late North American thought. The Greek’s version of cosmopolitanism literally means “citizens of the world”, and as a statement for equality, “cosmopolitanism was propounded mainly by people who were marginal and powerless---clanless and hearthless” (p. 339). Kant’s version, two thousand years later during Enlightenment period, is presented as “an antidote to the ills of nationalism” and as “the standard bearer of the struggle of the universal against the particular, of the interests of humanity against this or that local community” (p. 140). Arendt’s version is “beset by lost opportunities, tarnished by competition between national memories, degraded by an ideological servitude to particular powers, and corralled into a moral dualism of good and evil.....” (p. 154). Lastly, Nussbaum’s version is mostly restricted to the use of cosmopolitanism in US educational reform, to promote world citizenship as opposed to national citizenship (p. 155).

Cosmopolitanism in modern times is used by social theorists as an alternative to “ethnocentric nationalism” and “particularistic multiculturalism” (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002, p. 1). Cosmopolitanism, as Vertovec and Cohen term it, has multi-layered meanings. It can be referred to as a vision of world citizenship and democracy; it can mean values and dispositions to engage cultural multiplicity; it is also employed by some theorists to advocate post-identity politics or hybrid to challenge conventional conception of identity and belonging (p.1). According to them, the essence of cosmopolitanism suggests something that “(a) transcends the seemingly exhausted nation-state model; (b) is able to mediate actions and ideals oriented both to the universal and the particular, the local and the global; (c) is culturally anti-essentialist; and

(d) is capable of representing variously complex repertoires of allegiance, identity and interest” (p. 4). When qualifying the concept of cosmopolitanism, they further contend that it is not an exclusive Western notion and that different cultures have “a cosmopolitan consciousness and practice that is comparable to, but distinct from, Western cosmopolitanism” (p. 15).

There are, however, certain stereotypes associated with cosmopolitanism, namely that it is only available to “privileged”, “bourgeois” and “politically uncommitted” elites (p. 6). It is true in the sense that the elites have the necessary resources to travel and absorb other cultures, but with recent development in international tourism and immigration, the opportunities to meet people from different parts of the world and to understand other cultures are also accessible to a wider range of people. Being associated with elites, cosmopolitanism also entails consumption of some sort, especially consumption of foreign places. The so-called “cosmopolitan tourism” refers to the search for “varied experiences, a delight in understanding the contrasts between societies rather than longing for uniformity or superiority, and the development of some skills at interpreting cultural meanings”, which is a trend based on exoticism, commodification and consumer culture (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002, p. 7). Nevertheless, the desire for cultural otherness does not denote deep sense of cosmopolitanism. The true cosmopolitans “exhibit a culturally open disposition and interests in a continuous engagement with one or other cosmopolitan projects” (p. 8).

Vertovec and Cohen have viewed cosmopolitanism in six major rubrics: as a socio-cultural condition, a world view, as political projects for recognizing multiple identities or building transnational institutions, as a dispositional orientation and as a mode or competence (p.9). A socio-cultural condition of cosmopolitanism is marked by “a pastiche of traditional, local folk and national motifs and styles; a culture of mass consumerism consisting of

standardized mass commodities, images, practices and slogans; and an interdependence of all these elements across the globe, based upon the unifying pressures of global telecommunications and computerized information systems (Smith, quoted in Vertovec & Cohen, 2002, p. 9). Seen as a philosophy, cosmopolitanism is construed as “citizens of the world”, following Kant’s idea (p. 10). As political projects, cosmopolitanism can mean framework or institution that bridge the national-state system or the democratic principle of plural loyalties (p. 11-12). Cosmopolitanism can also be referred to as an attitude or disposition, which “represents a desire for, and appreciation of, cultural diversity” or a practice or competence to learn about different cultures and manage the system of meaning (p. 13). Hiebert (2002) views cosmopolitanism “an openness to all form of otherness, associated with an appreciation of, and interaction with, people from other cultural backgrounds”, “an everyday practice of hospitality between people of different cultural backgrounds” (p. 212). Hannerz views cosmopolitanism as “a perspective, a state of mind, or—to take a more processual view—a mode of managing meaning”, “relationships to a plurality of cultures” and “a willingness to engage with Other” (1990, p. 238-239). It is a disposition of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, which is largely acquired through travel (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002, p. 13). Cosmopolitanism as competence is characterized by “a personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting” (Hannerz, 1990, p.239).

The cosmopolitanism I am using in my study, based on their theorization, is a dispositional orientation or a competence, a mode of engaging with the world, which is somewhat similar to Hiebert’s idea of “everyday cosmopolitanism” (2002, p. 212). I use cosmopolitanism as an outlook, particularly an outlook that stresses an openness to/appreciation of difference that may or may not relate to a privileged elite class. The cosmopolitan

consciousness that people exhibit is an openness to/appreciation of difference, “an openness to all form of otherness”, “an everyday practice of hospitality between people of different cultural backgrounds” in Hiebert’s words.

Regarding everyday cosmopolitanism, the research on sociability of multicultural neighborhoods in Montreal suggests that immigrants who rely on strong ties (family and kin) form insolated communities, whereas groups with weak ties (acquaintances) are integrated (Chicoine et al. quoted in Hiebert, 2002, p. 217). Moreover, Hiebert (2002) refutes the idea that cosmopolitan disposition is irreversible and that people who have developed a multicultural mode of behavior will remain in that state forever (p. 220). Based on his study on young second generation immigrants, Hiebert notices that there is a strong ethos to reconnect with the cultural root as they enter adulthood---they seem to practice a different version of cosmopolitanism (p. 221).

Building on Waldron’s argument on cosmopolitanism, Hall (2002, p. 26) maintains that people draw from a variety of cultural repertoires to form their own cultural vocabularies and discourses:

It is not that we are without culture but we are drawing on the traces and residues of many cultural systems, of many ethical systems—and that is precisely what cosmopolitanism means. It means the ability to stand outside of having one’s life written and scripted by any one community, whether that is a faith or tradition or religion or culture—whatever it might be—and to draw selectively on a variety of discursive meanings.

Hall agrees with Waldron on the centrality of culture and identity, which means that people are culturally situated and embedded and that people cannot establish identity without a

cultural vocabulary. In the modern cosmopolitan environment, argues Hall, one forms a “cosmopolitan self” when it is impossible to preserve a full cultural identity and one has to reflect on the multiplicity of these identities and dispense the ones that are no longer necessary (p. 27). In theorizing the dialectics of cultural contact, Chan (2002) categorizes five different outcomes of encounters when people depart from home culture (point A) and arrive at the host culture (point B). The first outcome is essentializing: both A and B essentialize when they encounter difference and retreat to the unchanging same. The second outcome is alternating—A and B coexist and individuals retrieve A or B depending on the situations. These people are identity jugglers, trying to alternate between different identities. The third one is converting, which suggests the replacement of A by B and the loss of the old identity and the embracement of the new. The fourth one is hybridizing, which means people are open to new cultures and identities without giving up their culture of origin. The last one is innovating. A new identity, or a more cosmopolitan identity, comes out of the entanglement of the two cultures (p. 193-194). Also, it is noted that the cosmopolitan concept was present in the classical Chinese philosophy of Confucius, where he proposes the idea of *he er bu tong*, harmony/integration in difference. The interaction between the two cultures is dialectic in the sense that both cultures find a point of confluence, thus benefiting from change and growth in a reciprocal fashion, the principle of being harmonious without essentializing (p. 197-198). Historically, there are many moments when exotic culture, Indian Buddhism for example, has influenced the mainstream Chinese culture and become part of the cultural core, thus exhibiting the mutual entanglement between the two cultures that eventually transformed and regenerated (p. 199-200). The more contemporary example, however, is the Chinese immigrants in Thailand where their choices of wedding symbols adapt from an eclectic juxtaposition of Thai Buddhism, Chinese Confucianism

and Western Consumerism (p. 202). In these cases, “one culture sort of slips into another culture, half forgetting itself and half changing the other” (p. 206).

3.3 Migration and Diaspora

Diaspora is in a constant state of (re)formation and in the age of globalization, the conditions of a globalized economy, new forms of internationalization, cosmopolitan sensibilities and the revival of religion as a focus have contributed to new opportunities for diasporas to emerge (Cohen, 2008, p. 141). “Invariably promiscuous and unsystematically profane”, Gilroy (1999, p. 298) asserts, “diaspora challenges us to apprehend mutable itinerant culture. It suggests the complex, dynamic potency of living memory: more embodied than inscribed”. Marienstras (1999) argues it is only recently that the term diaspora is used to describe minority groups whose awareness of their identity is defined by a relationship, territorially discontinuous, with a group settled ‘elsewhere’; before, diaspora implies the idea of center and periphery, the relationship to the land and the territory and the idea of a relation to the state (p.358). Shuval (2008) maintains that diaspora discourse “reflects a sense of being part of a ongoing transnational network that includes dispersed people who retain a sense of their uniqueness and an interest in their homeland” and a diasporic reality is founded on consciousness, memory, identity longings and virtual elements of the diasporic group (p. 30).

There are a few attempts to delineate the concept and the earliest one goes back to 1991, when William Safran identified several common features of diaspora (quoted in Cohan, 2008, p. 6):

- They, or their ancestor, have been dispersed from an original ‘center’ to two or more foreign regions;

- They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements;
- They believe they are not---and perhaps can never be---fully accepted in their host societies;
- Their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favorable, either they, or their descendants should return;
- They believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
- They continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship.

Based on Safran's theorization, Cohen (2008, p. 17) further categorizes different groups of diaspora into classical (Jews), victim (Africans and Armenians), labor and imperial (Indians and the British), trade (Chinese and Lebanese) and deterritorialized (the black Atlantic) by highlighting some of the important characteristics that they share in common:

- Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
- Alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;

- An idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
- The frequent development of return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;
- A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;
- A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
- A sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and
- The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in hosting countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

Both Safran and Cohen adopted a descriptive approach to outline the “ideal type” of a diasporic group, an “ideal type” that is characterized by dispersal, forced or voluntary, from the homeland, a troubled relationship with the host country and an ongoing tie to the original homeland. However, scholar like Tsagarousianou (2007, p. 104) finds their approach “limited and limiting” in that it fails to “recognize the dynamic and fluid character of both diasporas and the volatile transnational contexts in which they emerge and acquire substance (p. 105). He maintains that the notion of diaspora is a elusive one and that Cohen’s rendition did not take into account the novels forms of late modern transnational mobility, such as transnational commuting

or mental migration (p. 105). I concur with Cohen in using a descriptive approach since it enables people to “understand the diasporic phenomenon in the round” (Cohen, p. 17) and prevents the concept from becoming an overused buzz word.

Different from the descriptive model, Vertovec (1999, p. xvii) seeks to give greater definition to the concept by categorizing diaspora as *social form*, as *type of consciousness* and as *mode of cultural production*. Diaspora as social form is characterized by social relationships tied by history, tension of political orientation and economic strategies. Vertovec (1999, p. xviii) regards diasporic consciousness as common among contemporary transnational communities, which is constituted by a dual nature, a positive one by identification with a cultural or political force and a negative one by experience of discrimination. Diaspora as mode of cultural production entails production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena (xix). Along a similar line, James Clifford (1999, p. 220) proposes to focus on diaspora’s borders, on what it defines itself against. He opposes to the idea of a clearly defined concept of diaspora, “either by recourse to essential features or to privative oppositions”; instead, he sees diaspora as “a loosely coherent, adaptive constellation of responses to dwelling-in-displacement” (p. 221).

Foregrounding the basic geographic concepts of space and place in the transmigration literature and highlighting the geographic character of diasporas, Geographer Laurence J. C. Ma (2003, p. 6) views diaspora as “geographically as complex and interrelated sets of places and spatial processes, created as a consequence of varied forms of transmigration and transnational economic activity”. He suggests that “a diaspora can be a process, a group of people and a geographic area and a spatial network” (p. 7). He notices that in the conceptual shift whereby the negative connotations of diaspora such as forced dispersal from the homeland, discrimination in the host country and longing for return are replaced by more positive characteristics such as

mobility and flexible identities (p.6). He defines diaspora as “functional spaces, characterized by the movement of people, capital, goods and information between homeland and host land or among the places where a diasporic population has settled” (p. 8).

Another perspective on diaspora is the idea of “flexible citizenship” proposed by anthropologist Aihwa Ong (1999) to refer to “the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions (p. 6) and “the strategies and effects of mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals seeking to both circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investments, work, and family relocation” (p. 112). Ong describes several examples of the Chinese diaspora who celebrate flexibility and mobility: the multiple passport holders, the “astronaut wife” who is left in the US or Canada to take care of the kids and the “parachute kids” who are dropped off in another country by parents on business trips (p. 19). A similar view is “instrumental citizenship” proposed by Ip, Inglis and Wu (1997), i.e. citizenship acquired for practical business and instrumental purposes, which may or may not link to loyalty to a country.

For Chinese who are staying overseas, an identity characterized by diasporic consciousness refers to identification with either the cultural concept, “a feeling of connectedness with sense of being the bearers of a cultural heritage handed down from their ancestors, of being essentially separate from non-Chinese” (Wu, quoted in Ang, 2001, p. 48) or the political concept of being citizens of People’s Republic of China and experiences of discrimination in the host country.

3.4 Migration and Chineseness

For a vast country with huge population and long history like China, the concept of Chineseness is inevitably complicated by its history, geography, ethnic minorities, overseas/diasporic Chinese communities and the interactions among these factors, therefore it is impossible and oversimplifying to come to terms with a clear-cut delineation of what Chineseness means. Scholars across various disciplines, Philosophy, Cultural Studies, East Asian Studies, are intrigued by the fluidity of the term “Chineseness”. Much of their efforts, according to Tu Weiming, is to “explore the fluidity of Chineseness as a layered and contested discourse, to open new possibilities and avenues of inquiry, and to challenge the claims of political leadership (in Beijing, Taipei, Hong Kong or Singapore) to be the ultimate authority in a matter as significant as Chineseness” (1994, p. viii).

From the perspective of “China as a geopolitical concept and Chinese culture as a lived reality (Tu, 1994, p. 1)”, Tu proposes a triad notion of “cultural China” that consists of three “symbolic universes”: the first universe being mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore; the second universe being Chinese communities throughout the world, in other words, the Chinese diaspora; and the third being the intellectual community who try to bring the conception of China to their own linguistic communities. He concludes that the geopolitical periphery has become the cultural center in shaping the discourse on cultural China (1994, p. 13-14). The reason to group Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore together with mainland China, according to Tu (p. 16), is they collectively constitute a psychological, economic and political nexus. Ien Ang (2001, p. 42-43) maintains that Tu’s discourse is important in challenging the “traditional, centrist and essentialist conceptions of Chinese culture and identity”, but she also suggests that Tu’s idea is driven by a desire to maintain Chineseness as a marker of common

culture and identity. Tu Weiming (1994) points to the fact historically, Chinese culture is dynamic and ever changing and the idea of a “Chinese consciousness” or “core area” is “instrumental in forming a distinctive Chinese identity” and it signifies “a unique form of life profoundly different from other styles of living often condemned as barbarians” (p. 3).

Anthropologist Myron Cohen (1994, P. 89) asserts that in pre-modern China, Chineseness is based on a unified common culture--sustained by a national exam system that requires the mastery of a standard curriculum and participation of standardized rituals--in the sense of shared behaviors and beliefs (p. 89-94). Similarly, Wu contends that the anthropocentric view of being at the center of existence is based on a deep-rooted sense of belonging to a unified civilization (1994, p. 149). Chinese possess a deep and sentimental attachment to the localism—be they customs, food, or local products—of their home communities and a regional personality can be construed as a manifestation of the Chinese character; therefore, having a place of origin somewhere in China, argues Cohen, is one important dimension of being Chinese (Cohen, 1994, p. 96). In addition, Ma (2003, p. 32) claims that Chineseness means different things to Chinese in different places; for example, people have different experiences being Chinese in the cosmopolitan cities such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore and San Francisco, which points to the importance of place in shaping the cultural identity of Chineseness. In modern China, however, being Chinese is rooted in nationalism, “ in a conception of China a nation-state with interests that must be protected and advanced in competition with those of other nation-states (p. 101)”.

The limits of polysemy of Chineseness, however, lie in the idea of diaspora, which is defined by Ang as “transnational, spatially and temporally sprawling sociocultural formations of people, creating imagined communities whose blurred and fluctuating boundaries are sustained

by real and/or symbolic ties to some original ‘homeland’” (2001, p. 25). According to Ang, the creative tension between “where you are at” and “where you are from” forms productive syncretism that “marks the emancipation of the diaspora from China as the transparent master-signified of Chineseness” to “an open signifier invested with resources potential, the raw material for the construction of syncretic identities suitable for living where you are at” (2001, p. 35). Ang contends that “the meanings of diasporic Chineseness are the result of the irreducible specificity of diverse and heterogeneous hybridizations in dispersed temporal and spatial contexts”. With regard to Chinese or Chineseness as a common reference point in this volatile postmodern world, Ang (2001, p. 36) eloquently contends:

In this context, diasporic identifications with a specific ethnicity (such as ‘Chineseness’) can best be seen as forms of ‘strategic essentialism’ (Spivak 1987:205): ‘strategic’ in the sense of using the signifier ‘Chinese’ for the purpose of contesting and disrupting hegemonic majoritarian definitions of ‘where you’re at’; ‘essentialist’ in a way which enables diasporic subjects, not to ‘return’ home, but, in the words of Stuart Hall, to ‘insist that others recognize that what they have to say comes out of particular histories and cultures and that everyone speaks from positions within the global distribution of power (1989:133). In short, if I am inescapably Chinese by *descent*, I am only sometimes Chinese by *consent*. When and how is a matter of politics.

She rejects the “convenient and comforting reduction of Chineseness as a seemingly natural and certain racial essence”; instead, she argues that “depending on context and necessity it may be politically mandatory to refuse the primordial interpellation of belonging to the largest ‘race’ of the world, the ‘family’ of the ‘Chinese’ people” (p. 50-51).

David Yen-ho Wu maintains that the single English word Chinese misses the nuanced meaning of its many Chinese counterparts, *zhongguoren*, *zhonghuaminzu*, *huaren*, *tangren*, *hanren* etc (1994, p.148). *Zhongguoren*, according to Wu, carries the connotation of modern patriotism or nationalism; *zhonghuamingzu* includes other non-Han races into the Chinese since minority groups have been assimilated into the Chinese culture because of the superior Han civilization. Wu notices that both “*zhongguoren* and *zhonghuaminzu* represent an identity based on concepts of cultural and historical fulfillment rather than the more conventional modern notions of nationality or citizenship” (p. 150). There are 55 recognized ethnic minorities in China, besides the majority Han, which collectively constitute *zhonghuaminzu*. But within the Han ethnicity, people from different areas in possess linguistic, cultural, dietary and customary differences and according to Stevan Harrel, the differences between two Han groups may be more pronounced than that between a Han and a minority group (quoted in Wu, 1994, p. 156).

Huaqiao (Chinese living overseas), *huaren* (Chinese persons), *huayi* (descendants of Chinese) are terms used for the Chinese diaspora. L. Ling-chi Wang (1994) has categorized five different types of identities associated with Chinese diaspora in the US, namely *luoyeguigen* (the sojourner mentality), *luodishengen* (accommodation), *zhancaochugen* (total assimilation), *xungenwenzu* (ethnic pride and consciousness), and *shiqunzu* (the uprooted), all of which are related to *gen* (roots), which symbolizes Chinese culture and the geographic entity of China. Although Wang’s categorization was specifically in the context of the US, it is potentially applicable to the overseas Chinese in other geographical locations. For example, Wu (1994) uses the Malay word *peranakan* to describe the hybridized identity of local born Chinese in Indonesia where they speak the indigenous language of the host country, observe some Chinese and some indigenous customs and are regarded as belong to neither group (p. 160). The

sojourner mentality mostly associates with early Chinese settlers in the US who were subject to severe discrimination and hostile treatment and were longing for returning to cultural roots in China. Opposite the sojourner mentality is the assimilation mentality, which refers to erasing and uprooting Chinese heritage and conforming to the mainstream Euro-American values. This is common among the first generation of American-born Chinese. Accommodation mentality is to settle down in the US, planting seeds in foreign land, without total abandoning the Chinese heritage, which came into being during Cold War period. Ethnic consciousness starts to emerge in the 70s when many Chinese went back to China to reconstruct their family histories. The uprooted refers to the highly educated Chinese who initially come to the US as international students and stayed since.

For Chinese graduate students who study overseas, Chineseness entails different meanings: it means *zhuanghuaminzu*, which includes the majority Han and fifty-five ethnic minorities; it means Tu Weiming's (1994) idea of Chinese consciousness, the unique philosophy and classical texts; it also means a place of origin or a regional identity that have unique traditions and culture. Just as the geographer Ma (2003, p. 32) has pointed out, place is a crucial element in shaping the cultural identity of Chineseness and given the geographical and ethnical diversity, the cultural, dietary, linguistic differences between two Han groups might be more pronounced than a Han and a minority group (Harrel, quoted in Wu, 1994, p. 156).

3.5 Coming Together

All these strands of theory, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, diaspora and Chineseness, affect the identity reconstruction of Chinese students and I am using a hybrid form of theoretical framework that includes all three strands when analyzing identities of Chinese students. An identity characterized by diasporic consciousness refers to identification with either

the cultural concept, “a feeling of connectedness with sense of being the bearers of a cultural heritage handed down from their ancestors, of being essentially separate from non-Chinese” (Wu, quoted in Ang, 2001, p. 48) or the political concept of being citizens of People’s Republic of China and the experiences of discrimination in the host country. An identity characterized by cosmopolitan consciousness denotes that one possesses multiple allegiances, interests or disposition that results in a cosmopolitan identity characterized by an openness towards differences and an decentered attachment to any particular identity. An identity characterized by transnational consciousness denotes dual or multiple identifications—“awareness of decentered attachment and of being both ‘here and there’” (Vertovec and Cohen, 1999, p. xxi). In the context of Chinese international students, if students are diasporic orientated, they feel more patriotic than they are back home and have a strong identification to being citizens of the PRC. If students are cosmopolitan orientated, they have a decentered attachment to any particular identity, so they feel neither Chinese nor Canadian. If students are transnational orientated, they feel that they are both Chinese and Canadian.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Research Paradigm

After the discussion of theoretical framework, this chapter outlines my methodology: paradigmatic stance, research design, and specific methods used for data collection. In terms of paradigm, I am a social constructivist: ontologically, I subscribe to a relativist approach to reality, i.e. there are multiple realities and realities are locally constructed; epistemologically, I believe that knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and the research participants. Qualitative research has a long and distinguished history and it is employed by multiple disciplines using different paradigms and various data collection methods, so there is no one unique set of methods or practices that is entirely to its own. The broad definition of qualitative research proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 4) states:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible.....

This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

The essence of qualitative research lies in its commitment to naturalistic and interpretive approach. Qualitative researchers are concerned with “socially constructed nature of reality” and the “situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 13).

4.2 Research Tradition: Collective Case Study

The purpose of my study is to gain in-depth understanding of the social experiences of Chinese graduate students and to analyze and interpret how their identities are affected by their experiences rather than measure or quantify variables of their experiences, thus I believe

qualitative methodology, particularly case study, is the right approach. All participants constitute a collective case study for my research and I write a vignette for each participant, followed by a cross-case analysis.

Case study, which has been used across different social science disciplines, sociology, anthropology, law and psychology, entails that the investigator explores a real-life bounded system (one case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) through multiple sources of data collection (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). There are several defining characters of case study: first, the researcher needs to identify the parameters of the cases being studied; second, the researcher uses multiple data collection methods to triangulate the information; third, in writing up the qualitative study, the researcher provides description of each case, interpretation of the findings and thematic analysis across different cases (p. 98). Based on the intent and the scale, case study can be categorized into intrinsic and instrumental study. Intrinsic study is about learning a particular case, whereas instrumental study is about learning general problems or issues behind the case. There are often multiple cases in an instrumental case study in which each case contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon—a collective case study (Stake, 1995).

The design of a case study fieldwork involves establishing the research site, identifying the parameter of the case and sampling strategy, various forms of data collection and data analysis—I will outline each step below in detail. The university's main campus is my research site, where all in-person contact are held, open but not limited to public space such as the libraries, the Student Union Building and the cafes. Three of the participants were interviewed in the Student Union Building; one was interviewed in his office and the other one was interviewed at a student lounge of her residence building. The diverse student population and a large share of Chinese international students make it an ideal site to carry out my research.

4.3 Participants

I have chosen a small number of participants, five in total, with diverse backgrounds to shed light on their social experiences and identity construction. Each participant has to meet the following criteria: first, participants need to acquire legal documents (visa and study permit) to study in Canada and self-identify as Chinese. Second, participants have to be returning students who have already spent a substantial amount of time, one year or longer and who have formed their social networks---students who have just started their programs are not eligible for my study. *Purposive sampling*, which requires selecting a small number of participants with diverse variations that best informs the research topic (Creswell, 2013, p. 158), is my recruitment strategy. Purposive sampling is both “deliberate” and “flexible” in that the researcher deliberately seeks a wide range of participants and modifies the selection criteria during data collection (Hennick, Hunter & Bailey, 2011, p. 85). I want each case to be representative of different experiences of Chinese graduate students on campus: for example, some students might have developed romantic relationship with people they have met in Vancouver; some might be married and have kids, but their family members may or may accompany them during their study; other students might have studied or worked in other countries before coming to Canada; and others might have grew up in the special zones of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau. Of course age, gender, religious affiliation if any, ethnic minority will also be considered as variations for each case. By putting up posters on campus residences designated for international graduate students, posting recruitment advertisement in online groups and talking to people that I know, I have successfully recruited five participants. For confidentiality purposes, all participants were given two character Chinese family names as their pseudonyms. Nalan, the youngest participant (age 23) and a master student in Education, comes from the water town of Suzhou. Dongfang is a

doctoral student in Material Engineering who comes from the countryside of Nanchan. Qingyang, who belongs to an ethnic minority group *hezhe*, is a doctoral student in Law. Shangguan, the oldest participant (age 38), a master student in Education, has years of experience working as a public servant in Chengdu. Ouyang, who speaks Cantonese and has lived and worked in many places in Asia, is also a master student in Education.

4.4 Methods

Case study researchers usually collect data from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts (Yin, 2009). Specifically for my study, I have used semi-structured in-depth interview as the main data collection tool, with reviewing postings on social media as a triangulating strategy. Interviews enable the researcher to get a holistic view of the experiences and perceptions from participants. The interview process took place from Dec 2015 to January 2016. After transcribing the interviews, all transcripts were sent to participants for member check with follow-up questions. For the initial interview, which took approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, I have spent sometime at the beginning establishing rapport with the participant—introducing the background of my research and gathering their personal information—and had them sign the consent forms. Then, I proceeded to the questions outlined in the interview protocol. Interviews were conducted in the language that the participants were comfortable with, but apart from Ouyang, all other participants chose to be interviewed in Chinese. The interviews were conducted in a casual manner so that participants are relaxed when sharing the personal viewpoints and stories with the researcher, who assumed the role of an attentive listener, staying in the background of the conversation.

When trying to uncover social experiences and identity construction, the online postings, especially blog postings and social media postings are extremely useful, both as a standard data-collecting method and as a triangulating strategy. Students from mainland China do not have full access to Internet unless they install VPN to bypass the security restrictions, so most people use Wechat, the Chinese version of Facebook, as the major social media platform. Coming to Canada means that the restrictions are lifted, that they have access to social media websites, and that postings on different websites entail a slightly different readership. Particularly for my project, I had their consent to be added as contact in their social media and I have examined the social media postings of each participant from the time when they first came to Vancouver till the time when they were being interviewed for triangulation.

4.5 Data Analysis

The data gathered from interviews were audio-recorded and imported into Nvivo 10 for transcription. Using computer program for sorting data enables the researcher to better organize the data, to look closely at the data and to visualize the relationship between codes and themes (Creswell, 2013, p.202). The features in Nvivo enable the researcher to transcribe and organize the data in a series of computer files, which is convenient, but for coding purposes, rather than use the software to sift through all the text, I coded the text manually to gain a better sense of the context and emerging themes. According to Creswell (2013), case study analysis starts with detailed description of the cases and their settings, then thematic analysis within each case and cross-case thematic analysis to compare and contrast and lastly, the overall assertions and generalizations (p. 209). Similarly, Stake (1995) proposes four strategies when doing analysis. Categorical aggregation refers to aggregation of a collection of instances where meaning will emerge; direct interpretation is mostly used for single case study where the researcher only

interprets one case; the third strategy is to search for patterns and consistencies within certain conditions; the last step is naturalistic generalization in which the researcher reaches conclusions through close examination of different cases. The emerging themes are social experiences and the making of transnational social space, future plans, lack of identification with hyphenated identities, the meanings of being Chinese, stereotypes and discrimination associated with being Chinese, hybridized identity and multiple identities.

Chapter 5: Vignettes of Participants

I will present my findings in this chapter, first an individual vignette for each participant and then a cross-case thematic analysis. For confidentiality purposes, all participants were given two character Chinese family names as their pseudonym. Except for Ouyang, all other participants come from mainland China. Nalan, Dongfang and Qingyang came to graduate school right after their undergraduate studies; Shangguan and Ouyang had years of work experience before starting graduate school.

5.1 A Transnational or a Cosmopolite: The Story of Ouyang

Ouyang is a master's student in Education. He was born in Hong Kong and he has moved to Vancouver in 2014 with his fiancé, who was also doing her master at the same university. Both of them have families in Vancouver, which is one of the reasons why they choose to come to Canada. Ouyang was born into a Catholic family and was baptized as a baby, but when he was old enough to make a decision, he chose not to be religious. Ouyang has worked in international student recruitment at a Hong Kong university for over seven years before going to graduate school: "There were changes at the office and people were leaving, so I thought it's a good time for a change." He does not have a clear plan after graduation: "I am not sure about staying in Vancouver, but we would definitely consider remaining in Canada. I had plans to work in Japan, but it depends on whether I do my PhD or get a job here in the future".

Ouyang is a frequent traveler because of his family upbringing and his education. His family was relocated to Singapore when he was a child and he has spent 16 years in Singapore for his entire secondary schooling before going back to Hong Kong for his undergrad in Chemistry and Business Administration. He spent the first year and half in Hong Kong and then he went for a year-long exchange program in Australia:

I decided to go on exchange because I wasn't really happy with life in Hong Kong then. I found it difficult to adjust to the social environment due to my status as a "returnee" — people found it difficult to relate to. I didn't know what to expect for my exchange, or even know what it's about at first. I had 10 choices, and ended up applying to 10 different countries, so Australia was just an accidental choice. I didn't mind going anywhere, to be honest.

Not long after coming back from Australia, he went on a summer exchange to Japan:

This was even more accidental than my exchange to Australia. Kyushu University came to my campus for an information session, but no one came, so the staff at the international office asked me to "fill in" since I was always hanging out there. I thought it's an interesting opportunity over the summer, so I just applied. The program itself was 3 months long, and my experiences there really endeared me to the country, particularly to my host family.

After moving to Vancouver, Ouyang's social network revolved around people somewhat related to academia. Family friends were his social contacts when he just arrived in Vancouver, but as he was more involved in his program, he got to know more people from classes and from attending workshops and conferences. Another group friends were his old colleagues who were from Vancouver. Ouyang liked hiking and spending time with family and friends in his spare time. In terms of new hobbies, Ouyang said jokingly, "Does reading count? It is new to me, because I was never in social science or humanities, so I was not used to so much reading." Besides his study, he was volunteering for two NGOs, a refugee agency and Immigration Services Society of BC:

I mostly volunteer on an ad-hoc basis...probably four or five hours a month. I do enjoy the experience even though it's mostly office and administrative work. I decided to volunteer at these agencies in order to acknowledge my own privilege in migrating to different places under very different circumstances.

Last summer, Ouyang and his fiancé travelled around North America, California, Boston, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec, for conferences and for pleasure. Ouyang remarked, "Last summer was unexpected, but great. From an academic point of view, I enjoy the experience of going to conferences and I think it is very useful for a graduate student. Part of that is I miss traveling around so much..." Overall, Ouyang is content with social life in Vancouver:

I am happy now; in fact I am much happier here than when I was in Hong Kong because there is more human interaction. Hong Kong is a very consumerist and materialistic kind of place. As a matter of fact, most of the time we spend socializing are in the mall, shopping. There is less time for us to interact, socially, person to person.

His most memorable experience is settling down after moving out of his uncle's place: "It is a matter of getting out of our comfort zone. We used money to solve problems back in Hong Kong. Here both of us are jobless, so we have to save money. We fixed a lot of things ourselves. We had to settle down in the apartment ourselves---that was memorable and very fruitful, I would say".

Ouyang uses social media, mostly Whatsapp and Facetime, to communicate with his parents back in Hong Kong, but he does not talk to them too often, only once every a few weeks, since his parents are used to him being away. However, Ouyang does not find social media useful in terms of enhancing social experiences. He admits that he uses less social media since he

comes to Vancouver: “Here, it is definitely more in-person communication. Social media for me is just helping that process. I would say I could do without social media.”

Because of his experience of migrating to various places for schooling, for work and for pleasure, Ouyang sees identity as fluid, ever-changing: “I don’t believe we should be talking about identity in the singular form. Each of us has different identities, some of which might be contradictory. It is not static, so it keeps changing over time.” In addition, he sees identity as a two-way operation: “For my experiences, there are two parts to this. For one, I can decide what my identities are, but at the same time, identities are sometimes ascribed to us and we assume particular identities, consciously or subconsciously, strategic or otherwise.” Ouyang associates his identity and belonging to the specific places that he inhabits, to the languages that he speaks and to the people he that befriends with:

I try to define my identity by who I meet, moment by moment. I go to different parts of the world and our identities grow. Each time we go to a different place, we develop a connection and a relationship with the land and the peoples around us, which enriches who we are. I feel that how we relate to the land or how we relate to the peoples on this land really play a part in who we are and who we become..... I move between different worlds depending on what kind of language I am speaking and since I grew up in a Cantonese-speaking environment, I identify myself as a Cantonese speaker, but that does not link to being Chinese, so to speak. Apart from speaking Cantonese, I also move between different English-speaking worlds as well, Singaporean English, Hong Kong English, English in here. I think I identify myself more with moving between these worlds, rather than identify myself being part of one specific world.....

He has multiple identities that he simultaneously identifies with, but he assumes and negotiates particular identity depending on the environment that he is in:

For myself, I consider myself to be Chinese and not Chinese at the same time, inhabiting that space in between. There is that Hong Kong identity as well, that I relate to. As much as I am a HongKonger, I am also a Singaporean. In Singapore, I get to be identified as a Chinese-Singaporean..... It is hyphenated. And of course, you throw a bit of Australia, a bit of Japan, a bit of other places, so I don't really know. It is a mix of everything. It is a mumbo-jumbo, everything coming together at the same time.

Taken into consideration of his citizenship, the issue of identity becomes even more complicated: Ouyang possesses both a British passport and a Hong Kong passport. Before returning Hong Kong to the Chinese mainland, the British government granted full citizenship to a small number (50000) of elite HongKongers and their families (Ong, 1999, p. 122). In this sense, Ouyang is certainly a member of the privileged and cosmopolitan class who can enjoy travel convenience, among other benefits, brought by his citizenship, which he may not pledge allegiance to: "By virtue of my passport, I might be considered British, but I am not British in that sense and I am not Chinese in that sense."

While he identifies himself to be ethnically Chinese, he does feel there are certain stereotypes or "baggage", in Ouyang's words, associated with being Chinese, which he is uncomfortable with:

Coming to Canada, I feel in addition to being ethnic Chinese, I realize I am also Asian. This is because of the context in here—I have never felt so Asian in my life. It is something I feel being ascribed onto me. In here, I get to be identified as

Asian. I was born into the part of the world that is called Asia, so if you think the notion of Asian relates to that, then I am Asian. But here if people say Asian, a lot of things get thrown into it. If I say I am Chinese, a lot of that gets thrown into it as well. I feel Asian in the sense that other people think I am Asian, will I use that label to identify myself? Probably not. I say it is something that is unavoidable in this sense.... For me, there are many ways of being Asian and there are many ways of being Chinese as well.

The various cultural traditions that he partakes, Chinese, Japanese, Singaporean, are all important to Ouyang in the sense that he sees tradition as a form of resistance against the prevalent materialistic culture. He values the tradition of celebrating Chinese New Year, but he embraces values in other cultural traditions without privileging any particular one:

I grew up with the tradition of Lunar New Year and this is important to me, but I also find traditions from other cultures are important. I was truly privileged to have the experience to know and to be respectful of other traditions and cultures—this taps into my background and upbringing and I do recognize that.

The most important values to Ouyang are respectfulness and diversity: “My foremost value that I identify with is to be respectful.... I used to respect sameness but since I move to Vancouver, I feel we should respect difference instead of sameness.” He sees being Chinese as a point of departure, from which he can let go of merely tracing roots and acknowledging where the ancestors are from: “It is something to be acknowledged, not something to hold us back in terms of who we think we are and how we construct our relationship to the world”. Ouyang stresses the importance of multiplicity of Chineseness in various responses to my questions:

“There are different ways of being Chinese and it is important to give people the liberty to define who they are.”

5.2 A Young and Venturous Spirit from the Water Town: The Story of Nalan

Nalan is also a master’s student in Education. She is from Suzhou, a city located south of the Yangtze River, known for its distinctive Wu culture, classical gardens, traditional art and cuisine. Forty-two percent of the city is covered by water, including the famous fresh water lake *Taihu*, the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal that runs through the city and various ponds and streams, so the city is also praised as the “Venice of the Orient”. The proverb that describes the unearthly beauty of the city “Paradise in heaven; Suzhou and Hangzhou on earth” is household words in China. The classical gardens, now UNESCO World Heritage sites, were once private gardens owned by Ming scholars who were inspired by the Taoist philosophy to shun from the worldly affairs and return to nature to cultivate temperament. The structure and the layout of these gardens, the pagodas, the rocks, the stream, the yard, were all built with this underlying theme for people to immerse in nature.

Nalan is the youngest of all the participants and she comes to graduate school directly after her undergraduate in Business Administration in Suzhou. She is the only child in her family and her parents live back in Suzhou. She is quite candid about her motivation to pursue graduate study in Canada: “I want to immigrate to Canada and I am not ready to work full-time yet.... My parents are very supportive of my decision to come to Canada for the masters. The master degree also comes as an advantage in the job market, both here and back in China.”

Nalan is an outgoing girl, always with a big smile on her face, speaking in a cheerful tone. With a clear goal to expand her social network, Nalan is interested in socializing with different groups of people, Chinese students, other international students she meets in classes, friends

through other friends' network. She likes to hangout with her classmates at potluck dinners where they drink and chat about their future. Even when she is out for errands, such as grocery shopping, she will try to talk to people and make new friends. She only knew a friend of her mom's, whom she calls Aunty, before she arrived and she maintained regular contact with her and became friends with her family. Last year was the first year that Nalan was away from family for the New Year, so spending the holiday season with her aunty helped her to fight homesickness.

An interesting development since she came to Canada is that she was in a relationship with a friendly Canadian, whom she met at a party through her friend's network. He is an environmental engineer currently working in Vancouver. When speaking about her boyfriend, Nalan had a sweet glow on her face, saying that the most memorable experience was with him because "he welcomes me into his world". However, Nalan admits that this is not a serious relationship and it will not affect her future plan in terms of where she prefers to settle down. Because of her boyfriend, she has developed several new hobbies, paddle boarding, mountain biking, playing ukulele, swimming and hiking: "I want to develop myself in a more well-rounded way. I want to learn how to swim and how to play a musical instrument."

Nalan has done three part-time jobs so far. The first one is a cashier job for a grocery store: "It was a very tiring job, lots of chores." The second job is a receptionist for a spa in downtown, which is referred to Nalan by a friend. It is not interesting, but it helps her practice her English, so Nalan has stayed there for a while. The third job is a facilitator for an English language school, which Nalan regards as the "the most beneficial work experience so far" and "a valuable experience to put on the resume". Her duties include teaching kids English and taking them to fieldtrips.

Amidst her busy life in Vancouver, Nalan texts her parents once a week on Wechat and video chats with them every two weeks. She talks to her friends less frequently, every two to three months, where they chat about their whereabouts, the process they have made and their future. Nalan is a frequent user of major social media platforms, about thirty minutes everyday. She uses her social media strategically as sources of information. She uses Wechat to communicate with family and friends and to keep up with pop culture trends in China. For example, she likes the posts on Ms. Peng Liyuan's style and she watches the popular TV show *Nirvana in Fire* starring Hu Ge, a Chinese actor. She uses Facebook to communicate with friends who only speak English and she uses Instagram to follow fashion bloggers. Nalan finds social media helpful in terms of enhancing social experiences: "Most local people use Facebook, and sometimes if you are not close enough to ask for their number, you can always add them on Facebook. For example, I know some Japanese girls and we communicate regularly on Facebook." While she enjoys the ease of communication brought by social media, she finds it less helpful for forming friendship: "Well, I don't really like Facebook. People broadcast everything and there is quite a bit of junk information. I mostly use it as a tool for communication, both Facebook and Wechat.... I am much more comfortable with face to face communication."

Nalan identifies herself as Chinese, Chinese more in the cultural sense than in the geographical or the political sense. Particularly, She identifies herself as Chinese from the south, which she is proud of, but she also acknowledges the diversity within China: "Due to historical reasons, people from Hong Kong, Taiwan or Macau may not identify themselves as Chinese---I understand and respect that. Everyone is different." She is open to the possibility of becoming Chinese-Canadian, provided that China allows dual citizenship.

For her, being Chinese means belonging to a distinctive culture with five thousand years of history and unique philosophical traditions, but more specifically she has a deeper identification to her hometown Suzhou, to its local culture, dialect and food:

I am from Suzhou, a city with three thousand years history. Sometimes I will talk to my friends here about my hometown, the food and interesting places to visit....

Chinese language is important to me---this is something that I will never forgo.

Dialect is important to me as well. If I video chat with my grandma, I will talk to her in Suzhou dialect. Here I do not have people to speak Suzhou dialect with.

Nalan goes on to talk about the importance of specific holidays and dietary traditions in the local Suzhou culture:

Suzhou has its own local culture, which is important to me. Worship of ancestors at Qingming¹ is a big deal in Suzhou. Winter Solstice is a time for family reunion and back home we say “Winter Solstice is as important as the Spring Festival”. We usually drink *dongniang* wine and eat *tangyuan*². In Mid-Autumn day and Dragon Boat Festival, we eat meat *zongzi*³ and meat *moon cake*---it is eating meat *zongzi* and meat moon cake that makes it festive and special... Suzhou has the largest freshwater lake, *Taihu*, and our diet is centered on water produce. The most well known is *shuibaxian*⁴, lotus root, lotus seed, water chestnut, Chinese water chestnut, gorgon, water bamboo, water cress, and arrow head. People who live by *Taihu* always eat

¹ Qingming is a traditional Chinese festival where people honor their ancestors by visiting their tombs. It is usually in the first week of April.

² *tangyuan* is a Chinese food made with glutinous rice flour with various fillings inside, like red bean paste.

³ *zongzi* is a traditional food eaten during Dragon Boat Festival. It is made of glutinous rice and different fillings.

⁴ *Shuibaxian* is eight different kinds of fresh water produce.

shuibaxian, drink *Taihu* water and eat fresh water fish from *Taihu*. We seldom eat seafood because of pollution and we don't use underground water like people from other cities do. In a sense, we have a peculiar attachment to water and to *Taihu*.

While Nalan has strong identification of being Chinese, she also possesses a cosmopolitan outlook brought by her experiences in Canada: "I see myself as a world citizen. I am interested in other cultures besides my own, such as the Japanese culture and the indigenous culture. I am learning Spanish, Japanese and French at the moment. I am not religious, but I am curious about religion and its different branches."

When Nalan first comes to Vancouver, she is not used to the food here: "People eat large shrimps in Vancouver, but back home, we only eat delicate small ones. They taste much better, tender and juicy." As energetic and outgoing as Nalan, she initially feels estranged because local people socialize in a distant and detached manner. After studying and working in Vancouver for a year, Nalan is more used to the environment and has a better sense of belonging. She has made new friends with her Chinese classmates, who treat her like a younger sister, she has her mom's friend and family to spend Chinese New Year with and she has got a boyfriend who cares about her, all of which contribute to her sense of belonging. Nalan comments, "While there are still stereotypes or discrimination against us, overall Canada is a welcoming country that provides services and opportunities for people to blend in, which partially contributes to my sense of belonging."

Nalan's worldviews and values have changed after staying in Vancouver for one year. She becomes more mature, more organized and more realistic:

The most important change is that I become less anxious about being successful. My friends who are working at the moment are more ambitious than I am. When I was in

my undergrad, I thought I would become a big name person with huge career success. Now I still have this ambition, but I can also see the difficulties and problems that I might face and I am less anxious about how soon I can achieve my goals.... I set short-term realistic goals for myself that I strive to achieve. I am more down to earth, slowing down my pace, which sometimes is progress on a different level. If I were to do this master in China, I probably would not be as independent as I am now. Living by myself gives me the opportunity to focus on what I am doing, to figure out directions and to learn to take care of myself.

Nalan's immediate plan after graduation is to work in Canada and immigrate: "My plan is to work here for a while and immigrate, but I will not apply for Canadian Citizenship. I do not want to give up Chinese Citizenship, but if in the future China allows dual citizenship, I will consider to become Canadian.....It is my plan now, but it might change in the future".

5.3 An Aspiring *hezhe*⁵ Student Leader: The Story of Qingyang

Qingyang is a second year PhD student in Law. She has finished two master degrees in Law before coming to Canada. The reputation of the university and a close family member who is an alumni are the major motivations for her to come to Vancouver; the favorable immigration policy towards international students is another reason. At the moment, her plan is to go back to China afterwards and contribute to social justice in the Chinese society.

Qingyang was born in Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang Province, to a family of four. Her older sister and her family live in Beijing and her boyfriend is doing his postdoc at

⁵ Hezhe is one of the most endangered ethnic minorities in China, known for their fisherman lifestyle.

York. She belongs to the second most endangered ethnic minority group *hezhe*, the total number of which is just over 5000 and most of whom live in the plateau area harbored by Heilongjiang, Wusulijiang and Songhuajiang. *Hezhe* people only have oral language and apart from a few elderly who are fluent in the language, most young people can only speak Mandarin. *Hezhe* people used to live fisherman life along the rivers, but nowadays most people have adopted the urban lifestyle, so fisherman skills and the craftsmanship of the well-known fish skin cloth are only practiced by a handful of people.

Qingyang did not know anybody prior to coming to Vancouver, so all her friends were people she got to know after she arrived. She has lived in the residential college on campus since arrival, where she has formed her own social circle: “There are over 130 students living in St. John’s and we are at similar age, so we have a lot in common. I am grateful to be part of this community. Have I not lived in St. Johns, I probably would not have made it through during some difficult time.” She enjoys the various events organized by the St. John’s community, fieldtrips, sport events and social gatherings. Her best friend is a doctoral student from Singapore who has always been active in charity work both back home and in Canada.

While making progress in her study, Qingyang also actively engages in student leadership at GSS (Graduate Student Society). The most memorable and challenging experience in her social life is participating in student politics: “I participated in student politics, which I had no experience back in China. This is an opportunity that I do not want to miss. I get know the Canadian society better through this job and I can develop various skills within a short period of time.” For her position, Qingyang needs to attend the CASA (Canadian Alliance of Students Association) conferences four times a year to discuss student policies. It is stressful and as an international student, Qingyang feels like an outsider:

All attendees were Canadians and I was the only Chinese there---I felt like an outsider. They focused on specific issues in Canada, and it was hard for me to chime in. I felt inadequate in terms of language ability and interpersonal skills. To be honest, I have been in this position for more than six months now, and I still felt this way.

Qingyang is very independent and she communicates with her parents through Wechat only when she feels down. Usually she only messages people when something significant happens in their lives, such as getting married or having a baby. She uses Wechat for information and Facebook for local popular culture. While Qingyang finds social media convenient in terms of getting information, she thinks social media is not conducive to real friendship: “Even you have tons of Facebook friends, they may not be close to you in real life.” Unlike Nalan who seeks to expand her social network, Qingyang tries to condense her network: “When I was younger, I was more interested in meeting new people and making new friends, but now I feel that you can only befriend with people of your caliber, so you have to work hard and be good at what you do. This year I am trying to condense my social network, probably because I am getting old.”

Born in Harbin, Qingyang grew up in the city, so her knowledge of the *hezhe* culture and tradition were through listening to family stories, visiting museums rather than her own experiences. Qingyang acknowledges that being an ethnic minority in China comes with different advantages: “There are lots of favorable policies towards ethnic minorities in China. For my own experience, I got bonus points for different levels of entrance exams, junior high, senior high and college. There is no discrimination associated with being an ethnic minority; on the contrary, I think it is an advantage. I am proud to be a *hezhe*.”

Although Qingyang identifies herself as a *hezhe* person, as an international student in Canada, her *hezhe* identity is obscured by her Chinese identity:

Back in China if you belong to an ethnic minority group, you might have a different sense of belonging, but when you are an international student in a different country, this does not matter any more. In the eyes of the Canadians, all international students are minorities. It does not really matter what ethnic group you belong to back home; I identify myself as Chinese here.

Qingyang has a heightened identification of being Chinese when she is in Canada and she identifies with being Chinese both in the cultural sense and in the political sense. There are stereotypes associated with Chinese international students and Qingyang wants to reverse these stereotypes by being an exemplary Chinese:

I was reading some negative news on China the other day and realized why people say they are more patriotic when abroad---I do feel that I am more identified of being Chinese. There are misunderstandings towards us sometimes, and I hope I can alter these perceptions either through my research or by my words and deeds. The impression of China comes from the impression of Chinese people, so as Chinese students abroad, we need to be aware that what we do may affect the Chinese image and we need to set good examples.

Being Chinese means subscribing to a particular way of thinking, i.e. the idea of family reunion, especially on Mid-Autumn Day and during Chinese New Year. She categorizes China, Korea and Japan into the eastern cultural circle, which she thinks is significantly different from the western circle:

Eastern culture is more reserved, moderate, tolerant, and *zhongyong*⁶, whereas western culture is more direct, inspirational and creative... Our attitude towards relationship is very different from western point of view. We always think about family and responsibility first when we make decisions. Eastern people, particularly Chinese, value these greatly. We value collectivity, whereas westerners value individuality.”

She does not have a particular sense of belonging to the city or to Canada; she has more sense of belonging to the St. John’s community, i.e. to being part of the academic community: “I have a sense of home in the St. John’s community, but I have lived here long enough to notice that this home is pretty mobile too. People come and go. The external things are always changing, so I put more emphasis on internal things, such as finding my position within academia, which gives me a stronger sense of belonging.”

So far Qingyang’s plan is to advance her career back in China. Her best friend from St. John’s has influenced her a great deal on her future plans: “He is Singaporean, and for him going back to Singapore after his doctorate is natural. He wants to contribute to society and help people there, so it has influenced my ideas.” Besides, her boyfriend is expected to teach at Beihang University after his postdoc, which has affected her decision to some extent. She has always been interested in social justice issues and wants to contribute to the Chinese society using her expertise, which is another reason for her plan to return.

However, she also says that she might change her mind about immigration. One of her friends has finished his doctorate in Canada and eventually chose to settle down in Vancouver

⁶ Zhongyong is a doctrine in the *Analects* by Confucius, representing moderation, rectitude, objectivity, sincerity, honesty and propriety.

because for him a job that allows more time with family is more important than a well paid job that demands long working hours: “My life in Canada is stable and if you are trying to achieve something back in China, you need support from a lot of people, which is not easy. Why should I give up what I have for something so uncertain?” Her sister’s husband is a visiting scholar at UBC at the moment and they have brought the family to Vancouver. Both her aunt and her niece love Canada and looking at them, Qingyang is leaning towards immigration: “It is an option for my parents if they want to live in Canada, which is safer and has better social welfare. This is one of the changes that have happened to me. Before I have never considered immigration, but now I am considering it. An option is better than no option.”

5.4 A Loving and a Daring Mom: The Story of Shangguan

Shangguan graduated in 2015 with a degree of Master in Education. She is originally from Chengdu, a south-western city in China known for its leisurely lifestyle and spicy cuisine, where her family, her parents and her older sister live. Before coming to Canada, She has worked as a public servant in the local government in Chengdu for nine years, after finishing her first MA in Comparative Literature. Upon graduation, Shangguan went back home to get her nine-year-old daughter to live with her in Vancouver. At the moment, her daughter is going to elementary school and Shangguan is freelancing till she finds full-time employment.

Shangguan’s life in Chengdu seems comfortable and carefree, so I cannot wait to ask her what motivates her to pursue graduate studies in Canada. She smiled:

This may sound absurd... In the eyes of many people, being a public servant is a desirable job for a female, stable and not too stressful. For my job particularly, I get to interact with people from different walks of life and various cultural backgrounds.

The flip side of this is that being a public servant is kind of boring. It is repetitive after doing it for a long time. I was bored by my old job and wanted a change. This has something to do with my personality---not everyone is like this. I like being in school, I have always done well in school and my family is supportive of my decision.

Shangguan is an introvert who prefers her own company, so her social network consists of mainly Chinese students from classes: “You go to classes together and there is group work and sometimes you hang out after classes. Even after I graduate, my social network is still around people that I met in class. Now that my daughter is going to school here, I also mingle with her teachers, parents of her classmates.”

Shangguan has a few close friends back home that she communicates frequently via Wechat or QQ. She drops a line whenever she has a minute and they chat about what is new in their lives and whereabouts of their mutual friends. With her family and parents, she talks to them twice or three times per week, mostly through video chat, but occasionally she telephones them. She appreciates the ease of communication brought by new technology: “Thanks to technology, it is now much more convenient to communicate online. It makes life easier for my parents because they don’t feel that I am that far away and they can still be part of my life.”

While Shangguan enjoys the convenience of technology to stay connected with friends and family, she questions the role of social media in forming true friendship and in providing useful information:

The down side is that there is an overflow of information on social media that you need to sift through and much of the information is shallow and fragmented, which prevents you from engaging deep thinking. I appreciate the convenience of

technology that enables me to communicate with families and friends whenever I want, but there was a time when people can only communicate by hand written letters and you cherish those letters because you have to wait for them. Now that information is readily available, it seems cheap and shallow. People may spend two or three hours each day skimming posts on social media platforms, but it is not the same as reading an actual book.

During last winter break, she has embarked a month long trip to the US with two friends, from the west coast to the east coast, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago. Compared to trendy and noisy American cities, Shangguan prefers the laid-back Canadian cities: “I am a quiet person and I enjoy my own space. In Canada, if you don’t actively make contact with people, you have all your time to yourself. Personally I like it.” In terms of her social experiences in Canada, she has experienced both racial discrimination and goodwill. The discriminatory experience happened one day when she was on the bus to university: “ I was trying to get off and there was an Asian-looking couple ahead of me who were also trying to get off. A white guy was trying to get on the bus, yelling, “There is Chinese everywhere, all Chinese...” But there are local people who are welcoming and friendly to her: “One parent from my daughter’s classmate has taken a great interest in my daughter and she has invited us a couple of times to visit her family. I turned it down politely at the beginning, but she insisted, so we went to visit them in her home. We had dinner at her house and we chatted---it was lovely. ”

Shangguan possesses a more tolerant view towards people from different cultural backgrounds: “I recognize there are differences in terms of values, cultures and lifestyles, but more importantly, I recognize what we share in common as human being.” She also becomes less

critical of the problems existed in China: “I used to work for the government, ‘within the system’ so to speak, and I was unhappy about how things work sometimes, but after I came to Canada, seeing how things work in here, I was more tolerant.”

She possesses a cosmopolitan view of identity, seeing her identity as fluid and blurry, less defined by the boundary of any particular identity: “I think one of the perks of people traveling around and moving to different places is that you become more tolerant with and accepting of [different cultures and different people]. Personally I see myself less attached to any particular identity, Chinese or otherwise, and I feel that my identity is less defined by boundaries.” She vividly retold me a story that she read with her daughter. It is about a duck dressed in Christmas costume and all the other animals think she is Santa, except for one piggy, who thinks the duck is only Santa’s assistant and Santa should be a pig. “This is an example of why we should be aware of own limitations and should not be confined by them. The piggy thinks that everyone else must be a pig, just like himself. We all have limitations that we may or may not recognize, so going to different places helps us to transcend our limitations.”

For Shangguan, being Chinese foremost means subscribing to certain cultural values and traditions, for example the emphasis on education: “Most Chinese parents that I know [from my daughter’s school] are obsessed with rankings and academic achievement. I think this is one of the cultural traditions in China where education of the younger generation is considered the utmost important aspect of child rearing.” Shangguan also thinks that being familiar with the classics in Chinese philosophy is an integral part of being Chinese. Instead of spending money on English tutoring for her daughter, Shangguan spends more time with her on reciting introductory texts in the Chinese Classics: “I think some of the ideas are applicable not only to Chinese but also to people from other cultural backgrounds. It is applicable to all human being”. Shangguan

values these virtues and traditions, but she is genuinely concerned that in contemporary China where economic development and gaining material wealth become top priority, there is little room for the ancient wisdom: “We kind of discarded most of the traditions and some are even ashamed to talk about traditions.”

Shangguan has always valued spiritual growth over material wealth, more so after she came to Vancouver: “Of course material wealth is important; without it, I would not be able to come to Canada to study. But I still value spiritual growth over material wealth, more so since I came to Canada, probably due to the environment.” Her friends were shocked at her decision to quit the public servant job to come to study in Canada. Their exact words were, “She is out of her mind, but she is a bit of maverick, so she is probably better off living abroad.”

Shangguan does not have a strong sense of belonging either in Canada or back in China, and she does not feel the need to adapt into a different identity. She thinks that being an international student is disadvantageous when seeking employment since employers prefer Canadians and permanent residents. She also notices the unequal treatment of foreigners in China versus foreigners in Canada: “I feel that Chinese are more welcoming towards foreign students and workers than Canadians towards Chinese students or immigrants in terms of kindness, respect and the opportunities people get”.

At the moment, Shangguan is looking for full-time employment in Vancouver. She decides to stay in Vancouver for as long as her work permit is valid for because of her daughter’s schooling: “She is much happier in school here than back in Chengdu, although she attended a private school in Chengdu. She cannot wait to go to school to be with her classmates this term.” Shangguan does not have a clear cut idea where she will be in three years and her idea fluctuates between going back to China and immigrating to Canada: “Sometime I am more inclined to go

back and at a different time, I am more inclined to stay. Overall, I am accustomed to life in Vancouver and I will consider staying for good if there are opportunities.” In any event, social experiences or social network are not decisive factors in her decision: “Life is a process of having new friends into your life and bidding farewell to some old friends. At my age, this is normal and I see it with an open mind.”

5.5 A Promising Scientist: The Story of Dongfang

Dongfang was born in the countryside of Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi Province, located in the central area of China. Unlike most of his generation, he has an older sister who is married and is living in Nanchang at the moment. Dongfang has traveled from his hometown to the northern part of China for his undergraduate and masters before pursuing his doctorate in Vancouver. Because of his excellent academic achievement and service, he became a Communist Party member in undergraduate. The motivations to come to Canada are matching research interest with supervisor, mild weather and the English-speaking environment.

Dongfang’s social network is centered on people from the academic community. His friends mostly consist of students from his department, Chinese students he has met in various occasions, other international students and his roommates. Outside his own department, he hangs out with Chinese students that he gets to know “attending social gatherings and participating in activities organized by Chinese Scholars and Students Associations (CSSA)”. Taking courses at Academic English Support service by Continuous Studies is another way for him to make new friends. Most of his non-Chinese friends that he knows are through attending activities organized by the GSS (Graduate Student Society). Dongfang has lived in Thunderbird Residence for a while before he moved to a shared house in Dunbar. He has made friends with his roommates:

I love both places. There are five buildings in the Thunderbird Residence and each building has one advisor. The advisors always get together and organize activities for the community; for example, during Chinese, Hindi or Islamic holidays, they always organize themed activities. Christmas is coming, so there might also be events. If students have time, they always participate in these events, especially for new international students who just arrived in Vancouver. Sometimes students dine out together, which is a great way to meet people, hang out and make new friends. Now that I live off-campus, I usually hang out with my roommates. We will watch movies or play video games together.

Amidst his busy academic schedule, Dongfang manages to develop a new hobby of playing guitar. He has taken guitar lessons and has performed on stage with his friends for a small audience. Football has always been a hobby and Dongfang likes to play whenever he can form a team: “You know it is not easy to find people who want to play together. Some of my roommates come from the UK or Brazil, who are quite enthusiastic about football, so we often play together in the parks.” In addition, he devotes some of his time to volunteering. He volunteers for the GSS Orientation, where he does a presentation on different resources available to international students and life at the university. He also volunteers for the Graduate Student Association in his department to organize seminars and social gatherings. During summer break, Dongfang travels around Vancouver: “I went hiking and went to the parks and the beach. I hiked almost every well-known trail nearby, like Grouse Mountain, Mountain Seymour. Sometimes I will ask friends to join me and sometimes they will ask me to join them. Vancouver’s summer is gorgeous, so I do not think it is necessary to go to other places.”

Dongfang communicates with his parents regularly via Wechat. Most of his friends and classmates are working at the moment and he gets their updates from Wechat “moments”, but he only keeps regular contact with close friends. On one hand, Dongfang acknowledges the pivotal role of Wechat in the Chinese community in maintaining contact with old friends back home and making new friends in Vancouver: “Wechat is the most used social media among Chinese students, so if I meet some people, I always add them on Wechat—very convenient. We are not friends until we add each other on Wechat.” On the other hand, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the popular local social media platforms, help Dongfang expand his network to the non-Chinese community: “Non-Chinese students prefer these, and if they want to add you and you do not have any of these handles, it is kind of awkward. These help me make new non-Chinese friends and I am curious about their whereabouts. I mostly use Facebook for postings and Twitter for information and news”.

Overall, Dongfang claims that communication is simpler and more straightforward in Canada than in China, but he also comments that it is difficult to make close friend with people from different cultural backgrounds. His most memorable experience is the student orientation organized by the GSS in his department, which has changed his perspectives on different levels and cleared his assumptions:

When I first arrived, I was unfamiliar with the environment, not confident with my English, and not aware of how things work here. Before I came here, I thought students in foreign universities are very mature and capable. They speak fluent English and have all rounded development. That idea changed after the event, which lasted about 2 hours. I asked lots of questions, probably some naïve questions, but I

realized we shared so much in common, the problems we face, the difficulties and the future.....

Initially, Dongfang was less identified with his Chinese identity. He encountered barriers when socializing with other students and he wanted to get rid of his Chineseness:

I was more attracted to western culture, listening to pop music, watching the movies they like, reading local news, such as the presidential election For example, in a casual conversation, it is very difficult to talk about Chinese movies or Chinese songs, but the topics of Hollywood productions or Canadian pop singers are much easier for people to engage. It seems that western culture is more popular and dominant, whereas Chinese culture is only a subculture. In a sense, I want to get rid of [the Chineseness].

He told me the experience where he was judged by his phenotype, which he was uncomfortable with:

Sometimes, when you go to a restaurant or a shop, the owner will speak to you in Chinese if you look Chinese to them. To be honest, I did not like it at all. I am like how do they know I am Chinese; is it that I cannot speak English? Or if you go to the bank, the teller would ask you if you need service in Chinese and I always say that I prefer English. I was repulsed [by this kind of behavior] when I first came here.

As Dongfang is more adjusted to life in Vancouver, he is more confident and comfortable with his Chinese identity: "Later I feel my Chinese background is an advantage---you have a Chinese background besides the dominant western background." He identifies with being Chinese from a cultural prospective; particularly, he notices the pronounced regional differences in China and how regional personality is an important dimension in forming his Chinese identity:

I am from Jiangxi and I did my undergrad and masters in Shenyang, a city in north China..... The regional difference is drastic between north China and south China. People from the south are sophisticated and people from the north are forthright and if you live in a place long enough, you will notice these details. For example, if you go to a restaurant in Shenyang and you complain about the food or the service, the owner will be offended. But if the same thing happens in south China, the owner will be very polite, asking about your suggestions and switching a new dish for you..... Historically, the north and the south are different countries and even today, the northerners are not as open-minded as the southerners....I grew up in Jiangxi and as I moved to Shenyang for my higher education, I noticed more regional differences between the north and the south, but I was also more accepting of these differences.

The custom of visiting the ancestral shrine and writing family genealogy are important traditions to his sense of Chineseness: “I grew up in the countryside of Nanchang, and we had an ancestral shrine in our village. Every New Year, we all get together and celebrate and if there are male newborns, they will be added to the family genealogy. This tradition can only be kept in the countryside, and it is important to me”.

Dongfang thinks it is necessary to adapt to local culture by forming a hybridized identity: “If you plan to stay here after graduation, you do need to familiarize yourself with their culture, but it is not like Chinese culture is inferior to western culture. I will not discard my Chinese identity.” Looking into his future, Dongfang’ thoughts oscillate between going back to China and staying in Canada. Social network and the comfortable living environment only somewhat affect his future plans---it is career development that is the decisive factor:

For a while, I was pondering what my plan was after graduation, whether I should stay here or go back to China. Sometimes I was determined to go back to China, since all my friends and families are back in China. Sometimes, I wanted to stay in Canada because the social benefit is much better and life is simpler here. You can work hard and earn a better life, different from back home where your life is greatly affected by your network or how many back channels you have. I have not made up my mind yet, but it pretty much depends on where I can have better career development. I will apply for the post-graduate work permit and start looking for jobs here and in China at the same time”.

5.6 Cross-case Analysis

In the cross-case analysis, I organize each theme under a different subtitle and the major themes are social experience and transnational space, uncertain future plans, lack of identification with being Canadian, diversified meaning of being Chinese, stereotypes associated with being Chinese, hybridized and multiple identities in migration.

5.6.1 Social Experience, Social Network and Social Media: The Making of a Transnational Social Space

Similar to immigrants, Chinese graduate students inhabit “transnational social space” characterized by “sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders of multiple national-states (Faist, 2007, p. 233-34)” through transnational ties and relations. For social networks in Canada, participants with a clear immigration agenda are more likely to have extended social circles to transit from students to permanent residents, whereas participants who

have not yet decided their future plan have smaller social circles that evolve around life in university and within academia. Nevertheless, they socialize with a mixed of co-nationals, host nationals and other international students, exhibiting an “inclusive global mixing” pattern in Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013)’s term. The youngest participant Nalan is an extrovert who has a clear intention to immigrate, so she actively expands her social network and mingles with people outside university. Conversely, Qingyang, the doctoral student in Law, tries to condense her social network and only befriends with people “of her own caliber”. Shangguan, the oldest participant and an introvert, enjoys her own company and socializes with Chinese students and other parents. Except for Nalan, other participants’ social circles evolve around the university and academia: Dongfang has made friends through Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA), English corner and GSS events; Ouyang has met new people at various conferences; Shangguan has maintained friendship with Chinese students after graduation and Qingyang engages in student leader roles. Both Dongfang and Qingyang claim that residential community becomes the focal point in their social network. Dongfang has made new friends in the Thunderbird Residence; Qingyang’s best friend lives at St. John’s College, whose devotion and dedication have influenced her.

According to Vertovec and Cohen (2002, p.7), “cosmopolitan tourism” refers to consumption of foreign places to search for varied experiences and understanding of differences between societies”. During school breaks, participants usually travel for pleasure, the most popular destinations being cities in the US. In this sense, participants actively engage in consumption of foreign places and cultures. Besides Shangguan, other participants devote time for activities outside academic circle, in the form of part-time job, voluntary work on and off

campus or student leadership. Some have developed new hobbies, such as outdoor sports and playing musical instrument.

Participants' social experiences in Canada are characterized by both discrimination/alienation and goodwill/hospitality. Shangguan vividly retells the incident of racial discrimination when getting off a bus, but she also comments on the hospitality of a parent from her daughter's school. Qingyang feels like an outsider when attending CASA (Canadian Alliance of Student Association) conferences as the only Chinese. In general, participants are content with their social life in Canada as they find life simple, less materialistic and comfortable. Dongfang and Ouyang both feel more at ease in Vancouver because of the simplistic lifestyle and straightforward social etiquettes. Both Nalan and Dongfang comment on the friendliness of Canadians, but they also suggest that while it is easy to meet people, it is much more difficult to form lasting friendship.

Simultaneity and transnational ties are defining characteristics of transnationalism (Chan, 2002; Faist, 1999). While establishing social networks and gaining social experiences in Canada, participants also maintain strong transnational ties with families and friends back home. With the advent of advanced communication technology, social media has played a pivotal role in forming transnational social field. Students from mainland China all choose Wechat to communicate with people back home. Most participants talk to families quite often, once per week or every two weeks, except for Qingyang who only communicates with her parents when she is upset; however, they communicate less often with friends, only texting or messaging. Ouyang, the only student from Hong Kong, uses Whatsapp and Facetime to communicate with people back home.

Because of internet surveillance, participants from mainland China cannot access western social media, but they have all signed up for social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and

Instagram, in addition to popular Chinese social media such as Wechat and QQ, after coming to Canada. They strategize the use of social media for different purposes: Nalan uses Facebook for communication with local friends and Instagram for fashion bloggers; Dongfang uses Facebook for postings and twitter for information; and Qingyang prefers Wechat for information and Facebook for popular culture. While all participants acknowledge the convenience of communication and abundance of information brought by social media, most people contend that social media is not conducive to forming friendship, that it inhibits deep thinking and that it overflows with quick and shallow information.

5.6.2 Future Plans: The Age of Uncertainty

Participants' future plans after graduation are characterized by uncertainty, except for Nalan who has decided to stay in Canada early on. Dongfang, Shangguan, Ouyang are indecisive about where they will be and what they will be doing and their decisions are mainly affected by career development opportunities. Ouyang hopes to work in higher education sector in Japan, but he also considers doing a PhD in Canada. Shangguan's plans oscillate from returning to China and staying in Canada, but her daughter's education prospect is a major concern regarding return or stay. Qingyang has a tentative plan to return to China and her return plan is influenced by her best friend's dedication to contribute to his home country and her boyfriend's career prospect back in Beijing. Although Dongfang is a member of the Communist Party, political affiliation does not seem to affect his future plan. The change of values and worldviews may affect their life trajectory afterwards, in a more subtle way. Both Dongfang and Nalan claim that they become more rational and realistic after one year in Canada; Ouyang is more respectful of differences;

Shangguan values more spirituality than materiality. Participants are equipped with positive attitudes that will make life more fulfilling wherever they are and whatever they are doing.

Participants' future plans are somewhat reflected in their motivation to pursue graduate study in Canada, as all of them have factored in immigration possibility when choosing Canada, with Nalan being the most upfront about her motivation to immigrate. The common reasons for younger participants to choose a university are matching research interests with supervisor, university reputation, and the English-speaking environment. The common reasons for older participants who have extensive work experiences are changes in work place, boredom of the old job, and prior contact (family and friends) in Vancouver. Overall, social experiences and contacts in Canada play a minimal role in participants' decision of future plans; it is economic reasons such as career prospect and personal reasons such as loved one that are the decisive factors in their future plans.

5.6.3 Chinese-Canadian: A Tenuous Identification

When Chinese graduate students leave their hometown and come to Canada, they face complicated identity construction. Particularly, participants have a tenuous identification with the hyphenated Chinese-Canadian identity. When I ask them how they see themselves, the options being (Chinese, Cantonese-speaking Chinese, overseas Chinese, Chinese-Canadian, others), participants identify themselves as Chinese, including its variations, (Nalan, Shangguan, Dongfang, Qingyang) or Cantonese-speaking Chinese with multiple identities (Ouyang), but none of them identify themselves as Chinese-Canadian. The only closer response is from Nalan, who is open to becoming Chinese-Canadian if China allows dual citizenship. A Chinese-Canadian identity denotes that people identify themselves as Canadian primarily and at the same

time acknowledge that they are ethnically Chinese. For people who are not born in Canada, becoming Canadian entails a lengthy process of fulfilling residency requirement after becoming permanent resident and entitlement to certain benefits. For international students who are steps away from these, their lack of identification with the hyphenated identity, or particularly the lack of identification with being Canadian, is a reflection of lack of attainment. Consequently, their lack of identification of being Canadian results in lack of sense of belonging in Canada. Except for Nalan, who reports to have some sense of belonging in Canada, and Ouyang, whose sense of belonging is more fluid and place-based, all other participants report no sense of belonging in Canada. Dongfang says that having a job offer in Vancouver may help him find more sense of belonging; Qingyang maintains that she is trying to locate her sense of belonging inwardly, rather than to external transient things, like people around her.

5.6.4 The Meaning of Being Chinese: A Diversified Discourse

While all participants identify themselves as Chinese, there is much nuance and caveat to what it means exactly. Cohen (1994) argues that Chinese possess a deep and sentimental attachment to the localism—be they customs, food, or local products—of their home communities and a regional personality can be construed as a manifestation of the Chinese character; therefore, having a place of origin somewhere in China is one important dimension of being Chinese (p. 96). For Nalan and Dongfang, the meaning of being Chinese is linked to specific place or locale. Coming from south China, they both stress the importance of local culture, traditions and dialects in shaping their Chinese identity. Nalan is from the water town of Suzhou, therefore the local tradition of celebrating Winter Solstice by drinking *dongniao wine* and eating *tangyuan*, the dietary habit of eating water produce, drinking water from the regional

fresh water lake *Taihu* and the Suzhou dialect are fundamental aspects in her Chinese identity. Similarly, based on his own experience, Dongfang comments on the drastic differences between the north and the south in terms of people's mindset. The countryside traditions of visiting the ancestral shrine and writing family genealogy during Chinese New Year are conducive to forming his Chinese identity.

Another dimension to Chineseness is the concept of *zhonghuaminzu*, which means that it encompasses Han and the other fifty-five ethnic minorities (Wu, 1994, p. 148). Similar to Ang's concept of "strategic essentialism", ethnic minorities can play with their identity politics. Qingyang belongs to the second most endangered ethnic group *hezhe* and her identification with being Chinese is situational. When she is an international student in a foreign country, she identifies herself as Chinese, because it is easier to find the sense of belonging and identification; when she is in China, she identifies herself as a member of the *hezhe* group because it is more politically powerful.

To be Chinese also means that people subscribe to "a particular way of thinking that values collectivity, families and responsibilities (Qingyang)", "unique philosophical traditions (Nalan)" or "classical texts (Shangguan)". Qingyang comments that eastern culture is more reserved and moderate, whereas western culture is more direct and creative. The idea of family reunion, especially on Mid-Autumn Day and during Chinese New Year, is important to Qingyang. Unlike other parents who send their children to private English classes, Shangguan has her daughter learn the introductory texts of Chinese classics in that the principles in these texts are applicable to people in contemporary time.

As Ien Ang (2001) puts it, the limits of the polesemy of Chineseness are contained in the idea of diaspora (p. 25). Ouyang embodies the diasporic subject who renounces the obsession

with center and embraces the diasporic and multiplicity of identities. Ouyang holds a British and a Hong Kong passport, and he identifies himself as Cantonese-speaking Chinese. In this sense, Ouyang belongs to the group of diaspora that possesses “flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999, p. 112)” or “instrumental citizenship (Ip, Inglis and Wu, 1997)”, which entails that people seek to both circumvent and benefit from different national-state regimes or to acquire citizenship for practical and instrumental purposes. Ouyang sees his identity as fluid and multiple: “For myself, I consider myself to be Chinese and not Chinese at the same time, inhabiting that space in between...I have a British passport, but I spent very little time in the UK. By virtue of my passport, I might be considered British, but I am not a British in that sense and I am not a Chinese in that sense.”

5.6.5 “The Prison-house of Chineseness”: Stereotypes, Discrimination and Misunderstanding

Despite diversity within the Chineseness discourse, there are always stereotypes, discrimination or misunderstandings associated with the label of being Chinese. In *Global Diaspora*, Cohen (2008, p.17) highlights some of the important characteristics of diaspora: dispersal, forced or voluntary from the homeland, a strong ethnic group consciousness, a troubled relationship with the host country, usually lack of acceptance, and an ongoing tie to the homeland. The fact that students have strong identification to being Chinese, that they experience discrimination and that they maintain contact with family and friends back home via social media make them a group of diaspora. Ouyang maintains that people can assume certain identities, but they are also being ascribed to identities. Ouyang’s sentiments highlight both the rigid

assumption of Chinese otherness by the western culture and the diasporic subjects' desire to go beyond their Chinese (or Asian for that matter) identity.

Participants experience racial discrimination based on phenotypes: Qingyang thinks that the west possesses misunderstanding and hostility towards Chinese people, so as an international student from China, she wants to reverse these perceptions by being an exemplary Chinese. Dongfang is hardened by the fact that people in the restaurant or at the bank always talk to him in Chinese because he looks Chinese.

Based on participants' stories and the literature review, one of the common assumptions is that Chinese students are bad at English. There is massive literature on the difficulties that ESL students encounter in various levels of schooling, from elementary school to graduate school, which I believe to some extent has reinforced this assumption. Of all the five participants, only Dongfang and Qingyang mention that they have language difficulties, but close examining of the transcripts suggests otherwise. Qingyang has to go through campaigns and debates to win her student leadership position and none of these could happen if her English skills were not strong enough. Her feeling of "inadequacy or being an outsider" is mainly due to cultural differences in student politics and different expectations for student leaders. Similarly, during member check, Dongfang notes that feeling inadequate in English happened when he first arrived, and he no longer feels that way one year into the program. The initial difficulty adjusting to the language and the culture should not be viewed as a permanent stigma. Another common assumption is that Chinese students form their own social groups by only socializing with co-nationals and that they are sojourners in the host country, excluded by other students. Although participants have different backgrounds and disposition, none of them feel that they have to only socialize with Chinese and that they are confined by their Chineseness. On the contrary, they form extended

social networks that consist of co-nationals, host nationals, and other international students. They express interests in mingling with people from different cultural backgrounds, learning new things and going beyond their Chineseness.

5.6.6 Identity Construction in Migration: Hybridized Identity and Multiple Identities

Diaspora, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism affect people's migratory experience and identity construction process collectively and they are not mutually exclusive. Diasporic consciousness means identifying either with the cultural concept or the political concept of being Chinese and subjecting to discrimination in the host country, which may result in a diasporic identity characterized by a heightened sense of patriotism. Cosmopolitan consciousness is a dispositional orientation or a competence that stresses an openness to/ acceptance of difference. In theory, diaspora and cosmopolitanism are inherently contradictory: diaspora suggests one possesses strong allegiance to one's home country and culture and experiences lack of acceptance in the host country, whereas cosmopolitanism suggests that one possesses multiple allegiances, identities and interests that results in a decentered attachment to any particular identity. In reality, however, participants can develop both diasporic and cosmopolitan consciousness in their identities.

Three participants (Nalan, Shangguan, Dongfang) have developed hybridized identities with both cosmopolitan and diasporic consciousness. As the youngest participant from the water town of Suzhou, on one hand, Nalan is proud to be Chinese, identifying herself as Chinese from the south. On the other hand, she sees herself as a world citizen, interested in other cultures and languages besides her own. Her Chineseness is very much situated in the distinctive Suzhou culture: the Suzhou dialect, the importance of Qingming and Winter Solstice, the special filling

zongzi and *tangyuan* during Mid-Autumn Day and Dragon Festival, the local fresh water dietary habit of eating water-born vegetables and fish from *Taihu*: all of which constitute a regional personality that can be construed as a manifestation of her Chinese character.

Shangguan, the oldest participant, finds her identity blurry and less defined by boundaries: she is less attached to any particular identity and she becomes more tolerant of difference, recognizing what people share in common despite differences. This openness towards divergent cultural experiences acquired through travel is exactly what Vertovec and Cohen (1990, p.239) suggest a cosmopolitan disposition. Nevertheless, she feels being Chinese is discriminated against and her identity as a Chinese international student is disadvantageous in job-hunting market, which links to the diasporic consciousness.

Dongfang has developed an hybridized identity with both diasporic and cosmopolitan consciousness: “I do feel I need to adapt to know more about their culture, but not discard my own identity.” Initially, he is more attracted to western culture and wants to get rid of his Chineseness, but later he is more accepting of his Chinese identity, even regarding it as an advantage. Dongfang possesses an openness to/tolerance of difference, both in the context of regional differences in China and in the context of cultural differences in Canada. He notices drastic differences between people from the north and people from the south in terms of their disposition, language and dietary habits, and he becomes more tolerant to these differences.

Qingyang, the *hezhe* student leader, is the only participant in the group that has developed a strong diasporic identity characterized by heightened ethnic consciousness, patriotism and the feeling of lack of acceptance. For her, being Chinese means identifying with both the cultural and the political concept of China. Back in China, being a *hezhe* gives her a sense of identity, but in a foreign country, Qingyang’s *hezhe* identity is obscured by her Chinese identity. She is more

comfortable with the eastern culture that is more reserved, moderate, tolerant and collective as opposed to the western culture that is direct, inspirational and creative, individualistic.

Ouyang is the only participant that has developed a transnational and cosmopolitan identity, characterized both by decentered attachment to any particular place and a respectfulness and appreciation of difference. He has lived, studied and worked in Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia in his formative years, so he recognizes the importance of place in forming his identity and identifies with moving between these places, rather than to any particular place and he rejects to be confined by his Asianess or Chineseness. Although Ouyang belongs to the Chinese diaspora, his identity is not characterized by diasporic consciousness: he sees himself as a Cantonese speaker, which sometimes implies friction and competition with the Mandarin speakers. In terms of his citizenship, Ouyang possesses both a Hong Kong passport and a British passport. In this sense, Ouyang certainly belongs to the privileged class who can enjoy travel convenience, among other benefits, brought by the flexible citizenship. Nevertheless, having the privilege does not necessarily translate to an open disposition to differences or celebration of plurality, which Ouyang embraces.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored how Chinese graduate students (re)construct identities through their social experiences at a Canadian university, particularly approaching them from the perspective of potential immigrants, taking into consideration of the fuzziness or ambivalence of the category of international students/immigrants. To answer my research question, I argue that Chinese students develop complex and hybridized identities, from diasporic-oriented, to both diasporic and cosmopolitan oriented, to extremely transnational and cosmopolitan oriented. Where exactly their identities locate in the continuum largely depends on participants' upbringing, disposition and life experiences. However, the more participants mingle with a mixed group of people, expose themselves to various cultures, the more they become transnational and cosmopolitan oriented, tolerant and appreciative of differences and less attached to clear-bounded identities.

6.1 Major Findings

In terms of their social network, participants socialize with a mixed of co-nationals, host nationals and other international students, exhibiting an “inclusive global mixing” pattern in Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013)'s term. While establishing social networks and gaining social experiences in Canada, participants maintain strong transnational ties with families and friends back home. With advent of advanced communication technology, social media has played a pivotal role in forming transnational social field in participants' daily life. In addition, they have adapted to the local preference for social media and strategize different social accounts for different purposes. Participants' intention to immigrate also affects their social networks and social experiences: participants with a clear immigration agenda are more likely to have extended

social circles to transit from students to permanent residents, whereas participants who have not yet decided their future plans have smaller social circles that evolve around life in university and within academia.

Although participants have all have factored in immigration possibility when choosing Canada, their future plans after graduation are characterized by uncertainty. Overall, social experiences and contacts in Canada play a minimal role in participants' decision of future plans; it is economic reasons such as career prospect and personal reasons such as family ties back home that are the decisive factors in their future plans.

In terms of their identity, participants have a tenuous identification of the hyphenated Chinese-Canadian identity. Consequently, their lack of identification of being Canadian results in lack of sense of belonging in Canada. While all participants identify themselves as Chinese, there is much nuance and caveat to what it means exactly: it means *zhuanghuaminzu*, which includes the majority Han and the other fifty-five ethnic minorities; it means Tu Weiming's (1994) idea of Chinese consciousness, the unique philosophy and classical texts; it means a place of origin or a regional identity that have unique traditions and cultures; it means the various dialects; it also means a diasporic group that possesses flexible citizenship or instrumental citizenship. Despite diversity within the Chineseness discourse, there are always stereotypes, discrimination or misunderstandings associated with the label of being Chinese. The common stereotypes are that Chinese students are bad at English and that Chinese students are sojourners in the host country who only socialize with co-nationals. Participants also experience racial discrimination based on phenotype.

6.2 Contributions and Implications

Diaspora, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism affect people's migratory experience and identity construction process collectively. Within each discourse, there are a variety of ideals across different disciplines, often contested and always evolving. For example, theorists have used different approaches to delineate the concept of diaspora, descriptive approach by Safran and Cohen and categorization approach by Vertovec (1999). Based on the data analysis, I notice that being a member of a diasporic group and having a diasporic-orientated identity are two different things; having one quality does not necessitate the other. People can belong to one form of diaspora and possess no diasporic consciousness. For example, Ouyang, the multiple-passport holder, does not have a heightened identification to either the cultural or the political concept of being Chinese.

In theory, diaspora and cosmopolitanism are inherently contradictory: diaspora suggests that one possesses strong allegiance to one's home country and culture and experiences lack of acceptance in the host country, whereas cosmopolitanism suggests that one possesses multiple allegiances, identities and interests that results in a decentered attachment to any particular identity. In reality, however, participants' identities can be both diasporic and cosmopolitan oriented. On one hand, they identify with being Chinese and report experiences of discrimination in Canada; on the other hand, they are "citizens of the world" and are less attached to clear-bounded identities. The extent to which and the ways in which participants are affected largely depend on their upbringing, disposition and life experiences---people who have lived in different countries and traveled extensively in their formative years are more cosmopolitan-oriented.

Migration has long been seen as a single-direction movement, where immigrants leave their home countries and settle down in the host country permanently. However, the newer trend

of return migration suggests that immigrants sometimes choose to relocate back to their home country after immigrating because they cannot find proper employment in the host country (Ho, 2010). My findings coincide with return migration in suggesting that migration has become a circular movement, as the world becomes more interconnected and people become more mobilized. Participants' decisions about immigration may change after they graduate and gain employment experience; they may go back to their home countries to work first, and decide to immigrate to Canada later.

Education has become a major driving force that propels global mobility. In the context of global mobility, nation-states have to deal with “a complex cultural diversity by a fluid and dynamic set of relationships” (Rizvi, 2009, p. 280). As there is an increasing flow of international students in Canadian universities, the space of university campus becomes more transnational and culturally hybrid. Higher education institutions and policy makers, in turn, should accommodate cultural diversity brought by the educational mobility by developing new policies and services that help students negotiate and navigate the process. The former Immigration Minister John McCallum remarked at the Canadian Bureau of International Education's Annual Conference, “If I think what groups in the world would make the best future Canadians, the group that first come to my mind is international students. Given that we definitely need immigrants, this is a premium category of people from which to draw” (Shen, 2016). Despite the fact that international students are seen as a desirable group of future immigrants, there is huge gap in terms of service provided to international students during immigration process, particularly at the university level. At the moment, the International Student Center at the university being researched is not allowed to provide consultation on immigration related topics to international students, albeit the great demand.

International student is an administrative category, only suggesting that people need to acquire legal documents to study in Canada, but it fails to address the nuances and diversity within this category. First, international students possess multiple identities and experiences-- they may be parents, teachers or professionals in their fields before going to graduate school. Therefore, they should not be viewed as single-dimensioned, only as learners/students, or consumers of the university's brand name, but as multi-dimensioned and asset of the university. Second, they belong to a heterogeneous group with diverse national, ethnical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Specifically, for the group of Chinese graduate students, their identities interact with diaspora, the complex notion of Chineseness and the prospect of potential immigrants.

6.3 Limitations and Suggestions

The scale of my research is rather small: I have only collected data from one Canadian university and I have a small number of participants. The small-scaled research can only provide an in-depth localized picture, but it will not be able to speak to the trend of international student mobility, social experiences and identity construction in larger context. For future researchers, the area of transitioning experience from international students to immigrants remains an under-research area amidst the large body of literature on international students and immigrants and there are still multiple directions to explore, for example, the experience of navigating immigration process and finding employment after graduation and return migration of landed immigrants or citizens. With regards to research design, a comparative framework or a multiple-setting design that utilizes mixed methods will enable researchers to gain width as well as depth in their research.

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Appendices

Appendix A Advertisement to Recruit Participant

Dear students,

My name is Ran Xiang, a graduate student in Department of Educational Studies at UBC and my supervisor is Dr. Handel Wright. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research on Chinese international students' social experiences. You are eligible for the study if you are a returning Chinese graduate student at UBC.

If you decide to participate this study, you will be interviewed individually twice (less than an hour each time) in January 2016. The interview will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis. With your permission, the researcher would love to be added to your social media network (Facebook and Wechat) and use some of your posts for analysis. There will not be monetary compensation for your participation and you can withdraw from the study anytime by notifying the researcher. Your contribution is highly valued for expanding our knowledge of the social experiences and identity construction of Chinese graduate students.

Participation to this study is entirely voluntary and should you be interested, please email me at
xxxxx

Regards,

Ran

Appendix B Consent Form

Project title: *Crossing Borders, Constructing Identities*

A Collective Case Study of Chinese International Graduate Students at a Canadian University

Co-Investigator: Ran Xiang

MA student, Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxx

Principal Investigator: Handel Wright

Professor, Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxx

Research Purpose: This is a master thesis project titled *Crossing Borders, Constructing Identities: A Collective Case Study of Chinese Graduate Students' Social experiences at a Canadian University*. The purpose of this research is to explore the social experiences of Chinese graduate international students and how they reconstruct identities through these experiences. The results of this study will possibly be presented at academic conferences and published in journals.

Research Procedure: The collective case study consists of in-depth interviews and document/artifacts analysis. If you decide to participate in this research, you will be interviewed individually twice (less than an hour each time) in January 2016. The interview will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis. With your permission, the researcher would like to be added to your social media (Facebook and Wechat) and use some of your posts for analysis.

Confidentiality: The information you provide will be held in confidence. The audio recording files and transcription will be stored safely in the researcher's personal computer, password protected and encrypted. The signed consent forms will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the office of the principal investigator and will be destroyed after five years. For your protection, your identity will not be revealed. You will choose or will be assigned a pseudonym. The researcher will not use video recording in any of the interview sessions, nor will she use photo images in the thesis.

Potential Risks and Benefits: There is no known risk to participants in this research. There might be some questions that are sensitive, but you do not have to answer them if you do not

want to. By participating in this study, you help us expand our knowledge of the social experiences and identity construction of Chinese graduate international students.

Right to Withdraw: Participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. Should you incline to withdraw at any point during the study, feel free to do so by notifying the researcher.

Compensation: There will not be monetary reward for participating in the research.

Contact Information: If you have any other questions regarding the research and your participation, please do not hesitate to contact me at xxxxx

Complaints: If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at xxx-xxx-xxxx or if long distance e-mail xxxxx or call toll free at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

I _____ have read and understood all the information in this form. Please indicate below whether you give consent for the researcher to access your social media accounts (Facebook and Wechat).

Yes No

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Participant Signature Date

Name (please print) Date

Appendix C Interview Protocol

Personal Information

Demographics: age, place of birth, degree, marital status, years spent at UBC, ethnicity

Background: history before you come to UBC, family background, families in Canada, religion if any, motivation to pursue a grad study (e.g. attraction to Vancouver/Canada, degree, future career/advancement)

Social Experiences

Describe your social network of friends or families in Canada. Tell me more about your new friends in here? (Who are they? How did you meet them?) New romantic relationship? Have you developed any new hobby? What do you often do for enjoyment?

How often do you talk to families and friends back home? What do you chat about?

Describe your engagement with institutions or communities outside your academic discipline, (e.g. voluntary work, cultural affiliation, religious affiliation, clubs, organization etc.) How is your social life in Canada overall? Tell me about a memorable experience (non-academic) in Canada.

What did you do over the summer break or other breaks from school or school brake? (e.g. travelled- if so where? Went back home to visit?)

How did you find social media in terms of enhancing/decreasing social experiences or friendship?

Identity/ethnicity

How do you identify yourselves as Chinese, if at all? (e.g. Hongkongnese? Cantonese-speaking Chinese? Huaqiao? Chinese-Canadian? Something else?)

What does being Chinese /other variations mean to you exactly? (Custom? Diet? Language? Tradition?) Has your sense of Chineseness changed over time? Specifically how is has been changed, if any, since you got here?)

What are some of the cultural traditions or rituals that are important to you?

How do you feel the sense of community or belonging in Canada as an overseas Chinese student?

How would you describe your worldview and values now? Is it different from what you believed back home or when you just arrived in Canada?

Canada espouses multicultural policy, a policy that values different cultural perspectives brought by immigrants. Do you feel this affects how you see yourself as an international student and particularly as Chinese/ its variations?

Have you managed to maintain your identity (cultural, religious) or do you feel you need to adapt to a different identity?

Future Plans

What is your plan after graduation? Have your plans changed? If you plan to stay in Canada, how do you see your status in Canada? If you plan to go back home, how do you see yourself fitting into the society?

How do you see your staying in Canada, particularly how your social experiences affect how you see yourself? Does this affect your future plans?