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# Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

Xi Wu

*The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor

Tarc, Paul

*The University of Western Ontario*

Graduate Program in Education

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, an increasing number of Chinese international secondary school students have come to study in Canada. Upon arriving in their international context, their school and out-of-school lives are influenced by socio-economic, political and cultural forces circulating in and connecting across the home and host spaces of China and Canada. As the overarching frame, the study employs Ong's (1999) notion of 'flexible citizenship,' examining the cultural logics mediating students' lives and how they flexibly and not-so-flexibly engage in their learning and self-making in their transnational spaces.

This research is a qualitative ethnographic field study conducted in and around a Canadian international secondary school in Ontario. It follows 11 international students from mainland China in their in-school, out-of-school and online spaces across a time period of 14 months. The study affirms that cultural logics of capitalist accumulation and/in Western modernity mediated with Chinese cultural logics in influencing my participants' academic learning, social connections and educational/career aspirations in their study abroad. Implications of the findings are addressed for educators, administrators, parents and policymakers to heed how institutional forces and dynamics of culture and power mediate international students learning and life challenges, needs and habits.

**Key words:** Chinese international students, Canadian international secondary schools, flexible citizens, transnational spaces, cultural logics, subjectivity, self-making

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

This study examines the learning and self-making of Chinese international secondary school students in a Canadian international secondary school in Southwestern Ontario. In a globalized world, students' lives are influenced by transnational cultural flows and social connections, which dynamically shape their multilayered and hybrid identities. I conducted an in-depth one-year ethnographic study which explores the everyday lives of eleven Chinese international students; I portray how they understood and fashioned themselves in transnational space(s).

In this dissertation, I have drawn on conceptual resources from interpretive and qualitative research methodology, cultural geography and socio-cultural anthropology. This thesis is comprised of eight chapters. Chapter One, the introduction, outlines the study's background, rationale, purpose, research questions, significance, researcher's positionality and key terms. Chapter Two expounds the conceptual framework that guides the whole study. Chapter Three is the literature review that clarifies recent contributions and gaps from relevant research fields. Chapter Four offers a detailed explanation of the methodology and research methods. Chapter Five gives a narrative of the transnational experiences of eleven Chinese participants. Chapter Six illustrates how these international secondary school students became flexible citizens, and what the flexibility and constraints were in their choices across nations. Chapter Seven goes deeper in analyzing three key insights that closely relate to how different cultural logics emanating from families, societies, and nations coexisted, dialogued with and mediated each other to govern my participants' subjectivities and unfolding lives. The last chapter discusses the results, addresses the implications, and points to areas for further research.

## **Context**

Schooling, once regarded as internal to the sovereign nation-state, has been altered by heightened transnationalism in a globalizing world. Accordingly, teachers, students, educational policies and ‘best practices’ are crossing borders with increasing frequency and intensity (Tarc et al., 2012). In recent years, an increasing number of Chinese international students have come to study in Canada. From 2008 to 2015, the number of Chinese international students in Canada has increased from 20,371 to 120,002 (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2012, 2016a). Much of the focus of internationalization of education and student mobility has been at the level of higher education (Popadiuk, 2010). However, secondary schooling is also a domain of internationalization as evidenced by the growing numbers of Chinese international students attending secondary schools (CBIE, 2014; Popadiuk, 2010). As of 2015, the number of Chinese international secondary school students reached close to 20, 334 (CBIE, 2016b).

Upon arriving in the new country, Chinese international students, orient their everyday lives between the home-country space, the host-country space, and a larger set of “cosmopolitan options” (Marginson, 2014, p. 6; Ong, 1999). Based on their situated interest in transnational space, Chinese students respond fluidly and opportunistically to the changing social, cultural, political and economic conditions (Ong, 1999). Informed by multiple transnational forces, they become flexible citizens with multi-layered and hybrid identities that influence their practices, needs and aspirations in academic studies and social lives (Held, 2002; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Rizvi, 2005; Wang, 2013). Here citizenship is a complex and multidimensional concept, which expands traditional

definitions that relate to rights and obligations. Citizenship in this dissertation “...stress[es] the affinity and identity dimensions of citizenship” (Ichilov, 1998, p. 11). Stuart Hall (1990) emphasizes that people’s identities are always constituted in and by discourses— “[o]ur identities are subject to continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (p. 225). Therefore, people’s identities are in flux as they are always in a process of change. Further, with regard to migrants, their fluid identity making is “linguistically, socially, culturally, and politically contextualized” and is complicated by the status of “being-in-between” of two or more nations (Soong, 2016, p. 145). More specific to my study, Chinese international students’ identities appear to be molded through continuous interaction amongst diverse cultures, embedded in power relations, in ‘translocal’ spaces (Wang, 2013).

Indeed, migrant students’ identities, shaped by multiple global and local social forces/discourses and cultural traditions, are a complex and dynamic process (Ong, 1999; Hall, 1990). One significant global discourse— neoliberalism that emphasizes students’ self-management according to market logics— permeates Chinese international students’ transnational lives and influences their choices in self-making. Individuals conform to neoliberal rationalities in the pursuit of efficiency and competitiveness (Ong, 1999; 2006). These rationalities tend to shape students’ self-regulating processes.

Further, many scholars (e.g. Ong 1999; Marginson, 2014) argue that students’ “self-making”, is influenced by value and norms in the host society. For example, Ong (1999) and Taylor (2012) highlight the privileging of so-called high Euro-American

symbolic values and cultural norms, recognized by both Canadian schools and Chinese students as useful for students' attaining high status and social recognition in the future. One of the most significant challenges comes from local teachers, administrators and student servicing personnel who believe that they have little to learn from students from other cultures or educational systems. Instead, international students need to accommodate themselves to the educational environment in Western developed countries, which contributes to their further academic and professional development (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Another force comes from students' families (especially from parents) who believe that Chinese students should acquire "the essence of Western culture" (p. 10) as well as improve English language competencies through international education (Zhang & Beck, 2014). Encountering various pressures to survive in their host society, many Chinese international students abandon former aspects of their identities to 'melt into' the host culture in order to gain acceptance by their adopted society (Coward, 2014).

Nevertheless, it still seems impossible for Chinese international students' to be fully assimilated to the host society regardless of how hard they try. According to Coward (2014), Chinese international students often feel discomfort and are suppressed or placed in peripheral positions as guests in the country of settlement. Further, the discomfort of cultural assimilation, to some extent, derives from Chinese international students' home-culture distinctiveness, which continues to shape their identities and/or

regulate their practices and aspirations in the transnational context (Ong, 1999; Li, 2008). Students' home cultural distinctiveness relates to their blood and sentimental ties, their online and virtual connections with the home space, their patriotic feelings and national citizenship (Ong, 1999; Tuan, 1974; Chong, 2016). Here, blood ties refer to the "kinship bonds" (Ong, 1999, p. 66) — connections and relationships between family members and relatives.

Therefore, international students are not the persons they were when they arrived in the country of origin, nor are they set loose to be anything they want to be (Marginson & Sawir, 2014). Marginson and Sawir (2014) further explain that international students are in charge of neither the destiny nor the environment of their host-country. This study focuses on the 'self-making' of eleven secondary school Chinese youths under larger conditions in transnational spaces. Illeris (2003) mentions that, 'youth' is a transitional phase in a certain type of society where the framework has already been set to influence individuals through childhood. Mehdi (2012) further explains that migrant children face pressures not only from their family and local school, but also, more importantly, from the host society and government. Illeris (2003) argues further that, admittedly, though youth are still free to make some choices, their identity construction is largely done within a framework with limited room to maneuver (p. 366). In my studies, I examined how eleven Chinese international secondary school students did "maneuver" in their daily experiences, what imaginaries and constraints were evident in their practices and

choices and, thus, how these students were becoming flexible and not-so-flexible citizens in their transnational contexts.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

My study purports to illuminate Chinese international secondary school students' learning and becoming in transnational spaces. Based on my exploratory research purpose, I have three main research questions:

1. What are the experiences of Chinese international secondary school students before and during their international education? What are the larger social, cultural, economic and political conditions in which these experiences are embedded?
2. In what ways do Chinese international secondary school students' transnational experiences shape or constitute their practices of self-making?
3. How do Chinese international secondary school students project their future based on their transnational experiences and trajectories of self-making?

To address these questions, I conducted an ethnographic field study in a Canadian international secondary school in Ontario to learn about eleven Chinese international secondary school students' transnational lives.

### **Rationale and Significance**

First, very few studies about international students' experiences have been

conducted in Canadian international secondary schools, despite the growing numbers of Chinese international students attending secondary schools (CBIE, 2016b). Moreover, my study includes, but also is beyond such widely researched areas as international students' academic studies or language acquisition in a foreign context. My study contributes to the emergent literature on transnationalism, the internationalization of education at the secondary school level, international students' second language learning and identity-making from a socio-cultural standpoint.

Second, regarding the theories, my research employs Ong's (1999) conceptualizations of *flexible citizenship* and *cultural* logics of self-making to explore Chinese students' learning and becoming in transnational spaces; thus, the study aims to test and build upon Ong's framework.

Third, my ethnographic research contributes to deepening the understanding of the transnational everyday experiences of Chinese international secondary school students, and their multi-layered, hybrid identities. Therefore, my study offers insights into how these students regulated and fashioned themselves as organized by larger transnational forces and conditions. Through reading my dissertation, (incoming) Chinese international students and parents could better understand competing forces for Chinese students from the host space and the home space and what possible academic and emotional challenges might exist in students' transnational lives. Through the illumination of my participant Chinese youths' transnational life trajectories, Chinese



parents might give their children more emotional support in their transnational mobility rather than solely focus on academic achievements that relate to family prosperity. All these insights could have a significant impact on the wider lives of international students as well as the work of educators, administrators and policymakers regarding how to enhance programs and practices for (incoming) international students.

Last but not the least, researchers in comparative and international education, social and cultural studies, second language education may get insights from my study about how to use ethnographic field studies to illuminate (Chinese international) students' academic studies, language acquisition, transcultural and transnational lives and self-making.

### **Positionality of the Researcher**

Here, I narrate my transnational movements, which may relate to my analysis of the experiences of my participants. The reflection of my transnational experiences helped me understand the maneuverings of eleven participant Chinese international students, including struggles they encountered in their transnational mobility, and what factors and concerns influenced their present and future choices.

In 1979, China introduced its one-child policy, under which households exceeding the birth quota were penalized (Zhang, 2017, p. 141). I was born in the early 1980s and so most of my classmates and friends are the only child in their families. I am

the *only* daughter from a middle class family in a major and highly developed internationalized city, Suzhou, which is located adjacent to Shanghai Municipality. My parents, who are scholars in China, wanted me to study abroad since I was very young. Many the children of my parents' friends and colleagues studied in Western developed countries and some of them have settled in England, Australia, Canada and the US after their graduation. In my view, the broad social trend makes many Chinese parents believe that their children need to achieve world-recognized educational qualifications through studying in Western developed countries.

Like many other classmates and friends, there was great parental involvement throughout my growth. When I applied for the bachelor programs in Chinese universities, my parents took a decisive role and pushed me to apply for the major of Business English in Soochow University, which is a high-ranking university in China and very close to my home. In my parents' view, the proficiency in English allows me to develop better and further my international education and professional development. To some extent, after I had worked and studied in Canada for many years, I think my parents were correct because English plays a significant role in Chinese students' performances in academic studies and professional development.

After I graduated from Soochow University, I applied for the major of accounting in the University of Sydney and got the offer. In the early 2000s, accounting was promoted by many overseas educational service agencies in China as a very lucrative

major that also facilitated international students' immigration to Australia. My parents got the information for my international education from an agency in Shanghai, which also dealt with all my university applications later. Given the lack of knowledge about Western societies, most of my friends and I relied on Chinese agencies to make university and immigration applications. Also, I paid attention to the world university rankings, as my family and I did not know how to make "correct" choices in university applications that could optimize my further career development. Now, I cannot believe how much trust I gave to agencies and university rankings before I crossed borders. After I began my studies in Western University, I never sought any support from agencies; instead, I made all the applications in Canada on my own.

However, I did not study in Sydney— not just because I still relied too much on my parents when I was 23 years old, but also because I totally was not interested in studying accounting or working as an accountant in the future. I began to reflect upon what my interests were and what I wanted to become in the future rather than just following my parents' decisions. Indeed, there were some jobs or types of life I really resisted regardless of how much economic benefits I could achieve. Instead, I got a master's degree in Applied Linguistics in Soochow University and later became a college English language teacher. These experiences helped me accumulate an understanding of different pedagogies worldwide and knowledge of some Western countries, such as the US, Canada, and Australia.

Nevertheless, a few years later, I still went to study in Canada. The main reason was that I was not satisfied to be a college English language teacher. In my view, in China it is still believed that those students who could not achieve high academic performance study in colleges. Chinese students prefer to study in universities. So, working as a college English language teacher did not bring me full job satisfaction. Meanwhile, all universities in China appear to require teachers with doctoral degrees. I aspired to work in top universities in China or other countries, which would allow me to *self-actualize* as highly emphasized in the social context that I grew up. Self-actualization here is about “realizing [my] full inner potential in the form of wisdom” (Murtaza. 2011, p. 578). My self-actualization also relates to my satisfaction with higher university degrees, decent jobs, social recognition, and working on some meaningful jobs, etc.

After several years’ struggling and discussion with other family members and family “field trips” to many developed countries in Europe and Australia, I finally immigrated to Canada in 2010, and began my graduate studies at the Faculty of Education in Western University in 2012. I still hoped to gain Western university degrees (at postgraduate levels) so that I could get better professional development either in China or in Canada. At that time, I had already gotten married and gave birth to a lovely boy. I thought I was mature and independent enough; in addition, education is the

major I have always had a passion for. As an English language teacher, in China, I always reflected upon how to motivate my students' learning.

In the beginning of my international education, I felt that the transnational life was very lonely and overwhelming. On the first day when I came to London, Ontario, I wanted to return as it is not as modern as what I *imagined*. I already missed the modern and comfortable living environment in my hometown, Suzhou. I came alone without family's company for the first year, during which period I returned to China every 3-4 months. I achieved high scores in the English language admission test, IELTS ("The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) measures the language proficiency of people who want to study or work where English is used as a language of communication" (Retrieved from <https://www.ielts.org/what-is-ielts/ielts-introduction>); however, I still could not understand discussions between Canadian professors and students in classes. Some Chinese cohort friends also met similar challenges in their academic studies, so we supported each other academically and emotionally. I was also too shy and timid to ask Canadian classmates and professors for the learning support. In addition, the class modes in Canada require students' independent learning and self-exploration, which also brought many challenges to me. As a new immigrant, I was deficient in the local knowledge so I actually demanded more learning support from professors and other supporting staff. After a six-months frustrating transitional period, my academic studies got better. In 2013, my family came and stayed with me, which

gave me a lot of relief. I did not need to make video calls with them every day.

Gradually, I accumulated knowledge about the local educational system and society, and I was able to apply local knowledge to my academic learning. My marks went up accordingly, which made me feel relieved.

During my stay in Canada, I also tried to accumulate social and work experience. From 2013, I began to work in a Canadian international secondary school as a Mandarin and IELTS instructor because I hoped to accumulate Canadian teaching experience that might serve me for my future career development. This school is also the site where I conducted my field research. Throughout my stay in Canada, I always tried to prepare and reflect upon the future. As a Chinese immigrant, I feel it is extremely hard to find a tenure-track academic position in Canadian universities and colleges. In the meantime, I also do not want to miss any valuable developing opportunities in China.

Furthermore, I want to mention the transnational experience of my son. John's (pseudo name) transnational experience was different from mine in the early 2000s when my parents wanted me to study and stay in Western developed countries. After more than one and a half decades of development, China has gained a more powerful economic and political position worldwide. On the one hand, the whole family (the grandparents and parents) still hoped John to be proficient in English and earn a degree from a top Canadian or US university in the future. On the other hand, the whole family also wanted John to be proficient in Mandarin and to accumulate knowledge about

Chinese cultural and social norms through life experiences in China. Both my husband and I are the only children in the family, so there is much involvement from the parents and grandparents in John's growth, which is a very common phenomenon in China.

As a person with a lot of transnational experience, I also hope that John can experience different lifestyles in China and in Canada so that he might be more open-minded and gain complex worldviews. Certainly, after John grows up, both my husband and I hope he will make his own decisions about where he wants to stay and what he wants to learn. John has a strong affiliation with the Canadian society because he attended a Canadian day care center when he was two and half. In the childcare center, I chose a class with a mixture of Chinese and Canadian teachers to facilitate John's accommodation to the school life in Canada. After several months, John preferred to speak English, watch Canadian or American TV shows, and eat Western-style food (e.g., sandwiches, burgers, and popcorn). Most of John's friends were Canadians or Chinese Canadians (i.e. CBC -Chinese-born Canadians).

John also maintained Chinese social connections in China—e.g., there were a few newly arrived Chinese immigrant students who could not speak or understand English in John's class, so John sometimes played the role as the interpreter between them and the Canadian teachers. John speaks fluent Mandarin and understands some Chinese social and cultural knowledge because he stays with Chinese family members either at home or

in online space every day. Every Saturday morning, he also went to a Chinese school, where he studied Mandarin and Chinese culture.

The stories of my son and I illustrate that studying abroad is not just Chinese international students' own dream or choice; instead, it might be the dream and decision of multiple generations. Even when Chinese students study abroad, they still maintain intricate connections with and between the home space and the host space. These connections and movement mold Chinese international students' identities and aspirations. The stories of my family members and myself help me understand the transnational life experiences of the participant students in my study, especially regarding how the assemblage of forces from families, societies and nations have affected my participants' understandings and choices in their transnational lives. In this sense, I am an insider in my research given my identities as a Chinese international student, a mom whose son also migrated transnationally and a teacher at the school. I worked in my research site for almost three years, so I have abundant knowledge about the school and Chinese international secondary school students. My insider roles helped me build rapport and trust with students, which was crucial for my ethnographic research and allowed me to engage in constant dialogues with the students (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2011) to understand their feelings in different curricular, extracurricular and wider social contexts.



However, my insider role also brought some inconvenience for my research—e.g., when some students knew I was a school teacher, they became cautious in participating in my research as they were afraid of saying or behaving inappropriately that might affect their social images that are very significant for Chinese. Some participants became more open to express their feelings after I had stayed with them for more than two months. I was very happy that after half a year, many of them regarded me as their friend and would like to text or call me to share their recent happenings and inner feelings.

Meanwhile, I also bracketed myself out at times and was vigilant to question *commonsense* perceptions originating from my insider experiences. Such perceptions could form the presumptions that may in turn impose on my interpretations of the phenomenon I observed. Therefore, sometimes, I reflected upon my outsider attributes. For instance, I immigrated to Canada and I am an adult researcher, not a secondary school student. These distinctions sensitized me to some patterns in data collection and data analysis that might be difficult for the insider researcher to see (Collins, 1986). Also, some participants were very interested in listening to and understanding my transnational experiences—e.g., what made me immigrate to Canada, what my son's transnational experience was, why I studied in Western University, and how I would make choices for my future academic and social lives (Would I stay in Canada or return back to China?). I was very careful in answering these questions because I did not want

to impose my opinions on my participants. Through wide discussions with my participants about these questions, I touched the deeper feelings and thoughts of my participants.

### **Key Terms**

**Identity:** Castree, Kitchin and Rogers (2013) expound that identity refers to,

... how people see themselves and express ‘who they are inside’ to others. Individual identity is expressed through what people say and write, their cultural tastes, how they dress, and their material possessions, and groups to which they belong. Collective identity is a sense of belonging to the same group, of the same views, outlook, values, and beliefs....(p. 231)

Further, what is important with identity is not solely the ways we wish to be seen or heard, but very often the ways in which we are seen and heard by others (Byrd Clark, 2007). So, in this sense, migrant Chinese students may strive for social images or identities as desired by people in the home space and the host space. However, people in China or in Canada could see migrant students in different ways rather than their desired status.

Regarding different types of identities, Gee (2000) states that people could be recognized as a certain kind of person or several different kinds at once. Consistent with Gee, Held (2002) argued that, “Individuals increasingly have complex loyalties and multi-layered identities, corresponding to the globalization of economic and cultural forces and the reconfiguration of political power” (p. 54). My study investigates the

development of students' multi-layered identities and belongings as situated in their former and present economic, socio-cultural and political contexts.

**Internationalization of education:** I locate my study in the area of internationalization of education, which involves the increasing scope or intensity of international educational activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers, international linkages, partnerships, and projects; as well as new international academic programs and research initiatives (Knight, 2004, p. 6). My study concentrates on the academic mobility of Chinese international secondary school students.

**Self-making:** In this study, it refers to how students consider who they are and who they hope to become. Self-making relates to how people build and maintain their identities in interaction with others. Self-making is an ongoing identity construction process, especially in light of transnational flows, mobilities and interactions (Gholami, 2017; Örule & Hyden, 2006).

**Transnationalism:** Mitchell (2009) describes transnationalism as, “a movement or set of linkages that occur across national borders....its growing population indicates the heighten *interconnectivity* of people and things that now flow across borders and boundaries” (p. 772). I am interested to learn about the linkages between Chinese international students and other people or events in transnational spaces.

## **Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework**

My research focus and approach are informed by the associated fields of cultural sociology, transnationalism and the internationalization of education. My research is guided by conceptions of transnationalism by Ong (1999) and other scholars (e.g. Mitchell) and Ong's formulations on "flexible citizenship" and "cultural logics" of self-making and subjectivity. Connections across theorists are found in the use of these theoretical concepts – though challenges still exist in employing them in my research.

### **Transnationalism**

After Chinese international students migrate to a new country, they inhabit different transnational spaces because of the intricate global social and cultural communication and connections (Ong, 1999; Mitchell, 2009; Soong, 2016). Transnationalism is a phenomenon that comes along with globalization. For example, as Ma (2003) argues that, "Globalization of production and increasing spatial mobility due to more efficient transportation and communication have given risen to the characteristics of contemporary transnationalism" (p. 4). Mitchell (2009) describes transnationalism as "a movement or set of linkage that occur across national borders.... its growing popularity indicates the heighten *interconnectivity* of people and things that now flow across *borders* and *boundaries*" (p. 772).

Two aspects are emphasized in transnationalism: first, the space concept is significant in understanding transnationalism (Mitchell, 2009; Wu, 2017). Global flow

has brought transcendence across national boundaries (Ong, 1999; Mitchell, 2009). Ong (1999) relates migrant students' choices and staying in different transnational spaces to the intricate global social and cultural connections and relations. Here, transnational spaces relate more to "...social spaces that connect and position some actors in more than one country" (Vertovec, 2009, p. 12). Transnational space is a significant concept in understanding "...how the world is constituted by cross-border relationships, patterns of economic, political and cultural relations, and complex affiliations and social formations that span the world" (Rizvi, 2010, p. 160). In relation with my study, I examined how eleven Chinese youth positioned themselves and got connected or affiliated with intricate transnational social networks which they constructed and navigated as their own transnational space.

Within all the social connections in transnational spaces, migrants' involvement in both the home and host societies is a central element of transnationalism (Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1992, p. ix). Migrants choose to linger in unfixed transnational spaces, which is significant in understanding their self-making (Ong, 1999; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Tuan, 1977). With regard to my study, Chinese international students study in Canada, while maintaining ties to the home space, "...even when their home country and the country of settlement are geographically distant" (Schiller et al., 1992, p. ix) and each is changing.

Furthermore, Ong (1999) points out Chinese international students' existing spaces extend from those geographically circumscribed to virtual and online spaces in different locations. For instance, Chinese international students maintain connections with their home spaces through online communities (e.g. QQ space and We Chat space) (Liu, 2014). In my study, I learned how my participants communicated and interacted in these online communities. It is noteworthy that transnational learners keep different economic, cultural and political linkages in transnational spaces given their situated interest; or they may physically travel back and forth within diverse transnational spaces (Soong, 2016, pp. 147, p. 154). In my study, I not only explored my participants' dialogues between different transnational spaces, but also probed into how they flexibly maintained transnational connections given situated needs and preferences.

With these intricate and contextualized transnational social connections, as Hall and Gay (1996) have emphasized, migrants' identities develop dynamically, unstably and discursively. International students reflect upon who they are becoming or how to represent themselves in specific contexts (Soong, 2016, p. 23). Also, migrant Chinese students may form "...a type of consciousness, marked by multiple senses of identification" (Rizvi, 2010, p. 160). However, recent scholarship focuses on how migrants adapt themselves to the place of settlement rather than look back to the situations of their home contexts and home identities (Vertovec, 2009, p. 13). Therefore, partial interpretations might be generated about who migrant students are and what they

pursue in their lives. Migrant students negotiate between the past and the present, which creates both possibilities and hindrances for future choices (Soong, 2016, p. 41). My study examines Chinese international students' experiences before and during their international education. I illuminate how understandings of these experiences continue to influence Chinese students' multiple sense of identities, preferences, and aspirations.

Second, power relations exist in transnational spaces, which directly affect migrants' choices (Mitchell, 1997; Wu, 2017). According to Ong (1999), power dynamics and discourses come from world capitalism and the control from the home country and the country of settlement. Rizvi (2000) further argues global capital flows shape migrants' calculations about how to position themselves differently within and across countries (p. 161). For example, as Taylor (2012) illustrates, the major motivations for migrants to go to rich democratic countries are to find opportunities in work and education (p. 422).

However, transnationalism research also acknowledges the continued 'stickiness' of places, such as the home country, and this stickiness becomes especially fiercer if the path to a more rewarding life is blocked (Dunn, 2008, p. 4; Taylor, 2012, p. 422). In Wang and Zuo's (2014) case study, they highlight how some Chinese international students returned to their own cultural groups when feeling discouraged or frustrated in their academic studies. Further, the stickiness to their home space also connects with political, economic and social forces from migrants' home state (Lee, 2006). As I

mentioned above, being transnational is not of one form as it varies from person to person. People may change their sense of connections with the host country as well as their home country (Soong, 2016). In my knowledge, all these interactions and transnational connections are built up and embodied in relations of power. My study explores how the circulation of power governs Chinese international secondary school students' self-making and choices in transnational spaces.

### **Flexible Citizenship**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, flexible citizenship has emerged as a key lens through which contemporary migrant Chinese have been understood (Lin, 2012, p. 137). The classical definition of citizenship emphasizes civic rights and obligations. More recent definitions supplement the traditional definition of citizenship, stressing citizens' multiple affinities, belongings and identity development given increasing transnational flows (Ichilov, 1998, p. 11; Mitchell, 1997). Ong (1999), Ichilov (1998) and Mitchell (1997) put forward a multidimensional model of (cultural) citizenship that incorporates both the national and transnational dimensions of citizenship and belongings. Mitchell further explain that given transnational flows, "transnationals become cultural citizens of particular national and metropolitan locals" (p. 230). The multidimensional model of cultural citizenship above not only recognizes the relations between people' identities and nation states, but also highlights the connections between identities and local particularities. My study



considers Chinese international secondary school students' multiple affinities and belongings through their flexible accumulation in transnational spaces.

More specifically, in a highly interconnected globalized world, Ong (1999) states that migrant students embody a flexible notion of citizenship to accumulate capital and power. Bourdieu (1986) gives a deep analysis of the three fundamental types of capital and their correlations,

capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility. (p. 248)

My study explores how Chinese international secondary school students, as flexible citizens, learn how to accumulate different forms of capital, what the challenges are in such a process, as well as how they respond accordingly. As Ong explains, "[f]lexible citizenship refers 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).

As explained above, Chinese migrants' mobility challenges traditional notions of citizenship and nationalism that introduces, "...a range of alternative spatial formations and modes of accumulation in different parts of the world" (Lin, 2012, p. 137). In this sense, Ong's notion of flexible citizenship suggests a move away from a rigid conception of citizenship that privileges the relationship between citizens and national territory, towards conceptions of more flexible and geographically plural and hybrid identities and

modes of government (Waters, 2003, p. 221). Likewise, Lee (2006) argues that Chinese migrants' flexible citizenship is a strategic form of Chinese identity to gain different forms of capital. Vertovec (2004) observed many globally mobile people and found that "...they experience[d] the increasing need to retain their [multiple] national connections so that they can enjoy opportunities that stem from such ambiguity" (cited Soong, 2016, p. 153).

Flexible citizenship is particularly applicable when considering my study of Chinese migrant students' identities because both they and their families hope to grasp different transnational opportunities for 'better lives' (Soong, 2016, p. 213). Global neoliberal discourses that highlight the instrumental function of education for "human capital developmental and economic self-maximization" (Tarc, 2009, p. 73) form Chinese international students as highly calculative subjects that strategically seek opportunities across political borders.

Chinese international students yearn for a kind of global and local acceptance as they amass individual skills and knowledge that could be transformed into social and cultural capital (Ong, 2004, p. 65; Ong, 1999). For instance, Ong (1999), investigating international students in North American universities, argues that Chinese students who gain their university degrees also tend to engage the host-culture and thus build and/or maintain a prestigious social status. Also, Kim, Brown and Fong (2016) explain Asian American immigrants' "'strategic education' whereby education is viewed as instrumental and serves the purpose of achieving higher socioeconomic status" (p. 273).

At the same time, as Chinese has become a wealthier country, migrant Chinese do not envision their futures only in Western developed countries, but also look back to

grasp opportunities in China. As Lee (2006) explains that as China pushes ahead with its reforms and gains growing economic and political stature in the international arena, Chinese international students also look back and pay attention to economic, social and cultural opportunities in China. Therefore, in the process of accumulating capital, Chinese students develop multiple layers of flexibility.

Admittedly, capital accumulation is an overarching theme in how migrant Chinese students navigate their lives transnationally; nevertheless, Ong (1999) also elucidates forces that affect the extent of flexibility in their choices.

In [migrants'] quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena, subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments and cultural regimes. These logics are produced within particular structures of meaning about family, gender, nationality, class mobility, and social power. (p. 6)

In my view, the above-mentioned argument emphasizes how structural limits always exist in migrants' students' capital accumulation. For example, Ong (1999) highlights transnational political, societal, and cultural forces that have an aggregated effect in regulating migrant students' flexible accumulation in their self-making. For instance, a large proportion of Chinese international students do not (want to) lose their Chinese identities and cultural distinctiveness (Lee, 2006).

To illustrate, Chinese students' attachment with the home space, first, relates to the citizenship education in China (Chong, 2016). Citizenship education "...refers to political socialization by equipping school students with the knowledge, skills and values that are deemed important for life in a given polity" (Law, 2007, p. 19). According to Chong (2016), in China, the education system is a top-down management style, where the Ministry of Education ensures that patriotism and socialist ideas are adopted in

teaching materials and implemented in classroom teaching. (p. 95). For example, in the Junior Secondary School Curriculum (2000), “the national domain aims to help students know and care about China’s national policies and developments, love China, and understand the contribution of the Communist Party of China (CPC) to China’s revival” (Law, 2010, p. 346). One significant way of the patriotic education is the daily Chinese-national-flag-raising ceremony with the play of the national anthem that becomes one of the most “stirring moments” for Chinese students (Chong, 2016, p. 94).

In addition, “[m]oral education guidance [is also] carefully prescribed in textbooks and based on *Confucian principles* such as loyalty, respect and obedience” (Chong, 2016, p. 92). The use of Confucianism is to educate students through moral persuasion that tells students what sort of conduct or character is *right and virtuous* (Chong, 2016, p. 91). In education, students “with Confucian heritage cultural background tend to be modest and diligent, emphasize the importance of *order*, respect for *authorities*, and value *pragmatic* acquisition of knowledge” (Sit, 2013, p. 37). I contend that Confucian tradition not only reinforces the citizenship education that cultivates Chinese international students’ patriotism and socialist ideas, but also informs their cultural learning habits and their attitudes towards teachers.

Further, Sit (2013) argues that the emphasis on the pragmatic acquisition of knowledge in Confucianism is embodied in Chinese students’ learning for achieving high scores in examinations that decide their academic and career destinies. So, Confucian principles also associate with high expectations for *learning achievements* by Chinese students and parents. Citizenship education and Confucian principles in China promotes the formation and reinforcement of national and cultural distinctiveness and

ethos in migrant Chinese students' identities that affect their practices regardless of where they are.

As Vertovec (2009) argues, not all migrants are transnational. Some of them stick more to their home spaces given power forces and developing opportunities. Student migrants are not only shaped by their mobility, but also by rootedness in their home space. Transnational flow and movements bring the uneven and distinct positioning of each Chinese international student in relation with the historic, political, families, cultural, temporal and spatial backgrounds he or she lives through (Soong, 2016, p. 36). It can be seen that the notion of flexible citizenship (regarding strategies in capital accumulation) represents an overarching part of Chinese migrants' self-making (Lee, 2006). Nevertheless, Chinese international students' everyday lives in the host society are also governed by their cultural and national distinctiveness, shaping their preferred lifestyles, habits and feelings that also relate to the transnational routes they choose (Soong, 2016). As analyzed above, again, I re-emphasize that because of economic, cultural, political and social constraints in transnational spaces, the flexibility in students' choices does not equate to greater 'freedom.' Further, complexities exist in migrant Chinese students' everyday calculations as they make negotiations "between past and present, desire and angst, possibilities and hindrances, and fantasy and nostalgia" (Soong, 2016, p. 22). In my study, I looked into the students' complex and nuanced feelings and considerations in their choices and the corresponding contextual conditions of their current transnational space.

### **Ong (1999)'s Notion of Cultural Logics of Self-Making and Subjectivity**

My study also investigates the cultural and social forces that play significant roles

in students' everyday practices and understanding of themselves. Ong (1999) has raised the notion of cultural logics that are formed by students' cultural insights and attention to everyday practices and emerging power relations, informing Chinese international students' behaviors, choices and aspirations in their transnational self-making (Ong, 1999; Wang, 2013). Cultural logics rely on, "the establishment of stereotypes and other kinds of precedents, catalogued in individuals' personal libraries, as models and scenarios which may serve as reference in inferring and attributing motivations behind people's actions" (Enfield, 2000, p. 35). The flexibility in migrant students' choices relates to mediations of diverse cultural logics (Ong, 1999). Further, Ong and Nonini argue that cultural logics in self-making of overseas Chinese are constituted through transnational systems rather than through stable cultural entities (as cited in Law & Lee, 2006, p. 146). The transnational systems entails students' families, schools, and other transnational social connections, etc. Here, I analyze relevant cultural logics at the global and local scale.

First, cultural logics of globalization/modernization regulate Chinese international students' lives (Ong, 1999). Neoliberalism, as one of the most significant ideologies constituting 'globalization,' influences Chinese international students' actions and choices (Beck, 2012; Ong 2006). Sharma (2008, p. 3) explains that neoliberalism, as a complex and even contradictory set of market-based notions, penetrates almost every single aspect of our lives. Neoliberal rationality "informs actions by many regimes and

furnishes the concepts that inform the government of free individuals who are then induced to self-management according to market principle of discipline, efficiency, and competitiveness” (Ong, 2006, p. 4).

A problem that comes with neoliberal discourse is that it attends to market-driven demands, while minimizing humanistic concerns or cultural values (Ong, 2006, p. 153). As Collier and Ong (2005) claim, “market calculation is freed of any social or cultural considerations, responding only to the global logic of supply and effective demand” (p. 13). Nonetheless, market-driven demands, in many cases, are beyond international students’ capabilities to successfully compete. Meanwhile, global-scale neoliberal social discourses are unlikely to fulfill individual Chinese international student’s specific social and cultural characteristics and needs (Ma & Wang, 2014).

Second, in the West, Chinese international students’ everyday practices are influenced by dominant Euro-American values and norms, which determine and judge, “...the signs and forms of metropolitan status and glamour” (Ong, 1999, pp. 89). Versions of Euro-American values and norms, largely representing the social and cultural capital of the middle and/or elite classes, are highly valued worldwide (Bourdieu, 1984; Ong, 1999). Such capital enables individuals to demonstrate certain competencies that, “...are crucial in employment and education selection process” (Valentine, 2001, p. 26). More specifically, in Canada, educational spaces “...are sites of cultural and social reproduction, succumbing to a *hegemonic value system*” (Basu, 2011,

p. 1311). Here, hegemonic value system refers to dominant social and cultural norms and values in the host society that not just reinforce the status quo, but also reproduce social and economic inequities (Basu, 2011; Ong, 1999).

For Ong (1999), many affluent Chinese families send their children to North America for some forms of transnational social and cultural capital, as an ideological system of taste and prestige, through which they are able to sustain or advance their elite social status. My study explored the Chinese international students' family backgrounds and the expectations that these families put on their children. My research also considers what influence the dominant U. S./Canadian culture exerts on Chinese international students' self-regulation.

Further, students' home cultural distinctiveness or cultural logics continue to control and regulate their practices in a transnational context (Ong, 1999). Mitchell (1997) contends that although migrants become more or less assimilated to the dominant culture in the country of settlement, they still bring their home-culture with them (p. 103). Their sense of (and identification with) spatial location comes from living or associating with their home-culture (Tuan, 1974, p. 233). For instance, Li (2008) mentions that many Chinese students prefer to stay together given their preference for the collectivity and communication in Mandarin both in and out of classes. In that way, they maintain a sense of home but in a foreign context, even though this feeling raises barriers for them to immerse into the host-society and academic learning community.



As explained above, dominant cultural logics worldwide or in the host society combine with students' home country logics (Wang, 2013). According to Ong (1999), the mediation of different cultural logics governs students' subjectivities in their practices and choices (p. 17). Castree, Kitchin and Rogers (2013) define subjectivity as, "[t]he influence of personal feelings, beliefs, desires, and interests on the conduct and outcome of action" (p. 496). The notion of governmentality maintains that regimes of truth and power produce disciplinary effects that condition our subjectivities in everyday practices (Foucault, 1991). Ong and Pratt (2009) indicate that sources of *truth and power* refer to such regimes as the state, family, education, religion, and economic enterprises. Foucault (1977) argues that disciplinary power traverses all points and supervises every instant, so it normalizes (p. 183). Transnational lives and self-making of Chinese international students adhere to normalization processes. Cultural logics generated through various regimes of cultural normativity in transnational spaces affect students' daily practices and choices (Ong, 1999, p. 159).

Regarding my studies, I look for the mediations of cultural logics informed by the youth participants' experiences in families, communities, school-enterprises and nation-states and examine how such mediations affected the students' choices and aspirations that shaped their identities. Further, in comparison with adults, the identity construction of youths unfolds within a context with very limited room for manoeuvre (Illeris, 2003). In this sense, I hypothesized that the mediation of youth students' cultural logics might

be even more constrained by dominant social discourses.

### **Summary of Theoretical Framework**

Generally, I chose the conceptual frameworks that allow me to deeply and critically investigate students' self-making in a transnational context. I found some connections between the theories: Cultural logics are (re)constituted and (re)formed in transnational spaces under relations of power. The mediation of cultural logics inform how Chinese students navigate in transnational spaces. In this sense, I argue that they also *make* their own transnational spaces given their relations, roots and routes that crisscross national borders and imaginaries. Migrant youths' transnational spaces thus are fluid, contingent and precarious. The flexibility and inflexibility in Chinese students' learning and becoming are governed by power relations in their situated transnational spaces.

Admittedly, limitations exist in my use of theories. To begin with, youth cultural logics work in students' inner worlds, which are not accessed easily or directly. Interpretations were generated through my feelings and experiences in the field, which somehow still might be different from that of the students in my study. Second, cultural logics and flexible accumulations are always emerging in students' everyday lives. Therefore, my research showed just a snapshot of Chinese international students' transnational life trajectories. From elaborating on my theoretical framework, I now turn

to the recent literature on the internationalization of education in Canada and China, and Chinese students' transnational experiences.

## **Chapter Three: Literature Review**

An extensive search of the relevant literature finds a considerable number of studies relating to Chinese international students, albeit most of these are at the post-secondary school level (Popadiuk, 2010; Knight, 2003, 2004). Most research focuses on language or academic development, but ignores the deeper processes of students' extracurricular lives, their belongings, attachments and emotions, the involvement of their family members and friends in decision making, all of which represent facets of students' self-making. In this sense, we lack a fulsome understanding of Chinese international secondary school students' lives. I am working in this research gap in studying the qualities of eleven students' perceptions and self-making in transnational spaces. This chapter mainly focuses on the literature on internationalization of education in the West and in China, reasons for Chinese students to study abroad, and their learning and identity formation in a foreign context.

### **Internationalization of Education in Canada**

Internationalization of education covers a wide range of domains and educational activities across nations. Many people are confused about what it really means and how it penetrates in everyday lives of families, schools and nations (Guo et al, 2010). Knight (2004) gives a prevalent definition of the internationalization in education,

Internationalization is a term that is being used more and more to discuss the international dimension of higher education, more widely, postsecondary education....it means a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers, international linkages, partnership, and projects; and new, international academic program and research initiatives. (p. 6)

In line with Knight, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (2014, p. 2) also frames the internationalization of education as broad in scope with five key inter-related areas of educational practice: experiences of international mobility, international teaching, international research partnerships, the internationalization of curriculum and the preparation of educators and leaders for other locations of educational practices. My study centers on transnational experiences of *internationally mobile* Chinese students, which also relates to the internationalization of Canadian curriculum and the preparation of educators and leaders for multicultural educational practices.

Internationalization of education is not a new phenomenon in Canada. Since 1948, “Canada has always been among the top senders and the top recipients of international students” (Guo et al, 2010, p. 75). In the past five decades, the internationalization of education has gained increasing prominence in Canada (Lin & Chen, 2014; Beck, 2012). According to The Canadian Magazine of Immigration (2016), “On December 31st 2015, 356,574 international students were present in Canada –an increase of 191% compared with December 31st 2000” (para 1). China represented the top source country, with the number of students reaching as high as 120,339 (para 3).

The regional origin and the purposes for study in Canada have changed over time. It is interesting to note that in 1948, “the regions of origin of international students were more evenly distributed than today” (Guo et al., 2010, p. 76). Students came from Asia, Europe, Latin America, and other regions in North America. In contrast, the recent CBIE

statistics (2016) show that Chinese students in Canada outnumbered international students from other regions, representing 33% of the total.

With students coming from different regions worldwide, the internationalization of education in Canada contributes to the development of understanding of all students, educators, school administrators and policy makers about diverse cultures, worldviews and knowledge (ACDE, 2014). ACDE (2014) emphasizes that the internationalization of education promotes students, educators and school leaders' preparation for multicultural educational practices. Educators and schools could employ international collaborative practices that result in students' mutual growth and multicultural awareness (p. 3).

However, in recent periods, educational activities aiming at improving international understanding and cooperation have shrunk considerably, whereas more educational practices are driven by economic rationales and market profits (Guo et al, 2010). Guo et al. (2010) argue that receiving-countries are quickly entering into the market of international students, as their contribution to national economies is significant. For instance, Canada "derives \$8B annually from international student expenditures including tuition and living expenses. The presence of international students created over 83,000 jobs and generated over \$291M in government revenue (2009)" (CBIE, 2014, para 5, 6). Global Affairs Canada (2015) reported, "International students in Canada provide immediate and significant economic benefits to Canadians .... Data for 2012 show that 265,400 international students spent a total of

some \$8.4 billion in communities across Canada, helping sustain 86,570 Canadian jobs.” (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2016). Guo et al. further mention that driven by such significant economic benefit incentive, the competition for international students is escalating.

Apart from the economic rationales, education is increasingly becoming “space-making technologies that cut across national borders, enrolling foreign subjects as producers of knowledge in various fields” (Ong, 2003, p. 49). Canada as a country with low demographic growth also hopes to recruit top talents worldwide. Canada is using the ‘brain return’ strategies to recruit international students and encourages them to stay after their higher education (Guo et al, 2010, p. 76). The focus on international students has expanded from their short-term contributions to the economy, to their human capital potential as permanent skilled immigrants (Arthur & Flynn, 2011, p. 223). According to the Government of Canada, skills, Canadian work experiences, language ability and Canada higher education experiences are all valued in the application of immigration (<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/express-entry/grid-crs.asp#pointsA>). University degrees in some licensed and needed fields (e.g., pharmacy, medicine, law, etc) facilitate international students’ immigration (<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/express-entry/grid-crs.asp#pointsA>). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC, 2010), one priority of their jobs is to recruit highly skilled newcomers who are likely to succeed in Canada and to promote the nation’s economic growth, long-term prosperity, and global

competitiveness (cited in Gopal, 2016, p. 133).

In line with the national developing strategies in Canada, Ong (2003) argues that “education is an expression of technical power involved in the production of modern knowledges and the strategic training of knowledgeable subjects in relation to specific political interests” (p. 49). Under such a context, Ong further raises a key issue in the internationalization of education, “What is at stake in the educational circuits and centers are the proliferation of new global values and norms about what it is to be human—as citizen-subject, calculative actor, global professional[s]” (p. 50). In my view, a danger in current educational discourse orients education at cultivating competitive and professionally successful talents rather than other ethical and humanistic concerns (e.g., students’ learning interests, preferences, differences and needs, etc) (Ong, 2003).

What is mentioned above mainly focuses on the scope of higher education. More recently, internationalization has become “a more common phenomenon in secondary schools, serving as a tool to provide youth with cosmopolitan capital and relevant capabilities for the future” (Yemini, 2014, p. 471). Similarly, Li (2014) highlights that the ages of Chinese international students in North America are becoming younger and younger as more students are coming to study abroad in secondary schools. Very few studies about international education have been conducted in Canadian international secondary schools, even with the growing numbers of Chinese international students attending secondary schools (CBIE, 2014; Popadiuk, 2010). Therefore, more research



needs to be conducted in this area in order to understand how Chinese students navigate their lives in Canadian secondary schools, and what challenges and concerns are present in their daily practices.

### **Recent Background of the Internationalization of Education in China**

The history of international education in China relates to the development of China's economy. China encountered a severe economic predicament after a series of ambitious political and social movements and natural disasters in 1960s (Retrieved from <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64190/65724/4444925.html>). In 1966, the Cultural Revolution broke out, during which period everything foreign was strongly criticized. From 1966 to 1976, China had almost completely closed all the connections with outside world. After 1976, the Chinese government was shocked by the rapid development of other countries, which drove an urgent need to improve its backward position and to catch up with developed countries (Du, 2001). China's post-Mao drive aimed to "give China the competitive edge in the world economy, enabling it to catch up with the West" (Greenhalgh, 2008, p. 361).

The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in 1978, where Deng Xiaoping confirmed his leadership position, was a turning point for China's carrying out the opening-to-the-outside policy (Du, 2001). Ong (1999) highlights that after Deng Xiaoping came to power, social nationalism was repositioned through a reengagement with global capitalism. Deng Xiao Ping implemented various policies and practices to promote the development of China's economy according to the market needs. China followed "the Asian development model whereby 'strong state regimes' are

engaging in facilitating fast capitalist growth” (p. 38). Under this social context, during the early 1980s, waves of ethnic Chinese went to Canada, Australia, and the United States to seek economic opportunities for family prosperity and nation revitalization (Ong, 1999; Ong, 2006). Ong (1999, 2006) points out that this was a big wave of Chinese students to study abroad.

Meanwhile, during this period, the curriculum and pedagogy in China also absorbed elements from other places worldwide. Since 1977, educational theories have been selected mostly from Western developed countries (e.g., the US, the UK, and Canada) and were adapted to fit the special context of China and its government educational planning reforms (Deng, 2011). Since the 1980s, the Chinese government has launched a series of basic education reforms. Those reforms have reoriented the system from traditional curricular orientations towards a focus on knowledge and skills that are perceived as the requisites for globalized knowledge and information-saturated economies. The Chinese government has shifted the emphasis of teacher-centered pedagogy to student autonomy and from knowledge transmission to knowledge construction (Liu & Fang, 2009). In this sense, the curriculum content and pedagogical practices in China have been becoming internationalized. Developments in the internationalization of Chinese curriculum and pedagogy, in my view, relate to learning preferences and characteristics of modern Chinese international students.

*The Outline for Reform and Development of Education in China*, being issued in 1993 (CCPCC and State Council 1993) increased attention towards internationalization (Wang, 2014). Wang (2014) further explains that,

[it] also proposed specific strategies toward achieving this end, including (1) promoting international academic exchange and cooperation; (2) permitting

cooperation between Chinese and foreign universities in running institutions; (3) encouraging Chinese students to study overseas and to contribute to the modernization process in China either by returning to China or by other means; (4) streamlining the admission process to Chinese universities for foreign students; and (5) promoting TCFL. (chapter 1, article 4) (pp. 13-14)

After the enactment of this policy document, more Chinese students studied in other countries. Various forms of cooperative educational programs were established in China.

After decades of development, presently, China has become an emerging power in the global arena. In recent years, Wang (2012) mentions, in order to let China gain a competitive edge in the market for skilled labor, the official emphasizes the source and composition of human capital must be further internationalized in order "...to attract and utilize a large number of talented people from abroad. Also, the concept and quality of human capital need to be internationalized because it can demonstrate that the country has the capacity to cultivate homegrown talent to compete overseas" (p. 2). This social context promotes the continuous development of international education (Wang, 2012). In the next section, I explain some of the possible reasons why secondary school Chinese students study in Canada.

### **Reasons for Chinese International High School Students Studying in Canada**

After the analysis of the development of internationalization of education in Canada and in China, this section explores possible reasons for high school Chinese international students' transnational mobility. Soong (2016) has highlighted that the motivation for transnational mobility is individualized, "...grounded on personal and family choices where transnational activities are more selective" (p. 36).

Notwithstanding, in general, in recent years Canada has been seen as an ideal country for

Chinese international students to acquire their high school education. According to Education in Canada (2014), Canada is represented as a safe, multicultural and friendly country for many Chinese families to send their children abroad.

Further, the tuition in Canada is much lower than that in the U.S. and the UK. Consequently, more and more Chinese students study in Canada for their secondary schooling as the starting-point of their international education (Education in Canada, 2014). Different from undergraduate or graduate students, Chinese international high school students need to continue their education in Canada or other developed countries for many years; therefore, tuition and living expenses are significant concerns for many Chinese families. Beyond the reasons listed above, recent literature focuses on other reasons for Chinese students' transnational mobility.

### **Value of Canadian (Western) Education**

Western developed countries are ideal places for Chinese parents and children to pursue their dreams because they value the supremacy of Western civilization, wealth and democracy (Ong, 1999). Ong (2003) states that elites "[seek] to accumulate world-class degrees and certifications that will open the door to a successful career in the international arena" (p. 50). Chinese students' international education experiences and family expectations speak to Ong's view. With the development of China's economy, many affluent families that have already accumulated wealth send their children abroad

to gain forms of symbolic capital as university degrees in Western developed countries, refined taste and values. These forms of symbolic capital determine personal and family positions in the society (Ong, 1999). High school credentials become the first steps for Chinese international secondary school students to enter Canadian universities (Li, 2004). In the study of Zhang and Beck (2014), many high school Chinese international students studied in Canada given that the value of Canadian credentials and the mastery of English would enhance their future prospects in the global job market. Generally speaking, affluent Chinese families hope their children to accumulate Western educational qualifications that serve their career development and maintain their social class positioning.

### **The Value of English**

Many Chinese international students study in English speaking countries (e.g., Canada) to improve their English language competencies (Zhang & Beck, 2014). Bourdieu (1991) conceptualizes language itself as a kind of symbolic power, which shapes people's vision of the world (p. 170). Globalization heightens the uses and positions of English language. In Zhang and Beck's study (2014), one girl named Joyce said, "Now in China many companies require quite a high level of English.... I wanted to improve my English in Canada. In addition, my father doesn't care too much about my degree. He thinks if I could learn English well that would be good enough" (p. 6). Soong

(2016) even argues that many Chinese international students relate their English language competencies to their self-worth or social image. Therefore, studying in an English-speaking environment in Canada contributes to heightening Chinese international students' self-worth.

### **Pressures from Gao Kao (National College Entrance Examination)**

A large group of Chinese international students study in Canada to escape the Gao Kao (The Chinese National College Entrance Exam) (You & Hu, 2013, p. 309). Since the debut of Gao Kao in 1950, “this test has been officially stipulated as the sole college admissions criteria for most of the time to ensure that only those who have reached the Gao Kao cut-off scores for higher institutions will be admitted” (You & Hu, 2013, pp. 309-310). Under such an institutional context, Zhang and Beck (2014) expound that in China, the university education decides the future of students given heated competitions in the society. Students enroll in universities on the condition that they win high scores in Gao Kao. Students' failures in Gao Kao may incur economic loss and shame to their families given that educational qualifications become barriers in their career development.

International education provides another option for Chinese international students to access top universities in the world. In Zhang and Beck's study (2014), some participants expressed their feeling of luck to escape Gao Kao through their international

education. For example, one girl named Cindy said, “[By coming to Canada] I avoided taking part in Gao Kao, a big disaster [for] many Chinese students.” (p. 7). Another Chinese girl named Joyce shared the similar feeling, “I may probably fail in Gao Kao and felt very lucky [that] I could go to a college without taking it here in Canada.” (p. 7). Avoiding the stress and potential humiliation from Gao Kao become the important reasons for secondary school Chinese students from affluent families to study abroad. Chinese families strategize the most advantageous educational plans and international education becomes a backdoor for their children to achieve world-recognized university degrees (Crabb, 2010; Zhang & Beck, 2014).

Moreover, given the existence of standardized tests in China (e.g., Gao Kao), all the Chinese high school students face extreme pressures so that they aspire for relief. In Li’s narrative inquiry (2004), a girl named Mei complained that she could not stand the pressured academic life in China anymore because she studied every day until midnight as well as during weekends. Further, in order to help students achieve high scores in Gao Kao, Chinese teachers prefer to use a tedious teaching mode—duck-feeding or spoon-feeding teaching, which requires students to be passive learners who just memorize all the knowledge that teachers have taught. Under such an oppressive learning environment, students could not learn based on their interests (Li, 2004). In Li’s study, Mei and other participants hoped to enjoy a relaxing and interesting life through studying in a Canadian high school.

## **Immigration**

A large number of Chinese international students who study in Canada are driven not just by economic reasons or the desire to escape from study pressures, but they are also attracted by immigration policies. Canadian educational and work experiences facilitate their easier immigration (Guo et al, 2010; Arthur & Flynn, 2011). Arthur and Flynn (2011) point out that immigrants more easily find jobs in Canada, which explains why some international students hope to immigrate given the whole family's expectations for their career development and affluent lives in Canada. So, international education becomes a shortcut for them to immigrate and immerse into the host society.

To summarize, given the desire to get a better education, relief for study pressures and the pursuit for better lives through immigration, Chinese international students study in Canada. Transnational mobility may provide them with more flexibility and favorable conditions in China and in Canada. In the next section, I analyze the literature on how Chinese international students live in transnational spaces during their international education and what forces keep molding their identities.

## **Chinese International Students' Experience and Identity Formation**

International education contributes to students' personal growth and their career development (Murphy, 2007). The ACDE's (2014) position paper highlights that international education enriches and enhances educational experiences for all students.



The ACDE further adds, “principled practices of internationalization of education create opportunities for collaborative knowledge production, exposure to different contexts and worldview, more complex and nuanced analyses, and improved capacity to respond to change and diversity” (p. 3). Students’ sophisticated worldviews and multicultural awareness through international education facilitates their personal growth and becoming (Murphy, 2007). Also, through the international education, many Chinese international students achieve credentials and qualifications they need for the future career success (Li, 2004). Admittedly, international education serves students’ self-development, though challenges still exist such as social and cultural assimilation, discrimination, stereotyping, study pressures, financial concerns, homesickness and the feeling of nostalgia, loneliness, and expectations from their family and themselves (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 117, Soong, 2016). A myriad of complex factors influences Chinese international students’ identity formation.

First, in their international education, social interaction and assimilation both emerged as the central themes in Chinese international students’ experiences (Coward, 2014), which implies certain tensions. In an English language education system, some local teachers, administrators and student servicing personnel, believe that they have little to consider or learn from other cultures or students from other language contexts (Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Wu, in press). Many strategies for teaching Chinese international students “are premised on the idea there is something wrong with them—

that they or their learning methods or social relations, are ‘in deficit’” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 22). For instance, according to Foulkord and Ma (2014), in North America, critical thinking and active participation are the necessities in students’ learning, while silence is associated with resentment and disobedience. However, many Chinese students do not participate actively given their former more disciplined and structured learning environment. Chinese students’ silence is less contributive to performance and evaluation in their international education (Wu, in press). Also, it is noteworthy that in the study of Foulkord and Ma, some professors always encouraged or demanded students’ critical thinking in classes, whereas they were more likely to be concerned about local students’ class discussions. Dissatisfied Chinese international students, as the minority group, are less likely to complain due to power relations in the educational system (e.g., educators’ power and students’ fear of negative evaluation) (FitzPatrick, Davey & Dai, 2012; Wu, in press).

Further, research on international students’ experience identifies language learning as a major challenge for Chinese international students in academic settings. Chinese students need to pass the language proficiency test (e.g., IELTS) in order to be admitted into academic programs (Soong, 2016). In the process of preparing for language proficiency tests, Chinese international students undergo many difficult experiences that can be arduous and even humiliating (Zhang & Beck, 2014). Meanwhile, even if they have passed the language tests, they still need to greatly

improve their practical English language competencies (e.g., English public speaking skills) in order to get success in different academic programs (Coward, 2014).

Under such conditions, most Chinese international students try to conform to the local academic requirements. For instance, if Chinese international students cannot meet the academic requirements or fail in any courses or language admission tests, they often re-enroll in another study period or take the language test again and again—their failures in course learning and language tests incur additional expenses for living and tuition that many students may find very hard to stand (Soong, 2016).

Nevertheless, although Chinese students try to be integrated into the host-society, they still feel suppressed or are mostly situated in peripheral positions as guests in the country of settlement (Coward, 2014) as their home-culture and home-space are always the integrated parts of them (Ong, 1999). As Sawir et al. (2008) argue that Chinese students are those individuals who are not only nationally defined, but also socially and culturally defined because of their former living environment. If “...the responsibility is often left to students to ‘adjust’ or ‘adapt’ to the host culture rather than for institutions to understand and try to accommodate [according to] their unique needs” (Lee & Rice, 2007, pp. 381, 385), Chinese students may feel isolated and lonely in their transnational lives (Soong, 2016). All these feelings may, conversely, result in their adherence to their Chinese friends and relatives in China or in the host society to seek some emotional support (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). My study not just investigated what academic and

other life requirements were for eleven Chinese international secondary school students in Canada and what their challenges were, but also explored how to create a more supportive learning environment.

Second, some deficit views and stereotypes in the host society may also generate tensions in Chinese students' transnational lives (Soong, 2016). Scholarship, such as Hu and Smith (2014) and Wu (in press), emphasize that, influenced by Confucian values, some Chinese international students prefer to follow teachers' instructions and learn through memorization. They feel stressed and uncomfortable in open and active discussions in and out of classes, critical thinking, or learning through exploration as emphasized in their daily school lives in North America. Undeniably, these views may be the reality in some classrooms. Nevertheless, the cultural learning characteristics or habits referred above may reinforce common stereotypical views on Chinese students without careful examination of students' heterogeneity.

Discomfort may arise from these stereotypes because Chinese international student's learning attitudes, individuality, motivations, and preferences vary. Personal learning characteristics of diverse Chinese students relate to their personal socio-cultural backgrounds (Behera & Patra, 2012; Gordon, 2014). For instance, Hu (2003), Hayhoe, Mundy (2008) and Wu (in press) state that many Chinese international students from coastal or developed regions and better-off families are familiar with Western critical, collaborative, explorative and creative learning styles. In addition, the study of Dyball et

al. (2010) shows that Asian students actually enjoy interactive discussion-based learning rather than teacher-centered mode (cited in Soong, 2016). Soong (2016) further critiqued the stereotypical views on Chinese international students who always prefer rote learning and are passive in class interaction. Chinese students' silence or the insufficient participation in classes may originate from the lack of interests in the content taught rather than shyness or modesty (Ouyang, 2004). However, many studies simply concluded that inactive participation of Asian students in classes has created teaching and learning problems for students themselves as well as academic staff. Such stereotypical views may make Chinese students feel uncomfortable (Soong, 2016, p. 54). Byrd Clark (2012) mentions, "Canada has a growing number of youth with multiple, overlapping identities" (p. 153). She further highlights that the multiple and heterogeneous students' identities relate to their particular life experiences. I, as the researcher, was attentive to heterogeneities in participant students' academic and life histories rather than assumed homogeneity and stereotypes in my participant students. Chinese international students' heterogeneity affects their unfolding futures.

Third, some Chinese international students' cling to feelings of nostalgia so they still maintain the home cultural lifestyle in their international contexts (Soong, 2016). According to Soong's study (2016), some migrant students who adopted a Western lifestyle in their home country began to appreciate their home cultures and became aware of the significance of their home cultural identities in the foreign country. Some of them

led a Western style way of life in the public, while maintaining their home cultural styles in their private life. Their feeling of nostalgia sometimes led to their loneliness and stickiness to their family members and friends in the Chinese space.

Fourth, another important challenge for Chinese international students comes from high expectations from their families and themselves. This relates to one-child policy (Tan, 2012) as well as the “credential capitalism” (Kim, Brown & Fong, 2015, p. 271) in China. Most of the students in my study were between 17-19 and did not have any siblings because of China’s one-child policy that was implemented from 1979 to restrict the population growth. Under such a social context, in order to prepare their children for the competitive globalized world, most Chinese families push their only child to achieve high academic performance as well as a variety of skills (Tan, 2012). Chinese parents are willing to make high investments on the education of the only child who is expected to be the sole bearer of the whole life dreams (Chow & Zhao, 1996, p. 56). Chinese parents even “...conjures their visions of [family] future- dreams and nightmares- around the academic success or failure of their only child...” (Crabb, 2010, p. 387).

Further, parents’ expectations also relate to the emphasis on the credential capitalism in China. According to Kipnis (2011), in China, credential capitalism refers to a prestigious bachelor’s degree that is considered to be the best route to the ongoing production of capital (e.g., high-paying jobs, prestige, and social connections) (cited in

Kim, Brown & Fong, 2015, p. 274). Kim, Brown and Fong (2015) further state that Chinese parents invest heavily on children's education so as to help them achieve credentials for their future development. Under parents' high expectations, the only children "are inspired by a sense of filial responsibility" (Crabb, 2010, p. 396) to strive for their parents' happiness and family prosperity and thereby sustain great pressure (Deutsch, 2006; Short, Zhai, Xu & Yang, 2001).

Fifth, many Chinese students may rely heavily on their parents in decision-making, social lives and other aspects before and during their international education. There are two main reasons for this phenomenon. First, even if Chinese international students study abroad, they are still influenced by traditional Chinese family values. Deutsch (2006) points out "Chinese children were inculcated with the values of filial piety toward their parents, which included respect, obedience, and the obligation to care for elderly parents and respond to their needs" (p. 367). Under such family and social contexts that emphasize the obedience to elders, Chinese parents play key roles in their children's academic choices (Kim, Brown & Fong, 2015).

Additionally, Chinese parents give the only children all-round care at home before their international education (Short, Zhai, Xu & Yang, 2001). According to Chen (2003), parents of only-children demonstrate higher care and caution in the process of raising their children, although it may bring hardship in everyday lives of Chinese international students. In the critical incident study of Popkdiuk (2010), one participant

student who studied in Vancouver said in an interview that her parents did all the house chores for her. When studying in Canada, the student did not know how to take care of herself and felt very frustrated (p. 1533). In my view, Chinese international students may learn how to live independently eventually, though in the very beginning, their long-term reliance on parents seems to bring challenges for them.

Further, Chinese children's reliance also is embodied in the emotional level, which may make their international life arduous. Chinese parents are very attentive to the needs of the only children, which may result in students' emotional reliance (Chen, 2003, p. 75). Popkdiuk's study (2010) shows that in their international education in Canada, many Chinese international students still believed that families and close friends are in the best positions to talk about their emotional challenges, which resulted in their isolative and immobile situations (p. 1525). I inquired into my participants' family lives and the relationships with their Chinese friends before and during their stay in the international school.

Last but not the least, notwithstanding Chinese parents' over-protection, care and involvement in their children's decision-making, Chinese international students still have physically left their family and social networks in the country of origin, so they gradually lessen their close relationships with parents and friends and can feel disoriented. Sometimes, they appear to be positioned as neither insiders nor outsiders in both the country of settlement and country of origin (Soong, 2016). After staying in a foreign



country for some period, some migrant students may feel they are located in "...between the transnational space of [their] 'roots' and 'routes'" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 190; Soong, 2016). *Roots* in this thesis relates to Chinese migrant students' connections with the previous 'local,' while *routes* implicate all the mobilities in their transnational lives. As referred above, Chinese international students sometimes are situated in peripheral positions as guests in the host society (Coward, 2014). Meanwhile, migrant students also encounter similar tensions in their country of origin due to the hardship in maintaining social connections and changes in their identities (Soong, 2016).

The in-between status makes migrant students find "...themselves in a 'relational deficit,'" which has generated their loneliness (Sawir et al., 2008, p. 149). According to the study of Soong (2016), some Chinese students might be able to maintain strong transnational ties over prolonged periods, while others may have such experiences that their family and social bonds have weakened more rapidly than what they anticipated. However, most international students, especially Chinese teenagers, still prefer the support from their friends and family members rather than relying on institutional support from schools (Soong, 2016, p. 64; Popadiuk, 2009). This habit, to a great extent, has aggravated the sense of loneliness for migrant students.

In general, international education is difficult as it is full of barriers and challenges – though it also presents opportunities for growth and self-formation. Stereotypes, local cultural assimilation, study pressures, Chinese cultural distinctiveness

and loneliness from relational deficits may push Chinese international students back to the same-culture networks in China, Canada or other spaces that provide them with support and stability (Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Li, 2014). Through my field study, I illuminated such possibilities and challenges along Chinese international secondary school students' self-making trajectories across host and home spaces.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, through the literature review, I first discussed the internationalization of education in Canada and in China, which closely relates to broader social and educational contexts that prompt Chinese international students to study abroad, to live their lives between different international spaces, and to reflect upon where to live or work in the future. I further investigated former empirical studies of Chinese international students' transnational experiences when they stayed as newcomers, minority students and outsiders in a host society. According to Soong (2016), migrant students stay mobile, which allows them to fit in and look out. Therefore, they are able to navigate their distinct ways of life. The “push-pull” (p. 147) forces in different transnational spaces not only contributes to Chinese international students' career and life development, but also bring abundant pressures. Guided by other scholars' contributions, my ethnographic field study looked into what possible reasons there were for my participants to study abroad, what their former studies and

social lives were like in China, what opportunities, challenges and pressures emerged in their transnational lives and how they navigated their lives between the home space and the host space to seek their distinct ways of life. In the next chapter, I explain the details of my research methodology and methods.

## **Chapter Four: Research Methodology/Methods**

In my research, I used an interpretive and qualitative methodological approach, which attempted to understand meanings and intentions in my participants' transnational experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Manning and Kunkel (2014) expound that interpretivism is a methodological paradigm with the focus on understanding individuals' interpretations of social actions in authentic contexts (p. 1). My interpretation of this explanation is that in interpretive research methodologies, we, as researchers, need to understand individuals' meanings and intentions based on their social practices, local contexts and wider conditions. With regard to my study, I, as the researcher, not only paid attention to how daily cultural and educational practices became meaningful to my participants and their self-making, but also understood how these practices became meaningful to me, where meaningfulness was always embedded in larger social contexts. Concerning the definition of qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible....qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

As mentioned above, I argue that qualitative research is an interpretive practice based on interpretations from authentic settings. Through the interpretivist-qualitative lens, I draw

deeper insights into how meanings and actions work together in different situations and moments (Manning & Kunkel, 2014, p. 1).

### **Ethnographic Field Study**

Under the broad umbrella of an interpretive and qualitative approach, I conducted ethnographic field research. Regarding the definition of ethnography, Brewer (2000) explains:

Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of methods, which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally. (p. 10)

Consistent with the definition referred to above, I stayed at the site for more than one year, during which period I tried to catch the meanings grounded in real life contexts. The physical site where I conducted my ethnographic field research is a private (for profit) international secondary boarding school in Ontario. I worked in this school as a part-time IELTS and Mandarin teacher for almost three years. Gille (2001) critiques the misrepresentations that an ethnographic single case starts and ends in one locality in transnational social studies. I conducted a single sited ethnography, which by no means signifies that my study involved only one location or space. The school offers an Ontario Secondary School Curriculum from Grades 10 to 12. My focus was on the experience of grade 11 and 12 Chinese international students. The school accepts international students from around the world, but is made up of students predominantly from China. Most of

students in the school begin their studies as ESL (English as a second language) learners and aim to study in universities in North America through university preparation courses. The student services department in the school offers students assistance and guidance in university applications and other life issues (e.g., visa extension).

I tracked the everyday lives of eleven Chinese international students who come from different regions of China. Apart from their studies in the secondary school in Canada, I also investigated the students' former life experiences in China, their practices in online spaces, and social network sites. Therefore, the participant students in my research were connected into different locations where they had once stayed, lived in or been associated with.

With regard to the reasons why I chose ethnography as my research methodology, I want to highlight six aspects. First, I define my study as social and anthropological research. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) have explained, ethnography "is one of many approaches that can be found within social research today" (p. 1). They further point out that since the early twentieth century, ethnographic fieldwork has been central to anthropology. The reason why ethnography is more widely used in social research is that it emphasizes particularization and specificity (Collier & Lakoff, 2005, p. 23). In my view, there exist great complexities and diversities in the lives of Chinese international students. Particularities in each participant's specific transnational experiences were the key standpoints in my ethnographic field inquiry.

Second, one of the unique features about ethnography is that it helped me understand and interpret the meanings in real contexts. Ethnographers capture the meanings on the basis of people's words and actions because meanings are not stable (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 12). Similarly, Marshall, Clemente and Higgins (2014) claim that ethnographic enquiry focuses on *thick descriptions*, which highlight the contextualization of behaviors and attributions of fluid and changing meanings (Geertz, 1973). In relation to my study on 'flexible citizenship', Byrd Clark (2014) argues that identity construction is a dynamic, multifaceted, and complex process. She also states that ethnography reveals some of the complexities, tensions, and instabilities of identity construction in everyday lives. Ethnography afforded access to the eleven students' complex and dynamic identity development in their specific contexts.

Third, ethnography is "a style of research rather than a single method and uses a variety of techniques to collect data" (Brewer, 2004, p. 312). Brewer (2004) further outlines ethnography's repertoire of techniques, which includes in-depth interviews, discourse analysis, document analysis, participant observations, visual methods and online observations. Shumar and Madison (2013) point out that since the mid-decade of the 2000s, many ethnographers have realized that all places are fluid and hybrid, both physical and virtual. Ethnographers are increasingly conducting ethnography that combines virtual and physical elements (p. 263). In my research, Chinese international students inhabited online spaces that helped maintain inextricable and complex

connections with their home and other spaces (Ong, 1999). Therefore, I expanded my ethnographic research from the traditional physical enclosed field to permeable online spaces and communities (i.e., We Chat community, QQ Space, Facebook). With a repertoire of these research tools, I engaged the complexities and depth of my research phenomenon.

Fourth, Hammersley and Atkinson (1990) argue that in ethnography, researchers become co-constructors of the reality, knowledge and all the interpretations. Holmes (2014) concurs that in ethnographic research, researchers and the researched negotiate jointly about the research context, focus, topic and the process by which data is generated and represented (p. 100). In my ethnographic research, my participants understood most about the trajectories and challenges of their individualized experiences in transnational spaces. So I discussed with them about the particular steps in my research, and how they understood their lives and choices.

Fifth, Riemer (2012) argues that the ethnographer is the interpreter of culture from the emic, or the insider's view of reality. This inside perspective was also a significant aspect in my study. I not only relayed the voices from my participants, but also represented the meanings and intentions as accurately as possible to their contexts through abundant discussions with the participants (Marshall, Clemente & Higgin, 2014, p, 16). I tried to avoid the etic perspective, which focuses on "the external, social scientific perspective on reality" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 32).



Sixth, my ethnographic research contributed to, and depended upon, a sufficient degree of positive rapport, trust, and harmonious and nonthreatening relationship between my participants and myself. This was crucial for my data collection. In the very beginning of my study, my participants were curious, though somehow cautious, to express their ideas. Through long-term staying with them in the school and extracurricular activities out of school, we built up a trusting and friendly relationship. After several months working together, they invited me to different activities they attended, chatted with me online and talked with me when they felt happy or worried. Also, I had to admit that given my Chinese identity, it seemed to be easier to build the trust because we shared similar home culture, experiences, social views, and transnational routes. In my view, such trust and mutual rapport served for the emic perspectives in understanding the authentic feelings (e.g. confusion, joy, frustrations, etc.) of the participants' learning and becoming in the Canadian international secondary school.

I have explained six reasons why I chose ethnography, as it best fits my research purpose and contributes to my deep understanding about the authentic transnational experiences of my participants' lives.

### **Ethical Issues in Qualitative Ethnography**

Ethical issues were the first step in my ethnographic field study. First, I strictly adhered to Western's ethical protocol. The Letter of Information (See Appendix I) was sent to my participants (i.e. classroom teachers, students, administrators and other support-staff) with some clarifying comments. Once the purposes and procedures of my research were made clear to the participants, they were invited to sign the Consent Form (See Appendix I). With regard to the student participants, nine of them were above 18 years old, while another two were 17 when they joined in my research project. For the latter group, I requested a waiver of consent from their parents who lived in China. They were mature enough to decide whether they agreed to participant in my research. Ten teachers or school administrators participated in my study. No physical or mental risks were involved in my study.

I maintained the privacy and confidentiality of all of my participants and the school involved. Pseudo names were given to the student participants, the teacher or administrator participants, and the affiliated institutions. The real names were not disclosed. In order to keep their Chinese identities, the student participants were given Chinese names. Data were stored in a secure way accessible only to my supervisory committee and me. Throughout my research, the participants had opportunities to reflect explicitly on their learning and becoming in relation to their daily practices or experiences. The mutual maintenance of the trust between the researcher and the

researched was a key tenet of ethical concern in my ethnographic study (Marshall, Clemente & Higgin, 2014).

### **Data Collection**

Regarding the data collection, I used multiple methods, or triangulation, to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5) in my research. Because of my social constructivist and interpretivist epistemologies, data were “collected on an ongoing, iterative basis” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 599) from the research site. I stayed at the site from April 2016 to May 2017 to collect and analyze data.

Afterwards, I visited the site occasionally and did member checks online until July, 2017.

My ethnographic field study was divided into three periods. The first period was from April 2016 to August 2016. The second period lasted the whole autumn semester, from September 2016 to December 2016. The third period, from January 2017 to May 2017, spanned the spring semester. In order to ensure depth in my qualitative study, I did not recruit a large number of students. Altogether eleven students (See Figure 4.1) participated in my study—ten students joined in the first period and another girl took part in the mid-August 2016. Eight participants were my former students and three were recruited in the process of my class observations. No participants were my students when I conducted my research. In order to triangulate the source of the data, I also interviewed

and talked with some classroom teachers, administrators or student servicing staff (See Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.1**

Note: In the beginning of this study, I asked all the participants about their ages, hometowns, family situations and how long they had stayed in Canada. Most participants' places of origin are situated in capital, coastal cities that are the most developed and internationalized regions in China, albeit a few participants are from inland and less developed regions (Shanxi, Yunan, and Nanning) in China. In addition, I also considered the life experiences of both boy and girl students coming from different geographical and family backgrounds.

<b>Male students from inland and less developed regions in China</b>		
<b>Name (Male)</b>	<b>Chen</b>	<b>Hao</b>
<b>Hometown</b>	Xinzhou ShanXi	YunNan
<b>Age</b>	20	20
<b>Length of staying in Canada</b>	2 years	2 years
<b>Parent's jobs And siblings</b>	Father: Businessmen Mother: Government officer	Father: Researcher Mother: Researcher
<b>Simple Introduction</b>	Chen was pushed by his parents to study in Canada and work in big cities in China or Canada later rather than the small town where he came from. Studying abroad was not what he ever wanted. He always resorted to	Hao studied in Canada because he failed in Gaokao two times. He had to pursue his goal (career success) in Canada. He had the strong attachment to Chinese social circles and was always

	QQ and We Chat online spaces to express his struggles in English language learning and social lives in Canada.	willing to help his Chinese friends.
<b>Name</b>	Lei	
<b>Hometown</b>	Nanning, GuangXi	
<b>Age</b>	17	
<b>Length of staying in Canada</b>	2 years	
<b>Parent's jobs And siblings</b>	Father: Professor/engineer Mother: Retired	
<b>Simple Introduction</b>	Lei pursued his dream according to his interest in art. His family gave him lots of freedom to pursue his dream.	
<b>Girl students from Capital, coastal and developed cities in China</b>		
<b>Name</b>	Lan	Li
<b>Hometown</b>	Wuxi JiangSu	Suzhou/Shanghai
<b>Age</b>	18	19
<b>Length of staying in Canada</b>	1 year	1 years
<b>Parent's jobs And siblings</b>	Father: Engineer Mother: Teacher	Father: Businessman Mother: Housewife
<b>Simple Introduction</b>	Lan was very lonely in Canada because of high family expectations. All her family members regarded her international education as an investment for her future.	Li pursued higher academic goals (squeezing into the most competitive major and Canadian universities). However, after suffering from insomnia for several months because of the study pressure, she stopped to push herself harder. She returned back to China every several months given that she loves the city, Suzhou, where her family settled down.
<b>Name</b>	Lin	Qi
<b>Hometown</b>	Beijing	Fuzhou Fujian

<b>Age</b>	18	17
<b>Length of staying in Canada</b>	1 year	0.5 year
<b>Parent's jobs And siblings</b>	Father: Real estate manager Mother: Many different jobs	Father: Bank manager Mother: Government officer
<b>Simple Introduction</b>	Lin always loves city life, so she was not satisfied with the quiet town life in the school. She agreed with her mom's choice that her international education was mainly for immigration.	Qi relied heavily on her mom and had strong filial feelings for her parents. She followed every step that her mom set for her in the international education. Qi studied very hard in Canada.
<b>Boy students from coastal and developed cities in China</b>		
<b>Name</b>	Qiang	Song
<b>Hometown</b>	Shenzhen	Shenzhen
<b>Age</b>	18	20
<b>Length of staying in Canada</b>	1 year	2 years
<b>Parent's jobs And siblings</b>	Father: Businessman Mother: Businesswoman One brother 8 years old	Father: Senior manager Mother: Businesswoman
<b>Simple Introduction</b>	Qiang paid lots of attention to broaden his social circles in Canada and in China and such awareness came from his family business contexts in China. He always thought about how to use his social connections to make himself to be a successful businessman in the future.	Song felt very lost and disappointed about his international education. He always wanted to rely on others (his parents, Chinese agencies and friends). He had a tense relationship with his parents given his dissatisfactory learning achievements in Canada and his parents' high expectations.
<b>Name</b>	Le	Hui
<b>Hometown</b>	Shenzhen	Shenzhen

<b>Age</b>	18	18
<b>Length of staying in Canada</b>	2 years	2 years
<b>Parent's jobs And siblings</b>	Father: Businessman Mother: Businessman One brother 10 years old	Father: Vice-principal of a secondary school Mother: Teacher
<b>Simple Introduction</b>	Le attached strongly with his parents and little brother. He made slow learning progress in Canada, though he did not feel dismayed because his family did not push him so hard. He just wanted to learn something useful in a Canadian college.	Hui described himself as a Chinese patriot and communist. He highly regarded brotherhood relationships with other Chinese friends in Canada. He always learned Chinese culture, history and politics when he stayed in the Canadian high school.

**Figure 4.2**

<b>Teacher and Administrators</b>	
English 3U course teachers	Mr. Brian and Mr. Davies
English 4U course teacher	Mrs. Anna
Administrators and teachers	Mr. David He is in charge of the academic programs and discipline of students within the school. Mr. Ben Mr. Ben stayed in Asia for many years so he is somewhat familiar with Chinese culture. He works as a guidance counselor who focuses on course selections, course planning and university applications. Mr. Ben invites universities and colleges to make introductions in the school and discusses with students about what they want to study. He also helps students develop learning skills and transfer the skills from the high school to universities and later to

	<p>jobs.</p> <p>Mr. Green, Mrs. Irene, Mrs. Joanna Mr. Green is a Canadian teacher who studied in China for many years. He could speak fluent Mandarin. Mrs. Irene and Mrs. Joanna are from China.</p> <p>They take care of international students' lives outside classrooms. They arrange students' airport pickup, residence rooms, medical insurance, adjustment, and make sure that when students come, they feel welcome. They help students familiarize with the school neighborhood and do the transition. They also arrange the experiences for students in different cultural activities.</p> <p>Mrs. Cathy, Mrs. Jones (They are from China.) They are International Language teachers (Mandarin) and guidance counsellors for academic affairs (e.g., university applications).</p>
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The above diagrams give a brief introduction of all my participants. I tracked the life trajectories of my participant students through three periods. During the first and second periods, I stayed at the site up to five hours every week, during which time I observed the participant students' performances in classes (See Appendix II), their interaction with other students and teachers, their assignments or other school related artifacts, as well as their involvement in the school or community activities.

During the same period, I conducted online observations (See Appendix II) of students' virtual communities (e.g. QQ spaces, We Chat). Students knew my "online presence", which, to some extent, might affect some of their actions online. For example,



they might be cautious to make some sensitive complaints that actually revealed their true feelings about their daily lives. Therefore, in light of this, the anonymity and trustful relationships became extremely important regarding how genuine the data I was able to obtain. In my view, after the trust had been built up, my participants felt comfortable to post whatever they hoped to express. I took the field notes of my observations. Patton (2002) points out that observations, which enable inquirers to see things that may be routinely overlooked among people in the natural setting, help us understand and capture the context (p. 262). I discovered and explored key issues from the site observations. I only collected the data on those student participants and teachers who had given their informed consent. I did not collect any data on other students or teachers, who were present at the site or in the online communities.

Close to the end of the first and second period, one round of semi-structured one-on-one interviews (See Appendix III, Appendix IV, Appendix V) were conducted with the participant students, their classroom teachers and administrators, and the support-staff in order to make deeper explorations for more details about key issues or critical incidents emerging from my observations, the literature and other sources. Each interview length varied from 30 minutes to around one hour. Apart from the interviews, based on the weekly observations, I conducted short informal face-to-face or online talks with students and teachers or administrator participants. In the third period, I focused on

the member-checks and kept on tracking students' lives, especially for their university admissions. Small unrecorded talks with students were involved.

Meanwhile, in order to get a better understanding of Chinese international students' transnational experiences that are embedded in the broad social, economic, cultural and political contexts, I investigated relevant educational policies and school documents (See Appendix VI). Through my observations, interviews, informal talks and document analysis, I not only had collected data about students' experiences before and during their stay in Canada, but also investigated power discourses in specific contexts that inform their self-making.

### **Data Analysis**

I took field notes in the process of my observations. Most of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Four teacher participants did not want to their talk to be audio-recorded, so I took notes with pen during the interviews and transcribed afterwards. Transcriptions were contextualized in the dynamics of the real situations (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 426). Consistent with my social constructivist epistemological perspectives, I coded the transcripts based on themes, through which all the data were dissembled, categorized and reassembled. The themes were formed through the theoretical concepts, literature, observations, informal talks and interviews. Regular comparisons between the new data and the existing data were made (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 600) to decide what

issues and themes needed to be further investigated. At the same time, the core variables were identified which “account for most of the data” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 601).

“Saturations are achieved when the coding that has already been completed adequately supports and fills out the emerging theory” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 601). For example, the saturation of the complexities in Chinese international students’ self-making might occur after my sets of deep observations, interviews about the students’ transnational studies and social lives, and some related document analysis. By comparing, synthesizing and interpreting all the data to “maintain a sense of holism” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 427), my findings were more reliable.

### **Reflexivity in Ethnographic Research**

Reflexivity was significant in my ethnographic field study because it was a personal undertaking for both the participants and me (as the researcher) in the fieldwork together (Holmes, 2014, p. 100). Reflexivity “...can be seen as a multifaceted, complex, and ongoing dialogic process,...”, in which meanings are continually evolving (Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014, p. 2). Holmes (2014) explains that reflexivity focuses on constructed and negotiated relationships and different representations. Four aspects were highlighted in my reflexivity in the process of my conducting ethnographic study.

First, Holmes (2014) and Davies (1999) state that the most significant aspect in reflexivity is about relationality in the field study. My ethnographic study was an

ongoing process of relationship building between my participants and me (Holmes, 2014, p. 101). As emphasized above, I was aware of the relationships with my participants, as trust generated more genuine data (Holmes, 2014). I paid critical attention to the influence of my presence on my data collection and interpretation. It was possible that my participants performed differently in front of me across the varied contexts of interaction. Also, the contexts and participants influenced me, as the researcher. The emergent relationships between my participants and me affected how the data were produced and interpreted and ultimately how the findings were represented.

Second, Holmes (2014) emphasizes that reflexivity is embodied in possibilities of representing data. For instance, Holmes indicated that after relationship building and participants' understanding about the research project, they are likely to offer authentic data, so that data may vary in different stages. Accordingly, I reflected on the changes in the meanings and checked with my participants about why they chose the representations in some specific ways. Further, Holmes (2014) contends that participants in ethnographic study have concerns about the representations of their data in culturally, politically, and socially appropriate ways. I was conscious of presenting the data in ways that my participants felt comfortable and preferable.

Third, reflexivity in ethnography relates to the sensitivity in inevitable ambiguities in social relationships (Davies, 1999). These ambiguities signify that some data might be misleading. To illustrate, Davies (1999) suggests, "the development of

multifaceted relationships with some individuals in the field helps to sensitize ethnographers to the possibilities not simply for deliberate deception, but for mutual misunderstanding arising from cultural and sometimes personal differences” (p. 81). Concerning my situation, for instance, some Chinese international students might keep good student images in front of me given their Chinese sense of “face (面子)” concern (social images). So, they might blame others (e.g. friends, parents, teachers, etc) when referring to their own study or life difficulties in Canada. I tried to triangulate the sources of data to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data (Cohen et al., 2011).

Fourth, as Dervin and Byrd Clark (2014) emphasize, “...reflexivity should take place before, during, and after research” (p. 236). They further state one important aspect is that researchers need to “...reflect before, during, and after entering the field on how power ‘circulates’ ...” (p. 236). This reflection, in my view, allows researchers to understand the changes in power relations. For example, I am a Chinese female researcher who did not teach or evaluate participants. So, in the very beginning, I might be positioned in a lower position in comparison with their course teachers and school administrators. After staying at the site with students for a longer period, the power relationship was also likely to change. They might regard me as their friend, a person who had received a lot of education or even a teacher depending on my positions in the power networks. The changes in the power positions both permitted and constrained the students’ revealing of their personal feelings to me. Meanwhile, I might also interpret the

feelings and practices of my participants in different ways given the changes and unfolding contexts and power relations during the research. I, as the researcher, co-constructed and represented my identities with students and vice versa (Dervin & Byrd Clark, 2014, p. 237).

As explained above, researcher(s)' reflexivity is situational and contingent. Therefore, reflexivity required ongoing attention, for example, it required me to go back to the field to consider contradictory and conflicting voices (Dervin & Byrd Clark, 2014, p. 236) both from the participants and within myself.

### **Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness of the Data**

In qualitative research, validity might be addressed through the depth and richness that the data has achieved and the extent of triangulation (Cohen et al., 2011). Likewise, Fetterman (1989, p. 94) states, "Triangulation is the heart of ethnography validity" (as cited in Riemer, 2012, p. 182). As mentioned in my data collection, I used some multiple methods to gather data and to assess the consistency of the findings. Also, the triangulation of the sources of data was used to build a coherent justification for themes in my study (Cresswell, 2009; Denzin, 1970). Moreover, Riemer (2012) argues, "transparency in research methods and analysis improves the credibility and validity of ethnographic reports, as does the inclusion of researcher ..." (p. 163). Regarding

transparency, I collaborated with my participants to decide some important choices in my research (e.g. how to represent the data).

Further, reliability can be “...regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurred in the natural setting...” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 202). In my research, my background inevitably influenced my personal interpretations. But, most often, I focused on the meanings that participants held rather than the meanings that I brought to the research or what other scholars expressed in the literature (Creswell, 2009). For example, in my ethnographic field notes, I wrote down what my interpretations were and then I checked my interpretations and representations with the participants at the site or through online communications (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 209). Discrepancies were investigated in subsequent observations, talks and interviews.

### **Limitations of My Ethnographic Field Study**

First, transferability is also one of the bases of reliability in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011). For me, it is hard to know how the findings of this study are transferable to other similar situations. Nevertheless, I think my contribution is to understand deeply these particular student-participants’ self-making and represent this understanding to other researchers.

Second, somewhat unequal power relations were involved between the participant-students and me (i.e. the researcher). Marshall, Clemente and Higgins (2014)

argue that this unequal power relation can result in "...deception in ethnographic research in the gathering, selection, and dissemination of data" (p. 14). In my ethnographic study, I was a part-time teacher and a PhD student who might be hierarchically superior to my participant students (Holmes, 2014). Dervin and Byrd Clark (2014) point out that researchers have an obligation to respect those powerless individuals (p. 235). It was possible for my participants to feel stressed to express challenges in their transnational experiences or to perform as a different person in front of me. So, a collaborative and trustful relationship was significant in understanding key issues in students' self-making.

Third, students' learning and becoming is a dynamic and ongoing process, which could also be investigated through years of ethnographic field study. Nevertheless, because of the limit of my time and resources in the PhD program, I only used around one year to conduct my field study. It might be the direction of my future research to learn about these students' lives after years of study and work in Canada and in other countries.

This chapter elaborates my research methodology and methods and how I made data analysis. In the next chapter, I give a narrative about the eleven Chinese international students' transnational mobility and lives.



## Chapter Five: Students' Stories

In the first section of this chapter, I profile the backgrounds and experiences of my Chinese participants. Of eleven participants, I represent nine students' experiences that provide saturation in my account of the diversity of experiences. In the second section, I analyze how the students used international education as a 'back door' that might give access to Canadian higher education, job opportunities and further development.

The school is located in City A, a middle-sized city in Ontario, Canada. When a student arrives to the school, the principal and academic staff compare the student's previous studies with Ontario Ministry of Education requirements to determine the student's grade level equivalent (ESLAO, ESLBO, ESLCO, ESLDO, ESLEO —ESL courses, 3U courses—university preparation courses, 4U courses—university preparation courses, 3C courses—college preparation courses, 4C courses—college preparation courses (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000). Students belong to ESL AO, BO, CO, DO, and EO levels are ESL students. EO is the highest English level ESL course, while AO is the lowest. The five ESL courses are based on students' levels of proficiency in English (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007).

Additionally, English and Math placement tests are conducted to ensure that students enter their core courses at the appropriate levels. At my recruitment phase, most of my participants were enrolled in 3U or 4U courses. They were in distinct academic

and life paths given the expectations from their families and themselves. After telling each of their stories, I turn to my own interaction with them as the ethnographic research unfolded.

## **Section One: Stories of my participants**

### **Chen**

Chen is a *reluctant* international student, who is preoccupied with his parents' expectations for success (as illustrated by the song, see figure 5.2). He struggled especially with English. While he left China because of the pressure to succeed academically, he found the pressure from his Canadian high school to be little better (again, largely because of the language barrier). He hoped to do well enough to get into a university and not disappoint his parents and himself.

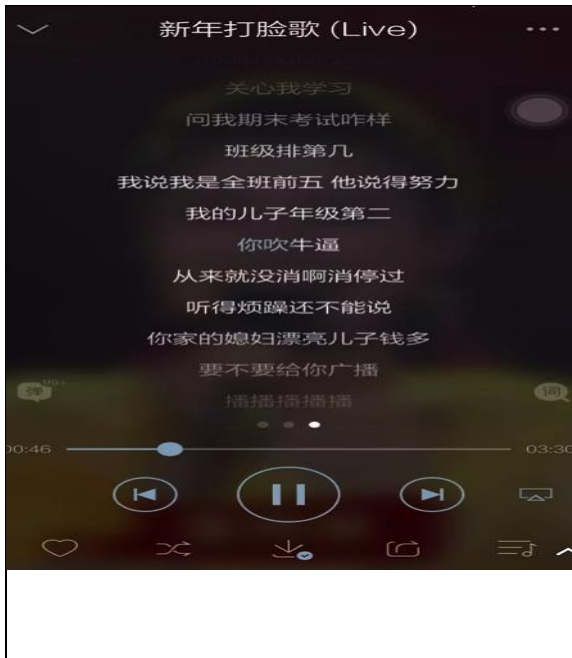
Chen's family has high expectations for him and had made much effort to support his academic studies, though his scores in China were less than satisfactory. So the family had to seek another option. Chen is from Xinzhou (a small city in the north-central section of the inland province of Shanxi in Northern China), where the quality of education is not so desirable. Chen's father is a businessman and his mother is a government officer. For his high school education, his father let him go to the city rather than stay in the small town where he grew up. His family supported Chen's education by buying a small apartment close to his school. His grandparents took charge of all of

Chen's domestic chores. However, despite all the efforts made, Chen did not do well academically, which meant that he probably would not do well in the Gao Kao (National College Entrance Examination).

So, Chen's father encouraged him to study in Canada, since Chen would not be admitted to any high-ranking universities in China nor find a good job in a big city. One friend's daughter who also did not succeed in academics in China did access a decent university in Canada. So Chen's family chose to follow a similar path through studying at the secondary school level in Canada. At the age of 17 (September, 2014), Chen began his international education.

Chen felt pressured from his parents' expectations so sometimes he used songs and online postings to express his inner feelings. For example, before he came back to China for the summer vacation in June 2016, in a Chinese online community (QQ space), he posted a song that conveys Chinese parents' wishes for boys with which he felt much resonance.

**Figure 5. 1**

 <p>新年打脸歌 (Live)</p> <p>关心我学习 问我期末考试咋样 班级排第几 我说我是全班前五 他说得努力 我的儿子年级第二 你吹牛逼 从来就没消啊消停过 听得烦躁还不能说 你家的媳妇漂亮儿子钱多 要不要给你广播 播播播播播</p>	<p><b>New Year “For Face (social image)” Song</b></p> <p>My parents always care about my studies; They always ask about my rankings in classes; I said I ranked five—they asked me to work harder; They told other people, “my son ranked number two!” You guys boasted! You guys never stopped! I felt bored, though I could not complain. You guys always said my daughter-in-law is so beautiful! My son makes so much money! Should I broadcast publicly and loudly for you? I will! I will! I will!</p>
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Although he initially resisted, Chen finally agreed to study in Canada because of his low marks, heavy study pressure and the oppressive learning environment in China.

Chen complained that the teachers in his Chinese high school taught quickly—the amount of knowledge taught within one class might be equal to the amount that his Canadian teachers delivered for one or two weeks. He could not digest and memorize so much knowledge so that his test scores were dissatisfactory. He was done with the unbearable study pressure and oppressive learning environment and decided to study abroad. As Chen claimed,

The study environment in China is so oppressive that my former teachers have very serious relationship with students. I had been commanded to stand out of the classroom for the whole day because I talked with another student when the teacher was teaching. Also, there was one time that I made a joke with a teacher, who was infuriated and used a book to whack me. By contrast, the Canadian teachers in my present high school are so nice and always made jokes with students.

However, almost two and a half years' staying in Canada did not bring Chen much relief because of his mediocre progress in English. Given his insufficient English language competencies, he felt confused and did not have enough capability in understanding class knowledge, active participating and completing assignments. His test scores were not good.

His dissatisfactory tests scores dismayed him greatly. He once thought about transferring to another school in Toronto as some friends got higher scores there. Several times, he even told me, "I want to return back to China and attend Gao Kao because at least the teaching is in Chinese." However, Chen cancelled the plan, as he could not bear the study and social pressures in China as well.

Given the financial support, care and attention from his parents and grandparents, Chen had strong affiliations with China. Every day, Chen contacted his parents. His parents wanted him to work in big cities, to get career success and to uphold the family honor in China. Chen did not want to disappoint their parents. Meanwhile, his Canadian experience reinforced his determination to return back to China where there are many social connections and the styles of life he enjoys. He just wanted to achieve educational qualifications in Canada to become more competitive in the job market in big cities in China.

## **Hao**

Hao is a shy and motivated Chinese international student who persistently pursued his career success, and his interests. His failures in Gao Kao pushed him to study abroad. However, studying in Canada was not as easy as what he had imagined in China.

Having suffered from some torturous learning experiences in China, Hao finally decided to study in Canada at the age of 18. Hao took the Gao Kao twice; however, his scores were not high enough for him to be admitted by any prestigious universities in China. During the first Gao Kao preparation, he did not study hard and was just admitted by a Chinese vocational college. He and his family totally could not accept this result. Having learned from the first failure, he went all out in Gao Kao-oriented training for another year, though he still could not achieve the high scores that were required by high-ranking universities in China. So he had no choice but to study abroad. His parents found an agency that helped Hao find a good school in Canada. He had two choices—one required him to study in a college first for the first two years before studying in another Canadian university. Another option was to start with a Canadian international high school and then make university applications. Hao was unconfident about learning in a Canadian college first given his lack of knowledge in the English language, Western

culture and academic knowledge in general, so in September 2014 he decided to start studying in the international high school.

Hao's learning challenges in Canada related to his insufficient English language competencies and shyness. Most often, he stayed with Chinese friends in and out of classes for the mutual support. He was too shy to make class participation especially when he just arrived. Hao complained, "even if I have some ideas in daily learning, I am less capable to express in English. So, I could not get high scores in all the courses given that active participation is highly emphasized in the school."

Hao was very realistic and persistent. He adhered to the field (i.e., math, finance) in which he might not just study well, but also earn a high income in the future. He was not good at physics and chemistry, which made him less confident in studying science majors in higher education. Finance is a "lucrative" area that he felt interested in. Hao wanted to study in a Canadian university with a good ranking, and afterwards, work in Canada for several years to accumulate more qualifications that make him competitive in the Chinese job market. Hao applied for some mid-ranking universities in Canada given that his average was just around 80. He hoped to be admitted by University D (pseudo name; the university where he studied later) or University of Windsor for their relatively high rankings among all his choices. When he had just joined my research project, he aspired to continue his graduate studies in a top university in Canada. However, close to his graduation in Jan 2017, he felt a little dismayed because other Chinese friends who

were already in some top Canadian universities stood great study pressures, especially when they were not so proficient in English.

Hao pursued his interests in sports. For instance, he likes to ride bicycles. He did not continue this hobby in City A, where there is no big mountain. In his hometown, Yunnan, there are lots of mountains, where he enjoyed bike trips every summer vacation when he returned back to China. In 2015, he went to Vancouver with some Chinese friends who were also mountain bike lovers. Through this tough activity, he learns the spirit of persistence and bravery, which are the qualities that he pursues in academic studies and future jobs.

Hao not only values the family relations, but also tries to maintain good social connections with friends in China and Canada. When Hao stayed in Canada, he still contacted his parents very often. Hao's parents are both researchers in Yunnan (Yunnan is an inland tourist city in the southwest of China). His father could not travel to foreign countries by himself, because he did not have a private passport given his administrative position. He only had a passport for public affairs. So Hao visited his parents once or twice each school year and always posted the family photos in his We Chat space. Before he graduated from the high school in December 2016, he looked forward to the upcoming Chinese New Year, during which period he could meet some old friends and relatives. Before he returned back to China in January 2017, he bought different types of health care products for his parents and grandparents to express his filial love.



Apart from his family members, he also kept close relationships with other friends in Canada. For instance, when his friends returned back to Canada, he helped them book their bus tickets and waited for them until the next day morning at the bus station. During the summer vacation, some other Chinese international students visited him in his hometown. Hao, who is shy, used Facebook to socialize with local Canadian people. During the summer vacation, he posted some pictures to show his Canadian teachers and friends his life in China. He also wants to use Facebook as a platform, through which he could meet more Canadian friends after he enters university. Through his transnational mobility, he has gradually broadened his social circles.

### **Qiang**

Qiang's parents sought business and family development opportunities in a number of different cities in China, so he had already been accustomed to the mobile lifestyle since his was young. His parents are both in business. The whole family moved from an inland province, Hunan, to the economic development zones in Dongguan and, later, Shenzhen. According to Qiang, Dongguan and Shenzhen are two developed coastal cities in China, very close to Hong Kong. Qiang's parents also tried to explore flexible development opportunities for their children. Qiang studied in Canada. Qiang has a younger brother with Hong Kong permanent residency. His mom gave birth to his brother in Hong Kong not just because of the one-child policy in Mainland China, but

also given the expectation of more flexibility and opportunities for the little boy. His parents thought that permanent residents in Hong Kong do not need to apply for visas to many Western developed countries. So, it might be easier for his brother to study or to work abroad. Influenced by the business circumstance in which he grew up, Qiang focused on the practical use of his international education and social lives.

Various sources of pressure (e.g. the nation, his parents, the school and teachers) prompted Qiang to study hard in China and in Canada. In junior middle school, his parents and teachers pushed him to achieve high marks so that he could enter a high-ranking high school where he might achieve high scores in Gao Kao. In China, he learned for extrinsic reasons rather than for himself. However, after the high school examination, his scores were not high enough for him to be accepted by top public schools. His family wanted him to get a western university degree to improve “his worth” and therefore he was enrolled in an international school and later, studied in Canada at the age of 17 in 2015.

In Canada, Qiang studied for a bright future and a worthy life related to “career success.” Different from the situation in China, nobody forced him to study in Canada. Nevertheless, he did not want to lose any opportunities for his “bright future”. He aspired for his success since his parents and he had invested so much money and energy on his international education. Qiang studied hard for good scores for university admission in Canada. He wanted to study in a top business undergraduate program in Canada and a

master program in the US. The pressure for hard work not just came from himself or the expectations of his parents, but also from other social forces. For instance, he had a Chinese girlfriend, whose academic performance was outstanding. Qiang said, “I feel lots of pressures because I hope to convince my girlfriend’s parents that I could give her a bright future”. He practised Taekwondo every week, as he did in China, which cultivated his sportsmanship and inspired his persistence to endure the hardship of his transnational life.

Qiang experienced some differences in his international school. In the international classes in China, the teachers from western developed countries taught the English language courses, while other courses were still given by Chinese teachers. Most of the Chinese teachers still used the *rote-learning* modes through which the knowledge is transmitted to the students. However, Qiang forgot most of the knowledge after mechanically memorizing. By contrast, in Canada he was required to use different styles to learn—lots of knowledge application and independent learning were involved.

Qiang paid attention to his independence, and social and leadership skills that are emphasized both in his family and the Canadian contexts. For Qiang, children from Chinese coastal cities (e.g., Shenzhen) are different from their counterparts from inland cities. He was in a boarding school in China, where he already learned how to live independently at younger ages. In his view, Chinese students from inland regions in China still follow parents’ arrangements at similar ages. Further, Qiang was very good at

socializing because he attended different business occasions with his parents in China. He wanted to learn management or business for the undergraduate program, as some neighbors have hotel businesses where he could take an administrative position after graduation.

In Canada, Qiang found that the social and leadership skills are highly emphasized in the application of business schools. So, Qiang participated in different extracurricular activities (the student council election) and community events (e.g., teaching and learning taekwondo, volunteer) to build himself as a university applicant with strong social, communicative and leadership skills. Qiang felt it was challenging to be immersed into the Canadian local social circles because of cultural differences and language barriers. Qiang created a We Chat community, where students in the school offered help and support to each other. He hoped that these social experiences and connections could help him enter a top business program in Canada and win more career opportunities in the future.

## **Song**

In September 2014, Song came to Canada at the age of 17. Song had lots of complaints about the present school and his parents, which, in my view, can be attributed to his dissatisfaction with his present study situation. He did not know how to change his dissatisfactory situation in Canada.

Prior to his study abroad, Song was tightly controlled by his parents. They had high expectations for his future success. His father is a senior manager in a big company and his mom is a businesswoman. He attended a Chinese public school from grades 1-9. After that, he went to an international school in Shenzhen, which cooperates with his present Canadian international high school. Song argued,

In China, the education is used to filter students—those who study well go to universities, while others do not have a bright future. So, my parents always had a tight control over me since I was very young. They pushed me to attend different after-school tutoring programs in China, though I still did not perform very well. There were some embarrassing moments when my parents pushed me to mechanically memorize the English words to win the vocabulary contests while I just wanted to cry.

All these pressures pushed him to Canada, as he wanted to have a free life; meanwhile, the international education might help him enter a good university to attain his parents' expectation for his success. He missed his parents, but not so much.

Song expressed his discontent about the present school life that was mainly caused by his low scores in all the subjects. He had retaken English CO, EO, 3U courses two times. He felt very sleepy in classes because he could not understand the course content in English. He categorized himself into the middle-level students who always received unfair treatments from some Canadian teachers because they only gave high scores to top students. Song complained,

In the school, some Canadian teachers feel that Chinese students who rank in the middle are irresponsible for our learning because of our grammar mistakes and language inaccuracies. However, our English language foundations are not solid enough for us to avoid language mistakes regardless of how hard we have tried.

Song was worried about his university application, as he did not want to study in low-ranking universities or colleges. Nevertheless, the dissatisfactory learning situation disappointed him again and again. He retook many courses because his low average scores could not qualify him to be admitted by any mid-ranking universities in Canada. Song's educational plans also changed because of his insufficient English language proficiency. When I interviewed Song in September 2016, he wanted to learn business so as to work for his dad in the future. However, in Feb 2017, he gave up the idea of learning business because it requires high English language proficiency. So, instead, he applied for the major of computer programming. He was interested in games and coding and this program did not require him to use English to write a lot of essays. Until July 2017, he still had not received any offers from the Canadian universities to which he had applied. The universities requested him to submit the scores in IELTS or other language tests, though he did not have the confidence to attend again. He once failed in IELTS examinations and still recalled the scary feelings when he was communicating with some Canadian examiners in IELTS oral tests. He resisted attending any more English language tests for academic purposes; instead, he just hoped to enroll in the university ESL programs before the academic programs.

Song relied heavily on his Chinese friends and agencies. For example, he could not re-enter Canada until the middle of fall term, 2016 because he had not extended his study permit before it got expired. Subconsciously, he still believed that he was not

capable to deal with these “complex” applications in English independently. When he stayed in China, he paid around 1000 dollars to an agency that actually re-applied the study permit for him. It would be much easier and cheaper if he extended by himself in Canada. When he returned back to City A, his friend booked the bus ticket for him. Song relied on Chinese agencies and his friends to deal with his daily business. He hoped to study in the same Canadian university as his Chinese friends so he could seek their support. It is also worth noting that though he relied on some Chinese agencies in many aspects, he still felt worried that he might be cheated by these agencies in Canada. He heard many stories in China that Chinese students are very easily cheated by other Chinese in a foreign country, so he still hoped to seek the support from his familiar friends.

As mentioned above, the high family expectations made Song feel pressured. In spite of the tense relationship with his parents, Song still showed respect and filial piety for them. I think he somehow understood his parents’ hope that he could be as successful as his dad. Song had no intention of going home for summer vacation 2016, as he was not satisfied with his present learning status. He hoped to return back home or invite his parents to Canada after he was admitted to a university. However, eventually, he still went home because most of his friends returned and he didn’t want to stay alone in the dormitory. Given his dissatisfactory learning performance and the lack of independence, his parents called him some insulting words, such as “rubbish”, “useless” every day and

everywhere. He almost escaped back to Canada to avoid being insulted by his parents.

During summer vacation in 2017, he stayed in City A even though he already graduated, just waiting for university offers. He did not know how to confront his parents in China.

Despite the tense relationship, Song still highly respected his parents. He showed admiration for his dad who earned a doctoral degree. When Song stayed in China, he never told other people about his family situation because he did not want them to think that he relied on his dad. In Canada, all of his friends are from elite families so he did not care. Song's dad worked very hard to be financially successful and so he demanded highly of his only son as well. Song hoped to earn a lot of money and provide a richer life for his parents. Although his parents treated him unfairly, he still showed strong filial piety.

## **Hui**

Hui is a Chinese patriot who not only has a strong passion for Chinese history, culture and social phenomena, but also highly emphasizes social connections with other Chinese friends and relatives in China and in Canada. He insisted on his dream of working as an archeologist in China.

Hui who never thought about staying in Canada permanently, just wanted to make use of the international education to achieve higher social positions in China. Hui was educated in Shenzhen and came to Canada at the age of 16 (September 2014). His



father is a vice principal in a school for the disabled in China, and his mother is a primary school teacher. Compared with other students whose parents are businessmen, his family is not so wealthy. Further, Hui's *Hu Kou* 户口 was still in the rural area of Hunan, China. Hu Kou, "The Chinese household registration system", acts to make rural residents as inferior citizens either materially or emotionally (Chan & Buckingham, 2008, p. 582). He contrasts himself from students who own city "Hu Kou" or are city residents. He wanted to change such a disadvantaged situation.

When studying in Canada, Hui noticed differences in the education system. In his former school in China, the teachers transmitted knowledge to students. Hui claimed, "as to how much knowledge students could understand, it left up to the heaven (听天由命) to decide". Some students who are smart or diligent might achieve higher scores or understand better about the course content. In contrast, in Canada he was expected to acquire the knowledge by himself and apply knowledge. However, to some extent, Hui was dissatisfied with some Canadian teaching given that the teachers explained knowledge points slowly. Hui still had higher learning expectations for the amount of knowledge he was able to obtain every class.

The biggest challenge for Hui to study in Canada was the health status. He never got very sick when he was in China. However, in Canada, he suffered from all kinds of illnesses (e.g. flu, stomach pain, etc). He lost much weight—almost 15 pounds in the first year. He had to retake many courses again and again because he missed many

classes for health problems. He ate well in Canada, sometimes cooked by himself and walked in the neighborhood very often. The living condition in Canada was “quite good” in comparison with his familiar rural area in Hunan province. However, he just got sick and could not understand his physical situation. Every year, he returned back to China for two months, through which he hoped to “build up” his body (养身). He got ill just because he was not acclimatized even though he had stayed in Canada for more than two years.

Hui had a strong patriotic feeling—he loves Chinese politics, history and culture. He went to Hunan, China every summer vacation. Influenced by the family, social and political contexts in the rural areas in Hunan, he believed that communism helps all members of society lead a good life. He fought against the power and capital that are emphasized in the Western societies. In his We Chat Space (online community), he emphasized that he felt very “sick” about the corrosive influence of bourgeois as total freedom and democracy cannot save the world. He read some translated books in sociology by Western authors. Hui was very determined to return back to China after graduation because of his passion for Chinese history, culture, politics and social connections. He did not choose those “hot” majors in economics or finance because of his interests.

Hui maintained strong social connections (Guan Xi, 关系) with his family members and Chinese friends. He called his parents every week. His mother is from a

rural area in Hunan. Therefore, he also found many attachments with the rural life in China where he stayed every summer. Whenever he met any difficulties in his international context, he discussed it with his Chinese friends in Toronto or Mississauga. Apart from Chinese friends in Canada, he also had very close social connections with friends in China, especially with a familiar Chinese professor in the Chinese Academy of Science, whom he wanted to work with after graduating from the undergraduate program in Canada. During the summer vacation, he went to Hunan Province and engaged in the archaeological studies with the Chinese professor who also guided Hui's university application and career plans. He told Hui that there are not so many university graduates in archeology in China. Old professors who do the site work would retire very soon, while younger professors only teach theories rather than practical work. So he suggested Hui learn archeology in Canada where he could learn from the practical site work. Hui held on to his dreams and never made any changes in his three years' international education.

Hui experienced some predicaments in his education in Canada—he applied for archaeological and human science programs in Lakehead University and other mid-ranking Canadian universities. However, too many absences and low English language proficiency made the teacher move him from English 3U to English 3C classes, which meant he could only apply for colleges. Hui did not want to give himself too much study pressure in Canada. He thought it would be very hard to study in universities directly,

and therefore he might study in a college with a major relating to anthropology first and then transfer to university programs.

## **Lan**

Lan pursued one goal after another in her international education. Study became the most important task in her transnational life, as her whole family anticipated her career success.

Lan emphasizes both knowledge accumulation and practical learning, which are embodied in her conflicting feelings for the education in China and in Canada. Lan is from Wuxi in Jiang Su province, which is a developed region that highly emphasizes education quality. Lan believes that Chinese middle school and high school education is quite good, as she had learned much knowledge to lay a solid knowledge foundation. She studied in a top high school where the teachers like to transmit all the knowledge. This is what she called as the “*duck-feeding mode* (填鸭式)—teachers feed ducks (students) with all the knowledge they need to eat(learn)”, while students just mechanically memorize. Lan did not like this mode. She preferred the self-probing learning process in Canada, though she felt Canadian teachers still taught in a slow and less productive way, especially when she was in the Canadian high school.

Lan’s parents had a tight control over her life and inspired her to work to achieve career success. In July 2015, She came to Canada at the age of 17. She did not want to

study abroad earlier because she was not mature and independent enough. Lan's father is an engineer and her mother is a teacher. She studied abroad because her parents believe the educational quality in Canadian universities is much better than that in China. So, she studied the university preparation courses in this high school. Lan got much spiritual support from her dad, who encourages her to insist on the dreams of the family. Lan's dad also influenced her career plans: she only wanted to work as "a golden collar (employees earn high salaries)" in big organizations rather than to establish her own business. She somehow could not understand why her Chinese boyfriend wished to learn business and paid much attention to social skills and managerial experiences. Lan's parents not only had high expectations for Lan, but also required academic and career success for her future spouse.

When I got to know Lan, she was struggling with her university and major choices: she got the offers from two top Canadian universities. One was from the Engineering program at the University of Toronto and the other one was from the math program in another university (University B, pseudo name) where she decided to study. In Lan's mind, the University of Toronto, with high world university rankings is more famous both in Canada and in China. However, after discussing with her parents, she did not choose the major of engineering in the University of Toronto because big companies always recruit male engineers everywhere, especially in China. She thought math covers wider areas, through which she could work as a finance analyst in the future.

A big challenge in Lan's international education was her English language proficiency. She achieved high scores in the IELTS examination though she still could not understand some technical words in many classes. Before her entry into the university, she did not have many opportunities to practice English in the Canadian international boarding school where most of students are from China and stayed close together every day. She felt it hard to use English accurately to express her meanings.

From September 2016, Lan began to study math in University B, where she met challenges in her academic studies mainly because of her insufficient English language competence. She worked hard to overcome all the learning barriers. Although Lan's IELTS score reached the admission requirement (6.5), she still could not understand some professors' lectures in the first few months. For some undergraduate courses, there were around 400-500 students in each class. The professors talked very fast. Lan felt very frustrated and asked one professor to speak slowly because she is an international student and not so good at English. However, the professor said he would not slow down only because of her language difficulties. If Lan had any questions, she should talk with the teaching assistants (TAs). Lan talked with a TA, who was a master student and could not explain clearly to Lan. Lan then tried to discuss with other cohort Chinese friends who also did not understand the professor's lecture. Lan believed that "industriousness and strong learning motivations make all the possibilities." Lan studied very hard until midnight every day. Gradually, she understood better in classes, though she still needed

to Google some knowledge points or read more materials after classes. At the end of the first semester, she received some A+s, which made her very happy.

Lan sought higher academic goals in her university studies. Before Lan went to University B, she thought Canadian universities are the best universities in the world. However, later on, she found that some classmates hoped to apply for top universities (e.g., Harvard) in the U.S. for postgraduate programs. Lan learned that top universities in the U.S. provide the best math programs worldwide, so studying there might provide her with better platforms for future career development in Canada, US or China. Lan tried to achieve a higher grade point average (GPA) to access future master program admissions in the U.S. She planned to make preparations for the GRE test (The Graduate Record Examination), because the score is required for graduate program applications. As for the GRE test, “[p]rospective graduate and business school applicants from all around the world who are interested in pursuing a master’s, MBA, specialized master’s in business or doctoral degree take the GRE General Test” (Retrieved from [https://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/about](https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about)). Lan decided to attend test training in China during summer vacations because she believes that training institutions in China are good at raising examinees’ test scores. Lan always had new goals in her international education, which kept her very busy.

Different from her life circles in the Canadian high school, Lan began to socialize with local Canadians. In the very beginning, Lan felt lonely as many Canadian students

liked to stay in groups before the tests to make some group discussions, while she just studied by herself. Also, during weekends, she only stayed in the dormitory by herself when her Canadian roommate went home. Sometimes her boyfriend came to accompany her. Gradually, she had set up a close relationship with her roommate who gave her lots of care and discussed emotional issues with her. However, for some big choices regarding future major choices and career development, she still discussed with some other Chinese girl friends in the upper grades rather than her roommate.

## **Lin**

Lin had changed her educational plans many times given the challenges she met in her international education and her own interests. Lin chose to come to Canada because of the study pressures in her former high school in China; however, when she encountered more pressures in Canada, she tried to escape again. When studying in China, she was not good at physics and chemistry, which are the two required subjects in Gao Kao. So, she was afraid that it might be hard for her to be admitted to a decent university in Beijing. When she was 18, in 2015, she found an agency which dealt with all the necessary matters for her to study in a Canadian international high school. In Canada, Lin did not feel that her studies were hard as the teaching speed was not so fast, which made her very content. As long as she led a relaxing life, she did not care about



learning efficiency. Also, her parents believe that as a girl, she did not need to lead a very hard life or squeeze into top Canadian universities.

Immigration was a core driver of Lin's education plans. At the end of June 2016, she hoped to be enrolled in an ECE (Early Childhood Education) program at a college that might help her immigrate easier. Nevertheless, the challenges of working with small children made her hold back. Lin then transferred her interest to the major of nutrition, which required her to select the course of chemistry. After having taken the chemistry course for almost two weeks, she could not stand it anymore because the teacher always asked the students to write lab reports in English. She gave up the major of nutrition and wanted to try another major, such as design that might also allow her to immigrate after graduation. Lin thought she is not the type of person who works so hard.

Lin aspires for the big city life so she did not want to stay in small city A with fewer recreational facilities. She grew up in Beijing, a metropolitan city. Every time she went to Toronto or Montreal, she enjoyed the strong business environment, which reminded her of her hometown where she had lots of fun. She does not like medium or small sized cities in Canada, which give her the same feeling as small towns in China.

Lin has a very close relationship with her mom who took the dominant role in her decision-making. Her father who had a busy job in a real estate company did not stay with her in Beijing. Their relation was not so close. Her mother changed several jobs, as she does not like a stable life. Her mom's preference for changes in life also affected Lin

who hopes to experience different lifestyles worldwide. Before she studied in Canada, Lin and her mom had been to Dubai, the US, Korea and Japan. Through traveling, her mother had an attraction to Western developed countries and hoped her daughter would immigrate. Lin followed her mom's opinion—for instance, she did not apply for any universities in Canada; instead, she would just study design in a college in Montreal and that would facilitate immigration. Her mom knew people in a Chinese agency who could help her deal with the immigration procedures. This was her mom's desire. Although her average scores were good, Lin still did not apply for any universities in Canada. She expressed the desire that she would like to study in a Canadian university after her immigration to Canada and being financially independent. Also, she had not decided whether she would stay in Canada permanently as she really missed the life in China.

## **Qi**

The whole family attached great importance to Qi's higher education and future life in a Western developed country. Her family made all the effort to help her get more contact with the Western world. Qi already gained some understanding about the knowledge and pedagogical practices in Western developed countries in her former high school. For instance, when she was in grade 10, Qi attended a cooperative summer camp, through which she gained some understanding about education in Canada. Qi's former school in China was also trying to catch up with the international trend; for instance,

there was a pilot project called “the subject discussion” in which students decided their own topics, discussed in groups and then presented in the middle and at the end of a term in front of teachers and students. Students with good performance could attend the defense. Qi mentioned that her former high school is a top and highly internationalized school in her home city, and the curriculum in the school orients around equipping students with an international vision.

Qi is just from a middle class family rather than an elite family, and therefore her international education exerted a heavy financial pressure on her family. Her father is a bank manager, and her mom is a government officer in Fujian. She had some scholarship that covered half of her high school tuition in Canada. However, it would be very hard for her family to afford the high expenses incurred from her undergraduate education. They might sell an apartment in her hometown. Qi who had good financial sense tried all the ways to save money. She hoped to take a part-time job after her entry into the university, which may relieve her financial pressures. Qi worked very hard—when other students selected two to three courses one term, she had four courses. She almost devoted all the spare time to her studies so as to graduate earlier and save money.

When Qi was involved in my study, she was already 17 and had stayed in Canada for half a year, though she still highly depended on her mom in decision-making. Sometimes, her mom could not understand the situation in Canada, so she asked Qi to think for herself. Nevertheless, for big decisions (e.g. university applications), Qi

followed her mom's decisions. The whole family hoped Qi would stay in Canada. She was interested in being an accountant; however, a Chinese agency told her mom that accountants did not belong to the eligible occupations for the minimum entry criteria for the express immigration entry. Her mom believes in Chinese agencies and checked with them all the time about the immigration trends. Her mom found that Canadian society wanted pharmacists who could not only immigrate easily, but also are more likely to find jobs with high salaries. So, she asked Qi to apply for some science programs through which Qi could apply for the major pharmacology later. In the end, Qi applied for the major of math, which facilitates easier immigration and high economic return.

## **Li**

Li was eager to succeed in a career and lead an affluent life through her efforts. However, she could not stand a stressful life and wanted some relaxation, and therefore she transferred to an international school in China.

Li could not bear heavy study pressures of the doctrinal teaching modes in her former Chinese public high school where she only stayed for one term. Li had nine classes every day and felt very tired, which made her sick frequently. Her rankings among all the students in the same grade varied between 60 to 70, which meant she could not enter top Chinese universities. Further, Li felt that what she had learned in the public school was useless. In order to help students win high scores in standardized tests,

all the teachers requested them to memorize abundant knowledge mechanically everyday rather than use some examples to explain. She felt what she had learned could not be applied in real life. So, finally, she transferred to another Canadian international school in Suzhou that used the curriculum of British Columbia, Canada. Suzhou is a developed city close to Shanghai. Her whole family also moved from Shanghai to Suzhou.

In the international school in Suzhou, Li experienced a very different learning atmosphere and began to prepare for her international education. Canadian teachers in the school were very good at giving interesting examples to help them understand. Independent learning was emphasized as Li had lots of independent research projects. Li likes such class modes because she could apply what she had learned to the real life. Li could apply for Canadian universities with the high school scores in the international school in Suzhou, though she did not want to wait to go abroad. In grade 11, she applied for a high school in England given her passion for British culture and TV shows; nevertheless, she did not get the offer. So instead, she came to study in Canada from September 2015.

In Canada, Li's educational plans changed for different reasons. After her arrival in Canada at the age of 17, in the very beginning, she hoped to enter a mid-ranking Canadian university. However, her satisfactory scores in IELTS examinations and school courses gave her much confidence to aspire for more. In the fall term 2016, she was

determined to apply for the actuarial science co-op (cooperative) program in the University of Waterloo that would give her more “valuable” Canadian work experiences.

However, this competitive program requires high overall grades, which exerted a lot of pressure on Li’s lives. Li worked very hard and suffered from insomnia very often, especially when she could not understand the course content or got low marks. She felt her health was not so good because of the stress. She even went to the emergency room in a hospital at the midnight for some small illnesses. She was very panicked when she felt sick in Canada. After 2-3 months struggling, Li found it was not the life she wanted. Before the middle of the term, Li dropped the English 4U course in which she got low scores. Then she felt much relieved. She realized that she could not stand such a stressful university life and gave up the thought of studying in the University of Waterloo. Li just wanted to learn in a relatively less pressured business program in a good-ranking Canadian university where she could still relax during weekends.

In Canada, Li’s learning and social involvement was aimed at functional purposes such as university applications and career development. Li likes art, though both her parents and she believed that it might be very hard for art graduates to find jobs. She wanted to learn majors with high economic return that would allow her to be financially independent in the future. Li did not want to rely on her parents or a future partner. She hoped to work hard with her future partner to create a wealthy life. Li applied for some business programs that require communicative and collaborative skills and a spirit of

persistence. In order to acquire these *qualities*, Li participated in the student council election, performed as a member in the student council, established a club and was involved in a mentorship program with mentors from different Canadian universities who provided individual support to high school students. With these valuable social experiences, she hoped to gain personal qualities as requested by top Canadian business schools.

Li had the strong attachment with her mom and the city of Suzhou where her family settled down. In the middle of January 2017, the school provided information for students who were interested to apply for the universities in Hong Kong. Li was interested in applying for the major of economics in the University of Hong Kong, which is a prestigious university worldwide and highly recognized in China. Her international education in Canada and in China allows her opportunities to apply for universities worldwide. Li thought she might travel home easier if she studied in Hong Kong. However, finally, she accepted the offer from a business program in a famous Canadian university as she still values the Canadian learning experiences.

## **Section Two: International Education as a ‘Back Door’?**

The previous section sketches the distinct profiles of the participants. This section goes through students’ stories to illustrate that how they and their family used international education as a ‘back door’ to acquire such symbolic and cultural capital as

better educational qualifications, ‘advanced’ knowledge and ‘practical skills’ that are valued in job markets. They hoped that educational qualifications and competencies would afford higher social positions and income for them in the future.

Many participants in this study felt less likely to obtain educational qualifications through the ‘front door’ (gaining high test scores in standardized tests in China), so they used a ‘back door’ beginning from the Canadian high school to access higher education. Some students (e.g., Hui, Qiang and Le) failed in high school entrance exams (Zhong Kao 中考) so they had to study in international secondary schools. Zhong Kao “is a kind of graduation examination of junior high school, and at the same time, the entrance examination to senior high school” (Wu, 2015, p. 89). The admission requirements of international schools are lower than that of public schools. However, all the students were required to study abroad. Before Zhong Kao, Le actually had never thought about studying in Canada. If his scores had been higher, he would have studied in a public school and attended Gao Kao given his preference for employing social connections in China that might bring him more convenience in his studies and future work.

Other participants (e.g., Hao, Lan and Chen) came to Canada to escape from “unbearable study burdens” and avoid the likelihood of failing in Gao Kao. Chen argued that in order to achieve higher scores in Gao Kao, his former classmates in China not just reviewed what they had learned until midnight every school day, but also attended lots of after-school tutoring programs during weekends. Chen, whose academic scores were



dissatisfactory in China, felt very lucky to remove himself from these pressures and possible failure in Gao Kao by studying abroad. Similarly, Lan complained that her only relaxation as a student in China was listening to music during dinner. My participants and their parents aimed to use international education as an ‘easier strategy’ to enter top universities and bypass dissatisfactory learning situations in China.

In addition, Qiang, Lan and Li argued that they studied in Canada for learning ‘alternative pedagogies’ that were less emphasized in their former learning in China. Lan and Li who were from the top public high schools in China got tired of doing different types of test papers and mechanically memorizing test-related knowledge points. It was almost impossible for them to use these knowledge points in their real lives. They were so stubborn that they resisted such rote memorization. By contrast, in Canada, they could learn practical skills and apply the knowledge to their learning and further professional development.

Again, almost all the participants aimed to employ “better Canadian education” to achieve “better life” in Canada, China or other developed regions. As Lan emphasized, “My parents and I like the ‘advanced education’ in Canada. My mom always discussed with her friends about the Western education.” Resonant with Lan, Qiang mentioned, “My parents thought that educational experiences in Canada allow me to see the advanced development worldwide.” Many participants (e.g., Qiang, Lan, and Qi) claimed that study and work contexts in China had become more and more

internationalized so that they had to chase the “international trend”. Otherwise, they could not get the international vision and Western degrees that are highly valued in the job market.

Also, some students (e.g. Hui and Chen) from rural or distant areas resorted to international education to change their inferior social positions within China. For example, Hui who grew up in Shenzhen still had his Hu Kou (household registration) in the rural area in Hunan. He hoped to use the Canadian education experiences to win better career development and to improve his social status. By studying abroad, Chen’s parents expected him to work in big cities in China or in Canada so the whole family may gain more social esteem (in his words “face—decent social image”).

It is worth noting that their imagination of “advanced and easier Canadian education” may be founded on some myths: some parents and students themselves (e.g. Chen, Song, and Lei) got the information about international education through the Internet and Chinese educational agencies rather than experienced by themselves. Parents and students (e.g., Chen, Qi, Hao) did not fully understand the requirements of studying abroad. Many websites and agencies depicted the learning environment in Canada as quite safe and enjoyable, and the Chinese students with happy faces having achieved success in their studies and career. Chen criticized an agency in China, which advertised that a very common Chinese high school student could get offers from top universities in Canada. Chen felt “very ridiculous”, though he thought many Chinese

students are still attracted by such attractive promotion, especially when they are less likely to be admitted by decent universities in China. He was one of these students before he came to Canada. My Chinese participants found that their expected identities (aspirations) were remote because of challenges in language learning, academic studies and social lives in their transnational spaces (Zhang & Beck, 2014). In the next chapter, I explore how my participants navigated in their academic studies and social lives as well as how their aspirations shift.

## **Chapter Six: Flexible Citizens**

The previous chapter narrates stories of my participants which illustrate how they purported to use international education not just as a ‘back door’ to run away from unbearable study pressure in China and possibilities of failure in Gao Kao (push factor), but also for ‘greener pastures’ to gain Western educational qualifications, practical skills, life and work experiences, etc (pull factor). However, after they arrived at Canada, most students felt challenged to achieve these preset goals. My participants’ experience spoke to Ong’s formation of flexible citizenship (1999), how the Chinese international students used flexible strategies for/towards capital accumulation in transnational spaces.

Through my field study for around one year, I found six interconnected domains for performing or representing their ‘flexibility’ as citizens-in-the-making in their study abroad as follows: students, language users, cultural learners, social networkers, dwellers and envisioners of their future. In performing these six roles, my participants, on the one hand, flexibly accumulated social and cultural capital in their situated transnational contexts. On the other hand, constraints, such as their former study and living habits and preferences, mother tongue, transnational social connections, home cultural distinctiveness, aggregated to influence how they navigated their lives and understood their developing and multilayered identities. By discussing each of the six domains, this chapter offers a more holistic or enlarged view of the international students’ lives.

## **Section One: Flexible Students?**

Upon leaving China, my participants met new and unexpected challenges in the Canadian international high school. Specifically, according to The Ontario curriculum Grade 11 and 12 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007), school learning should “enable students to better customize their high school education and improve their prospects for success in school and in life” (p. 3). Students, as independent learners, have many responsibilities to succeed in their learning. Courses are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills to meet expectations of future employers. (pp. 5, 9). Given such a market-oriented curriculum requirement, the student participants were pushed by the school and the Canadian educational system to build themselves as responsible and independent learners who are capable at critical thinking and applying what they have learned to real life scenarios. These learning skills (as cultural capital), being expected in future workplaces, centered in the students’ academic learning in Canada.

However, in some cases, these learning requirements ran counter to my participants’ former learning habits, characteristics, and expectations. Consequently, my participants left study pressures in China, but faced new challenges in their new school environment. As flexible learners, they sought solutions from the host space as well as the home space to meet academic requirements in the Canadian educational system. I begin with a detailed analysis of local learning requirements in Canada and the responses from the students.

## 1. Learning Requirements in Canada

### Independent Learning

As accord with the Ontario curriculum requirements, independent learning is highly emphasized in the Canadian international school: first, it was embodied in my participants' self-regulation of their studies (See Figure 6.1) and their responsibilities in completing assignments. As Qiang emphasized,

Different from my former school education in China, nobody regulates my studies and life in Canada. In many courses, the teachers allowed us to decide when and where to learn the course content. However, if I do not prepare before classes, or just read the Chinese version online, I may say something nonsense and cannot achieve high marks.

Resonant with Qiang's experience, Qi also expounded her study responsibility,

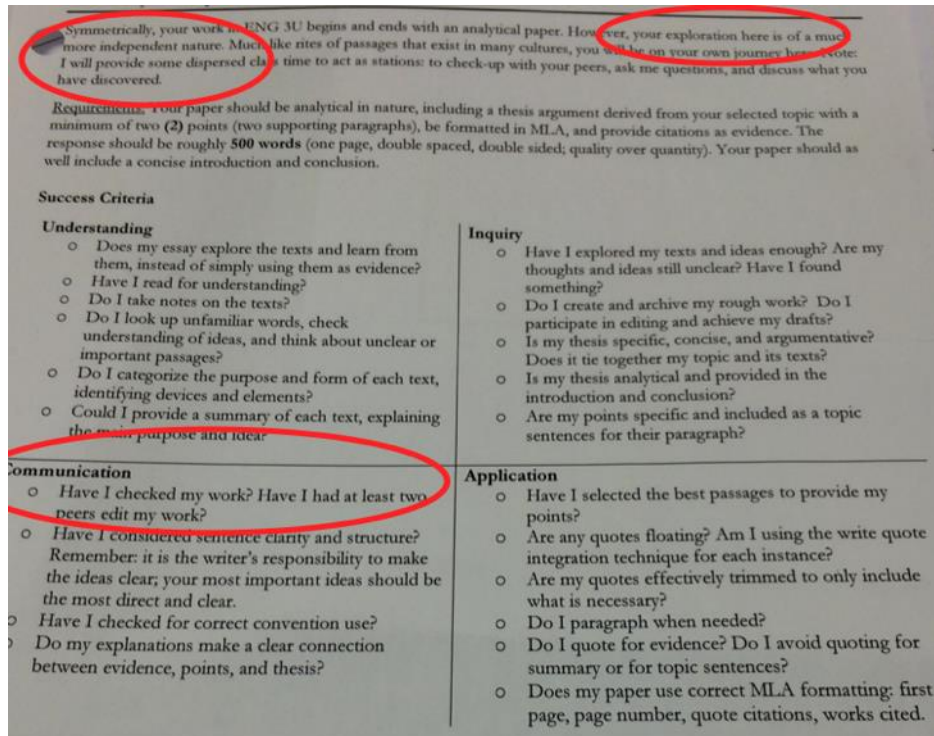
In Canada, if we do not review what we have learned, the teachers do not care. However, I feel that all the review is the reinforcement of what I have learned in classes, as I do not just study for completing assignments. I think I can learn skills and knowledge for my future work.

According to my field observation, after every mid-term, the teachers in English 3U and 4U courses assigned an *Independent Student Project* in which all the students were expected to self-regulate, organize their learning and check mistakes by themselves. According to Mr. Brian, all the English 3U students decided their own journeys or paths to reach the *end*. His students were allowed to discuss with their peers, teachers and other people to ensure the high quality of their *jobs*. Mr. Brian said this project was very similar to students' future work—they were required to independently demonstrate their growth and achievement. In English 4U classes, Mrs. Anna required

the students to focus on their reading journals (Independent student project) in which my participants needed to meet the expectations for their critical thinking, grammatical accuracy and MLA citation formatting.

Second, independent learning also required my participants' learning through self-exploration (See Figure 6.1). Most of the participants said that the Canadian teachers did not teach every knowledge point; instead, they needed to search a large amount of information by themselves. According to my class observations, the teachers did not frequently intervene in my participants' learning progress. Mr. Davies hoped to help them learn in an implicit way. In his understanding, students might not acquire too much learning content, whereas they grasped learning skills (e.g., searching information, collaborative learning) that contribute to their future learning and work. Likewise, Mr. Brian also argued that the English 3U course is university preparation-oriented. In Canadian universities, students should be very responsible for their learning. Professors who do not teach everything push students to get access to different resources by themselves. The English 3U course focuses on students' learning skills, which help them acquire the knowledge they need. So, he did not tell students when and where to learn.

**Figure 6.1**



On the positive side, after having suffered from so many years of tedious learning in China, my participants regarded independent learning as a practical way of learning that is based on their interests. Independent learning also improved their work competencies. For instance, Hui argued that the Canadian teachers in the school allowed him to learn what he likes rather than to force him to learn tediously so that he studied with more initiative. Hui looked forward to the learning in Canadian higher education, which would be very practical and allow him to explore deeply in the fields that he is interested (i.e., archaeology and human anthropology). Qiang had the similar feeling for independent learning— through searching the information in which he feels interested and applying the knowledge practically and collaboratively, his “multiple skills” (independent learning, knowledge processing and communicative skills) had been



improved.

However, on the other side, some students also felt pressured in independent learning, one of the most significant ones relates to the lack of teachers' learning support. For instance, Lan said, "in Canada, we need to make self-exploration, though I feel hard to understand some knowledge in physics and chemistry classes because of the language difficulties and the lack of understanding in the knowledge. I hope to learn more from teachers." Further, my participants claimed that independent learning involves a large amount of flexible learning, aiming to generate their ideas and cultivate their learning skills. However, some participants complained that such a class mode seemed to lack necessary discipline and learning efficiency. For instance, in the beginning of the summer term, 2016, in English 3U classes, the teacher led students to a park, or asked them to go to a library to search the learning resources. Qiang was a bit dissatisfied about such flexible class mode, because the classes lacked necessary discipline. He preferred the former Chinese classes in which his teachers had a tight control and supervision of their learning.

### **Active participation**

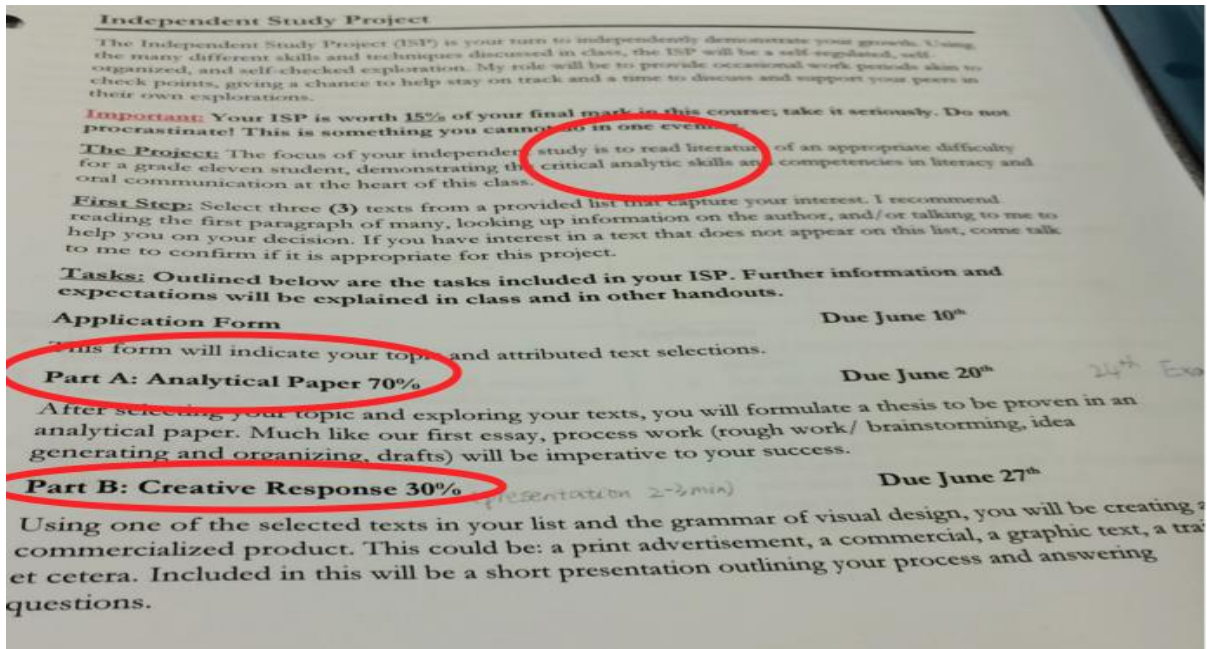
Many participants (e.g. Hui, Chen, Hao, Lei) said that active participation was expected in the school—their teachers not just encouraged them to make constant interaction and public speaking, but also evaluated their participation. Also, some

Canadian teachers in my study frequently used group discussions and seminars to encourage students' participation. In Mrs. Anna's classes (fall term, 2016), my participants needed to make small group discussions in front of the teacher every Friday (See Figure 6.2). Qi liked the seminar and discussion modes because she could practice her oral English through initiating questions, and discussion with the teacher and students. It also allowed her the platform to think freely. However, what she did not like was Mrs. Anna's evaluation for her discussion and talk. Other students had similar feelings: Chen mentioned that theoretically, students could not rehearse their group discussions in advance. However, in real practices, his group discussed all the questions and answers beforehand in order to make their discussions more smoothly and achieve higher marks.

### **Critical Thinking**

In almost all the courses I observed, the teachers encouraged my participants to reflect upon what they had learned. In other words, the students in my study were required to think critically. Lan claimed that critical thinking requires her to express her own opinions and apply the knowledge that she has learned. In both English 4U and 3U courses, students needed to complete Independent Study Project (ISP, see Figure 6.2), the score of which accounted for 15% of the whole. The most important purpose for this assignment was to cultivate their critical analytical skills.

Figure 6.2



Through ISP, Mr. Brian hoped his students to be good critical thinkers who are able to analyze what they have learned or read and to make real life connections. He argued that critical thinking also relates to students' self-regulation. A critical thinker knows what he or she should do and not do. In Mrs. Anna's English 4U classes (fall term, 2016), every Friday, the students worked on their reading response journals as their ISP, in which they answered the questions based on the content, applied the critical lenses they had learned to the analysis of the novel and real lives.

Even though my participants started to learn present modes of critical thinking, they still met challenges given their deficiency with Western knowledge and low English language proficiencies. As Mrs. Anna explained, one challenge for Chinese international students is that most of the texts in the Ontario curriculum highlight Western views with

the context in the US or in Canada. For example, when the students read a novel named *a good man is hard to find*, a big part of the story was to understand what the American road trip is. The students did not have the geographical knowledge. Meanwhile, it was very difficult for my participants to understand the main character's religious choices given that they lacked the Catholic background knowledge. Mrs. Anna said that it was difficult for her Chinese students to understand Western definitions of "good" or "evil". Some Chinese students did not have the basic backgrounds, so they took everything in the novels for granted rather than think critically. However, Mrs. Anna could not explain all the knowledge regarding Western religion, culture and geography for the students to understand. In line with Mrs. Anna's view, in the English 4U course, Hao and Qi also struggled to understand the critical lenses (e.g. post-colonialism, feminism) and use these lenses to analyze the novels. They never learned these Western theories in China. After Mrs. Anna taught in English, they still needed to read more Mandarin learning resources. My participants' deficiency in Western knowledge and insufficient English language competencies made 'critical thinking' challenging.

### **Practical learning**

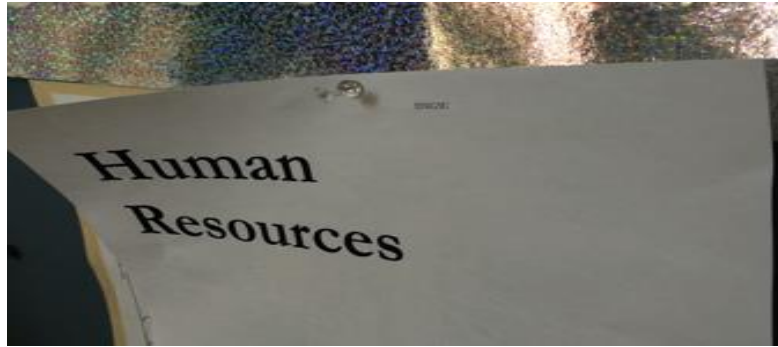
Practical (or career-related) learning is highly emphasized in the school. The school trained students' skills in studying and working with others on practical projects, which in many participants' view is similar to their future workplace circumstances. In

practical learning modes, students were required to work in teams in which collaborations and coordination were needed. Most of the participants were in favor of such practical class modes, through which they grasped working skills. For example, in the English 3U course, Qi and other participants were required to work collaboratively and design a poster for their company (See Figure 6.3 and 6.4). Qi stated, “In Canada, the teachers sometimes ask us to complete the assignments very close to our lives. I am not very familiar with so many practical skills. Recently, I am doing some advertisements. In China, I also had some creative ideas, though I had never tried.”

**Figure 6.3**  
**Source: class observation**



**Figure 6.4**  
**Source: class observation**



Another student Qiang also shared his experiences in computer classes, the teacher asked them to set up a personal website, where he made some commercial posters, videos and songs with his group members (see Figure 6.5, 6.6). It was a tiring and worthy task for him. In China, he seldom was able to apply what he had learned to his daily life. In contrast, most of knowledge in Canada could be applied to the real life, especially for his future work.

**Figure 6.5 Source: anonymous website**



**Figure 6.6 Source: anonymous website**

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## Unit 3: TV and Video Production

Our team made a short video ,which is about ORTHOKERATOLOGY commercial advertisements . In this video, we use some techniques in photography, the most important part is that we used many kind of shot (e.g. Eyes level 'Close up', 'Mid shot') to make our better . Then, in the video, the most camera and lens movement is from PANNING AND DOLLYING. We hope you can enjoy the video!



Further, almost all the course teachers guided my participants to make future career plans. For example, as Lan mentioned, even in the Chemistry course, the teacher asked them to do a project about their career plans in which they worked as pharmacists or lab analysts. Through this activity, Lan always reflected upon the future career life. In contrast, when the participants stayed in China, they never thought about their future, because it was devised by their parents.

### **Alternative pressures**

As referred to in Chapter Five, my participants resorted to international education as a 'back door' or 'shortcut' to success, though they realized that alternative pressures also existed in Canada. Life did not go easier: still, only through achieving higher scores in courses and university language admission tests, could they win better educational and professional opportunities and accumulate these forms of capital expected by their

parents who invested heavily in their international education. Parents' expectations often exerted much emotional pressure on their lives.

First and foremost, my participants' pressures still related to university admissions. Given their family expectations, all the students tried to meet the admissions conditions of their targeted Canadian universities. All the participants referred to some crucial requirements for them to be admitted by decent Canadian universities—e.g., high overall grades in the 4U (university preparation) courses, passing the literacy test (OSSLT), and achieving high scores (at least 6.5) in IELTS or other language admission examinations. In order to attain all these goals, all my participants had to attend afterschool tutoring, especially in English. When they returned home around 5:30 to 6, they still needed to do a large amount of homework and prepare well for coming tests as scores decided their university admissions.

On Sep 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Hui, Li, Qi and I went to the Ontario University Fair, where almost all the universities in Ontario did promotions. At the fair my participants mainly inquired about admission requirements for overall grades and language tests of different universities. On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Li and Qi went to an admission introduction given by a representative from McGill University who emphasized that the main admission criteria are the overall grades (See Figure 6.7). McGill requires overall grades varying from high 80s to 90s for popular majors (e.g., business and science). In addition, Chinese international students needed to pass language tests (e.g., IELTS, TOFEL, etc).




**Figure 6.7**

**ADMISSION STANDARDS FOR SEPTEMBER 2016 – ONTARIO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**  
 The values listed below are not the grades that will be required for admission in September 2017. Rather, they represent the lowest grades used for admission for September 2016. Grades that are equal to or better than those listed do not guarantee future admission; admission to McGill is competitive and subject to availability of space. As such, minimum grades for entry may fluctuate up or down by as much as 5% in any given year.

**Note: The inclusion of Grade 12 English or French in the 'Top 6' calculation is dependent on the language of instruction at your school.**

FACULTY OR SCHOOL	TOP SIX ADMISSION MINIMA	PREREQUISITE COURSES
Agricultural and Environmental Sciences* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All B.Sc.(Ag.Env.Sc.) programs</li> <li>Bioresource Engineering (B.Eng. (Bioresource))</li> <li>Food Science (B.Sc.(F.Sc.))</li> <li>Concurrent B.Sc. (B.Sc.(F.Sc.)/B.Sc.(Nutr.Sc.))</li> </ul>	75% overall; 75% in each math and science in Top 6  78% overall; 75% in each math and science in Top 6	4U English or French; 4U Calculus and Vectors; two of 4U Biology, Chemistry or Physics
Architecture, School of (B.Sc. Arch.)* <i>Note: The decision to admit takes into account the portfolio ranking.</i>	90% overall; 85% in each math and science in Top 6	4U English or French; 4U Calculus and Vectors; 4U Physics; 4U Chemistry
Arts (B.A.)	86% overall; 83% in each English or French in Top 6	4U English or French
Arts and Science (B.A.&Sc.)	92% overall; 83% in each English or French and 85% in each math and science in Top 6	4U English or French; 4U Calculus and Vectors; two of 4U Biology, Chemistry or Physics
Dietetics and Human Nutrition, School of (B.Sc. Nutr.Sc.)* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nutrition</li> </ul>	79.5% overall; 75% in each math and science in Top 6	4U English or French; 4U Calculus and Vectors; two of 4U Biology, Chemistry or Physics
Education (B.Ed.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kindergarten/Elementary Education*</li> <li>Physical Education</li> <li>Secondary Education*</li> <li>TESL*</li> </ul> <i>Note: The decision to admit takes into account the evaluation of the letter of intent (where required)</i>	81% overall; 80% in each English or French in Top 6 83% overall; 80% in each English or French in Top 6 81% overall; 80% in each English or French in Top 6 81% overall; 80% in each English or French in Top 6	4U English or French
Kinesiology (B.Sc. (Kinesiology))	88% overall; 83% in each math and science in Top 6	4U English or French; 4U Calculus and Vectors; two of 4U Biology, Chemistry or Physics
Engineering (B.Eng.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bioengineering</li> <li>Chemical Engineering</li> <li>Civil Engineering</li> <li>Electrical, Computer &amp; Software Engineering</li> <li>Mechanical Engineering</li> <li>Mining &amp; Materials Engineering</li> </ul>	Minima not available (new program) 96% overall; 85% in each math and science in Top 6 92.5% overall; 85% in each math and science in Top 6 92% overall; 85% in each math and science in Top 6 92% overall; 85% in each math and science in Top 6 92% overall; 85% in each math and science in Top 6	4U English or French; 4U Calculus and Vectors; 4U Physics; 4U Chemistry
Management (B.Com.)	94.5% overall; 85% in each English or French and math in Top 6	4U English or French; 4U Calculus and Vectors
Nursing, School of (B.Sc.(N.))	82% overall; 80% in each math and science in Top 6	4U English or French; 4U Calculus and Vectors; two of 4U Biology, Chemistry or Physics
Science (B.Sc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biological, Biomedical and Life Sciences</li> <li>Physical, Earth, Math and Computer Sciences</li> </ul>	93% overall; 85% in each math and science in Top 6 91% overall; 85% in each math and science in Top 6	4U English or French; 4U Calculus and Vectors; two of 4U Biology, Chemistry or Physics

The Schulich School of Music has its own admission office. Please contact them directly for more information.  
 \* Macdonald Campus  
 \* Additional documentation is required. Architecture applicants must submit a portfolio; B.Ed. applicants to Kindergarten/Elementary, Secondary, and TESL must submit a letter of intent. TESL applicants must also pass a language test.

 **McGill**

Enrolment Services  
August 2016

Under such demands, all the participants were perpetually worried about their scores that affected their future education. Mr. Ben mentioned that some Chinese international students hoped to be admitted by better universities by re-taking courses again and again to get higher scores. However, re-enrolling in courses incurs more financial and study pressure. For some students, their families could afford and were willing to bear high educational expenses for their children's better educational qualifications.

Study pressures continue in Canadian higher education. In the beginning of October 2016, Li talked with some friends who studied at the University of Waterloo. Li said that her friends experienced extreme study pressures,

My friends only slept 5 hours every night and used the rest of the time to study. Even if they studied under such a pressured status, only one entered the Co-op program. All of my friends who applied for the University of Waterloo aimed at Co-op programs. I felt scared, as this is not the life I want.

Furthermore, all the participants needed to attend IELTS exams and reach at least 6.5 (university admission requirement), which added more study burdens. Most of them felt very frustrated for attending IELTS exams. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016, I accompanied Qi to attend the IELTS test. It was the third time for her to have the test. After the oral test, she sadly said that her oral test was as bad as the last time. On the way home, I tried to comfort her, “Qi, you could have some relaxation tonight.” She responded,

I cannot. I still need to draw a poster, in which I illustrate the connections between the novels I have read. This is the last assignment of ISP. Also, I will have four final exams next week. Last week, I only slept for 3-4 hours every night to prepare for IELTS and other exams. I felt exhausted. Due to the heavy study pressure, I could not have a good rest in the following week as well. Studying in Canada is also not easy!

In this subsection, I analyze what the pressures were for my participants, as flexible citizens in the process of their pursuing different forms of cultural capital (e.g., educational qualifications, learning skills) in a Canadian educational system. In addition, challenges in academic studies also related to their former learning habits, characteristics, preferences and expectations in China.

## **2. Former Learning Habits and Characteristics from China**

When facing dominant requirements in the local Canadian school, my participants were pressured. Sometimes they rejected new demands, made compromises or resorted to preferred Chinese ways to *survive* better in the Canadian context. My participants' learning connected with Chinese cultural logics stemming from their former educational and social contexts (Ong, 1999). Qiang gave a good summary of the basic qualities of a good student in China who needs to pay attention to “德智体美劳” in quality education (all-round development in virtue, wisdom, athleticism, aesthetics, and labour). Suzhi (quality) education is highly emphasized in China, which aims to “[cultivate] socialist citizens with well-rounded development in virtue, wisdom, athleticism, aesthetics, and labor (*de, zhi, ti, mei, lao* 德智体美劳)” (Wu, 2012, p. 657). All round development has various interpretations and embodiments; nevertheless, morality and intelligence were the two key highlights in my participants' former education, which required them to make outstanding academic performance and to respect teachers, parents and other students. These Chinese virtues still guided my participants' learning in Canada.

### **Teacher-student(s) relationship**

Virtue or morality that stays in the first place in all round development is embodied in teacher-student(s) relationships. There are two embodiments in my study:

one relates to my participants' view that they always need to respect their teachers.

Second, such respect also requires their teachers' roles as knowledge authorities, who constantly and continually transmit useful knowledge and are dedicated to their teaching.

In my participants' views, teachers are serious and knowledgeable authorities in classes who transmit "important and correct" knowledge to students. Different from their former perspectives for teachers' role, Qiang and Le felt that Canadian teachers are their friends rather than authorities in classes. Nevertheless, influenced by former perspectives, most Chinese participants were still too timid to express their ideas in front of teachers. In my class observation in the middle of June 2016, Chen had a one-on-one talk with Mr. Brian. In the whole process, he just listened attentively to Mr. Brian's instruction without expressing his opinions or raising any questions. I could only hear the words, such as "yes, yes..". After their talk, Chen told me that teachers always are the authorities in his mind so he did not dare to argue. Informed by the former school experiences in China, Qi also argued, "I respect all the teachers so I listen attentively to their instructions and complete assignments." Hao added, "Students must respect teachers anywhere as they transmit the knowledge to us." My participants' respect for teachers relates to their obedience to and reliance on teachers (as learning sources), which somehow impeded their independent learning and critical thinking in Canada. Instead, they just wanted to follow teachers' instructions rather than actively express their own views or seek their own learning solutions.

Further, once Canadian teachers did not play their roles in teaching everything, dissatisfaction was incurred. The students in my study were dissatisfied about insufficient learning support and the limited amount of knowledge from Canadian teachers. Hui and Lan were disappointed about the limited amount of knowledge the Canadian teachers had taught or the teachers' less direct explanations, which in their view even related to the teachers' irresponsibility. In addition, in Qi's view, teachers should be very serious and knowledgeable. She felt angry when one Canadian teacher honestly said there was some knowledge that the teacher could not understand. Again, when some Canadian teachers asked students not to contact them late in the evening because the school did not pay them, Qi felt very hard to understand. Qi explained, "My former Chinese teachers worked very diligently. They were always ready to answer my questions." In Qi's mind, some "Canadian authorities" did not show the dedication and the spirit of sacrifice for their teaching.

### **Chinese Modesty**

Chinese modesty relates to Chinese virtue or morality in quality education, still influencing my participants' international education. Chinese modesty is also informed by the Confucian principle of respecting, learning from, and conforming to authority (Chong, 2016). First, given their former schooling, in which Chinese teachers took a dominant and authoritative role in classes, my participants were not accustomed to active

participation. Also, another aspect of Chinese modesty relates to students' concept that they could always make improvements in learning. Their former Chinese teachers encouraged them to work harder rather than to be satisfied with what they had achieved.

Under such a cultural and educational context, most participants continued Chinese modesty in their studies in Canada. For instance, in the English 3U and 4U courses, the teachers invited all the students to evaluate their performances. Qiang did not mark himself high, though he was also worried that his self-evaluation might affect the teachers' marks. For him, even though he performed well, he still felt too embarrassed to give himself high marks because it showed that he was satisfied with what he had achieved and did not want to work harder.

Again, the Chinese modesty became a barrier in my participants' class participation. More specifically, Song said, in the first few months, everything was so fresh and exciting, so he tried to participate in classes. As time went on, he lost the passion and was very uncomfortable to speak in front of people. In some courses, he just finished all the assignments, except for the oral parts even if he lost the marks. Song complained, "The Canadian teachers always encourage us to speak our ideas in classes. However, I feel so awkward, which is the same as my friends. I think all the Chinese students are not so confident to speak publicly." Chen further explained, "I like the Chinese class mode—teachers transmit knowledge and then students do some exercises.

I am the kind of person with inward personality. I always showed the respect to my teachers though listening.”

Moreover, Chinese modesty originated from my participants’ strong desire to maintain their *social image* (social images are highly emphasized throughout their growth) and *the sense of security*. Their attention to social images also connects with the second important aspect of quality education in China, i.e, intelligence. Or, in other words, my participants strived to be intelligent in other people’s eyes. According to the teacher and student participants, Chinese international students need the sense of security in their class participation, which means they do not like to be pushed by teachers. Mr. Brian argued, “Chinese international students need a safe environment to participate. They do not like to be called by teachers. They participate only when they are pretty sure about the answers.” In line with Mr. Brian’s view, Qi emphasized, “I may feel scared if teachers ask me to answer, while I have no idea about what to say or say something ridiculous. If I am very certain about the answers, I will raise my hands.” Similar to Qi, Qiang related his shyness to the desire to maintain his positive social image,

In the first one or two months upon my arrival, I did not dare to say too much as I was afraid of being looked down upon by others for the wrong answers. After more than one year’s study in Canada, I have improved quite a lot and could actively express in classes.

Sometimes, the sense of insecurities and modesty in class participation came from the use of English. As Lin said, “I am not the kind of person with inward personality. So, if I am silent in classes, the main reason is that I do not know how to use

the appropriate English words to express.” Meanwhile, Mrs. Cathy said that in her Mandarin classes, many students always argued with her about different discussion topics. So, her students seemed to be willing to express their ideas in Mandarin especially when they stay in Canada. However, Mrs. Cathy also argued that her Chinese students were still more silent in whole class participation.

### **Score (goal)—oriented Learning**

As referred to above, another significant part of all round development is 智 (intelligence or wisdom), which is mainly reflected in my participants’ scores. All the students emphasized that intelligent students in China are responsible for achieving high scores. This perspective still influenced their lives in Canada. Most often, their parents contacted them and the core concern centered on their marks in the school. Chen said his former Chinese teachers did not care so much about whether he submitted all the assignments on time provided that he had good scores. After arriving in Canada, all the participants tried all the ways to get higher scores, especially for core university preparation courses. As Qiang and Song argued, in any countries, responsible students need to be good at learning, so that they could be admitted to decent universities. After tests or assignments, many participant students still compared their scores as what they did in China. On Nov 17th, 2017, when Qi stayed in the school, she overheard an academic administrator’s talk with the Mandarin teachers that they marked students too



high. She felt very angry because at this stage, scores were so important for her university admission.

Sometimes, for the pursuit of high marks, the participants did not pay attention to some courses and learning elements given that these aspects were not evaluated in their university admissions. To illustrate, Song said, “In classes, we are asked by the teachers to make group discussions. However, in university applications, nobody cares about whether we participate or not. So, I just focus on the aspects that teachers may test us.” Likewise, Li mentioned that she did not put too much energy in learning the English 3U course though she really enjoyed the teaching and had learned a lot, because the scores of the 3U courses were not so important in her university application. All the 4U course scores are crucial for university applications. She only studied with all her strength for all the 4U courses regardless of whether she owned the interests or not.

Second, in order to achieve higher marks, my participants still expected *standard answers* and scopes for tests in Canada, which impeded their critical and creative learning. Hui complained, “Some Canadian teachers did not tell us what the important knowledge was in the tests. In contrast, in China, my former teachers always highlighted all the important knowledge points in tests.” In Hao’s mind, “In China, we made good preparations for some key knowledge points and answered in very fixed ways. This still relates to Gao Kao (a highly standardized test) that decides teaching and learning.” In Canada, many students (e.g., Hao, Qiang, Lan and Lei) still expected standard answers

that helped them achieve higher scores and correct knowledge. Without the scope for tests, my participants felt it hard to make test preparations in Canada, while they needed to achieve high scores for their university applications. From their perspectives, higher marks show their parents and other acquaintances and people in the job market that they are intelligent learners or workers.

### **High Learning Expectations**

Also, in order to be wiser or more intelligent learners, the Chinese students, especially for those who were from top Chinese high schools, had higher learning expectations for their knowledge acquisition. So, somehow they were dissatisfied with the lack of sufficient knowledge input or overemphasis on students' learning responsibilities in classes (i.e., independent learning and active participation). Lan who was from a top high school in Jiangsu said,

The knowledge I have learned in Canada is not so difficult. Sometimes, the teachers teach really slowly. For instance, in our math classes, I did not learn a lot, as the new information was very limited. I had already acquired much knowledge in China. I only learned more English vocabularies. I was not satisfied because I hoped to learn more. I heard from other friends that we could learn much more in Canadian universities. I look forward to university learning.

Sometimes, some Chinese students expected teachers' feedback rather than just encouragement for their class participation. For instance, Chen posted in his We Chat online community, "Canadian teachers in the school always said 'good' to everything. I did not know what that means. I hope to know which part of my performance was good."

Also, frequent students' presentations in classes also had incurred some Chinese students' dissatisfaction for the learning efficiency. For instance, Qiang argued,

Our Canadian teachers always ask us to make presentations in front of the whole class—it is very similar to students teach students. Many students cannot teach! If the teacher(s) transmitted knowledge to us, I could have learned more. Students have different accents or they could not use English to express clearly. In many former classes, I could not understand what they were talking about. In terms of the learning depth and width, the learning effect was not desirable.

The students' high expectations for their learning efficiency and personal achievements related to their complaint about group collaboration in Canada. Lin explained,

In Canada, we need to cooperate with other classmates to complete some projects. I do not like, as it is so inefficient to work with others. Sometime, with the time spent on assigning the tasks, I could already complete on my own. So, I prefer to do any projects by myself. Another situation is that all the group members are quite competent and thus we can assign tasks in speedy ways and complete with high quality. In this case, I like to cooperate with others. But I cannot require everyone to have strong study and work abilities.

In my 3U class observations, Lin completed many class presentations on her own.

Similar to Lin, Li and Qi also made complaints about group cooperation in the present school. In China, they completed all the assignments independently. They were still learning how to work with others and make some accommodations accordingly.

### **Conflicting Feelings for Using the Knowledge in China**

In the English 3U and 4U courses, some students hoped, while still hesitating to use their familiar knowledge in China to express their ideas critically. Tarc (2013) argues, “students may react to feelings of not being able to perform at their imagined level of ‘smartness’ when new material or altered rules of engagement are initiated by

teachers” (p, 34). My participants felt worried that Chinese knowledge could not help them reach the level of smartness of intelligence. As Hui explained,

After having lived in China for so many years, I am more familiar with all the knowledge in China. I sometimes used the knowledge and culture in China to support my ideas. For example, if I want to use slangs, I can only use Chinese ones. I cannot use Canadian slangs and idioms. In addition, I express my views on the economy, politics and history in my own ways in classes. I have fixed perspectives in these aspects. However, my critical thoughts with the Chinese contexts sometimes did not help me get high marks, as my thoughts did not cater to the Canadian teachers’ tastes.

Lin expressed the similar view,

Culture is another barrier. Words convey different meanings in Canada and in China. I have communicated with my Canadian teachers about cultural differences. In classes, I only use my Chinese experiences to illustrate my views because people might have similar feelings or resonance. However, I usually do not mention the social and cultural knowledge in China, as our teachers might not understand.

Sometimes, my participants’ familiar knowledge or cultural ideologies impeded their critical thinking in the Western context, so they could not meet the requirements from their Canadian teachers. For instance, Mrs. Anna complained that some Chinese students could not understand the *satire* in reading the literature. She gave her students a test on satire, in which they analyzed an easy article written by an author who herself wants a wife to deal with all the house chores. Hao thought that the author literally means that wives need to do all the house chores, which is nothing wrong in the Chinese culture. In the meantime, Li also felt very frustrated with analyzing some sensitive topics (e.g., abortion) that are not discussed publicly in her former Chinese high schools. She felt it hard to analyze such a sensitive topic from the feminist lens as sometimes she held

very different views. Some western feminist views made her uncomfortable, though she still needed to analyze in such directions for good marks or showing her smartness.

Chinese cultural logics emanating from the highlights of quality education are just some examples illustrating that my participants, as flexible students, lived their lives in Canada, though they were still governed by Chinese culture logics and forces from their families, Chinese society, educational contexts and nation state.

## **Section Two: Flexible Language Users?**

Apart from academic studies, another important reason for my participants to study in Canada is to gain fluency in English as a global language. In my study, English is not only associated with the target language country or culture, but also is an essential resource for attending higher education and attaining higher social class globally (Norton & Gao, 2008). Again, my participants were pushed by the local Canadian educational requirements to use English most of time in classes given that English competency relates to university admissions and future work opportunities.

### **1. The Requirements of Using English**

My participants' English language competencies relate to their university admissions, course learning and even future career development so they faced extreme pressures. As referred to in Section One, my participants needed to get high scores in the IELTS examination (at least 6.5) or other forms of language examinations for university

admissions. Additionally, the scores of the English 4U course also are considered by universities as a way to evaluate students' English language competences. For instance, I checked with Lei about the admission requirements for some art programs that request all the candidates to get the overall grade of 4U courses above 70. In the meantime, the English 4U course score should also be above 70.

In addition, all the participants needed to pass the English literacy test (OSSLT—“The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test measures whether or not students are meeting the minimum standard for literacy across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9. Successful completion of the literacy test is one of the requirements to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.” Retrieved from <http://www.eqao.com/en/assessments/OSSLT>) to get the high school diploma. (I once supervised the OSSLT Test, and some former students even suffered from diarrhea because of the nervousness). So, my participants faced multiple sources of pressure that required them to improve their English language competencies.

Moreover, many participants hoped to study in Co-op (cooperative education) programs in Canadian universities to earn transnational work experience. According to Mr. Ben, students without sufficient English language competence may hardly get Co-op positions because of interviews. Some interviewers may not be Canadians so they have different accents. If Chinese international students cannot understand their questions, they lose job opportunities. Some Chinese international students who may study well

still cannot get Co-op job offers because they lack strong English communicative competencies.

All the students in my study began their university preparation courses (3U or 4U). At this stage, almost all the course teachers expected them to speak English in classes. Mr. Brian emphasized that students below English EO somehow still are allowed to use their mother tongue occasionally in classes. However, in English 3U classes, all the students need to read and speak in English. When my participants looked up the bilingual e-dictionary through their cell phones, Mr. Brian and Mr. Davies just offered them English-English dictionaries. Mr. Brian sometimes asked my participants to submit their smart phones before classes in case they used the e-dictionary or played cell phone games. Some other teachers (Mrs. Anna and Mr. David) still allowed the students to strategically speak their mother tongue to facilitate their learning, while most often, they still needed to speak English.

With the dominant English-speaking requirement in the school, some participants (e.g. Lin and Hao) attributed most of their study predicaments to their low English proficiencies. Lin argued,

I feel if my English were good, everything would go smoothly. Canadians think in a simpler way than what Chinese people do. Of course, we still have some cultural differences. If my English competence were as strong as them, there would not be any problems in communication and studies.

Lin might say it in an exaggeratedly way, though still her English language competency related to her learning outcome in Canada. Given their low English language

proficiencies, it became impossible for some students (e.g., Hao, and Song) to attain academic requirements in the school.

Insufficient English language competencies also affected my participants' understanding of Canadian teachers' teaching. For instance, Li and Hao said that the English 4U (fall term, 2016) course was so difficult because Mrs. Anna sometimes lectured quickly. Given her respect for teachers, Li just blamed herself, "Maybe it is my fault. My English might not be so good. Maybe other students could follow and understand the teacher's instructions." Some Canadian teachers invited the students to ask questions when they felt confused. However, Li and Lei did not understand the whole class so they did not know how to raise questions. The whole class teaching was a puzzle for them.

In addition, class participation and critical thinking also required my participants' proficiencies in English. According to Mr. Brian, the biggest problem for Chinese students' critical thinking in English 3U classes was still their English competencies. I had similar feelings in my class observations. For example, in May 2016, some participants needed to read a poem and make the analysis in the class. When Lin totally understood the meaning, the class was already over. There was no time for her to think deeply or to participate in class discussion actively.

Notwithstanding the students' efforts in learning English, some of them made slow progress. Hui complained that "English and Mandarin do not belong to the same



language system. In China, we just learned English for tests rather than practical uses. So, it is hard for me to use English in Canada.”

## **2. The use of Mandarin**

Given their lack of enough English language competence and their attachment with their home space, my participants like to use Mandarin to make daily communication and social contact easier, *facilitate* their academic studies, find emotional support and maintain the *Chinese national cohesiveness*. All the participant teachers and students stated that in this international school, there is a small Chinese community where Chinese students still could speak Mandarin all the time. Sometimes if they met Chinese teachers, or even Canadian teachers who speak Mandarin, my participants did not use English. In class discussions, my participants always talked in Mandarin or read Chinese translations without the teacher’s presence. Hui explained this phenomenon,

It is more efficient to communicate with other students in Mandarin. Only a few words allow my friends to understand my meanings. In contrast, I need to make lots of vague explanations if I use English. Sometimes, misunderstandings can also be involved.

In addition, almost all the participants returned back to Mandarin to facilitate their understanding and learning in classes. For instance, Chen, Li and Le said that when they could not understand Canadian teachers’ teaching, they used Mandarin to ask classmates whose English language competencies were stronger about teachers’ instruction as well as specific requirements for assignments. In the high-level English 3U

and 4U courses, many participants (e.g., Li and Qi) translated almost every learning document into Mandarin to facilitate their understanding. As mentioned above, some Canadian teachers provided the students with English-to-English dictionaries to push their progress in English language learning. However, Song complained, “Why did the teacher give us English-English dictionary? When I wanted to search one word in the dictionary, I just found more and more new words I did not understand! I had no patience to read or learn anymore!”

Sometimes, for some difficult courses, some participants even found the Mandarin version to read first. In the fall term, 2016, Lei learned Senior Mathematics and the teacher taught very fast. When he asked a question, the teacher would use another two examples to explain. He could not understand either one. Lei felt very frustrated so that he bought a math book from China. Most often, after the teacher taught, he needed to learn the Chinese version after classes again.

Further, all the participants felt awkward to speak English with other Chinese friends because of the common social understanding that Chinese students should speak Mandarin when they stay together. Their mother tongue became not just a way for them to maintain national cohesiveness, but also related to the *social rule or social strategies* in the Chinese community in which they were situated. According to Lei,

It is so awkward to speak English with other Chinese friends. They may think I just show off so I might be marginalized or be pushed out from the whole Chinese group. I need to follow social rules in our small Chinese community.

Qi held a very similar opinion, “All my classmates are Chinese and therefore it is very awkward to speak English with other Chinese students. There is a student in our school who always speaks English. Nobody talks with him (her) in classes.” Song even stated, “Our English 3U teacher actually does not really care so much about the language use, as he understands human natural feelings ‘(人情)’.” Therefore, if a teacher restricts Chinese students from speaking Mandarin, in some participants’ eyes, the teacher can be very unreasonable. Even worse, some participants were somewhat rebellious when the teachers forced them to speak English all the time. For instance, Lin said, “Our English teachers sometimes checked the language use and marked. So, I was very silent in some English discussions because at least I did not lose marks for using Mandarin.”

It is worth noting some students began to speak less Mandarin in their daily lives. Li argued that she spoke Mandarin in classes because all the students are from China. When her desk mates were not Chinese, she spoke English every day. Also, after Lan entered into University B, in the very beginning when she saw Chinese students, she spoke Mandarin. There was one time when Lan was lost on the campus, a Chinese boy led her to the classroom. Lan spoke Mandarin, while the boy could not understand and responded in English. Through the experience, Lan began to speak English everywhere in the university regardless of whom she might meet.

### **Section Three: Flexible Intercultural Learners?**

As mentioned above, the Chinese international students in my research were pushed to learn cultures in North America in their academic studies. Apart from the course learning, my participants also had other opportunities (e.g., extracurricular activities and community service) to be immersed into the local society. For one thing, they were involved in local communities because of the school requirements or their intention of accumulating cultural and social knowledge and establishing social connections in Canada. For another, as youth, they were also curious about new cultural knowledge in other nations. During their intercultural learning process, though they gradually gained new understanding and habits in Canada, they still maintained former Chinese cultural distinctiveness (Ong, 1999).

### **1. Immersion in the Local Society and Culture**

Given the school requirements and their desire to contact with other cultures and people in Canada, my participants were involved in extracurricular school and community activities. According to Mrs. Jones and Mr. David, Chinese students in the school participate in Halloween activities, Christmas celebrations, university fairs, trips to Niagara Falls and Canada's Wonderland and some community service.

All my participants showed strong interest in learning Western culture. They are the generation growing up with cultures in other regions worldwide, especially the U.S. When I went to a university fair with some participants, we ate lunch in the Renaissance

Hotel, which is attached to the Rogers Center. That's where there would be a Blue Jays (Canadian professional baseball team) game in the afternoon. We could even see the auditorium in the cafeteria of the hotel. Qi and Hui were very interested in the Blue Jays and took lots of pictures. Later, when we began to order, Qi still had some difficulty reading the English menu so she used an e-dictionary to look up some unfamiliar words. She wanted to learn more about the local Canadian culture and food. After lunch, we walked on the street and saw a man mimicking Spiderman. Qi and Hui were so excited that they lingered there for a very long time. They told me they began to watch American movies since they were very young.

Some of the participants love Western movies, which provides them with another option to learn English and cultures in North America or other English-speaking regions. For instance, Qi said, "I like American cop TV shows and movie, such as 'white collar' and 'castles'. I not only learn the English language, but also am interested in American cultures". Li was obsessed with British TV shows, which also became one of the reasons that she made the application for a high school in England before she came to Canada. In comparison with the girl participants, the boys in my study (e.g., Chen and Song) went to cinemas less often, as they could not understand the content thoroughly given their insufficient English competence.

Moreover, according to the Ontario Secondary School Diploma Requirement, all my participants needed to complete at least 40 hours' community involvement

(Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/124a.html>) (See Figure 6.8).

In these community services, the students not just got contact with the Canadian society, but also learned cultures worldwide.

**Figure 6.8**



Qi had completed the required volunteer time, whereas she still hoped to be involved in more community activities to understand the local culture and society. In June and July 2016, Qi volunteered in some activities called “XX International Food Festival” and “Rib Fest” where she saw an array of dishes from around the globe (See Figure 6. 9). She also learned the local music and cultural knowledge through the activities.

**Figure 6.9**



On Sep 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016, many participant students (Lin, Hui, Qiang, and Chen) went to the Terry Fox Run, where they got relaxation from heavy study pressures and learned the story about the Terry Fox Run (See Figure 6.10). Qiang met a Canadian Olympic athlete, which made him very happy.

**Figure 6.10**



On Oct 2nd, 2016, Li volunteered in an activity called Culture Day where arts and food booths from different nations offered a mosaic of cultural activities. Li wanted to participate because she was able to learn about cultures worldwide, get to know local Canadian people, and practice her oral English.

It is also noteworthy that university admissions not just required my participants' high overall grades in 4U courses and language examinations, but also examined some qualities (e.g., creativity, persistence, cooperation) that were reflected in their extracurricular activities and social involvement. So, most of my participants emphasized

functional purposes (e.g., improving their practical English language competencies or achieving those required qualities) in their social involvement and extracurricular activity participation. According to Mr. Ben, there are Spanish and French clubs, a robotics club, science club, chess club, drama club and book club in the school that are guided by certified Canadian teachers. The students like the clubs in which they could take the leadership roles. Such valuable experiences in these clubs go on their resume, which is helpful for their university applications. In line with what Mr. Ben argued, Qi further mentioned that she joined the science club because the teachers guided them to use the latest technology. She wrote the experiences in her CV, which might be favored in university admissions. Similar to Qi, Li helped lead and organize a club activity to cultivate her leadership and communicative skills as requested by business program admissions in Canada.

In some community service, my participants felt dissatisfied as they did not reach their goals: first, they always stayed with other Chinese friends in the whole process. They only listened attentively to English introductions; however, afterwards, they did not make constant communication with other Canadians. For instance, when Qiang and Lan participated in tree planting activities, they were only required to complete their tasks rather than get opportunities to practice English and learn the local culture, which made them disappointed. In addition, some voluntary activities only required my participants to do manual jobs (e.g. planting trees and collecting garbage),



which made them dismayed. Some participants even complained that Canadian society just needs unpaid laborers rather than offer them opportunities to learn.

## **2. Attachment with Chinese Culture and Life**

Even though my participants got different contact with the local Canadian society, some of them still maintained strong attachments with former lives and culture in China. For instance, in the International Language class (Mandarin), Qi preferred to learn some traditional Chinese literacy and culture. In addition, some Canadian social involvement reminded my participants of their former experiences or familiar scenes in Chinese TV programs. Planting trees in Canada reminded Qiang of a Chinese live TV show called “Dad, Dad, where will we go”, which describes some celebrities who took their kids to rural and distant areas. Qiang and Lan are from the cities, so it seemed hard for them to do such manual jobs as planting trees. After the voluntary services, when we drove back close to the school residence, Qiang and Lan asked me whether there is any good Chinese restaurant nearby. Eating authentic Chinese food always cheers them up.

Also, in Canada, my participants watched Chinese TV shows that transmitted a home feeling to them. In the beginning of Sep, 2016, Lin always watched a popular Chinese TV show that describes some Chinese secondary school students’ choices and challenges in their transnational mobility. Lin found much resonance in the TV show that was shot in her former high school. Similar to Lin, the boys (e.g. Chen, Hao, Lei and Le)

like Chinese TV and variety shows, in which they could find educational and cultural resonance. Some TV programs relate to the patriotic education in China, for instance, Hui who is quite patriotic and attached to Chinese politics, culture and history stated, “I prefer to see Chinese war dramas that show the recent history. Sometimes, I also see the TV shows that describe stories of the four great classical masterpieces of Chinese literature.”

Concurring with my participants’ intercultural experiences, during my research, I also tried to understand Canadian society and culture, though I still watched Chinese TV shows, listened to Chinese music and celebrated Chinese traditional festivals to relieve my homesickness. Sometimes, when I felt pressured in my transnational lives, I even asked myself, “Life is already so hard in a foreign nation. Why do I still give myself a hard time in learning those unfamiliar things in which I am not interested?” In my view, the familiar culture constructed a comfort zone that transmitted a home feeling, which is significant for my participants’ lonely and stressed transnational lives.

#### **Section Four: Flexible Social Connections?**

Similar to the status of lingering between different cultures, all the students in my study also maintained intricate transnational social connections across borders. They gradually expanded social circles in Canada, through which they were learning new

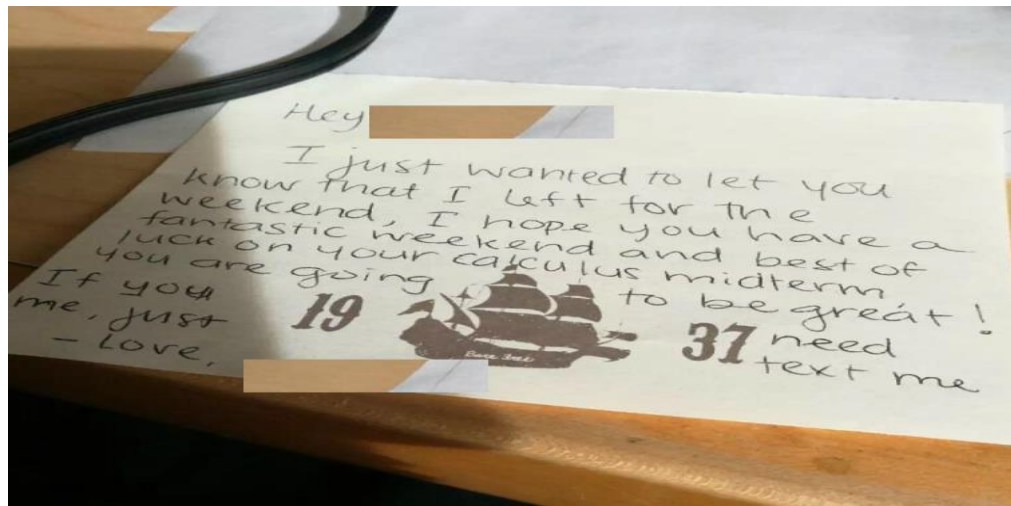
cultures and social norms that made their identities hybrid. Meanwhile, they still kept close connections with Chinese communities in Canada, China and other nations.

### **1. Having non-Chinese friends**

As flexible citizens, my participants attempted to broaden social circles transnationally for different purposes (e.g., seeking learning and emotional support, practicing English, learning the outside world, making their transnational lives less lonely, etc). Most of my participants employed opportunities either in the school or through online spaces to establish relationships with people from other nations. For instance, Hao did not have many local Canadian friends so he posted stories about his life in China and in Canada in Facebook to allow the present and future Canadian teachers and friends to understand who he is. In addition, some students established friendship with non-Chinese friends in the school. At the end of Oct 2016, when Le returned back to Canada, he had a roommate who was not from China. Le felt very happy as he could practice his oral English. Similarly, Li met two best friends in the international school—one is from Africa and the other one is from South America. Li thought that most Chinese students are the only kids in the family so they are very self-centered and like to rely on others. Li liked her non-Chinese friends who are very straightforward and not so bad-tempered or spoiled.

In University B, Lan also developed a friendship with her Canadian roommate from Toronto. In the very beginning, Lan had another close Chinese friend. Similar to many Chinese only children, her over-reliance brought much stress to Lan who cared about her academic achievements and did not want to be interrupted by other people frequently. Lan likes her Canadian roommate, who is very independent. Lan began to build up the friendship with her, though they still had different life habits and cultural perspectives. When her roommate went back to Toronto every weekend, she left Lan some notes (See Figure 6. 11) that brought warmth to Lan's lonely transnational life.

**Figure 6.11**



## **2. Connections with Chinese friends in Canada**

Although my participants gradually broadened their social circles in Canada, most of them still stayed together with Chinese friends given that they needed mutual academic and emotional support and that they shared some Chinese cultural

distinctiveness, stemming from similar cultural and social backgrounds. In order to facilitate the communication and support between Chinese students, Qiang even set up a *We Chat* Chinese international students' chat room (See Figure 6.12), where the students who arrived earlier helped solve academic and life difficulties and gave suggestions for newcomers.

**Figure 6. 12**



Through mutual support, my participants set up close bonds with their Chinese friends in Canada. They became the emotional brothers and sisters who always relied on each other. Further, less successful social communication in Canada pushed my participants back to the Chinese group. When Hui tried to socialize with Canadians, he felt that their thoughts could not be in the same direction as his because of language barriers and cultural differences.

Some participants maintained close relationships with the friends who followed the similar transnational educational routes. Li attended a Canadian international school in China so that her former classmates were also studying in Canada. Before the new semester in 2016 began, Li flew to Vancouver and stayed with her former classmates. According to my years' of experience with my former Chinese international students,

they maintained long-term relationships with their high school friends even after graduation.

Nevertheless, the students in my study came from different social, family and geographical contexts in China. It is worth mentioning that they also had conflicts in their perspectives as well. For example, Lin who came from Beijing argued,

The students in this school coming from different parts of China have very different perspectives. Disputes and misunderstandings always exist. For example, many students asked me why I study abroad, as the students with the registered residence of Beijing have favorable policies in university admissions. Actually, it is not the truth. It is still demanding for students from Beijing to enter high-ranking universities. I felt very annoyed when they said that. Some people might think I did not work hard or am not smart enough so that I study abroad. They do not understand me.

Li who had conflicts with some other Chinese students sometimes felt better to stay with non-Chinese friends. She was once locked out from her apartment, while her Chinese roommate did not respond because of a small conflict. Song was also very careful in having friends in Canada as many Chinese international students have bad habits: smoking, excessive drinking or heavy makeup.

The tensions between my participants and people from the host space and home space sometimes pushed them to stay in a very isolated position. They might neither be situated in the home space nor the host space, but in their own lonely transnational space. Also, as flexible citizens, as discussed above, they sought solutions for tensions in social lives by establishing social relations flexibly between transnational spaces.

### **3. Connections with parents and friends in China**

Most of the participants still maintained connections with their former friends in China through QQ or We Chat online Communities. They wrote blogs in Chinese We Chat spaces to make their relatives and friends understand their tough lives in Canada. Given Chinese filial piety and family bonds, most of my participants, especially for the girls, still maintained a close relationship with their parents. The easy access to the online transnational space provided them with the convenience to connect with their acquaintances in China instantly.

Most of the boys did not contact the family members every day, though they still showed filial love for their parents and the care for their siblings. Chen liked to talk with his parents every day. Before he went back to China for summer vacation in 2016, he even used his family picture as his profile picture in the We Chat online community. In the summer, Lei felt deeply moved that his parents waited for him at the airport until very late. They were worried about his health status in Canada and cooked nutritious food for him every day. Le missed his family so much. On his mom's birthday, he collaged the pictures of his mom and younger brother as well as his pictures in Canada in the We Chat community. In this way, he felt they still lived together. During the summer vacation, Le, who is very proud of his younger brother's piano performances helped take care of the little boy—sending him to different trainings, and attending some musical

contests. Le's parents did not want him to return back to Canada even in the fall term 2016.

All the girl participants called or had video chats with their parents every day to share their happenings and ask for guidance and support. The girls depended more on their parents. As Qi said, "In my mom's eyes, I am always a little girl, so she takes charge of almost every aspect in my lives: tax return, the university application, how to go to the airport and take planes." In July 2016, when Qi returned back to Canada, her mom would be very worried if Qi did not call her for one or two days. Similar to Qi, Li not only contacted her parents every day, but also went back to China almost every four months. Different from the other girls, Lan, who contacted her parents very often, was unwilling to do that, "My parents always ask about my study and life situations, especially for some big decisions in the university application. I need freedom so I do not want my parents to have too tight control over me." Lan became more independent after her international education.

As referred to above, though my participants lived in Canada, they still emotionally relied heavily on their parents. It was the first time for most of my participants to leave their parents and learn to be independent. Being independent could be a slow and hard process. Guidance and students' affairs staff (e.g., Mr. Ben, Mr. Cathy, Mrs. Jones, Mr. Green and Mrs. Irene) mentioned that there is an orientation week in every new term for all the students to be familiar with the neighborhood so they



try different things by themselves. This is not only a part of their transitional process in Canada, but also a process for them to be more mature. This process could be very overwhelming in the very beginning. Some students take very well, while some others who rely heavily on their parents may struggle more. Mrs. Irene said she always encourages Chinese students in the school to talk with the teachers with initiative because the Canadian teachers would not always try to talk with them. However, Mrs. Irene also pointed out that some Chinese international students are not independent enough and do not understand how to bear their responsibilities.

According to Mr. Green, Chinese international students are not as independent as many Canadian students. This might relate to the one-child policy in China, as Chinese parents deal with all the things for their only kids. They are not accustomed to solving problems on their own. Most Canadian students aged 17 or 18 do not rely on their parents and know whom to talk to when problems emerge. Sometimes in the residence, when Chinese students find something is broken, they still call their parents.

Mrs. Irene further argued that when the Chinese students in the school meet some difficulties in their lives, many of them just tell their parents and Chinese friends. However, their parents are in a different nation far away, so they do not understand the situations in Canada. It would be much better if the students could find teachers to discuss and solve the problems rather than to talk with their parents first, as some small issues could be magnified many times given the long distance. Mrs. Irene gave an

example that one child might say, “Mom, I get cold and could not breathe smoothly.” He or she might just say in an exaggeratedly way, while the parents feel the child experienced life dangers. Such events happened very frequently. According to Mrs. Irene, more than half of the Chinese international students in the school do not have the habits of talking with the teachers about different issues. They are very accustomed to being pushed by others.

The teachers in the guidance office claimed that some Chinese students’ over-reliance relates to their former life habits—before the international education, their parents and teachers dealt with all the life or study trivialities so they do not understand their own responsibilities. In Mrs. Cathy’s perspective, the majority of the students in this school are from the elite Chinese families. Their parents are abler to give them more choices: if they hope to escape from the study pressures in China, they come to Canada. However, some Chinese students may escape again if they encounter more difficulties and pressures in Canada. Many Chinese students do not know how to cope with academic and life challenges independently. For instance, some students in my study were interested in universities in Hong Kong that are closer to their home so they could seek more reliance. Nevertheless, in contrast to the teachers’ views, most of the participants did not disclose their worries and challenges in lives to their parents easily because they also did not want their parents to panic and get worried about them too

much. However, for decision making, they still relied heavily on their parents' thoughts.

My participants not only relied on their parents, but also made use of the educational services from Chinese agencies. For instance, in university applications, Qi followed all the decisions of her mom who got the educational information from agencies in China. In her view, these agencies do a lot of research to make *better* arrangements for students based on market orientations. According to Mrs. Jones, in university applications, many Chinese students are very similar to Qi. They entrust their applications to some Chinese agencies and do not want to bother the teachers and themselves.

Gradually, my participants became more independent after studying abroad, though the process might be long. As referred to above, almost all the participants began to realize the hardship of their parents so they did not tell all their worries to their parents to increase their emotional pressure. They also learned how to cook, how to take care of themselves, how to deal with all kinds of applications, etc. All these reflected their growth in their own transnational spaces.

#### **4. Loss of Social Connections in China**

As referred to above, my participants tried to maintain or sometimes relied on Chinese social connections, whereas they still missed many important social events and

lost some social connections in China. In the process of their flexible accumulation of capital in Canada, they were less capable to maintain intimate and close social relationships in China. For instance, during the mid-autumn festival (a festival for family reunion in China) in 2016, Qi wrote online that she did not stay with her friends in China for many festivals so she felt that they gradually became not so close. Further, most of the participants still contacted their friends online, except for Lan, who explained,

I once kept all the contact with my friends through We Chat online community. However, my parents took my password when I went abroad because they did not want me to contact friends in China, whom in my parents' idea I might still rely on. They also did not want my friends in China to distract my attention from my studies to somewhere else.

Given her parents' control in China, Lan lost most of the connections with her friends in the former high school.

In addition, sometimes when some participants had tense relationships with their parents, they even used studying abroad as a way to lessen their parents' control. To illustrate, Song did not have contact with his parents very often and had no plans to go back to China because he could not get on very well with them. He mentioned that his parents could not understand his humor. He felt very bored in the summer vacation in China so he wanted to return back to Canada earlier. Also, affected by their expectation for Song's academic achievement in Canada, his parents were dissatisfied with his academic achievements in Canada so they even said rude words. "You are the garbage. We cannot understand why you never work hard and go to a Canadian university." After

staying in China for three months in the summer vacation of 2016, he did not want to stay at home any more. Also, except for some big choices (e.g., university admissions), he did not call his parents. Academic and career success drove his parents to just focus on his academic achievements instead of paying attention to maintaining an intimate and close relationship with him across borders. Except for such important matters as dropping courses and university applications, Song sometimes did not even contact his parents for weeks. His parents had limited knowledge about his everyday life status and feelings in Canada.

In the process of pursuing personal achievements and success in the new transnational context, my participants lost some social connections with their friends in China. Also, their parents' attention to academic achievements and career success as the only focal points exerted more pressures to my participants' transnational lives, making it hard for them to maintain close family relationships.

### **Section Five: Flexible Dwellers?**

With intricate transnational social connections, my participants argued that they physically lived in Canada, but belonged to China. Albeit, their attachment to Canada varied. Some of them gradually had special feelings for City A or Canada. As Hao mentioned, "Canada is a part of me. I have immersed in the life in Canada through different social involvements. When I return back to China, I still think Canada is also a

part of me.”

However, the majority of my participants regarded China as their only home because of the special feelings bred from their upbringing. According to Mr. Green, there is a misconception that studying abroad is a good choice for everybody. Some parents’ wish for their children’s international education does not mean that the students also want to. Some students, regardless of where they go, are actually happier in their own country. They have the very strong sense of belonging for China given cultural, political, economic and social reasons.

My participants’ experiences spoke to the view of Mr. Green. In the summer vacation in 2016, Chen felt so comfortable when he stepped in the land of China. Studying abroad was just a channel for him to achieve career success; however, even with this practical purpose, he still strongly wanted to return back and stay in China.

Similar to Chen, Hui also affirmed his feelings for China as his home:

Any places in Canada cannot even be my second hometown. My health situation is not good in Canada. I coughed very fiercely so I think I need to return back in the summer every year to build my body stronger. In addition, I love to learn the politics and history in China. I want to return back and have no plans to immigrate to Canada. If I wanted to immigrate, I would go to a technical college. However, I do not have such plans.

Some unpleasant experiences in Canada also pushed Hui back to China. For example, in one class in the middle of June 2016, I found that Hui was very silent. His throat was very swollen because of an insect sting at a barbecue party. He went to see a Canadian doctor who prescribed some antibiotics, which did not help him a lot. Also,

given the language difficulties, he felt it hard to communicate with the doctor. He hoped to finish the course as soon as possible and then to go back to China for effective medical treatments. In the summer 2016, Qiang also asked me about whether there are any Chinese herbal practitioners in City A because his health status was not so good. The Canadian family doctor recommended a specialist, though he needed to wait for several months for the medical checkup. In Chinese cultural logics, Qiang needs to “get instant medical care even for non-emergent illnesses”, which could not be realized in Canada. He could not get the effective medicine, which made him very frustrated. He missed the “efficient medical system” in China. Qiang felt that whenever he steps on the land of China, he already arrives “home”. Canada never gives him the home feeling.

Further, social and cultural differences became the reasons why my participants could not find the home feeling in Canada. Lei still thought Nanning (his Chinese hometown) is his home mainly because Canadian life styles and habits are so different from his familiar ones. Some cultural conflicts even made Qiang retreat to his home space. As he explained, “Sometimes, some Canadians felt very angry about what I said. I felt very confused about their anger. In China, we understand what are appropriate to say or act. So I belong to China.” What made him feel strange was that some Canadians even asked him whether he hated Canadians or people from some other nations when he volunteered in the communities. Such a hostile attitude towards the minority Chinese group pushed Qiang toward the home space. In my perspective, my participants’ views

on the medical system in Canada and their contact with the local people, were still influenced by earlier wider social, cultural, historical, and relational structures in China that not only provided the ground, but also constrained their immersion into the new context (Tarc, 2013, pp. 24-31).

Moreover, many participants felt a strong attachment with China because of the familiar flavour in the food. Whenever Chen and Hao went to Toronto, they mainly wanted to try authentic Chinese food that gives them the home feeling. When Lan and Qiang felt homesick or lonely, they sometimes also went to Chinese restaurants and used Chinese food to relieve their nostalgic feelings.

Last but not the least, many students were very attached to familiar social circles. In the summer vacations during my field study, Qi was so happy every day when she stayed with her friends and parents in China. Similar to Qi, Li argued, “I grew up in Shanghai and moved to Suzhou later, where I have lots of friends. It is very easily for me to be immersed into the social life there.” Li likes the place in Canada where she lived, but Shanghai and Suzhou are still her hometowns in her heart.

As referred to above, all the students regarded China as their home country given the special feelings stemming from the familiar circumstances. Such feelings speak to what Mishra Tarc (2007) has argued, “what is one’s own is forever complicated by our earliest year[s]’ of dependency upon our mother (our first caregiver) and significant others” (cited in Tarc, 2013, p, 33). I also contend that China is always the first “mother”



nation for my participants, giving them the home feelings even after they stayed in Canada.

Many students displayed more patriotism when they stayed in the host country—e.g., Qiang used a profile picture in his We Chat online space, in which he was in the Chinese soldier uniform and held the Chinese national flag. He was the National flag group member, which he felt very proud of. Qiang expressed his love for China,

In Canada, I care about political, military and economic news in China. I do not pay attention to Canadian news, though I still view global events that can be discussed in classes. My former high school in China did not emphasize too much about the patriotic education, while at certain ages, I began to read Chinese political and military news. I found all my former Chinese classmates are the same.

Hui was also very patriotic during my stay with him and always reaffirmed his political positions and the strong desire to return back to China earlier:

In my heart, I am a communist. This relates to the influence of my family as well as wider social contexts. All the elders in my family keep on telling me that I should feel proud because China becomes stronger. This is very important for all the Chinese to earn the respect worldwide. I am not accustomed to the life in Canada, as I believe the developing guidelines in China. *Our* government has excellent macro-control of the national development. In Western countries, everything is just market-oriented or benefit-oriented. I think Western developed countries lack enough national macro-control.

Even during the Christmas talent show at the end of 2016, when I asked Hui whether he had some performances, he responded, “Are you kidding? I can just sing some Chinese revolutionary songs.”

Further, as mentioned by Hui, my participants’ patriotic feelings related to their social positions in Canada. They believed that if China enjoys higher international

positions, they would be more respected by people in other nations. They became more patriotic through the transnational lives. On July 12<sup>th</sup> of 2016, Qiang posted an article in his We Chat Space that explains such feelings:

Although we (migrant Chinese) live in another country, the power of China is very relevant to us. We are proud of every achievement and breakthrough of our country. The improvement of China's international status makes people worldwide show more respect to Chinese people. Maybe we, as international students, cannot do too much to impact international decisions, but we need to make more Westerners to hear our voices through Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. Everyone's contribution may be very small, but all the efforts together are huge. We support China!

When my participants referred to Chinese people, they preferred to use the term "we" to show the national cohesiveness (Ong, 2006).

Moreover, Hui was dissatisfied about Chinese people's social positions in foreign countries. He wrote in the online postings, "Many Chinese people stay together in Western developed countries for the mutual support given the inferior positions [he used the word "second-class citizens"] in Western countries". This is also another very important reason why he wanted to return back to the home country, as social positions are very significant for him.

As discussed above, citizenship or patriotic education was transmitted through my participants' schools, families, familiar social contexts and online sources to my participants. Although they were situated in a foreign nation, they were still governed by the Chinese nation state. Given the everyday citizenship education in online space (Ong, 2006), my participants still maintained the strong patriotic feeling, especially when they

stayed as the minority group or outsiders in the host society. Also, the national solidarity and cohesiveness (Ong, 2006), transmitting the sense of security and belonging, counted a lot in their transnational lives.

## **Section Six: Flexible Futures?**

The Chinese international students in my study always calculated the developing opportunities and tried to employ academic, social and cultural resources in transnational spaces to strive for the best development. First, I show the students' considerations in their roles as university applicants.

### **1. University Applicants**

In order to better understand my participants' university applications, I talked with the students and guidance counselors. The teachers in the guidance office mentioned that the school not only organizes students to attend different university fairs, but also invites representatives from different Canadian universities to make introductions. Most of my participants are the only kids or just have one sibling so they bear more responsibilities for their family prosperity and reputation. Neoliberal cultural logic spoke with Chinese filial piety to push them to work harder for success. According to my talk with these students, I feel that their parents who expected their future high social positions and good income used their international education as an entry for accumulating multiple forms of capital.

## **Calculations in the University Applications**

In the university applications, my participants considered about the job market needs in Canada and in China. This explains their preferences for high-ranking and world famous universities and hot majors (e.g. business, science or engineering). I talked with Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Cathy and Mr. Ben who are in charge of students' university applications in the school. Mrs. Jones stated that in university applications, parents of Chinese international students consider more about their child's future career development and university reputations worldwide. They mainly follow the market trend. According to Mr. Ben, the Chinese parents whom he contacted have very high and unrealistic expectations for the students. Under the pressures from their parents, most of the Chinese students in the school just want to study the majors with high economic returns in high-ranking universities. When Mr. Ben talked with some non-Chinese parents about their children's learning situations, they responded, "ok, if my son or daughter is less likely to go to University of Toronto, we will consider some other options." However, Mr. Ben further stated,

Most of the Chinese parents I know could not understand the students' pressures as they continuously push their children to work harder. Some Chinese students came to my office and said that they even wanted to drop some courses because their mid-term scores were around 88! Their parents thought that their scores were not high enough for the most competitive university programs. Some Chinese students applied for the programs that they might never get the offers. They just made so many applications so as to win the 'lottery'—generally, Canadian students may apply for 5-6 universities or majors, while Chinese students in this high school could apply for 14 to 15 universities or even more

(just in Ontario) so as to get more opportunities. Some of my former students applied so many and might just get one offer because they picked the hardest programs according to the trend in the job market.

In my participants' deep heart, they resisted the idea of studying in a college.

Chen mentioned that his parents suggested he study in a college rather than a university in Canada, though he did not want to, as he could not find a good job with a college degree in China. Song thought that another friend was less ambitious because he just wanted to study in a college. Instead, Song preferred to study in a decent university even though his overall grade was low. According to Mr. Ben, he suggested some students who like computer games study in colleges, learn practical knowledge and skills and make good salaries. However, they rejected the suggestion and only wanted to study in universities.

My participants applied for the universities in light of university rankings and reputations worldwide. When representatives of the University of Nipissing made the university introduction in the high school, no participants showed up, as they had not heard of the university in China. Even the participants with low overall grades were prone to apply for the mid-ranking universities that are known in China. For instance, most of the participants applied for Brock University, which has invested heavily in commercial publicity in China. Almost all the students had heard of Brock University when they stayed in China. My participants thought that they would be more likely to find jobs if their future employers knew the university. Mr. Ben argued,

Chinese students in the school lack the basic understanding about the educational system and quality in Canada. Most of the university rankings are not about the undergraduate studies. In Canada, the educational system is very equal. No matter where students go, they get the same quality of education at the undergraduate levels. Some Chinese students applied for the business program in University of Waterloo just because it is famous in Canada and China. When I introduced the business program in Wilfrid Laurier University, many Chinese students did not believe the high educational quality in such a top business school.

My participants explained the reasons why they always referred to university rankings. For instance, when Lei wanted to apply for the major of animation or media art, he searched the Canadian art school rankings online. Lei did not grow up in Canada and therefore he did not have direct ideas about Canadian universities. He had to take university rankings as the main references. Similar to Lei, Qi considered rankings and university reputations. She applied for a range of high-ranking Canadian universities (e.g. Western University, Queen's University, University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, etc) that bolster her confidence for the future career development. There are other top universities (e.g., McGill) that she also wanted to apply, though her overall grade could not reach the cutoff line.

Many students (i.e., Chen, Le, Lin, Qi, Qiang and Song) in my study were very realistic in their university applications and major choices because of the career development. Li stated that she likes art though both her parents and she believed that it might be very hard for art school graduates to find jobs. She chose some majors with high economic returns that allow her to be financially independent in the future. She wants to earn more money to buy luxury clothes and purses and to provide the best

education for her future kids.

In line with Li, Chen who is from a small town in China wanted to win social esteem for his parents. They expected him to work in big companies and cities, where he can earn high salaries and achieve respectable social positions. Chen said, “I do not consider too much about my own preferences; instead, I care about whether I can find a good job in China.” Lan’s father had higher requirements for his only daughter, since he invested all the family savings on her. He hoped that Lan could work as a “golden collar”, which means someone who earns high income in a famous institution. Bearing her parents’ expectations, Lan worked very hard to be successful in the area with high economic returns,

I am interested in learning math, through which I could work in wider fields (e.g., finance, stocks). I hope to be enrolled in a co-op program for my postgraduate education, where I could have transnational work experience. I will attend tests that let me have more professional qualifications to find good jobs in Canada.

As mentioned above, most of my participants chose to study in high-ranking famous Canadian universities rather than colleges, though there were some exceptions. The overall grades and language test scores of Hui and Le were not high enough for them to study in any Canadian universities so that they had to study in Canadian colleges first. In addition, Lin chose to study design in a college for her easier immigration to Canada. I discuss her situation in the next section.

## **Considering Immigration in University Applications**

Neoliberal cultural logics incurred the desire of some participants to immigrate to Canada in the future that might bring more opportunities and flexibility. Admittedly, the fantasy for the Western developed world still exists in many participants' families, which affected their university applications. For instance, Qi changed her educational plans given her mom's arrangements for her immigration:

In the very beginning, I wanted to learn business or accounting in the University of Toronto. But I changed my mind, as my mom said it seemed hard for graduates majoring in business and accounting to immigrate. So, my mom hopes me to be a pharmacist or a financial analyst. I think I need to be realistic. Even though I do not like some majors, I may still study for a brighter future. I want to be an 'elite of elites (人上人)'. So I accepted my mom's suggestions to apply for the major in science, math and actuarial science. These majors allow me to immigrate and find a good job after graduation.

As for Lin, even though her high school scores were satisfactory, she did not apply for any Canadian universities because of her mom's decision that learning design in colleges helps her immigrate easily.

## **2. Further Educational Plans**

The cultural logic of capitalist accumulation can be seen in how many participants used the present colleges or universities as the stepping-stones or buffers to more competitive programs in famous universities worldwide. They strived for better opportunities that they could achieve. For instance, after discussing with his mom, Le wanted to study in a college first, which does not require the IELTS scores and high



overall grades. Both Le and his mom thought that it would be impossible for him to reach the cutoff requirements for language admission tests (e.g., IELTS 6.5) in one year so he had to make some concessions. Le asked me whether there are cooperative programs between the college that he would attend and another high-ranking university in Canada. He hoped to use the college as a transition, while eventually he still wanted to study in a decent university. Likewise, Hao would go to a mid-ranking university in Canada due to his low overall grade; afterward, he aimed to study in a better university for his master program.

Lan expected more after she entered into University B. Before the higher education, she always thought Canadian universities were the best worldwide. However, she found that some friends hoped to apply for top universities in the States. Lan began to prepare for the application of the best math postgraduate programs worldwide—e.g., she tried hard to achieve higher scores and started to work on the GRE test. Lan always had new goals in her international education, which kept her very busy.

Notwithstanding the endless effort to pursue more success, some students did not want to continue such a stressful living status for academic achievements. Li gave up the application for the most competitive program in the University of Waterloo, as she could not stand the heavy study pressure. Chen just wanted to finish her undergraduate education in Canada and then return back to China for a “more comfortable life”. They felt exhausted in the ‘goal-chasing game’ in Canada.

### **3. Will I stay in Canada?**

With regard to where to live in the future, my participants were still calculating the opportunities between the home space and the host space. Some participants had a strong desire to immigrate and begin their new lives in Canada. For instance, Qi wished to own a car, a house, and a successful job that would support her parents' lives in Canada. Her parents hoped her to gain better professional development in Canada through the international education. Gaining the immigrant status may help her find jobs easier. Qi said it would be a waste of time and money if she studies in Canada and then returns back to China. Similarly, after having paid so much tuition and living expenses in Canada, Lei felt that it would not be worthwhile to return back to China. He believed that though there are fewer job opportunities in Canada, the population in Canada is not so dense. So, maybe, it would be easier for him to find jobs in Canada than in China. He did not have the confidence to engage fiercer competition in China because there are 1.4 billion people there.

Also, some students were making flexible calculations between Canada and China. Lin's preparation for immigration came from her mom, whereas she had not decided where to stay.

I hope that I could immigrate and find a good job in Canada. However, after I become a Canadian citizen, I may go back to China and work for several years. I am still young, so I need to experience a lot of things. My mom also hopes that I could stay with her. Being a Canadian citizen makes it easier for me to return back to Canada. I am still thinking about my future development.

Lin's word also reflected her mom's conflicting feelings for her daughter's immigration: on the one hand, she hoped Lin to immigrate and work in Canada. On the other hand, she still wanted to stay with her only daughter because of the intimate kinship.

What's more, Song also could not decide whether to stay in China or return back. His dad hoped him to get the Canadian permanent residency and then the Canadian citizenship. Some Chinese friends and relatives told him that the Canadian permanent residency is "a *good thing*". He did not understand what the benefits of getting the Canadian permanent residency or citizenship are, though he might still strive for the Canadian citizenship. Similar to Song, Qiang told me, "I have never thought about immigration before I came to Canada; however, I heard from others that the tuition is lower for immigrant students. In addition, I can enjoy many favourable opportunities in job hunting."

When I just knew Lan, she really wanted to immigrate given the family's fantasy for Western modernity. She even began to imagine the future life with her parents in Canada. When I invited Lan to my home, she asked me about real estate prices in Canada. However, situations changed after she entered into University B. Her parents told her that talents in finance or actuarial science are badly needed in China and very likely to earn high salaries. So she might return back to her home city in China and become a "golden collar". The students mentioned above were calculating opportunities in China, Canada and other developed nations or regions so as to fluidly plan their next

steps.

#### **4. Living with the Chinese “Circles”**

Chinese social networking (Guan Xi, 人脉) played significant roles in my participants' everyday lives, which explains why they wanted to return back to China or stay close to Chinese communities in Canada. Qi believed that it would be best if she could study close to her Chinese friends in Toronto who might introduce jobs to her. Her mom has some friends who manage restaurants in Canada and in the USA. Qi mentioned that she would look for part-time jobs in the friends' restaurants so that she could support her life independently in the university.

Most of the boys wanted to return back to China and seek future professional development. Hui had specific career goals about returning back to China and working in the Chinese Academy of Science given the influence from a familiar Chinese professor there. Hui followed his arrangements and guidance in university applications because he wanted to work with him in the future. Similar to Hui, Qiang stated that he would employ social connections in China to start his career:

I want to learn business in Canadian universities and then work as a hotel manager in China. It might be hard for me to work as a manager in Canadian hotels, so that I would return back to China. My neighbours operate their hotels in Shenzhen, where I could take a higher job position.

Also, Le wanted to learn international business, accounting or design in his future studies. His father has a company in Shenzhen and his family do business with clients

from Western developed countries. Le's family wanted him to learn practical skills in business and design that are contributive to the operation of the family business.

Consistent with his parents' opinions, Le also hoped to return back to China and get the family support.

### **Summary and Discussion**

This chapter illustrates how the eleven Chinese international secondary school students, as flexible citizens in the making, faced social, cultural, economic, and political forces in transnational spaces and what obstacles they faced in their daily choices, practices and aspirations (Ong, 1999). The cultural logics stemming from neoliberal criteria/discourses, and their families, societies and states dialogued and negotiated to govern my participants' calculations and choices (Ong, 1999, 2006).

As flexible learners, in order to gain better Canadian educational qualifications and other Western cultural capital (e.g., practical and independent learning skills) that are highlighted in the global job market, they were pushed by families, relatives and themselves to conform to dominant discourses in the Canadian educational system and society. Nevertheless, given the lack of sufficient English language competence and Western knowledge, the students felt pressured in learning. In order to seek solutions and learning support, they returned back to Chinese friends, learning resources, and other Chinese ways of learning. Further, their former learning habits and expectations for

efficient learning, higher marks, and better educational qualifications still governed their academic studies and plans in Canada.

Similarly, in their intercultural and social lives, on the one hand, they hoped to learn from the local Canadian society and establish social connections in Canada that could serve for their English language learning, academic and professional development. On the other hand, they still encountered barriers in this process—as identities were not solely the ways they wished to be seen or heard, but very often the ways in which they were seen and heard by others (Byrd Clark, 2007). Being regarded as the minority group and outsiders in the host society, the Chinese participants sometimes felt isolated and lonely. So, they had to return back to social connections in Chinese communities either in Canada or in China. Also, they possessed fixed frameworks in their perspectives (Chinese cultural logics) that rejected learning new knowledge or fitted the new knowledge into their former system. Therefore, even though they lived and studied in Canada, they actually constructed their own transnational spaces where they led similar lifestyles as before, inhabited similar Chinese social circles in Canada.

Still, my participants were not the persons who just arrived in Canada. They are learning and navigating their own life paths in transnational spaces. In this self-learning/explorative process, they gradually formed hybrid identities (Ong, 1999) that affected their practices and further life choices. In such a status, they not only enjoyed

the fluidity or flexibility, but also sustained pressures from multiple transnational spaces

(Soong, 2016).

## **Chapter Seven: Three Key Insights**

The prior two chapters illustrate how the eleven Chinese students, as flexible citizens in the making, navigated their lives and viewed their futures amidst challenges emerging in transnational spaces. In this chapter, I discuss three interconnected and significant insights emerging from multiple close readings of my data and my thematic analysis. Flexible citizenship, emphasizing the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, remains the overarching condition in my participants' transnational lives, though other cultural logics emanating from my participants' families, the host and home schools, and the nation-states of Canada and China also govern their daily practices and envisioning of potential educational, career and life routes. In their distinct transnational routes, my participants' in-between and multi-layered identities were accentuated or re-formed.

### **Flexible Routes to Accumulate Capital**

In order to equip children with social and cultural capital, such as Western experiences, social connections, and qualifications that are valued in the global job market, many Chinese families sent their “precious only babies” abroad. During my one-year stay with these Chinese youths, they were exploring how to build up better academic and career paths through study abroad. Based on their academic achievements, learning and social networks in Canada, they hoped to gain more economic, cultural and



social capital, such as higher income, social recognition, high social positions and family prosperity in the future.

On their way to accumulating the different forms of capital referred to above, the first step was to gain Canadian educational qualifications. In order to reach requirements of universities in Canada and other Western developed countries, my participants gained knowledge about the local Canadian society and figured out how to meet Canadian curriculum requirements including ‘soft skills’ (e.g., Working and studying independently and practically, and getting familiar with the Euro-American cultural, social and religious knowledge). In the meantime, my participants and their families also paid attention to building up social connections in Canada that might serve for the participants’ future career development.

After gaining initial qualifications (e.g., passing IELTS or other language admission tests, getting high course scores, gaining social experiences) and knowledge about the host society, my participants reconsidered their future educational and professional development. Some students (e.g., Lan, Qi and Li) changed their goals from entering more accessible programs in Canadian universities to more popular majors (e.g., business, engineering with higher admission requirements) in top Canadian universities. It was not easy to attain these higher goals. My participants devoted most of their time to course learning and community involvements in which they learned under intense pressure. Nevertheless, as soon as they achieved one goal, they began to orient towards

another one. Lan and Li felt that they became more and more ambitious through their international education. For example, after the continuous effort in the high school, Lan entered a famous Canadian university. However, subsequently, she began to prepare for more competitive programs (e.g., actuarial science) in top universities in the U. S.

In contrast, regardless of their hard work, some Chinese students still could not attain satisfactory academic results so they had to make compromises to find different routes to educational progress. For instance, Le and Hui originally oriented towards mid-ranking Canadian universities in the first year of their international education. Close to their university applications, they found their scores and English language levels did not qualify them to be admitted by any Canadian universities. So, they changed the strategies and reduced the pressure; instead, they decided to begin their studies from Canadian colleges as the stepping-stone to university admissions. Alternatively, given their lower than expected achievements in Canada, they decided to use Canadian education qualifications to help them find good jobs in China in the future.

Alternatively, given the lack of useful social connections and insufficient social recognition (e.g., encountering some social exclusions as described in Chapter Six), some students felt that they were situated in peripheral or powerless positions in Canada, which made them lose confidence about their future career development and lives in the host society. According to Bourdieu (1986), social connections and positions represent the social capital that could be transferred to economic and cultural capital. Different

from their outsider positions in Canada, my participants (e.g., Qiang, Chen, Hao, Le, Hui) thought that their middle- or upper- class identities in the Chinese mainstream society allowed them to use social networking in China to gain more opportunities (such as finding employment through family connections). Their international education seemed to represent to them more cultural capital than social capital. They hoped to combine their accumulated cultural capital in Canada and social capital in China to construct their “brighter” future.

Furthermore, most of the participants are from the developed and coastal regions, the capital city or tourist cities in China, where there are abundant career development opportunities. Some students (e.g., Lan, Le, Qiang, Song, Lin, and Hao) always compared developing opportunities in Canada and in China. The participants from Shenzhen, Shanghai and Suzhou felt that through the recent decades of fast development, China’s economy is very strong so that they might have better job prospects in China. After staying in Canada for many years, their fantasy of the modern West also gradually faded. They did not want to lose developing opportunities in China, so they wanted to employ the accumulated “foreign assets” (e.g., Canadian university degrees, work experiences, etc) to promote their career development in China.

Despite a more muted passion toward Western modernity, some participants still did their utmost to grasp developing opportunities and even permanent residency or citizenship in Canada. Lei mentioned that only if he could not find satisfactory jobs in

Canada, he would return back to China. In addition, other students (e.g., Lin and Qi) set their transnational routes according to immigration policy in Canada because of their families' fantasy for Western modernity and flexibility between the nations. For their families, even though the children might not stay in Canada in the future, the Canadian citizenship still affords the flexibility and options of mobility for future jobs and lives. These aspirations, as Ong's 'flexible citizenship' framework (1999, 2003) predicts, significantly impacted their families' choices. Their parents wanted my participants to exploit opportunities between nations—for instance, according to Lin, her mom believed that the Canadian passport facilitates Lin's travel, work and stay in many Western developed countries. Lin's mom did not want Lin to stay permanently in one location in the present highly globalized world.

### **Intersecting Cultural Logics Emanating from Families, Society and State**

The first section of this chapter outlines how my participants employed different routes to accumulate forms of capital. It is also important to emphasize that studying in the Canadian international high school represents only one dimension of my participants' mobility—physical, rather than their lingering in the host space. Some participants stayed immobile in their international education given their former habits, social connections, and preferences formed from Chinese family, social and political contexts. So there is a kind of intercultural 'thinness' in their transnational space.

A few students in my study clung more to the home space in comparison with their former lives in China. For example, Li, who attended a Canadian international school in Suzhou, felt her former schooling was more ‘internationalized,’ as she had abundant opportunities to get contact with the Western culture, art and sports through various teacher-guided extracurricular activities. By contrast, in the present international high school in Canada, she studied most of the time given her goal of attending a high-ranking university in Canada. The life in the present school was similar to the pressured public high school life in China where the students narrowly strive for good marks. Li felt she was attending a Chinese public school in Canada. Meanwhile, Li began to emotionally rely more on her parents in China. She went to the boarding schools in China; however, in Canada, she returned back to China every 3-4 months to get reunion with her parents.

Another interesting example is that when my participants stayed in China, they sometimes ate in Western restaurants, which was a way for them to get contact with cultures in other nations. However, in Canada, they desperately sought Chinese restaurants serving different cuisines of authentic Chinese food to remind them of the familiar flavor when they were missing home.

The two examples above illustrate that “while global processes valorize mobility, flexibility, and accumulation, there are structural limits set by cultural norms, modes of ruling, and national ideologies” (Ong, 1999, p. 243) that held my participants into the

home space. Chinese cultural norms, the patriotic feeling, the nostalgia and national ideologies that bred Chinese cultural logics (Ong, 1999) governed my participants' subjectivities and their lives in Canada. Here, first, I analyze how Chinese cultural logics entangled my participants to their roots in the transnational lives.

To begin with, most of my participants constructed 'Chinese communities' in Canada where they could re-make the sense of *Chinese social and national cohesiveness* in the host society. As mentioned in Chapter Six, Qiang established a Chinese We Chat online community for the Chinese students in the school to interact with each other. Staying close to the Chinese community in the school or online not just brought my participants life convenience and support, but also provided them with the sense of security in the unfamiliar Canadian context without their family's company. Chinese communities gave my participants life convenience and emotional support, though still interfered their immersion into the Canadian society and the accumulation of local knowledge.

Additionally, through the lonely stay in a foreign nation, some participants got a clearer understanding about their patriotic feelings, and the nostalgia for the familiar social and cultural contexts in China. As I have mentioned in Chapter Five, Hui has loved Chinese history, politics and culture since he was very young. Given his goal to learn social science or human anthropology in Canadian higher education, he began to read books on economics, politics, and society in the U.S. or Europe. He did not agree

with the capitalist competitive and profit-oriented modes in Western society. Also, he disliked the market-oriented practices in the school. For instance, the school charged high fees for every educational service. He described himself as a communist who is in favor of the government's macro-control over endless competitions and profit-oriented practices. In my perspective, the comparative views accumulated through the transnational mobility made him think more critically about the society in the host space. However, I also think that Hui tended to romanticize the situation in the home space as socioeconomic regulations in China have also been greatly influenced by the global neoliberal hegemony since the 1980s (Horesh & Lim, 2017). During my conversations with him for more than one year, he showed interest only in Chinese culture, politics, and histories. Staying in Canada did not give him pleasure, and the emotional discomfort from the patriotic feeling and nostalgia seemed to make him get sick very easily. He aimed at getting a Canadian university degree that might qualify him to work in a Chinese academic institution. Nevertheless, even a mid-ranking university degree would not be easy for him to achieve given that he always stayed in the home space.

Chen is another student who did not physically venture far from the international school. He had strong affections for the familiar life context in the home country. From Chen's perspective, his parents forced him to study in Canada without being concerned about his feelings. Chen preferred to stay in his familiar social circles and groups, eat Chinese food, and use Mandarin to study and work every day. He posted his feelings,

and happenings in his Chinese QQ and We Chat online space almost every day.

Returning to China during summer vacations made him emotionally revitalized. He just wanted to *survive* well in the Canadian high school and future university, and then use the Canadian qualifications to get a decent job in a big city in China.

The experiences of Hui and Chen link to a danger raised by Ong (2003) that many middle-class members in Asian countries hold an instrumentalist approach to education, i.e., studying in Western universities for accumulating professional skills and world-class credentials and being recognized in job markets. Concurring with Ong's concern, Hui and Chen did not immerse themselves in their local 'Canadian' context; they seemed to view the Western educational qualification solely as a means to realize a brighter future in China, as an imagined 'homeland.'

Such an instrumental aim limited the potential value of their international education. Given that they often lingered in Chinese contexts, both Chen and Hui made very slow progress in their English language learning and academic studies because of their unwillingness to walk out of their comfort zones (e.g., using English more often and being immersed in the Canadian context). Hui even dropped the English 3U (university preparation) course three times and had been transferred to English 3C course (college preparation) course. Ong (1999) argues that migrants use flexible strategies in their transnational lives, which means that they strive for their own distinct solutions. More than two years of dissatisfactory experiences in Canada made Chen and Hui even



more determined to return back to China after graduation, which they *envisioned* as the end reward of their unhappy transnational learning experiences.

Further, filial piety is also one of the most significant Chinese cultural logics (Ong, 1999) that governed all my participants' daily practices. To illustrate, some girl students (e.g., Qi and Lan) discussed almost every step in their international journey with their parents. In their view, they needed to follow their parents' decisions given that their parents were more experienced and loved them whole-heartedly. They also had the responsibilities to achieve academic and career success so as to provide affluent lives for their parents in the future.

Qi and Lan came from the middle-class rather than upper class families so their parents spent all their savings and income in supporting their international education. Every time when they thought about their parents' sacrifice, the students were determined to work harder to repay their parents someday. Some Canadian teachers (e.g., Mr. Brian) did not understand such strong work spirit originating from the complex filial duties. In May 2017, when Qi made her final decision about where to study, she gave up the offer from the University of Toronto, which was always her dream before she came to Canada. The main reason was that the tuition was so high that she did not want to put more financial pressure on her family. So, she accepted the offer from another famous university (University C, pseudo name) in Canada, which, though in her mind, is not so well known in China. Qi also showed all her offers from famous Canadian universities to

her relatives and friends online, which might bring honor to her family. The Chinese cultural logic of filial piety remained as a moral guide in my participants' transnational lives.

Filial piety is also embodied in family responsibility—e.g., most of the boys in my study stated that they would return and become the mainstay of the families. In China, family expectations for responsibilities for boys and girls are different. Ong (1999) also refers to this aspect that "...the male vision of the Chinese society that traces family genealogies from fathers to sons, who are constructed as male-to-male partners..." (p. 151). Lin and Ghail (2017) and Fei (2008) further explain that within the Chinese patriarchal society, males, carrying on family names, are responsible for family prosperity and social positions, while women bear less such burdens. Most of the boy participants (except for Lei) said they would return and support their parents when they are old. They did not foresee staying in Canada permanently. Most of them either would find decent jobs in big cities in China or take over the family business. In contrast, the girl participants were given more flexibility—the majority of the families wished them to immigrate and work in Canada or the States.

Last but not the least, all the participants acknowledged the Chinese cultural logic of Guan Xi (social connections) along their international journey. According to Ong (1999), Chinese Guan Xi institution is a mix of an instrumentalism (as a way to accumulating capital) and humanism (helping others) (p. 117). The two elements were

embodied in the everyday lives of my participants. I argue that the instrumental purposes of Chinese Guan Xi speak to the cultural logic of capitalist accumulation (i.e., accumulating social capital). My participants strategically used social connections or social capital both in Canada and in China to facilitate their further development.

Qiang is from a family who runs a family business. Growing up in such a family context, he had understood the importance of social networking since he was very young. Given the social knowledge learned from his parents and relatives, he also sought social connections in Canada. He participated in various social activities to know the local people, set up good relationships with teachers and administrators in the school and built up ‘brotherhood’ or ‘sisterhood’ relationships with his Chinese friends in the school. These friends are also from elite Chinese families with abundant social resources, so he was also building up relationships for his future. Qiang learned Canadian culture so as to find some “common language” with local people, though this learning process was not easy. Qiang tried to be involved in Canadian society, while his social immersion was still governed by the Chinese cultural logic of Guan Xi. He hoped that the accumulated social connections (social capital) might serve for his future academic and career development.

Other students and their families also invested in social networking transnationally. From the first year of her international education, Qi’s mom already tried to “pave the road” by building up social connections for her daughter in the new country.

She visited her Chinese friends in Toronto and in the U. S. who might be able to discuss her daughter's university applications and introduce jobs after her graduation. After one year's consideration, Qi finally accepted the offer from University C in Ontario. She also received another offer from the University of Alberta, though she did not have any social connections in Edmonton. So, in Qi's view, it might be harder to seek future opportunities there.

Apart from the instrumental function of *guan xi*, the humanism side also pervaded my participants' lives. For instance, Hao always helped other Chinese friends with such daily trivia as airport pickup, hotel booking and international mailing. Hui also helped his friends in Toronto and Mississauga whenever they were in need. Song believed that Chinese international students need to help each other in Canada as they come from the same nation (root).

### **In-between Status and Multi-layered Identities (Mediations of Different Cultural Logics)**

Studying abroad pushed the Chinese youths in my study to shuttle between the home space and the host space to make flexible accumulations. My participants' flexible accumulations positioned them in an in-between status—this status, on the one hand, provided them with expanded opportunities to accumulate social and cultural capital transnationally.

It is also noteworthy that in the capital accumulation process, my participants gained more knowledge about the education, culture and society in Canada. Their identities were developing and absorbing new elements from the host society. My participants broadened their mind, and thought more critically about their future academic and life plans. Qi wrote in her QQ space,

Before I came to Canada, my family only wanted me to study in University of Toronto. Now, I have broadened my minds after one year's life in Canada—I consider more about majors, intern opportunities, career developments, immigration, etc. I understand more about how to make the university choices and plan my future life in Canada.

Qi still followed her mom's plan for university applications, though her mom also learned from Qi's views for more comprehensive considerations. Her family never thought about these factors before she crossed the border.

In addition, given the purpose of practicing English and achieving social skills as requested in university admissions, my participants engaged in the host society and communicated with local Canadian people and students from other nations. Le, Lan, and Li found enjoyment from learning the local culture. They began to understand habits and preferences of local Canadians that they also adopted in their daily lives. For instance, they learned how to pay tips, how to split bills, what sensitive topics are in Canada, the tattoo culture, and the coffee culture, etc. My participants felt that new knowledge also had been injected in their bodies and gradually changed their perspectives and habits. To illustrate, most participants changed their habits from drinking tea to drinking coffee

every day. They understood that there are different varieties of coffee, and coffee culture became a part of their lives. In the process of achieving instrumental objectives, my participants' identities were also molded by local Canadian social and cultural forces. After many months in the international context, they were not the former high school Chinese students who had arrived in Canada.

Still, my participants' Chinese distinctiveness and former habits still went with them so that they inhabited an in-between status. This hybrid and in-between status was generated by mediations of different cultural logics. Sometimes, the in-between status made my participants very lonely, as they were not understood by local Canadians as well as Chinese acquaintances back 'home.' More specifically, given the family expectation for his learning achievement as well as his vision for better career development, Qiang stayed in Canada in the summer vacation of 2016, and took another English course. The Chinese filial feeling and duties converged with the desire of capital accumulation, all of which pushed him to study harder for his success. Nevertheless, he felt very lonely, because most of his friends were having summer vacations in China. When he saw that some friends posted pictures about their summer vacations in their hometown, he had the strong nostalgic feelings. Qiang lived in a very isolated status, which pushed him to volunteer in the community.

However, in that community involvement, he had conflicts with host Canadians because of different cultural perspectives. Qiang felt that social exclusion still existed in

the Canadian society. The unpleasant transnational social experiences made him even lonelier: His parents could not understand his nostalgia and other difficulties along his transnational routes, while local Canadians also thought differently from what he did. In my view, Qiang's hybrid state manifested a nostalgic feeling that ran counter to the filial piety and the cultural logic of capitalist accumulation. The conflicts between different cultural logics made him unhinged—he was not sure whether he could gain personal *happiness* through the *worthy life* that the family defined.

Similarly, the Chinese parents pushed some participants to study in high-ranking universities and highly competitive majors, though they did not understand the children's study or emotional/social pressures. Song's parents attributed all the study failures to his lack of learning initiative without considering about his difficulties due to the deficiency in culture knowledge, insufficient English language competence and the lack of sufficient learning and emotional support in Canada. Given the filial piety for their parents, most of my participants did not disclose their frustrations. Instead, they kept emotions inside and felt disconnected from their parents.

Instead, they preferred to discuss these emotional challenges with their friends and me who shared similar roots and routes and also inhabited an in-between status. One girl participant even said to me, "I do not want to bother you too often, but I really have nobody to talk to in Canada. Also, I do not want my parents to worry about me. I feel so depressed and sometimes suffer from insomnia. I would be happy and relieved if I could

talk with you sometimes.” Thus, the filial piety, patriotism and the pressures of capital accumulation coexisted and mediated with each other to generate my participants’ frustrations and loneliness in their transnational spaces.

### **Summary and Discussion**

This chapter illustrates how my participants used flexible routes to garner Canadian university degrees, social connections, and Western knowledge. They hoped that these qualifications and forms of capital could bring career success and higher social status in the future. In their transnational routes, their home cultural logics (e.g., Chinese cohesiveness, filial piety, patriotic feelings, social networking) still affected their practices in the host country; in the meantime, the cultural logic of capitalist accumulation and Euro-American cultures also gradually regulated their lives. Different cultural logics converged and mediated to form an intersected force, directing them to their distinct transnational paths. In line with Chapter Two, this chapter shows that flexibility in students’ transnational routes did not give them ‘freedom’ nor guarantee success; instead, their transnational routes, choices and aspirations were regulated by economic, cultural, political and social constraints in transnational spaces. In Chapter Eight, I present a discussion of the whole dissertation, put forward educational and research implications and make suggestions for future study.



## **Chapter Eight: Discussion and Implications**

The previous chapter analyzes three insights on how transnational cultural logics stemming from the assemblage of families, societies and states mediated to enable and constrain the ‘flexible citizenship’ of my participant-international students. This final chapter turns back explicitly to the research questions to summarize and discuss my participants’ experiences before and during their international education as well as to the larger educational, social, economic, cultural, and political conditions in play. This chapter also illustrates how the students navigated their lives between situated forces in transnational spaces, through which they deepened the understanding about themselves and their futures.

Based on my discussion, I re-clarify two significant points. The first focuses on how Chinese citizenship was becoming disarticulated and rearticulated in my participants’ lives. Second, I elucidate how my study was meaningfully guided by and expanded the conceptual framework of flexible citizenship. Finally, I discuss implications for different stakeholders and researchers and raise two areas for future research.

### **Section One: Chinese International Students’ Experiences in China and Their Self-making**

This section expounds my participants’ experiences before their international education. Their former experiences relate to broad social, cultural, economic, and

political conditions of global and local scales. The students' habits and preferences were formed through their life experiences in China, which continued to influence their academic studies and social lives in Canada.

### **1. Decisions to Study Abroad and Former Studies in China**

Given the one-child policy in China (Tan, 2012), most of my participants are only children. Their whole family relies on their future success that not only gives themselves affluent lives, but also brings prestige to the whole family. All the students come from relatively elite families, and their parents work for a family business or hold administrative roles in big organizations. The parents not only gave the students the best care in China, but also tried to use their family resources to construct a better future for these youths in their transnational routes. My participants and their whole family, including their parents, grandparents, or other acquaintances were involved in their educational plans.

The previous chapters show that almost all the parents and students (except for Hui) had a notion of the prestige of Western developed countries. According to Soong (2016), the fantasy provoked by the lives in the Western developed world could be seen as a conceptual space of modernity desired by transnational migrants (p. 165). The participants' fantasy towards this conceptual space relates the world capitalism and the cultural logic of capitalist accumulation (Ong, 1999). Each entire family's desire for the

accumulation of such forms of capital as Western degrees and knowledge, the proficiency in English, and transnational social connections pushed the Chinese youths to study in Canada.

Here, I still want to illustrate how my participants accumulated linguistic capital through international education. The global linguistic context drove my participants to study abroad. Practical English language competencies that are regarded as the necessities for white-collar jobs, higher salaries, and socially elevated positions are highly emphasized in the Chinese educational systems (Neubauer & Zhang, 2015; Huang, 2011). Practical English language competency is a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) for Chinese students to achieve higher economic and social status in the society (Hu, 2005). Since they were very young, the families highly emphasized my participants' English language learning. For instance, Song was forced to attend various English language contests in China.

In contrast to the literature, when I asked my participants the main reasons for them to study in Canada, they did not mention English language learning. I did a member check afterwards— Song and Li argued that learning English was already a necessary part of their lives irrespective of whether they studied abroad or not. English language proficiency has already become a needed competence everywhere in China, especially in the neoliberal zones (Ong, 2006) (e.g., Beijing, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Suzhou, Wuxi). Their parents also hoped them to be more competent English language

users through their Western education.

What surprised me was that most of the participants had not pondered seriously about their future academic and social lives in Canada until they arrived in the new setting. Before their international education, they did not understand what their transnational lives might be and how they might manage their lives more independently. They had followed all the educational and life plans set by their parents. This relates to the cultural logic of Chinese filial piety, which made them believe that their parents always make best arrangements for them, as well as their one-child status. So, their parents' fantasy towards Western modernity and education pushed them to study abroad. The students believed that their parents planned the best for their future. At such young ages, they did not expect the challenges they would encounter in the process of gaining Western educational qualifications, but blindly felt that their parents' decisions were sensible. In my perspective, Chinese filial piety generates my participants' blind trust for their parents' choices, though later, the tough transnational experiences made them reflect somewhat upon their parents' choices and their own life trajectories.

In addition, another more important reason for my participants to agree with their parents' decisions related to the pressures from Gao Kao (or other standardized tests) They wanted to escape from the pressured lives in China where they were unlikely to succeed at the highest levels. As mentioned in Chapter Five, most of the participants understand that Gao Kao and other standardized tests are used in China to stratify

students into different social positions given their access to higher education. Only those who attend famous universities in China and other developed countries are able to make the first step on the way to their success. Under the “credential capitalism” context in China, Gao Kao serves as a tool to identify deserving college students and workers in the Chinese workplace (Kim, Brown & Fong, 2016; Liu & Wu, 2006). Most of my participants experienced the study pressures or failures in Gao Kao, so they opted for a ‘back door,’ i.e., studying in Canada to obtain world-recognized university degrees and be favored in the global job market. Some participants (e.g., Hao, Chen, Le, Hui, Qiang, Song) did not have other choices in their educational routes—they either studied abroad or began to study or work from less satisfactory situations (e.g., studying in Chinese colleges, low-ranking universities or even doing manual jobs). As the children from elite families, their parents had to find alternative routes to social class maintenance and were willing to invest on my participants’ international schooling.

Further, as mentioned in Chapter Five, all the students in my study were also affected by the long-term test-oriented learning in their former schools and homes in China. In order to squeeze into decent primary schools and secondary schools where most of the graduates succeed in Gao Kao, the students attended countless standardized tests and after-school tutoring. In order to ensure that my participants got fully prepared in standardized tests, their former teachers transmitted knowledge for learning efficiency. The Chinese teachers also maintained authoritative positions for students’ *obedience in*

*learning*. Their former teachers required the student participants to use the rote learning method that involves mechanical memorization of all the key knowledge points and standard answers.

All these learning characteristics were catalogued in my participants' inner system and regulated their studies in China and in Canada. Under such an educational system, my participants relied on their teachers and textbooks for learning, seldom thought critically (otherwise they could not get high marks in standardized tests) and regarded their teachers as the authorities in classes. Some students (e.g., Lan, Li) had difficulties understanding and enduring such a tedious and depressive learning environment in and out of the school, so they desperately sought relief through studying in Canada. Their former educational modes also resulted in my participants' difficulties in learning in the Canadian educational system, especially for the first few months.

To summarize, my participants had a *fantasy* of education in Canada—the fantasy made them believe that they could easily gain world-recognized university degrees, escape from a pressured learning environment or possible failures, and be proficient in English. Under such a fantasy of their imagined Western world and education, many participants (e.g., Chen, Hao, Lin, etc) could not resist the temptation when Chinese agencies showed pictures in which many students who did not study so hard were still admitted by high-ranking universities in Canada. Most of the participants who had never been to or just had a short visit to Western developed countries possessed very limited

and partial understanding about the social and educational contexts in Canada. Only a bright picture was depicted and boasted in front of them.

## **2. The Access to and Accumulation of Western Knowledge before International Education**

After expounding some reasons that pushed my participants to study abroad and their fantasy for the “imagined Western society and education”, it is also worth noting that my participants are from different family, social and geographical contexts so their understanding about Western society and education varied. Before their international education, the participants (except for Hao, Lin and Chen) studying in international schools or highly internationalized public schools in coastal and developed cities in China already accumulated some understanding and familiarity about Western pedagogical practices and knowledge. Their former class learning included the activities of active class participation, creative thinking and collaboration.

Also, before their international education, some students (e.g., Lin, Li and Qiang) travelled to other Western developed nations for summer camps and exchange programs, watched Western movies, TV shows and ate in Western restaurants frequently so that they had accumulated the knowledge of other nations, and cultivated the transnational consciousness that is an awareness of multi-locality (Soong, 2016). These students already inhabited transnational spaces before crossing borders (Ong, 1999, p. 243). Their

families invested in the children's accumulation of Western knowledge before their international journey.

### **3. Chinese Cultural Logics and the Patriotic Feeling**

Although the majority of my participants already had some transnational awareness while residing in China, the home cultural logics still greatly influenced their lives. In Chapter Seven and this chapter, I have mentioned Chinese cultural logics governing my participants' academic studies (e.g., obedience to teachers as the authority) and their choices to study in Canada (e.g., following parents' decisions given filial piety).

In addition, the cultural logic of Chinese patriotism was bred through my participants' (e.g., Hui, Qiang, Le, Hao, Chen) family education and the citizenship education in China (e.g., the school flag raising ceremonies, and the visit to martyrs' mausoleum, etc.). The patriotic feelings were injected in my participants' bodies and kept on influencing their lives in and out of China. Moreover, my participants, to a different extent, animated special feelings and love for China through learning Chinese history, watching Chinese TV shows, and enjoying Chinese food and humor. Their patriotism was energized in the foreign context.

This section shows my participants' *former* educational studies, family and social lives in China. The broad educational, family, social, political, and economic contexts in



China not only influenced their decisions to study in Canada, but also inscribed cultural distinctiveness, patriotic feelings, study and life habits, characteristics, and preferences in their identities. All these performed as Chinese cultural logics, remaining to regulate my participants' lives in China and in Canada.

## **Section Two: Chinese International Students' Transnational Experiences along Their Routes and Self-making**

After my participants arrived in Canada, their everyday practices were regulated by fluid power dynamics coming from forces both in Canada and in China. This section refers to challenges that my participants encountered along their international routes as well as what changes happened to them. In the meantime, I also discuss how the students understood their lives and identities, and how they maneuvered between multiple transnational spaces to form their distinct transnational routes.

### **1. Fitting in**

As newcomers and minority group in Canada, my participants tried many possible means to “fit into” the host society. However, they found that there existed discrepancies between their “imagined” transnational lives and the realities.

When facing pressures in the host society, the students navigated how to cope with all the challenges along their own transnational trajectories. More specifically, as mentioned in Chapter 6, my participants had a difficult time under new competitive

regimes in Canada. To illustrate, according to the Ontario curriculum requirements (e.g., English 4U) (See the documents in Chapter 6), my participants were required by the school and their future universities to build themselves as independent, critical, and practical learners. They not only learned Western knowledge (e.g., American novels) and English language as their second language, but also applied Western knowledge to their independent learning and critical thinking.

Tensions arose under such challenges. My participants strived for Western university qualifications and knowledge so as to gain more opportunities in the competitive global jobs market. So, they tried to meet requirements in the school. However, some of them not only were deficient in cultural, social and religious knowledge in Anglo-Saxon countries (e.g., Canada and the US), but also lacked sufficient English language competence. So, it was very hard for them to use English and Western knowledge to think critically and learn independently. These students actually required more learning support than local Canadian students at similar ages and grades. They could not become good “game players” without fully understanding “game rules.”

Pushing the Chinese students to make blind and independent explorations made them frustrated. Song argued that his Canadian teachers thought that he and other friends were irresponsible in learning because of their grammar mistakes, inaccuracies in expressing themselves, and insufficient understanding of American literacy knowledge. However, given their low English foundations, they could not perform as independent

and responsible learners. My participants sought learning support from the teachers; however, the participant teachers purported to cultivate students' market-oriented learning and working skills, and therefore they pushed the students to study more independently. However, according to Chinese cultural logics, my participants emphasized that the paradox between Canadian teachers' high demand for assignment qualities and their insufficient teaching support reflects teachers' lack of basic work ethic in their teaching roles. As Sawir et al. (2008) argue, Chinese students are also socially and culturally defined because of their former living environment. In Canada, many participants (e.g., Qi, Hui and Lan) still expected teachers to transmit knowledge to them, so they could learn in a deeper and efficient way. They complained that their independent learning involves class learning inefficiency and the lack of teachers' responsibilities.

In addition, the Canadian teachers in my study were required by the Ontario curriculum requirements to evaluate students' class participation. Most of the participants were not accustomed to speaking in front of a large group of people because of their modest personalities and the lack of sufficient language competence. Their modesty also relates to the Chinese pursuit of "right" answers and positive social images. They felt humiliated and embarrassed to say something wrong in front of teachers and classmates. As explained in Chapter 5 and 6, social images count a lot for most Chinese students so that my participants tried to "avoid losing face" in front of a large group of

people.

Moreover, some assimilative forces that pulled my participants to the host society made them uncomfortable. In high-level university preparation courses, the teacher(s) pushed them to speak and use English only in classes (e.g., requiring them to use English-English dictionaries only, handing in their cell phones before classes and marking course language use). These practices blocked many participants' *survival* and support strategies in their academic studies. Song argued that the teachers who used the English-only rule did not understand "human's normal feelings". Lin and Hao were not only forced to be more silent in classes because of the teachers' frequent check of the use of Mandarin, but they also had to stay together more with the Chinese group for learning support and complaining about harsh school lives in Mandarin after classes. The assimilative practices challenged my participants' comfort zones and instead, pushed them more unidirectionally to the Chinese community to seek learning support and emotional comfort.

Fitzpatrick, Davey and Dai (2012) and Wu (in press) contend that in Western societies, Chinese international students are important consumers of education services, yet they lack power and voice. Dissatisfied Chinese international students, as a minority group, are less likely to complain given power relations in the educational system. My participants also lacked the power and voice in the Canadian educational system—the only way for them to express their dissatisfaction was to stay closer with the Chinese

group and make complaints in and out of classes in Mandarin to relieve their discomfort.

Apart from challenges in academic and language studies, all the Chinese participants also sustained pressures from their social lives in Canada. They tried to get involved in Canadian society, though they found it extremely hard to establish social relationships outside Chinese social circles. I explain this point in the next subsection.

## **2. Looking Out to the Home Space**

Encountering different sources of challenges in Canada, my participants returned back to their home space for learning and emotional support. First, in order to cope with language and learning challenges, my participants used Chinese ways to facilitate their learning in Canada. They sought the mutual learning support from classmates who are also from China in and out of the school. For instance, they discussed with their friends in Mandarin about the teaching content. They also used the English-Chinese-English e-dictionary to look up meanings of unfamiliar words instantly. Some students with more learning difficulties even searched the Mandarin version of course books and learning content. My participants explored how to use Chinese ways to get higher marks in the school and survive better in the Canadian educational context.

As illustrated above, my participants' transnational routes integrated Chinese social connections. The cultural logic of "Guan Xi" (social connections) was still significant in their everyday practices in Canada. Song even told me the old Chinese

saying, “When staying at home, we rely on the parents. When going out, we rely on our friends”. My participants sought learning and life support from their Chinese friends in Canada. Through the long-term mutual reliance in a foreign context, my participants cultivated brotherhood and sisterhood relationships with their friends on the similar transnational routes.

Additionally, hardships in international education made my participants more nostalgic, so they maintained close social connections in China. Li who lived in the boarding schools in China already learned how to be independent, whereas in Canada she wanted to live with her parents. She video-chatted with her parents every day, returned home almost every 3-4 months, and even preferred to work in Suzhou after graduation because of the emotional bond with her parents and her hard life in Canada. One way for my participants to relieve their nostalgic feelings is through food. It is interesting that when the participants were still in China, they sometimes ate in Western-style restaurants. However, in Canada, all the students missed Chinese food—sometimes if they felt upset, they used the familiar Chinese flavor to cheer them up. In my perspective, the “Chinese stomach” is a significant way for them to respond to homesickness.

Again, my participants’ feelings of nostalgia converged with the filial piety to govern their everyday lives. They not only missed their parents, but also followed their parents’ decisions as filial duty. As the Chinese saying goes, “When staying at home, we

rely on our parents.” I argue that given the convenience from telecommunication and the latest technology, my participants contacted their family members conveniently. So, even though they stayed in Canada, they found family support and supervision in the online space. For instance, Qi’s mom still booked hotel rooms and air tickets for her wherever Qi traveled.

Further, their parents largely determined my participants’ educational plans. The parents discussed with the children frequently about what hot and profitable majors are in Canada and in China, how to make university applications by referring to university rankings, and how to make concessions when they could not reach basic requirements. Most of the university applications and future life plans were formulated by their parents rather than by my participants themselves.

Consistent with other studies in the literature, many participants also mentioned that their parents made great contribution to their growth. So, they had the responsibility to succeed in Canada or in China to repay their parents in the future. Their experiences spoke to the view of Soong (2016) that “apart from such influences in the host society, transnational student-migrants have to face the [expectations] of family and friends back in their ‘root’ or home country” (p. 166). The filial duties for family members in China exerted more pressures on my participants’ transnational lives.

Moreover, their status as outsiders in the host society and their loneliness stimulated my participants’ patriotic feelings for China. All the participants thought that

they still belonged to China though some of them had stayed in Canada for 2-3 years. Many participants showed more affection for China (as the home country) until they stayed in Canada as the minority group or outsiders. For example, in their community involvement, my participants who still stuck with other Chinese students felt it hard to communicate with local Canadians given the lack of sufficient English language competence and shared interests (common language). When I asked my participants, “Do you have many Canadian friends?” They only knew the Canadian teachers or the school restaurant waiters or waitresses. Qiang was even asked by a Canadian whether he hated Canadians. These unpleasant social experiences made my participants feel isolated and lonely, and drove them to their home space where they received care, attention and special treatment. Many participants hoped that China could be stronger so they would be treated with more respect in Canada rather than be regarded as outsiders who wanted to squeeze in (Ma & Wang, 2014).

As discussed above, in my view, even though my participants stayed in Canada, they constructed their own transnational spaces, in which they learned in Canada, maintained former habits and kept connections with their family members and Chinese friends. Through these connections, they sought learning support, maintained the sense of cohesiveness and expressed their nostalgic feelings and love for China.

Also, it is also worth noting that although my participants maintained connections with their home space, somehow their ‘home’ was gradually being altered by their



inhabiting the ‘host’ space (Soong, 2016). As stated in Chapter 6, gradually, the students realized that their intimate social connections and shared perspectives with friends and relatives in China were somewhat diminished. Also, despite nostalgic and patriotic feelings in Canada, all the participants rationalized why they needed to continue to study in Canada. My participants also reflected upon changes in their identities which had impacted how they imagined their future educational routes and forms of being connected to others.

### **3. Reflection upon International Education and Re-envisioning Educational Routes**

After analyzing my participants’ transnational experiences, this section depicts how the students re-envision their educational routes according to their learning in Canada. As explained in the previous chapters and sections, in their transnational contexts, my participants found that their former fantasy about an “easier” education and life in Canada was inaccurate and even misleading. The students once regarded the international education as a ‘back door’ to Western university degrees and knowledge. Nevertheless, they turned out to find that studying in the Canadian international high school could neither guarantee them to be admitted by famous Canadian universities nor make for a less stressful life. In university applications, my participants pursued high-ranking universities and competitive majors so they worked at their utmost. They sustained the pressures originating from academic studies in school, the preparations for

language admission tests for Canadian universities, and the performing of some personal dispositions (e.g., collaborative skills, creativity, and leadership skills) as requested in university admissions. All the participants felt so exhausted in grade 12 that they could hardly bear any failure—every test score or presentation was important for their university admission. Further, bearing expectations and hope from their family for their academic success, my participants felt doubly pressured.

Given the pressures and challenges in their transnational lives, some students began to reflect upon their “imagined Western world” and re-envision their further routes. Li suffered from insomnia for a long time and then she realized that it was not the life she wanted to pursue. She dropped one course and gave up the application for the most heated major (actuarial science) in the University of Waterloo. Le, who worked hard in every course, still could not get high marks because of his low English foundation. So, he accepted the reality that he would begin his higher education from a Canadian college. Lin changed her desired major from early childhood education to pharmacology, and then to design because of study pressures and immigration requirements. After managing the study pressures and achieving high marks, she was still forced by her mom to study in a college for easier immigration. She finally agreed to study in a college because she was also tired of pressures in Canadian universities. However, through her transnational learning experiences, Lin also began to reflect upon her further education in Canada and whether she wants to stay in Canada after

immigration.

Further, some participants also shattered their illusion of affluent or better lives in Canada. All the students in my study come from elite families. A majority of them grew up in highly internationalized and modern developed cities in China. After arriving in Canada, some students felt disappointed, as many places and cities in this “developed country” are not as modern as their home cities in a “developing country”. They did not feel the improvement in their life qualities or enjoy the “imagined” Western modernity (Soong, 2016), which were two of the main motives for them to migrate to Canada. They began to reflect upon their future plans, especially regarding where to migrate in the future.

As illustrated in this section, through the transnational experiences they had experienced, my participants refreshed not only their views on the ‘host’, but also their sense of the ‘home’” (Soong, 2016, p. 174). They gradually stayed between the host space as well as the home space; or in other words, they lingered in an in-between and emotionally-conflicted hybrid status. Living in Canada was not easy for them because of global and local forces—they encountered pressures not only from dominant discourses (e.g., neoliberal discourses) in the host society and in the global scale, but also from their family expectations and socio-economic and cultural forces in the home space. Regardless of these push-and-pull forces, my participants are not robots who mechanically optimize success. They are human beings with their own comfort zones,

which relate to their habits, cultural distinctiveness, and other preferences formed through their respective life trajectories. In the next section, I illustrate how my participants projected their future based on their understanding of themselves through years of explorations between the host space and the home space.

### **Section Three: Projections for the Future**

I have described my participants' transnational experiences along their transnational routes, through which they developed their multi-layered and hybrid identities. Through their transnational mobility, they deepened their understanding about Canadian education and society, but also their Chinese cultural distinctiveness. When the participants just arrived in Canada, they had a fantasy about education and life in Canada. After staying for more than 2-3 years, they still strived for Western educational qualifications, career developing opportunities in Canada, though their projected routes changed.

To be specific, some students (e.g., Lan and Li), who were already admitted by or studied in the top Canadian universities, developed higher goals for their educational futures. After studying in University B and communicating with other Chinese and Canadian students, Lan was determined to apply for master programs in top US universities. Li who was admitted by the business program of University D (pseudo name for another famous Canadian university) hoped to apply for top business schools

for her postgraduate studies in Canada or in England.

Some other students (e.g., Hao, Le, and Hui) were not admitted to their preferred Canadian universities given their low overall grades and insufficient English language proficiencies. After almost three years learning in Canada, they still could not get high scores in IELTS examinations or even reach the university ESL (English as a second language) program requirements. So, they strategically enrolled in less competitive university or college programs as temporary buffers, where they could improve their English language competencies as well as try to meet admission requirements of more famous Canadian universities in the future.

Meanwhile, after graduating from Canadian universities, many participants (e.g., Hao, Lan, Li, and Qiang) hoped to work in Canada for several years, as they believed that transnational work experiences would add more value for their CV in the global job market.

Furthermore, as explained in chapters 6 and 7, the girl participants were given more flexibility about where they could stay in the future. Lin, Lan and Qi took serious considerations about immigration, as their parents believed that the Canadian permanent residency or citizenship would give them expanded opportunities in the future.

Nevertheless, Lan and Lin also mentioned that given the China's present economic prosperity, the girl participants who hoped to immigrate to Canada still wanted to avail of professional development opportunities in their home country.

In contrast, the boys in my study did not express a strong desire to immigrate. As Ong (1999) has discussed, in traditional Chinese families, males still are expected to be the backbone in taking care of the elders in the future. Most of the male students who come from elite families also hoped to give their parents affluent lives through taking over the family business or achieving higher positions in big organizations in China in the future.

Also, as explained above, some participants (e.g., Chen and Hui) were very fixed throughout their international sojourn. The structural limits set by cultural norms, modes of ruling, and national ideologies (Ong, 1999) still bonded them to the home space. When they could not fit themselves into Canadian society, they looked back at and re-imagined the home space. Their transnational lives were more narrowly oriented to use Western educational qualifications as a stepping-stone back into the Chinese job market.

To summarize, my participants were regulated by the cultural logic of capitalist accumulation in their future life plans. They persistently strived for educational qualifications and professional experiences in North America. Lan, Qi, Lin and Lei aspired to immigrate to Canada and begin their career and lives in this “developed affluent” country (as imagined by their families). I argue that the perspectives of Western superiority and strong power may still be held by many Chinese families, though these families also begin to swing when they witness significant economic progress in the context they are situated. Lan also discussed with her dad about the job prospect of

working as a “golden collar” (highly skilled and knowledgeable worker with high income) in China.

Further, given the present Chinese economic power (Lee, 2006), their filial piety, and preferences for Chinese social and cultural contexts, other participants were inclined to return to China, live in a familiar context and pursue career opportunities in China. With respect to this point, I contend that, to some extent, they also transferred their fantasy from Canada to the *imagined vision* in China. After expounding the transnational life experiences of my participants before, during the international education and their projection for the future, in the next section, I analyze how state sovereignty governed my participants’ practices and choices in their transnational spaces.

#### **Section Four: Citizenship, Governing and Sovereignty**

During my stay with my participants, their feelings for Chinese citizenship—rights, entitlements, territoriality and a nation—were becoming disarticulated and rearticulated with market and other social forces from the host and home society. On the one hand, globally circulated neoliberal discourses seem to weaken boundaries of nation states (Ong, 2006). Neoliberalism or the penetration of market logics performs as an economic doctrine, exerting negative relation to the state power—i.e., the market ideology limits the scope and activity of governing (Ong, 2006). As discussed above, throughout the whole study, my participants always considered development

opportunities on a global scale and how to employ what they have achieved as stepping-stones to reach their next goals. Their projections about future developments are not confined to territory within nation states.

My participants' flexible accumulation across borders spoke to Ong (2006)'s notion of "neoliberalism as exception" which highlights that market-driven calculations are introduced to manage specific populations. As explained in previous chapters, my participants' parents who either ran their family businesses or took administrative positions in big organizations paid close attention to global and local market trends to set up their children's educational goals and future life plans. Also, given the cultural logic of Chinese filial piety, the young participants mainly followed their parents' decisions about where to study and live in the future. After their transnational migration, the participants expressed the goals of furthering their higher education in Canada, England, US and other developed countries, as degrees from these regions are highly recognized in the global job market. The cultural logic of capitalist accumulation "unsettle[d] the notion of citizenship as a legal status rooted in a nation-state, ...to a condition of stateless" (Ong, 2006, p. 6), making my participants' flexible accumulation more free of national constraints.

Ong (2006) also puts forward the converse notion "exception to neoliberalism" highlighting governments' concern about how to maintain tight control over citizens under increasingly globalized and marketized trends (p. 4). In my study, given that my



participants were still very young, most of them (except for Hui) did not have overt political senses. Nevertheless, the power of the Chinese nation state still governed their lives in transnational spaces. It is also worth mentioning that “there is an overlap in the working of neoliberal exceptions and exceptions to market calculation” (Ong, 2006, p. 4). As Tarc (2013) further explains, “States still want loyal subjects, but given their new roles of competing in a much more interdependent global economy, governments want globally competent citizens who can contribute to national competitiveness from wherever they are located in the world” (p. 12).

This era contrasts earlier periods in the last century, where the Chinese government closed the “door” and very few people studied abroad. Since the 1980s, China has also been greatly influenced by the global neoliberal hegemony (Horesh & Lim, 2016), requiring the source and composition of human capital to be highly internationalized so that China could gain a competitive edge globally (Wang, 2014; Wang, 2012). Global neoliberal discourses align with the national economic development needs in China.

Under such a broad social and economic context, all the participants argued that the educational contexts in China are so internationalized that they had various channels to study in Western developed countries. Qiang and Lan mentioned that in recent years, the Chinese government has encouraged students to study abroad, so that graduates with international visions and *advanced* knowledge, and degrees in Western developed

countries are not just more favored in the global job market, but also serve for a stronger economy of the Chinese nation.

On the other hand, “sovereignty is manifested in multiple, often contradictory strategies that encounter diverse claims and contestations...” (Ong, 2006, p. 7). More specifically, neoliberalism, encounters other ethical regimes in particular contexts (Ong, 2006, p. 9). According to Chong (2016), in China, the Ministry of Education in China ensures that patriotism and socialist ideas not just are adopted in teaching materials and implemented in classroom teaching, but also are instilled through the hidden curriculum (p. 95). The socialist patriotic feeling had been injected into my participants’ identities—e.g., Qiang felt very proud to dress the soldier’s uniform and be the flag bearer in the school flag raising ceremony every day. He also always paid close attention to the political and social news in China wherever he stayed. Other students also had similar feelings—for instance, Le was delighted to visit martyrs’ cemeteries during the summer vacation with his families. The communist and patriotic feeling was instilled through their family education even though they already studied abroad. Many participants’ parents and relatives also emphasized that the students should feel proud of China’s recent development, as a strong nation is conducive to their future development in China and other nations.

Further, Ong (2006) claimed that cyber information and education foster rather than endanger citizenship embedded in nation-states (p. 53). My participants, to different

extents, reinforced their patriotic feelings and love for China through watching Chinese TV shows, learning Chinese history online, and contacting with other sources of patriotic publicity. Tarc (2013) also argued that “media is used to attempt to consolidate national cohesiveness by advancing an ‘us’ as distinct from (superior to) foreign others” (p. 28). My participants’ national awareness and patriotic feelings were reinforced periodically through their constant access to the patriotic education through social media from the Chinese online space. They frequently posted online that they support the economic and social development of China and felt proud of being Chinese. They wrote the words, such as “*We* love China” to express their patriotic feelings. Using “we” to refer to Chinese people represents their affection for the national cohesiveness.

Also, most of my participants still felt that they lived in the status as outsiders or even second-class citizens (in Hui’s view) in the host society, which also drove them toward the home space to seek the sense of presence and belonging. In the home space, they still maintained their status as middle-or –upper class. The unsatisfactory social status in the host society reinforced their patriotic feelings, which further stimulated their desire to employ Western degrees to help them seek better professional development and maintain their elite identities in China. In my view, my participants and their families become ‘winners’ from recent China’s stronger “economy by introducing market economic features” (Ploberger, 2016, p. 75). The students tended to have sympathetic views of the Chinese nation state, as they could benefit from a stronger nation.

What I have mentioned above are consistent with the argument of Carnoy (2014), “nation states still influence the territorial and temporal space in which most people acquire their capacity to operate globally...National states are largely responsible for the political climate in which ... individuals organize their social lives” (p. 31). The influence of neoliberal discourses at the national level provided my participants with the opportunities to study abroad and employed the flexibility between transnational spaces to realize self-optimizing.

Also, I contend that the Chinese government, albeit encourages Chinese students to study abroad to make the human capital more internationalized, still aims at cultivating loyal citizens who better serve a stronger economy in China. The Chinese nation, being influenced by neoliberal discourses and encouraging the citizens to seek development worldwide, does not loosen its hold on their loyalty. The state “...wants to produce citizen-subjects whose desires align with the goals of the nation...” (Tarc, 2013, p. 13). Most of the participants were still prone to employ the social and cultural capital that they accumulated in Canada or other Western developed countries to serve for the development of the Chinese nation and themselves.

In the next sections, I make suggestions for current and incoming Chinese international students and their parents. In addition, I raise some educational implications for educators, administrators, and policymakers about how to support international students’ lives at class, school and policy levels. Finally, I state what other researchers in

education, language, and/or cultural studies may learn from my ethnographic field research.

### **Section Five: Suggestions for Chinese International (Secondary School) Students and Parents**

In recent years, increasing numbers of Chinese international secondary school students came (and will likely continue to come) to study in Canada (CBIE, 2016b). My ethnographic field study shows a rich and authentic picture about the transnational lives of eleven Chinese international secondary school students in a Canadian international school. Students who have already studied in Canada might find resonance and reflect upon their own lives and choices. By reflecting on the findings of this thesis, Chinese international students and their parents understand how local and global forces worked together to inform the transnational lives of the students in my research. The incoming Chinese students and parents may not just get a deeper understanding about international education and transnational lives, but also consider what possible opportunities and challenges Chinese students might experience in a foreign nation. Through reading this field study, many Chinese parents and students might critically reflect upon their fantasy towards international education, transnational lives and the future. The fantasy that exists in their imagination might be very different from the realities. Here, I re-clarify three forms of fantasy for (incoming) Chinese international students and parents to ponder seriously.

The first form of fantasy came from the blind pursuit of capital accumulation and Western modernity from the students and their whole families without careful considerations about students' desires, anxieties, feelings, needs, preferences and habits. Before crossing the borders, many students in my study were led by different sources (e.g., educational agencies in China) to believe that Canada is a modern, wealthy and inclusive nation, where they could easily achieve the world-recognized educational qualifications and gain affluent lives and prestige for the whole family. Such a blind pursuit relates to the world capitalism as Western degrees are highly recognized in the global job market (Ong, 1999).

Nevertheless, given the insufficient understanding about their future lives in Canada and their attachment with the home space, some students experienced difficulties throughout their transnational mobility. For instance, the participants from the elite families in some developed coastal cities in China felt surprised and disappointed that many Canadian cities (especially the one in which they stayed) are not as modern as what they assumed. So, after they arrived in Canada, some students even doubted whether it is worthy of traveling across nations and studying in Canada.

Also, in order to achieve Western educational qualifications, my participants needed to conform to local curriculum requirements. Some of them (especially for the students from the public-school system in China) were not accustomed to critical thinking, independent learning, and collaborations given former long-term teacher-

dominant learning modes and the broader social and cultural backgrounds in China (e.g., the test culture). As newcomers, they required more language and learning support, which ironically ran counter to the Canadian curriculum requirements for students' learning responsibilities. Even after several years' struggling, many participants (e.g., Chen, Hao, Song and Hui), who were still not accustomed to the educational modes in Canada, did not enjoy their learning.

Meanwhile, with the intent of immersion into the Canadian society, my participants were involved in community service activities. However, they gradually found that their relations with others in the host society were shaped by larger socio-economic forces beyond their individual motivations and expectations (Tarc, 2013, p. 47). In these community service activities, they were treated as outsiders and a minority group in the local society so that it was very hard for them to be involved in the host society. With all these difficulties referred to above, some students got lost about why they studied abroad because they did not feel the enjoyment and belongings when pursuing capital accumulation and Western modernity in Canada.

The second fantasy relates to the students' purpose in using international education to escape study pressures in China. After learning my participants' experiences, I argue that studying abroad is neither a solution nor an easy way for Chinese international students to enter into top Canadian universities. My participants encountered different sources of pressure along their transnational routes. They not only

needed to achieve high overall course grades, but also pass the language admission tests (e.g., IELTS). All these university admission requirements were not easy for my participants to attain. Many participants frequently complained that they studied until the morning of the next day.

I found that some students who employed the international education as a strategy to escape from the pressures in China were quick to imagine escape again along their international journey. Chen even wanted to return to China to attend Gao Kao when his 3U course scores were dissatisfactory. However, he also realized that he could not return because he was afraid of competition and pressures in China. Having led a less stressful, if not fully successful, life in Canada for two years, he could not accept such fierce competition in China. Nevertheless, he was determined to work in China after his higher education in Canada. I am not sure about his further choices and life in China, though it is unwise to escape transnationally as pressures always exist in different contexts.

The third form of fantasy relates to the career and life projections for my participants' future lives, especially in China. After having experienced challenges in Canada, some participants *imagined* that they could lead an easier life in China as long as they have Canadian university degrees. Nevertheless, I suggest that with so many Chinese international students studying in Western developed countries and returning, Canadian university qualifications might not guarantee their bright future in China as well.



In addition, some participants romanticized the social and life context in China after they had encountered pressures in Canada. For instance, after learning the market-oriented educational strategies in Canada, Hui firmly believed that communism in China emphasizes the government macro-management and brings more social equality. However, influenced by global neoliberal discourses, privatization and marketization at individual, family, and institutional levels are also prevalent in the contemporary China (Zhang & Bray, 2016). So, Chinese international students in Canada also need to learn the recent development and the economic, social, and political contexts in their home country so as to plan their future.

I suggest parents and Chinese international students' awareness about the three forms of fantasy above. As flexible citizens, the Chinese international students in my research would like to employ flexibility or convenience from the host space and the home space without fully understanding possible constraints from social, economic, cultural, and political forces. Before making the choice to study in Western developed countries and crossing the borders, parents and Chinese students are suggested to gain a deeper understanding about the host society and the educational system. My study depicts an authentic picture about the transnational lives of eleven Chinese international students. Through reading other students' stories, (the incoming) Chinese international students and families could reflect upon purposes and challenges in international education and get more emotionally prepared.

As discussed in the first fantasy, some students in my study had a hard time in their transnational lives given the fantasy towards Western education and insufficient considerations about their needs, habits, preferences and interests. Studying in Canada might have relieved their study pressures in China, though generated new challenges and pressures given power discourses from the host space and home space. To illustrate, as mentioned in Chapter 7, the cultural logics stemming from the Chinese filial piety and capitalist accumulation worked together to push the students to work at their utmost. However, the goal of accumulating more capital ran counter to their nostalgic feelings and other Chinese cultural logics in the host space. My participants did not understand the complexities and competing forces from multiple transnational spaces until they crossed the borders.

Similarly, situated in different life routes and contexts, their parents could not understand pressures in my participants' transnational lives. They did not understand how the children's former habits and preferences collided with dominant social and cultural discourses in Canada. They could not feel the challenges and frustrations in the students' in-between status. My participants came to Canada alone at such young ages when they still desperately needed their parents' company and care. However, informed by the cultural logic of capitalist accumulation, the daily family online communication mainly focused on learning progresses and how to squeeze in better universities and majors, many participants felt lonely and pressured. For instance, Song even did not dare

returning home in summer vacation because his learning achievement was far below what his parents expected. Gradually, transnational lives not only brought loneliness to the Chinese participants, but also caused alienation and disconnection between the parents and the children. I recommend that parents not just focus on Chinese international students' learning progresses and achievements, but also give them more emotional support when their children feel lonely and upset in an unfamiliar context.

### **Section Six: Educational Implications for Educators, Administrators and Policymakers**

My ethnographic field study also gives educators, administrators and policymakers some understanding of what multiple sources of pressure and constraint were acting upon the eleven Chinese international secondary school students, and how cultural logics stemming from families, nations, and societies governed subjectivities in their actions and aspirations. These insights can contribute to curriculum and program improvements.

In order to triangulate the sources of the data, I also talked with ten classroom teachers or administrators in the school. On the one hand, their views enriched the insights on the daily practices and choices of Chinese international students. Some teachers are from Mainland China or had studied in China for several years. They gave their views on challenges, pressures, learning situations, cultural habits, and aspirations of different Chinese international students that they once taught or contacted.

On the other hand, the interaction of multiple, global, and local identities is the true challenge of our modern world, though it is not easy for educators to manage and to understand (Velasco, 2007, p. 84). In line with Velasco's view, I found that the Canadian and Chinese teachers in my research still lacked sufficient understanding about their Chinese international students. First, some Canadian educators and administrators in the school did not understand cultural perspectives and needs of their Chinese students. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 6 and 7, Mr. Brian did not understand some Chinese international students' work ethic and challenges. His students could study very hard even without any learning interests. My study found that many participants' work ethic was stimulated by different sources, including the assemblage of cultural logics emanating from capitalist accumulation (e.g., gaining Western university degrees, work experiences, etc), Chinese filial piety (i.e., fulfilling family dreams), diligent learning habits formed through their former test-oriented pressured learning environment as well as the obedience to teachers' authoritative roles in classes, etc. Growing up in different cultural and social contexts, many Canadian educators and administrators are less capable to understand how multiple sources of pressures in a transnational scope affect Chinese international students' feelings, learning and lives.

Also, in line with the literature, most of the teacher participants and administrators complained about Chinese international students learning methods (e.g., rote-learning) or reliance on teachers as the main source of learning, while they did not

have sufficient understanding about Chinese students' learning histories that closely relate to their learning habits and preferences. I argue that only through an-in-depth understanding of Chinese students' learning histories, can teachers make teaching accommodations appropriate to students' learning needs. For example, many Chinese students in my study were not satisfied with the independent learning and collaboration in classes given their high expectations for the learning efficiency. They complained that the amount of knowledge they learned one week in Canada equaled that of one class in China. Yet, almost all the Canadian teachers did not seem to understand the learning expectations of this group of Chinese students.

The insufficient understanding about Chinese international secondary school students may reinforce some assimilative practices without careful considerations about students' learning needs and feelings. These assimilative practices are prevalent and normalized because of dominant discourses in the host society—my study illustrates that these practices still relate to the overarching neoliberal goals of cultivating learners to be successful future workers with multiple soft skills, such as English language proficiency, creativity, critical thinking and collaborative skills, etc. An example I have referred to in this thesis is that the teacher participants (except for Mrs. Anna) used different strategies to push my participants to only use English in classes. Some teachers even required students to submit their cell phones before classes in case they might use English-Chinese-English dictionaries. They thought such practices (English only) serve for

students' future academic studies and professional development. However, they did not realize the importance of first language in facilitating my participants' English language learning.

So, I suggest that Canadian teachers (learn how to) talk with Chinese students frequently, understand their learning progress and needs, and adjust the amount of knowledge input, teaching content and teaching methods accordingly rather than just stubbornly believe that Chinese students' learning methods are wrong or their learning methods are deficient (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 22). My study spoke to the view of Tarc (2013) that people may not notice the arbitrariness of certain taken-for-granted cultural norms and practices until they are immersed in a very different setting. When facing a large number of Chinese students in their classes, the teacher participants argued that they lack the power when Chinese students use Mandarin to make complaints in and out of classes. In my perspective, Chinese international students who are vulnerable and lack power in the host society, do not know other options to make their voices heard, but use their mother tongue as a way to empower themselves and show resistance to dominant power discourses.

So, it is imperative to reflect upon how to enable Chinese international students (as the minority group who lack voices) in the host society through educator-student(s)' collaborative effort and the negotiation of pedagogy rather than forcing students to conform to dominant discourses.

It is also worth noting that home teacher participants who came from China or stayed in China for several years were the same as me—we assumed that we understand Chinese international students' thought and needs. Through this study, I found that we easily imposed our views on the students at times, while neglecting the development of their identities and their voices. The cultural and national identities are contextual, evolving and continually reconstructed (Bagnall, 2015, p. 13). My research shows some discrepancies between the views of the Chinese teachers (or supporting staff) and student participants. The Chinese teachers' understanding about Chinese international students' roots and routes were partial. To illustrate, similar to some other teacher participants from Chinese background, in the beginning of this study, I sometimes simply attributed my participants' dependence in learning, decision-making, and other small things in their transnational lives to their lack of initiative. Nevertheless, through my long-term study, I found more nuance. As mentioned above, some students in my study would like to make decisions independently, while the cultural logic of filial piety required them to be responsible for the prosperity of the whole family. So, they had to discuss with their parents or follow their parents' decisions so as to *ensure* they would be on the *right* life track. In addition, in a foreign nation, mutual support and reliance between friends made their transnational lives less lonely. So, there existed complex transnational stories behind my participants' reliance on their same-culture peers. Only through the deep engagement with these stories, could educators and administrators in Canadian

secondary schools or universities understand how to support Chinese international students' learning and life optimally.

So, what could educators, administrators and policy makers do to facilitate Chinese students' learning and lives in Canada? As a former teacher in the school, I had attended some PD (professional development) programs and meetings. I also asked the teacher participants' views on the PD programs they had attended. The teachers said that they mainly learned about the Ontario curriculum requirements and teachers' and students' responsibilities in the school. However, one significant teaching responsibility has not been fully emphasized – teachers need to make teaching accommodations based on the understanding of their Chinese international students' learning histories, cultural backgrounds, and challenges in their transnational lives. In other words, Chinese international students' learning needs and voices have not been enough informing the practices and pedagogies employed the school.

Meanwhile, I call on educators in Canada to heed heterogeneities among Chinese students given the family, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which they are situated. The previous two chapters show that the cultural logics emanating from families, schools, societies and nations governed my participants differently. In my study, Lan who was from a top Chinese public school was academically stronger than other participants. She had higher learning expectations than others. In contrast, the participants who were from the international high schools in China had weaker



knowledge foundations (except for Li), especially in math. So, they were more satisfied with the teaching speed. In addition, influenced by family mobility and former class modes, Li, Qiang and Lin, who are from coastal and developed cities, are not modest learners. In contrast, Chen, Hao and Lei, who are from inland and less developed cities, are shy in class participation given the former teacher-dominant class modes in China.

All the Canadian teacher participants expressed strong interest in learning Chinese students' learning histories and their differences and Chinese cultural distinctiveness in future PD programs. I recommend that constant teacher-student communication should be involved in teachers' professional development programs and regular meetings, as this is essential to empower them as a minority group in the Canadian educational system. Also, at the policy level, educators' intercultural awareness and sensitivities (to students' differences) should be highlighted in PD programs, and curriculum setting, especially regarding the care and attention to diverse students' learning habits, preferences, and styles.

Some teachers (Mrs. Anna) suggested more parental involvement in unaccompanied Chinese international students' school lives, especially regarding teacher-parent communication. Most often, they did not communicate with parents given the time and language differences. Mrs. Anna and Mr. Brian only talked with the staff in the guidance office, who played parental roles in Canada. In my view, parental involvement is significant for children's growth even when they stay in Canada. Through

understanding children's challenges in unfamiliar contexts, parents are more likely to make appropriate communication with their children and provide the emotional support their children need. Otherwise, they just expect their children's success rather than understanding the students' hardship. I suggest that the Canadian government and (international) schools invest in the establishment of convenient online teacher-parent communicative platforms where parents more likely understand their children's learning and life situations in Canada.

Further, as I have explained in Chapter Six and this chapter, international education is a lonely journey for my participants who were neither able to seek the emotional support from their parents and friends in China, nor able to forge relations with Canadian friends. They preferred to seek emotional support from a few Chinese friends, who shared the similar roots and routes and could understand each other's context. However, sometimes, they could not find any places to release their feelings, so they had to keep everything inside and feel lonelier and depressed. I suggest the establishment of mentorship programs in Canadian high schools and universities for (Chinese) international students to seek emotional support along their international journey.

Moreover, as mentioned above, some Chinese international students had unrealistic fantasies around Western education and life, which might give them a tougher time during their transitional period. As my participants complained that given the profit

incentive, international education service agencies in China portrayed a bright future so as to recruit more Chinese international students. Meanwhile, given the lack of knowledge about Canadian higher education, they always made reference to online university rankings that might give too coarse information. For international students' recruitment, I advocate that administrators in Canadian secondary schools and higher education emphasize what requirements are in Canadian educational systems, what challenges (Chinese) international students might meet, and how and where students could seek learning and life support.

At the policy level, in international students' recruitment, I call on more guidance from Chinese and Canadian governments for Chinese international students to make secondary school and university applications as well as to show them authentic pictures about what international education might be and what preparations students need to make. For instance, more governmental institutions on international education could be established to give (international) students straightforward bilingual guidance about how to make school applications on their own. Comprehensive introduction of Canadian educational system and schools should also be made so that Chinese students may consider more about their interests in school applications and other major life choices rather than only referring to school and major rankings. Also, they could be more emotionally prepared for possible challenges in their international education.

## **Section Seven: Implications for Researchers and Theoretical Contributions**

This is a timely study given the intensifying internationalization of education. With more Chinese international secondary school students studying in Canada and few studies in this area, my research sheds light on the transnational lives of eleven Chinese youths. The documentation and analysis of these students' perceptions and practices may be useful for scholars in comparative and international education to extend their own studies. Through triangulation of the sources of data (e.g., interviews, observations, small talks, online communication, document analysis, etc.), I have attempted to understand eleven students as flexible citizens in the making. My study also contributes by making transparent my *ethnographic approach* for a qualitative examination of international student experience that moves beyond academic achievement or language acquisition.

My long-term participatory field research was guided by, tested and meaningfully extends the conceptual framework of "flexible citizenship" (Ong, 1999, 2007) with its transnational scope and focus on "cultural logics of self-making." Transnationalism highlights transnational spaces in which intricate social connections transcend across national boundaries (Ong, 1999; Mitchell, 2009). I investigated the transnational economic, political, social and cultural forces in my participants' roots and along their transnational routes. My research shows their practices and aspirations in different transnational spaces (across the home country, the host country and other places).

Readers can understand how the Chinese students expanded social connections in Canada as well as in China from their new physical and digitally-connected transnational space in their Canadian international school. Concurring with Ong (1999), my research illustrates how students act and are acted upon, mediated by cultural logics, in accumulating (prospective) economic, cultural and social capital and forms of connection and belonging across national borders.

My study extends the theory of transnationalism because I have expounded how my participants produced *their own transnational spaces* in which they found a sense of comfort and belonging. Their transnational space is shaped by their distinct transnational routes and return to roots as they work toward aspirations of career success, higher social positions and family prosperity. Their own transnational spaces are not fixed, but are always expanding and contracting. In these transnational spaces, my participants developed their hybrid and multi-layered identities (Soong, 2016). Although all the participants argued that they still belong to China as their home of origin, they also recognized new elements in their identities. On the one hand, their new identities allowed them to think about their future development more critically. For instance, rather than blindly pursuing success in Western developed countries, they discussed with their parents about where to work or live in the future. Some of them (e.g., Hao, Hui and Qiang) hoped to maintain and employ social connections in China to facilitate their professional development. Also, through their transnational experiences, students' (e.g.,

Qiang and Qi) fantasies towards Western modernity were muted and new fantasies of China were invoked.

Nevertheless, they still recognized the value of Western degrees, work and life experiences given the imbalanced power relations from world capitalism. They benefited from Western education experience—with high school learning experiences and qualifications in Canada, they could apply for universities worldwide. However, they reflected more meticulously about the future—how to employ Western educational qualifications to build the lives to which they aspire. Again, their future aspirations are also not confined to single nation states. Intersecting logics shaped how they projected their career, and lives in the future.

My study illustrates that the students' calculations in their daily lives were governed by cultural logics stemming from capital accumulation, cultural norms in Euro-American countries and in China (e.g., filial piety, Chinese cohesiveness, nostalgia, patriotism, etc.). My research shows how different cultural logics converged and dialogued to influence my participants' choices and aspiration. Especially, Chinese filial piety spoke to neoliberal cultural logics to prompt my participants to continuously pursue one goal after another or find an alternative route when an obstacle proved too impassable. Conversely, students' patriotic and nostalgic feelings intervened in their capital accumulation in Western developed countries. Some participants (e.g., Hui and

Hao) still wanted to return to China, contribute to national development, and live in familiar contexts.

My study dug deeply into Ong's (1999) notion of flexible citizenship, albeit with younger subjects than those that empirically inform Ong's work (1999, 2006) that "refers 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). As mentioned in chapter two, Ong's flexible citizenship emphasizes the economic and political dimensions of migrants' flexible accumulation in their self-making but does not deeply touch upon cultural and social levels. Admittedly, neoliberal discourses made my participants travel and study in Canada. They continuously sought developing opportunities across nation boundaries. However, as social and cultural beings, the students in my study were also regulated by their patriotic feelings, nostalgia, filial piety, Chinese cohesiveness, and other Chinese distinctiveness that were bred through their former lives in China. So, my study well illustrates the enablers and constraints of flexibility in their transnational contexts.

As expounded above, transnational space formed my students' multi-layered and hybrid identities. The participants' identities related to intersecting cultural logics that mediated to influence their actions, choices and aspirations. Given the forces in their transnational spaces, my participants *sometimes* responded fluidly and opportunistically to changing social, cultural, political and economic contexts and at other times they

turned inward and homeward.

### **Section Eight: Areas for Future Study**

I stayed with eleven Chinese international secondary school students in both physical sites and online spaces for over one year, during which period they maintained transnational connections with their home space and their host space. My ethnographic field study allowed me to unearth their fantasies towards the Western developed world, the challenges in their transitions and immersion to the local Canadian context, their nostalgic feelings, the Chinese cultural distinctiveness, and the push-and-pull forces from the host space and the home space (Soong, 2016). Throughout the year, my participants' identities were developing—they deepened their understanding about where they evolved from and what they wanted to be in the future. In my view, their identities were contingent upon the situated transnational contexts. In my future research, I am very interested in keeping contact with these students and understanding how they perform as flexible citizens in Canadian higher education and future work.

Further, the main purpose of this study was to illuminate Chinese international secondary school students' learning and self-making in their situated transnational contexts. Gender issue emerged in this study and are worth further investigation in my future study given its significance in understanding constraints in migrant Chinese students' transnational lives and wider social context. To illustrate, Lan did not choose



the major of engineering because her dad thought that most of workers in this area are males. Another gender issue is that it seemed that most of boys in my study sustained more pressures in gaining academic and professional success than girl participants. In China, males still take more responsibilities for striving for family prosperity and social status (Lin & Ghail, 2017). So, there exist disparities for social expectations for boys and girls in their learning and lives, which likely influence migrant Chinese students' practices and aspirations. More attention will be given to these gender-related enablers and constraints in my future studies about migrant Chinese students' transnational lives.

Last but not least, many participants in this study encountered emotional challenges alongside their and their parents' pursuit for capital accumulation. According to Ong (2003), what is at stake with international education centers on that skills, talent and borderless neoliberal ethos define worthy citizens. In my study, many students repeatedly, and narrowly, equated a worthy life with their career success and parental approval. Such a thought was influenced by broader social contexts, highlighting the cultivation of successful and competitive neoliberal subjects. Nonetheless, humanistic aspects (e.g., students' personal interests, emotional development) are neither considered seriously in school education and society, nor taken into account in students' educational and professional routes nor substantively engaged in student-parent conversation. In order to emphasize the humanistic goals of international education, I would like to do further research on the emotional lives of Chinese international students and how to

disrupt the dominance of neoliberal subjectivities.

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# Appendix I

## Letter of Information and Consent for Students

### **Project Title**

Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces:  
Becoming Flexible Citizens?

### **Principal Investigator**

Dr. Paul Tarc

### **Graduate student researcher**

Xi Wu PhD Candidate

### **1. Invitation to Participate**

You are being invited to participate in this research about the experiences of Chinese international secondary school students because you have similar experiences. In our study, we will document your life experience in the international secondary school. Your participation will provide valuable data for this research project.

### **2. Why is this study being done?**

This study purports to illuminate Chinese international secondary school students' experiences in their international contexts.

### **3. How long will you be in this study?**

It is expected that we will conduct this study in your school during the window of April, 2016 to August, 2017. Xi Wu will stay at your school up to five hours each week to conduct this research. However, your involvement will be limited as stated below.

### **4. What are the study procedures?**

If you agree to participate in our study, you may be asked to participate in one or more of the following activities:

1. We will observe your participation in various activities in the school both inside and outside of classes. The lengths and times of observations can be negotiated between you and the researchers. The researchers will take notes only. There will be NO audio or video recording.
2. We will also observe the postings in your QQ space or We Chat space.

3. You are invited to take part in two or three one-on-one or group interviews. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded. You could request not to be audio recorded and in that case, researchers, will take notes only. Researchers may send the transcriptions to you for review and verification. If your mother tongue is Mandarin, the interview could also be conducted in Mandarin instead of English. If your mother tongue or the most familiar language is English, the interview will be conducted in English.
4. Small talks (5-10 minutes) either online or in-person will be conducted frequently when it is convenient for you. There will be NO audio or video recording.
5. Researchers will observe your assignments or artefacts in classes.

### **5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?**

This is a very low risk study. This research might remind participant student(s) of uncomfortable experiences or feelings of homesickness in their new setting. In the case where students are expressing significant anxiety, the researcher(s) will suggest that student(s) meet with their guidance counselor in the school.

In group-interviews, all the participants will be able to identify each other and know what each is saying. Researchers will talk with all the interviewees before each group interview to ensure that students do not disclose inappropriately in the presence of other students. If any student is not comfortable with group-interviews, researchers will only conduct one-on-one interviews with them.

### **6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

This research will contribute to insights on the wider lives of international students that may have significance for educators and administrators working to enhance programs and practices for incoming international students.

You will understand the process of doing qualitative research, which may serve for the improvements of your future research capacity in the university.

### **7. Can participants choose to leave the study?**

You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that was collected prior to your leaving the study will not be used. No new information will be collected without your permission.

### **8. How will participants' information be kept confidential?**

All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information, which could identify you, will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. Pseudonym names will be used to replace all participant names and the name of any places or events. Only representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to the study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. Other people/groups/organizations outside the study team will not have access to information collected. Researchers in this study have obligations to report some information to outside agencies (e.g., information about abuse of minors to CAS, or other such information) that may arise in this study. After the study is finished, all the data will be stored inaccessibly to others except the researchers. The researchers will keep all the personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of five years. A list linking your study number with your name will be kept by the researcher in a password-protected USB, separate from your study file. To protect your privacy, all digital data will be stored on a password-protected USB in the researchers' personal offices. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet with all the names removed from the data.

**9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?**

Each participant will be offered a gift card (\$10) as a thank-you token.

**10. What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide to participate only parts of the interviews, classroom or activity observations or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your student status. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

**11. Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have questions about this research study please contact Dr. Paul Tarc.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics.

**12. Consent** (please select the Consent option appropriate for your study).

If obtaining written consent, the consent form should be on a separate page at the end of the letter of information.

**This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**

Project Title: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

Principal Investigator: Dr. Paul Tarc

Graduate student researcher: Xi Wu

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the interviews and small talks.  Yes  No

I agree to participate in the class, activity, assignments and artifacts observations.  Yes  No

I agree to participate in online community observations.  Yes  No

I agree to be audio recorded in interviews of this research.  Yes  No

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research.  Yes  No

Participant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Letter of Information and Consent for teachers

### **Project Title**

Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces:  
Becoming Flexible Citizens?

### **Principal Investigator**

Dr. Paul Tarc

### **Graduate student researcher**

Xi Wu PhD Candidate

#### **1. Invitation to Participate**

You are being invited to participate in this research about Chinese international secondary school students' experiences because you are knowledgeable and experienced enough to give views on Chinese international students' academic studies and social life in Canadian international secondary schools. In this study, we will document the life experiences of some participant Chinese international students in your school. Your participation will provide valuable data for this research project.

#### **2. Why is this study being done?**

This study purports to illuminate Chinese international secondary school students' experiences in their international contexts.

#### **3. How long will you be in this study?**

It is expected that we will conduct this study in your school during the window of April, 2016 to August, 2017. Xi Wu will stay at your school up to five hours each week to conduct this research. However, your involvement will be limited as stated below.

#### **4. What are the study procedures?**

If you agree to participate in our study, you may be asked to participate in one or more of the following activities:

1. You may be contacted to make arrangements for classroom or activity observations. The lengths and times of observations can be negotiated between you and the



researcher. The researchers will take notes only with a focus on students' participation. There will be NO audio or video recording.

2. You are invited to take part in one or two interviews. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded. You could request not to be audio recorded and, in that case, researchers, will take notes only. Researchers may send the transcriptions or notes to you for review and verification. If your mother tongue is Mandarin, the interview could also be conducted in Mandarin instead of English. If your mother tongue or the most familiar language is English, the interview will be conducted in English.
3. Small talks (5-10 minutes) will be conducted frequently. There will be NO audio or video recording.

**5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

**6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

This research will contribute to insights on the school and out-of-school lives of international students that may have significance for educators and administrators working to enhance programs and practices for incoming international students.

**7. Can participants choose to leave the study?**

You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that was collected prior to your leaving the study will not be used. No new information will be collected without your permission.

**8. How will participants' information be kept confidential?**

All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information, which could identify you, will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. Pseudonym names will be used to replace all participant names and the name of any places or events. Only representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to the study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. Other people/groups/organizations outside the study team will not have access to information collected. Researchers in this study have obligations to report some information to outside agencies (e.g., information about abuse of minors to CAS, or other such information) that may arise in this study. After the study is finished, all the data will be stored inaccessibly to others except the researchers. The

researchers will keep all the personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of five years. A list linking your study number with your name will be kept by the researcher in a password-protected USB, separate from your study file. To protect your privacy, all digital data will be stored on a password-protected USB in the researchers' personal offices. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet with all the names removed from the data.

**9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?**

Each participant will be offered a gift card (\$10) as a thank-you token.

**10. What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide to participate only parts of the interviews, classroom or activity observations or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your employment status. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

**11. Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have questions about this research study please contact Dr. Paul Tarc.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics.

**12. Consent** (please select the Consent option appropriate for your study).

If obtaining written consent, the consent form should be on a separate page at the end of the letter of information.

**This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**

Topic: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

Principal Investigator: Dr. Paul Tarc

Graduate student researcher: Xi Wu

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the interviews and small talks.  Yes  No

I agree to participate in the class and activity observations.  Yes  No

I agree to be audio recorded in interviews of this research.  Yes  No

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research.

Yes  No

Participant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Letter of Information and Consent for Administrators, Guidance Counselors and  
Support Staff**

**Project Title**

Topic: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

**Principal Investigator**

Dr. Paul Tarc

**Graduate student researcher**

Xi Wu PhD Candidate

**1. Invitation to Participate**

You are being invited to participate in this research about Chinese international secondary school students' experiences because you are knowledgeable and experienced enough to give views on Chinese international students' academic studies and social life in Canadian international secondary schools. In this study, we will document the life experiences of some participant Chinese international students in your school. Your participation will provide valuable data for this research project.

**2. Why is this study being done?**

This study purports to illuminate Chinese international secondary school students' experiences in their international contexts.

**3. How long will you be in this study?**

It is expected that we will conduct this study in your school during the window of April, 2016 to August, 2017. Xi Wu will stay at your school up to five hours each week to conduct this research. However, your involvement will be limited as stated below.

**4. What are the study procedures?**

If you agree to participate in our study, you may be asked to participate in one or more of the following activities:

1. You may be contacted to make arrangements for classroom or activity observations. The lengths and times of observations can be negotiated between you and the researcher. The researchers will take notes only with a focus on students' participation. There will be NO audio or video recording.

2. You are invited to take part in one or two interviews. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded. You could request not to be audio recorded and, in that case, researchers, will take notes only. Researchers may send the transcriptions or notes to you for review and verification. If your mother tongue is Mandarin, the interview could also be conducted in Mandarin instead of English. If your mother tongue or the most familiar language is English, the interview will be conducted in English.

**5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

**6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

This research will contribute to insights on the school and out-of-school lives of international students that may have significance for educators and administrators working to enhance programs and practices for incoming international students.

**7. Can participants choose to leave the study?**

You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that was collected prior to your leaving the study will not be used. No new information will be collected without your permission.

**8. How will participants' information be kept confidential?**

All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information, which could identify you, will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. Pseudonym names will be used to replace all participant names and the name of any places or events. Only representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to the study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. Other people/groups/organizations outside the study team will not have access to information collected. Researchers in this study have obligations to report some information to outside agencies (e.g., information about abuse of minors to CAS, or other such information) that may arise in this study. After the study is finished, all the data will be stored inaccessibly to others except the researchers. The researchers will keep all the personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of five years. A list linking your study number with your name

will be kept by the researcher in a password-protected USB, separate from your study file. To protect your privacy, all digital data will be stored on a password-protected USB in the researchers' personal offices. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet with all the names removed from the data.

**9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?**

Each participant will be offered a gift card (\$10) as a thank-you token.

**10. What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide to participate only parts of the interviews, or activity observations or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time, it will have no effect on your employment status. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

**11. Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have questions about this research study please contact Dr. Paul Tarc.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics.

**12. Consent** (please select the Consent option appropriate for your study).

If obtaining written consent, the consent form should be on a separate page at the end of the letter of information.

**This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**

Project Title: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

Principal Investigator: Dr. Paul Tarc

Graduate student researcher: Xi Wu

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the interviews.  Yes  No

I agree to participate in the class and activity observations.  Yes  No

I agree to be audio recorded in interviews of this research.  Yes  No

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research.

Yes  No

Participant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix II

Topic: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

Classroom Observation

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Students' performance	
Significant Events	
Reflections	



Topic: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

School/Volunteer Activity Observation

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity observed (formal/informal): \_\_\_\_\_

What is the activity?	
Significant Events	
Reflections	

Topic: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

Online Observation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Event observed (formal/informal): \_\_\_\_\_

What is the event?	
Significant events	
Reflections	

## Appendix III

Topic: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

### Interview questions for students

- What is your nationality?
- Which part of China do you come from?
- Do your parents work in China or in Canada? What are their jobs?
- How long have you been in Canada?
- What is your impression of Canada?
- Did you come with your family or alone?
- Why are you studying here?
- What do you like about your school?
- What do you like about your neighborhood?
- Do you feel you belong here? How so?
- Where do you feel most at home?
- How often do you go back to China?
- How about your leisure activities in Canada?
- How about your leisure activities in China?
- What is your mother tongue? Do you speak mother tongue in classes?
- Are your parents or other relatives in China?
- How often do you contact your parents or other relatives?
- Do you still keep close contact with your friends in China? Explain
- Are you actively involved in your classes? Why or why not?
- Are you actively involved in extracurricular activities? Why or why not?
- What are your greatest stressors in your school life?
- What are the stresses you feel in your present social life?
- What do you like to do in your leisure time?
- What sorts of food do you like?
- What TV programs or movies do you like?
- Do you use Facebook to connect with people in Canada?
- Do your parents guide you in different aspects of your life?
- Do you want to continue your higher education in Canada? Why?
- What job do your parents want you to do in the future? Why?
- What job do you want you to do in the future? Why?
- Where do you imagine yourself in 10 years? Why?
- Where would you most like to live as an adult?

What else would you like to tell me about your experience as an international student in this host country?

## **Appendix IV**

Topic: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

### **Interview questions for teachers**

How long have you worked in the school?

What brought you to teaching?

What do you like most and least about your job?

What is it like to Chinese international students?

How do Chinese students typically participate in classes? How would you characterize the Chinese learner?

How is teaching the international students the same and different that teaching domestic students? Or if you haven't taught domestic students—how do you imagine that teaching the domestic students?

How do you teach those students whose first language is not English?

Do you think they are allowed to speak their mother tongue in class? Why or why not?

What is your relationship with students like outside of class?

Do you have some conflicts with students in classes? Could you please give some examples?

What do you like most and least about teaching Chinese international students?

What PD do you participate in here? What would you like to do in terms of PD?

What do you see as the greatest challenges for the international students in their studies and in their out of school lives?

## **Appendix V**

Topic: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

### **Interview questions for administrators and guidance counselor/support-staff**

How long have you worked in this position?

What are your job responsibilities?

What's it like guiding Chinese international students?

What are the school activities that Chinese students participate in?

What are the key challenges in your daily work?

Are there any school inspections every year? What are the main focuses in school inspections?

Does your school provide professional development for teachers? If yes, what are the emphases in the professional development?

How do you imagine these students' education and lives being the same or different if they were still in secondary schools in China?

## **Appendix VI**

Topic: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

### **List of documents for analysis**

Code of conduct  
Students' dress code  
Course schedule  
Curriculum requirements  
University application requirements  
Assessment categorization chart  
Lesson plans  
Extracurricular requirements  
Regulations in the dormitory

# Appendix VII



Research Ethics

**Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board  
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice**

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Paul Tarc  
**Department & Institution:** Education/Faculty of Education, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 107763  
**Study Title:** Examining Secondary School Chinese International Students in Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens?

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** April 20, 2016  
**NMREB Expiry Date:** April 20, 2017

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Letter of Information & Consent	Mandarin Version	2016/03/16
Letter of Information & Consent	Teachers	2016/03/16
Letter of Information & Consent	Students	2016/03/16
Letter of Information & Consent	Administrators, Guidance Counsellors and Support Staff	2016/03/16
Instruments	Interview Questions for Students - Mandarin - Received March 17, 2016	
Instruments	Interview Questions for Students - English - Received March 17, 2016	
Instruments	Interview Questions for Administrators and Support Staff - Received February 12, 2016	
Instruments	Interview Questions for Teachers - Received February 12, 2016	
Instruments	List of Documents for Analysis - Received February 12, 2016	
Other	Observation Documents - Received February 12, 2016	
Recruitment Items	In Class - Received February 12, 2016	
Letter of Information & Consent	Administrators, Guidance Counselor and Support Staff - Mandarin Version	2016/03/16
Recruitment Items	Recruitment Email for Class and Support Teachers and Administrators - Received February 12, 2016	
Letter of Information & Consent	Students - Mandarin Version	2016/03/16
Recruitment Items	Poster / Flyer for Students	2016/04/13
Western University Protocol	Received April 13, 2016	

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Rilev Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information: Erika Basile \_\_\_ Nicole Kaniki \_\_\_ Grace Kelly \_\_\_  Katelyn Harris \_\_\_ Vikki Tran \_\_\_

Western University, Research, &



## **Appendix VIII**

### **Curriculum Vitae**

#### **Education**

**2014.9-2018.6: Western University**

#### **Doctor of Philosophy**

Research Area: Internationalization of Education; Transnationalism; Cultural Sociology;

Applied Linguistics; English Language Education

Research Project: Examining Chinese International Secondary School Students in

Transnational Spaces: Becoming Flexible Citizens? (Ethnographic field research)

**2012-2014: Western University (University of Western Ontario)**

#### **Master of Education, Curriculum Studies**

Thesis: A Case Study on the Globalizing English Language Curriculum in One Chinese

College: How Western Pedagogies Are Adapted and Adopted in the Classroom (Case study)

**2005-2008: Soochow University**

#### **Master of English language and literature (Applied linguistics)**

Thesis: A Study of English Classroom Interaction in HTVE

**1999-2003: Soochow University**

#### **Bachelor of Arts (English)**

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#### **Work and Training Experience**

**2017-2018 Research Assistant**

**2017 Peer Reviewer, CSSE and CIESC Conference Proposals**

**2016-2017 Teaching Assistant for two doctoral courses**

**Course names:**

***1. Introduction to International Education in Global Times***

## ***2. EdD Field of Educational Leadership: Theoretical Foundations of Inquiry***

### **Teaching assistant job responsibilities:**

Providing feedback to students' response in forum; providing individual formative feedback for students on course assignments (the discussion forum portfolio and the synthesis and theory of action paper); Writing weekly tutor reflections on course readings/developing key students' reflection questions

**2016. 3:** Workshop Leader of the Seventh Annual Robert Macmillan Graduate Research in Education Symposium, Western University

**2015.9-2016.6:** Graduate Research Assistant, Western University

Focusing on publishing two journal articles and conference presentations

**2014.9-2015. 5:** Research Assistant, Western University

Working on a book review and some research projects; the organization and coordination of all the RICE (Researching International and Contemporary Education) seminars and meetings of Western University

**2013.9-2014.4; 2015.9-2017.3:** IELTS and COPE (The Certificate of Proficiency in English, language admission test for University of Toronto) instructor, a Canadian international secondary school

**2013.7:** TESOL Canada Certificate Training (London Language Institute, Canada)

**2012. 9** Successfully completed The Teaching Assistant Training Program (Western University)

**2004.6-2012. 7:** Lecturer, a college in Suzhou

### **Job responsibility:**

Teaching English for college students

Dean assistant and students' affairs assistant for two years

Research on interactive English language teaching

In charge of students' project coordination and arrangement

Working on research projects and having published six academic journal articles

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### **Professional Memberships**

Comparative and International Education Society of Canada (CIESC)

Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE)

American Association For Applied Linguistics (AAAL)

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### **Relevant Research Contributions**

#### **Refereed contributions**

Wu, X. (in press). Learner's privilege and responsibility: A critical examination of the experiences and perspectives of learners from Chinese backgrounds in the United States. *Educational Studies (US)*.

Wu, X. (2017): *Transnational students and mobility: lived experiences of migration*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 37(3), 418-423. DOI: 10.1080/02188791.2017.1315878

Wu, X., & Tarc. P. (2016). Translations and paradoxes of 'Western' pedagogy: Perspectives of English language teachers in a Chinese college. *L2 journal*, 8(4), 55-75. Retrieved from <http://repositories.cdlib.org/uccllt/12/vol8/iss4/art4>

Wu, X. (2015). English Language Pedagogy as 'Best Practice': The case study of one Chinese college. S. Niyozov, & P. Tarc (Eds.). (2015). *Working with, against and despite global 'best practices' educational conservations around the globe* (pp. 60-64) (A RICE/CIDEC compendium). Retrieved from Western University, Research international and contemporary education (RICE) website: [http://www.edu.uwo.ca/centres/rice/documents/FINAL\\_GBP\\_October-2015.pdf](http://www.edu.uwo.ca/centres/rice/documents/FINAL_GBP_October-2015.pdf)

Wu, X. (2014). *A Case Study on the Globalizing English Language Curriculum in One*

*Chinese College—How Western Pedagogies Are Adapted and Adopted in the Classroom* (Master's thesis). Available from University of Western Ontario - Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository. Paper 2291. <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/2291>

- Jiang, Z. F., & Wu, X. (2013). The influence of “environment language” on cross-cultural business communication. *Vocation, 10*, 159-160.
- Wu, X. (2011). The exploration of the effective use of multiple-media technologies in situational English language teaching in higher technical and vocational colleges. *Industrial & Science Tribune, 10*(17), 176-177.
- Wu, X. (2010). An exploration of the application of CDIO mode to the improvement of college students' English public speaking skills. *Journal of Changshu Institute of Technology (Education Science Edition), 24*(12), 76-78.
- Wu, X. (2010). The application of task-based pedagogy to English language teaching in technical and vocational colleges. *Communication of Vocational Education, 3*, 96-98.
- Wu, X. (2008). An exploration of college English classroom interactive teaching. *Journal of Suzhou College of Education, 25*(4), 104-106.
- Wu, X. (2007). Female's struggle to the mundane reality—the analysis of A Rose for Emily. *Journal of Lian Yun Gang Teachers College, 3*, 28-30.
- Wu, X. (2007). Language environment and its impact on the English learning for students in science and engineering majors in higher technical and vocational institutes. *Journal of Changshu Institute of Technology (Education Science Edition), 21*(12), 92-95.

#### **Other refereed contributions**

- Wu, X. (2017, May). *The examination of Chinese international students' learning and*

*becoming in a Canadian international secondary school*. Paper presented at 45th CSSE Conference, Ryerson University, Toronto.

Wu, X. (2017, April). *Learning and self-making of secondary school Chinese international students through transnational migration*. Paper presented at Migration and Ethnic Relations (MER) Conference. Western University, London.

Wu, X., & Tarc. P. (2017, March). *Translations and paradoxes of 'Western' Pedagogy: perspectives of English language teachers in a Chinese College*. Paper presented at American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) Conference. Portland.

Wu, X. (2016, Nov 3rd). *Chinese international students' transnational movement and flexible accumulations in a Canadian international high school*. Paper presented at Decolonizing Conference, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Wu, X. (2016, June). *Teachers' voices on adapting Western language pedagogy in one Chinese college*. Paper presented at 44th CSSE Conference, Calgary.

Wu, X. (2016, April). *Chinese international students' learning and becoming in transnational spaces*. Paper presented at Seventh Annual Robert Macmillan Graduate Research in Education Symposium (GRiES), London.

Wu, X. (2015, May). *Chinese international students' identity formation in a Canadian international secondary school*. Paper presented at 43 rd CSSE Conference, Ottawa.

Wu, X. (2014, April 25th). *Limits and possibilities of Western English language pedagogy as best practice in Chinese higher education*. Presentation at RICE (Western U) and CIDEC (OISE/UT) a one-day symposium, Toronto.

Wu, X. (2014, March). *Rethinking the adaptation and adoption of Western English pedagogies in Chinese higher education*. Paper presented at 58th Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, Toronto.

### **Non-refereed contributions**

Wu, X. (2006). Unit 8 Presentation. In S. Chen & Q. Lu (Eds.). *English for working with multinationals: An oral experience* (pp. 117-131). Nanjing: Southeast University Press.

Wu, X., Zheng, Y. J., & Zheng, X. (2005). Part IV translation. In Z. F. Jiang & C. H. Zhu(Eds.). *Exam tutoring for Precto A and B*. Suzhou: Soochow University Press.