

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED
STATES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

By

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ABSTRACT

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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This phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences of identity development of Chinese graduate students in the United States. Through in-depth interviews with 15 participants at a Midwestern research university, the study found that the majority of Chinese graduate students came with a strong student identity that conflated with personal identity and that they continued to develop their identity in the new environment. They encountered five significant contexts that wove together to form an overall developmental environment, which, along with their prior identity, determined the range, variety, and quality of interactions that they had. As a result, they developed multiple dimensions of identity through a bidirectional movement of identity differentiation and integration.

The study identified five themes that represent the significant contexts that coexisted in forming an enmeshed developmental environment for Chinese graduate students. These five themes also represent the identity dimensions that Chinese graduate students commonly developed. The themes include language barrier and language identity, academic adjustment and academic identity, cultural adaptation and cultural identity, social adjustment and social-emotional identity, and managing logistics and logistical identity.

The study provided a general contour of Chinese graduate students' identity development to illustrate their overall developmental experiences. It showed that their multiple dimensions of identity gradually differentiated from their personal identity while differentiating identity dimensions integrated into personal identity at the same time. Consequently, they increased the

levels of complexity, consistency, and integrity of their identity through a continuing two-directional movement of identity differentiation and integration over a long period of time. They maintained a dynamic interactional relationship among multiple identities that they developed in the process.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to people who suffer willingly in order to find the meaning of life, which is to give and to love.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As American higher education places more emphasis on international and cross-cultural education, more international students come to study on American campuses. In the 2010-2011 academic year, American colleges and universities attracted 723,277 international students from around the world (Open Doors, 2012a). International students not only contribute billions of dollars to the United States' economy each year—\$21 billion in the 2010-2011 academic year (Open Doors, 2012b) through tuition and living expenses, but they also bring their cultures and different perspectives to American higher education institutions, which affect overall campus cultural environment and learning experiences for domestic student groups (Johnson, 2008; Lou, 1989).

Equally important, a large proportion of international students stay and work in the United States after they finish their studies, providing needed talents to the American workforce as it strives for its competitive edge in the global economy (Duderstadt, 2005). This situation is especially evident in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields where the United States' dependence on foreign-born talent has become apparent (Duderstadt, 2005; Johnson, 2001, Pandit, 2007). Those students who do return home often act as educational, cultural, and economic links, and goodwill ambassadors between the United States and their home countries (Pandit, 2007). Therefore, it is strategic to create welcoming campuses for international students, help them adjust and adapt to the host environment, educate them effectively, and support their academic success, social and cultural integration, and personal development, which has far-reaching significance for American higher education and the United States at large (Johnson, 2008).

International students on American campuses are from all over the world; however, more than half of them are from Asian countries and regions (Bhandari & Chow, 2007). Mainland China, India, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Vietnam send 55% of all international students studying in

American colleges and universities (Open Doors, 2012a). Students from mainland China have reached a total of 157,558 in the 2010-2011 academic year, accounting for 21.8% of all international students in the United States. Mainland China has become the first among the top countries and regions that send the most international students to the United States (Open Doors, 2012a).

Notably, a large proportion of Chinese students are graduate students, even though undergraduate enrollment has been increasing very rapidly in the last five years or so. Many Chinese graduate students find jobs and stay in the United States after they have obtained their degree (Johnson, 2001). The contribution that Chinese graduate students have made to the United States, especially in STEM fields, is significant (Johnson; Pandit, 2007).

Johnson's research indicates that 85% of Chinese doctoral recipients in the sciences and engineering planned to remain in the United States for employment at the time of degree conferral, the highest among all countries and regions that send students to the United States. Johnson also noted "[t]he highest percentage of Chinese doctoral recipients was in the natural sciences and engineering. Chinese students earned 13 percent of the physical science and 15 percent of the mathematics doctorates awarded from 1988-96" (2001, p. 3).

Even though the data is a little outdated, it indicates the importance of ensuring Chinese graduate students to receive high quality education in the United States. The quality of the education and training they receive, along with their personal growth and development during their study, impacts the contribution they make in the workplace, especially in the fields of natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics where they make a significant contribution. However, research on Chinese graduate students, especially on their identity development, is lacking. The understanding of how they develop their identity in the new academic, social, cultural context in the United States is very limited.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the lived experiences of Chinese graduate students' identity development when they come in the United States. Specifically, the study explores what they experience in their identity development, what are the contributing factors, and what roles they play in the process.

The study draws upon existing knowledge of identity development, current literature on Chinese graduate students, and two pilot studies that I had conducted in China and the United States. I have adopted a lifelong identity development perspective established by Erikson (1968) and used Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1993) Human Development Ecological Model as an analytical tool to examine the roles of Chinese graduate students as agents and environmental factors as shaping forces. The study has also been informed by existing models and theories of student identity development (e. g., Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Kim, 2005; Renn, 2003).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in many aspects. First, it fills a gap in the literature. The lived experiences of Chinese graduate students' identity development have rarely been researched in the field of higher education. Second, the study is significant and informative to the identity development of Chinese graduate students. The findings of this study add new knowledge and understanding of identity development in their social, cultural, and academic adaptation and integration in the new environment in the United States.

Third, it helps practitioners including international educators, administrators, counselors, advisors, and faculty members increase their understanding of Chinese graduate students and improve current educational practice in educating and servicing this student group, and possibly, other groups of international students who share similar cultural traits with Chinese graduate

students. Fourth, this study also provides policy implications for higher education institutions in terms of improving institutional performance through increasing awareness of international education, modifying or formulating policies, allocating resources, and enhancing services and programs for international students.

Fifth, through raising awareness of identity issues in international education, the study informs research on identity development for international students studying in the United States as well as students studying abroad. Furthermore, understanding Chinese graduate students' identity development as racial minorities in the United States may shed light on similar research on other racial minority students, especially those studying at graduate levels.

Last but not least, this study adopts an ecological lens in examining identity issues of Chinese graduate students, acknowledging both environmental influences and individual students' agency. This approach is very different from traditional ones with either psychological or sociological perspectives in researching identity development, advocating a new way of investigating identity issues of students. Therefore, the significance of the study is multifaceted and lies in both practical and theoretical aspects.

Rationale for the Study

As noted earlier, international education has become very important to the United States in the 21st century. Marlene Johnson (2008), CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, comments that the United States cannot communicate with a world that it does not know or understand; and likewise, the world cannot understand America unless the United States does a better job of nurturing ties with the world.

International students play significant roles not only in providing needed talents to the American workforce (Duderstadt, 2005; Johnson, 2001; Pandit, 2007) but also in enhancing cross-

cultural understanding between the United States and the rest of the world (Johnson, 2008; Lou, 1989; Pandit). Lou (1989) stated

Foreign students represent an opportunity for America to give significant numbers of people from the rest of the world an understanding of American society, culture, and values. At least as important, the presence of foreign students offers a reciprocal opportunity for Americans to learn about other countries and their cultures and values. (p. 12)

To take full advantage of this opportunity, it is strategic for American higher education to increase its understanding of international students, help them succeed in their studies, support them in their social and cultural integration, and promote their growth and development in possible ways.

Due to the complexity of cross-cultural learning and adaptation, concerted effort is needed to enhance international students' experiences and to promote their intellectual and personal growth. One such effort is to improve student affairs and its capacity to serve international students. Conducting research on international students can provide new knowledge and understanding for student affairs professionals to draw upon in order to increase their service capacity.

Traditionally, student affairs professionals have sought to serve all students on American campuses. The philosophy of serving all students is demonstrated through the expanding range of services and support provided to students in various student affairs functional areas as students' needs changed and diversified (Barr & Desler, 2000). The same philosophy is also demonstrated through the accumulation of student development theories for various student groups that appeared on campuses over the years (Evans, et al., 2010; Torres, et al., 2009). The effort of serving all students should be extended to include international students if American higher education embraces them the same way as it does to domestic students. Conducting research on international students is

indispensable to the improvement of the programs and services that student affairs professionals provide for international students.

Chinese graduate students need as much support and services as other groups of international students. Providing sufficient support and services to help them grow and develop becomes increasingly important in American higher education. For one reason, the size of this student group has been steadily increasing in the last three decades (Bhandari & Chow, 2007; Open Doors, 2012a; Young & Wehrly, 1990). For another reason, many of these students will join the American workforce in the future. Johnson's (2001) research indicates that 85% of Chinese doctoral recipients at the time of degree conferral planned to remain in the United States for employment. Anecdotal evidence from international educators indicates a similar percentage of Chinese graduate students who do not return home after they complete their study. The quality of education they receive will affect the contribution they make to this country after they enter the workforce in the United States.

Nevertheless, research on Chinese graduate students is limited in scope, mainly focused on language issues, cultural adaptation, and academic adjustment (e.g., Greer, 2005; Huang, 2012; Huang, 2005; Jiang, 2012; Lou, 1989; Wan, 2001; Wang, 2004). Little research has been done on Chinese graduate students' experiences regarding their identity development when they study in the United States. Identity issues of this student group have been largely neglected in the literature, even though they are very important for Chinese graduate students. They grow and develop as a whole person involving many aspects that go beyond academic success. This gap demands research efforts for better understanding.

My two pilot studies have provided evidence that a systematic study on identity development of Chinese graduate students is worth pursuing. Some pieces of identity development such as racial identity and academic identity have surfaced in my pilot studies, but it is not clear what other

dimensions have been developed and how various identity dimensions intertwine and affect each other. Additionally, the experiences of Chinese graduate students regarding identity development are multifaceted and complicated by many factors. For example, my pilot studies indicate that cultural contexts are important for Chinese graduate students' identity development, and that their prior identities play significant roles in their cross-cultural experiences too. However, it is not clear how Chinese graduate students interact with cultural context in shaping their identity development. Therefore, a systematic and thorough investigation of Chinese graduate students' experiences regarding identity development is not only necessary but also promising.

Research Question

The study addresses the following question:

What are the experiences that Chinese graduate students have regarding their identity development when they study in the United States?

In answering this question, topics that have been addressed in this study include:

1. Chinese graduate students' prior identity when they first come to the United States.
2. Their cross-culture experiences in various domains and the roles their identity plays in the process of adjustment and adaptation.
3. The impact that their cross-cultural experiences have on their identity development including identity awareness, conflict, exploration, and development.
4. The contextual and environmental factors that contribute to or inhibit Chinese graduate students' identity development.
5. The roles Chinese graduate students play in shaping their identity development.

6. Variations in their identity development and the factors that affect developmental trajectory and outcome for individual students.

I have allowed space to make adjustments when I explore these topics in the research process, which is in accord with the nature of qualitative research (Rossman & Ralis, 2003).

Definition of Terms

Identity is a key term in this research, which deserves some space to define. The term conveys different meanings when used in various fields including philosophy, sociology, psychology, religion, business, computer science, and mathematics. Even in social sciences, there is a variety of definitions for the term. In this study, I use the term with a meaning that is the closest to an Eriksonian framework of identity that includes a *personal identity* and *social identities* with permeable boundaries and/or overlaps in between (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Personal identity includes personal characteristics and attributes that form a core sense of one's self (Cote & Levin, 2002; Jones & McEwen; Torres, et al., 2009). Social identities are personally held beliefs about one's self in relation to the social groups in which one finds oneself and the ways one expresses one's relationship to those social groups which is often manifested in the social roles that one plays and assumes (Cote & Levin; Torres, et al.).

I see both personal identity and social identities as socially constructed and reconstructed through constant interactions with others within a broad social context in which one resides, therefore entailing a "fluid, dynamic, and performative nature", not rigid, stable, or permanent (Torres, et al., p.581, 2009). The permeable boundary between personal identity and social identities allows the latter to move close to the former, the core sense of self. The more salient one feels about a social identity and the more this social identity is developed, the closer it moves to and overlaps with one's core identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000). One constructs, deconstructs,

and reconstructs one's identity through continuous integration, not addition, of multiple identities that become salient and developed at various times and spaces (Bowleg, 2008; Renn, 2004; Tatum, 1997; Torres, et al., 2009). Identity development is an ongoing process over one's lifetime (e.g., Erikson, 1963, 1968; Kegan, 1994; Levinson, 1984; Tatum, 1997).

In accordance with this definition, I use Chinese graduate student's identity as how they define themselves as individuals (i.e., personal identity) and the roles they assume as members of certain social and cultural groups (i.e., social identity). Personal identity for Chinese graduate students is the beliefs and values they hold for themselves regarding personal characteristics and attributes. My pilot studies show that they generally hold very positive self-concepts, considering themselves as capable, competent, and successful students when they first come to the United States. Succeeding in a very competitive educational system, attending a prestigious university in China, and being able to attend graduate schools in the United States have formed and reinforced their positive self-concepts. However, their positive self-concept and their beliefs about themselves might change as they study in a different educational system and engage in cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation where problems and difficulties are often encountered.

In the meantime, Chinese graduate students have new social roles to play (e.g., as a member of a racial minority group), or play the same social roles but might play them differently (e.g., as a female) in a new social, cultural, and educational context. Therefore, their social identities change accordingly that involve various aspects including academic identity, cultural identity, gender identity, religious identity, and socioeconomic status. Depending on individual circumstances, certain social identities become salient at a given time and thus demand one's attention and energy. Personal identity and social identity are seen as both product and process in this study. They embody continuity and change.

Identity development means the development of a positive personal identity with progressive strength along with proper integration into society and culture, leading to a stronger sense of identity in general. It also involves exploration of and commitment to one's social identities (Josselson, 2005). Therefore, identity development involves both personal identity and social identities, engaging in the process of differentiation and integration at the same time. The process of identity development continues throughout one's adult life, building on and incorporating earlier choices and experiences (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Levinson, 1984; Renn, 2004; Tatum, 1997). Identity development is influenced by environmental forces and individuals' effort as an agent (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

In this research, I expand the term of identity development to include identity change that conforms to the environment and leads to mal-adaptation in the form of marginalization from the society and alienation from one's core self that is not necessarily positive. Identity development, therefore, refers to the change that occurs in one's personal and social identities, including both positive and negative changes. Defined this way, I focus on what has happened in Chinese graduate students' identity development without the risk of attending only to their positive identity development.

Chinese student refers specifically to individuals coming from mainland China. Even though students from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau are also "Chinese students," they are outside of the scope of this dissertation research. In literature, sometimes students from Malaysia or Singapore as well as Chinese Americans are also referred to as Chinese students, but that is not the definition that I use in this dissertation. *Chinese graduate student* refers to those who have finished their undergraduate study in mainland China and are now in a graduate degree program in higher education institutions in the United States, excluding those students who have

received the first degree outside mainland China, say, in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom or Hong Kong.

America refers to the United States of America and is used interchangeably with the United States in this study, even though America is a broader concept and sometimes includes not only North America but Central and South America. Accordingly, the term *American* is of or pertaining to the United States of America or its inhabitants or citizens, unless it is specifically defined in the text.

Culture refers to the majority culture of a country that influences public behavior, discourse, language choice, norms, beliefs, and values (Sussman, 2000). This definition assumes that a majority culture exists in a specific country, even though most countries are culturally heterogeneous. In this spirit, the terms *American culture* and *Chinese culture* are used in this study, though I am well aware that there is no single American culture or Chinese culture.

I understand that qualitative researchers are against an extensive “Definition of Terms” because definitions evolve in a study and are more appropriately defined by participants (Creswell, 2007). In other words, definitions are constructed from multiple perspectives instead of from one’s own perspective as the researcher. That is why I define as few terms as possible and limit myself to the few that are the most necessary. The terms defined here are to delineate the boundary of the study in order to avoid confusion in communication. For example, “Chinese student” does not mean that I consider students from mainland China as more Chinese than students from Taiwan or Hong Kong. Instead, I want to convey a clear sense of which specific group of students I am researching. It is the same with other terms.

Researcher's Identity

I understand this is neither the place nor the time for me to write an autobiography, but a brief discussion on my identity will provide readers some background knowledge about me as the researcher and how my experiences of identity development might have affected this study.

I am a Chinese graduate student studying higher education in a prestigious doctoral program in the United States. I have been living and studying here for nearly eight years. Before I came to the United States, I studied in Australia for two years and worked in New Zealand for one and a half years. In addition, I also worked at a Chinese university as a student advisor for eight years and later as a faculty member for three years. My experiences in the doctoral program and life experiences in various cultures have had a profound impact on me. My identity has been evolving and developing over the years.

However, my prior identity developed in China forms a foundation for my identity development. Life experiences in China and Chinese culture in general have left a deep imprint on me. I feel that I have gone through a profound change in my identity through crossing-border experiences; but some essential parts of my identity have only been continuously questioned, reaffirmed, consolidated, and integrated. Only in recent years during which I have relived my childhood experiences, has my personal identity been transformed through a process of deconstruction, healing and reconstruction, which is aided by spiritual awakening. The process has not been smooth though. I have experienced deep conflict, confusion, tension, and excruciating pain as well as excitement, joy, fulfillment, liberation and peace in my journey of identity involvement.

For the readers who have an interest in learning more about my identity and its potential influences on this research, I have added a few more pages in Appendix One, titled

“Researcher’s Identity in Detail.” Readers can refer to this section and get more information as needed.

Summary

In this chapter, I started with the background and purpose of the research on lived experiences of Chinese graduate students regarding identity development. Then, I discussed the significance and rationale for conducting such a research project. I also specified the research question as “What are the experiences that Chinese graduate students have regarding their identity development when they study in the United States?” In order to communicate better with readers, I defined key terms, including identity, identity development, Chinese student, and culture. I ended the chapter by describing my own identity as the researcher to inform readers of what I might have brought to the research.

In the next chapter, I review literature that is closely related to the study. Given that the topic is not well researched, I organize literature into several broad categories to indicate how this dissertation research has been informed and framed. Five categories of literature are reviewed, including identity development theories, the context in which Chinese graduate students develop their identities, cultural identity and cross-cultural exchange, graduate students’ experiences and identity development, and research on Chinese graduate students’ adjustment and identity development.

In chapter three, I describe research methodology, including overall design and strategy, hermeneutical phenomenology, research site, sample, basic description for participants, data collection and analysis, data validation, and ethical issues and concerns. In chapter four, I discuss research findings and themes and present a composite description of participants’ lived

experiences of identity development. In chapter five, I focus on discussing major research findings and making recommendations for educational practice as well as for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the lived experiences of Chinese graduate students regarding identity development when they study in the United States. In this chapter, I review literature that has informed this study, organizing it from the broad to the narrow in order to provide useful contextual and background information for readers.

I start with a few models and theories of identity development, which are important because they have greatly affected how I look at identity issues and how I have framed this study. Next, I review research literature on the social and cultural context in which Chinese graduate students develop their identity. I then move on to cultural identity and cross-cultural exchange literature. I also discuss graduate students' experiences and identity development, because the participants in this study are graduate students. At the end, I review literature on Chinese graduate students' cross-cultural adjustment, finishing this chapter with existing studies that relate to identity issues of Chinese students.

Identity and Human Development Theories

Several identity and human development theories that are important to the dissertation research are reviewed here. First, lifelong identity development models and theories (e.g., Erikson's and Levinson's) that have shaped my view that people including Chinese graduate students continue identity development in their adulthood. Second, a sociologist's identity development model that directs my attention to "constitutive forces of the social environment" (Kaufman & Feldman, P.463, 2004) that might be influential in identity development in adulthood.

Third, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1993) Human Development Ecological Model that serves as the theoretical framework for the current study. And finally, Josselson's (2005), Jones

and McEwen's (2000), and Abes, Jones, and McEwen's (2007) models that provide the tools for examining the complexity of identity, multiple dimensions of identity and their interrelations, and individual's capacity that mediates contextual impact on identity development.

Lifelong identity development models insist that people continue to develop their identity in adulthood (e.g., Erikson, 1963, 1968; Kegan, 1994; Levinson, 1984; Tatum, 1997). Theorists such as Erikson and Levinson see human development and identity formation as an ongoing process over a lifespan, which is contrary to a notion that identity development starts at childhood, peaks at adolescence, completes at early adulthood, and then sustains without much change. Tatum (p. 20) succinctly describes the continuity of identity and lifelong perspective of development as follows:

Integrating one's past, present, and future into a cohesive, unified sense of self is a complex task that begins in adolescence and continues for a lifetime...The salience of particular aspects of our identity varies at different moments in our lives. The process of integrating the component parts of our self-definition is indeed a lifelong journey. (p. 20)

Erikson (1968) suggests individuals develop in adolescence "the prerequisites in physiological growth, mental maturation, and social responsibility to experience and pass through the crisis of identity" (p. 91). Erikson believes identity development process continues in adulthood, moving through and accomplishing three sequential objectives: intimacy, generativity, and ego integration, as a lifelong journey.

Correspondingly, Levinson (1984) holds a similar view of lifelong development, considering the adult years as a series of alternating stable and transitional periods. An individual pursues clearly defined goals and priorities in a stable period of seven to 10

years, and then moves into a transitional period of four to five years in which the individual evaluates the existing life structure, explores alternatives, and makes initial commitments that form the basis of a new and more satisfactory life plan.

Different from the aforementioned psychologists, sociologists (e.g., Feldman, 1972; Kaufman & Feldman, 2004) provide an alternative approach to look at identity issues in the student development research tradition, who are more concerned with, “the underlying constitutive forces of the social environment” (Kaufman & Feldman, p.463). They postulate that identity formation and change are not just the result of psychological growth or maturational unfolding; rather, they are more socially produced and patterned phenomena (Kaufman & Feldman).

To them, “the practice of treating socially produced and patterned phenomena as rooted in characteristics of the individual organism” is to commit “ontogenetic fallacy” (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004, p.463). The social environment becomes more important than psychological dynamics in at least some aspects of identity development such as individuals’ felt identities including self-perception (e.g., “I am smart”) as well as status or positional identities (e.g., “I am a would-be educator). Therefore, the identities of college students are partly constituted through social interactions and other social influences as they come in contact with a multitude of actors in a variety of settings in college (Kaufman & Feldman).

The sociological perspective on identity development is useful in examining Chinese graduate students’ experiences of identity development, because they encounter a different set of social and cultural forces that might have an effect on their identity when they move into a new cultural context in the United States. Some social and cultural forces, such as White primacy and racial discrimination (Rothenberg, 2002), are not seen in a Chinese context but are very

influential in the United States while some other social and cultural forces, such as deference to authority and individual sacrifice for collective and group interests, are important factors in China but less prominent in the United States. The sociological perspective points to the importance to look at the changed social and cultural context and how it might affect Chinese graduate students' identity development.

Compared to psychological and sociological approaches, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1993) Human Development Ecological Model has its advantages in examining identity development. Unlike sociological approach that emphasizes social influence over one's identity development, or psychological models that emphasize developmental forces unfolding within an individual person, the Ecological Model shows the forces flowing in both ways: environments influence people and people choose and shape their environments. It captures the context-specific person-environment interaction that exerts influence on the process and results of one's psychological development in all aspects (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). Development and growth occur when individuals interact with the environments and engage in increasingly complex actions and tasks (Bronfenbrenner; Renn & Arnold, 2003).

The Ecological Model depicts one's environment as four concentric rings consisting of Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, and Macrosystem with the person at the center. The person's developmentally instigative attributes are very important in the course of his/her interaction with environment and to the subsequent developmental result. Bronfenbrenner (1993) identifies four types of developmentally instigative characteristics, which are: personal attributes that invite or hinder particular responses from the environment; "selective responsivity" that determines how a person reacts and responds to one's surroundings (p. 12); "structuring proclivities" that indicate how a person engages and persists in increasingly complex activities (p.

12); and “directive beliefs” that refer to how a person perceives his/her agency in relation to one’s environment (p. 13). Bronfenbrenner’s ecology model provides a framework to see how environmental factors affect identity development and how instigative attributes of a person play roles in choosing and shaping one’s environments that in turn affect one’s development and growth.

Through research on women college students, Josselson (2005) considered identity as both product and process that embodied continuity and change. She considered that the pathway a person took by the end of college served as a portal to the future and continual identity development afterwards. This perspective is similar to the view of some other researchers who consider identity development as a lifelong process (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Levinson, 1984; Raible & Nieto, 2003; Tatum, 1997). It resonates with my belief that Chinese graduate students continue to develop their identity when they come to study in the United States, even though they have developed their identity to various degrees before their arrival.

Josselson (2005) built a model to capture a snapshot of women’s identity development at a given time. She used two core concepts, exploration and commitment, in her model to describe a person’s status of identity development. Exploration analyzes if a person has considered or compared various choices for her identity while commitment judges if the person has made a decision with any choices. Her model suggests that if a person has experienced a period of exploration (dimension one) and if the person has made firm identity commitments (dimension two), it then could be decided to which one of the four categories the person can be placed. The four categories are Guardians (not explored but committed), Pathmakers (explored and committed), Searchers (not explored and not committed) and Drifters (explored but not

committed). Josselson's two-dimension and four-category model provides a conceptual tool to look at various identity dimensions that Chinese graduate students develop.

Jones and McEwen's (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity provides one important conceptualization of relationships among social identities and relationships between personal identity and social identities. This model portrays identity dimensions as intersecting rings around a core personal identity that comprises basic personal attributes and characteristics. The model recognizes that each dimension of identity does not operate in isolation and can only be understood in relation to other dimensions.

In addition, Jones and McEwen's (2000) model emphasizes the context in which a person experiences and develops his/her identities, considering contextual factors as influential on the salience of each dimension of identity. The model of multiple dimensions of identity is helpful in thinking and examining many components of Chinese graduate students' identity development (language, academic, cultural, and other aspects of identity), their relationships to core identity, and the contextual influences on the students' identity.

Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) have re-conceptualized the model of multiple dimensions of identity, incorporating meaning-making capacity in a person's construction of multiple identities. In their new model, meaning-making capacity is added to Jones and McEwen's model as a filter through which contextual factors are interpreted prior to influencing self-perception of certain identity dimensions. The depth and permeability of the filter depends on the complexity of the person's meaning-making capacity and determines the contextual impact the person receives on various dimensions of identity. The applicability of this revised model to the current study is that the meaning-making capacity of Chinese graduate students

needs to be examined because it acts as a filter through which Chinese graduate students incorporate contextual influences to their identity development.

Context for Identity Development

People develop their identities through experiences and interactions in certain social and cultural contexts (Abes et al., 2007; Cummins, 1996; Hsieh, 2006; Jones & McEwen, 2000). Social relations of power are often internalized by individuals within the power relations, and as a result, reflected in their identities (Abes et al.; Dolby, 2000; Jansen & Wildemeersch, 1996). Therefore, discussing the social and cultural context is important to understanding Chinese graduate students' experiences regarding identity development. As they study and live in the United States, the way they are perceived, treated, and valued might affect how they shape and construct their identities in various domains.

Some researchers consider American society as one that often treats cultural and language diversity not as assets but as problems to overcome (Nieto, 2004), which creates distress and difficulty for international students to fit in and develop positive identity (Diangelo, 2006; Hsieh, 2006). Moreover, Eurocentric culture, values, and beliefs and English language are often seen as the norm in American society, and anything different is considered alien and inferior (Hsieh, Nieto); therefore international students might feel devalued and marginalized culturally and linguistically.

Under American ideology of cultural homogeneity, international students are often treated as a homogenous group as that is opposite to the domestic student group, even though there are more differences than commonalities among international students (Koehne, 2005). Koehne indicates international students are more heterogenous than domestic students in terms

of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but they are often treated as a group with group problems and identity, which suppresses the differences within the group and silences individual voices.

Koehne (2005) insists that international students are often dichotomized as the opposite side of domestic students, being treated as “the other” and therefore, often marginalized. In practice, international students lack a lot of opportunities that are readily available to domestic students. For example, international students pay higher tuition but are not eligible for student loans, many scholarships are specifically reserved for domestic students, and most international students are not allowed to work off-campus, reducing their opportunity to interact with the real world that they will enter after graduation.

Hsieh (2006) argues that Eurocentric culture is deemed as superior to other cultures and customs in the United States, so conformity to the dominant mono-cultural canons and norms are expected and sometimes, demanded. International students with different cultural backgrounds and language traditions have a high price to pay in the host culture and society where they often have to give up their cultural values and practices in order to be accepted in social and academic settings (Parks & Raymond, 2004). Those who are unable or unwilling to fit into the dominant Eurocentric culture are often attributed a deficient identity by American society (Hsieh). International students are left with the choices of either accepting this imposed identity or fighting against it in their identity negotiation (Hsieh).

Diangelo (2006) observed a classroom where Asian international students and other students of color were silenced and rendered invisible. According to Diangelo, international students and students of color often play audience to White American students instead of being full participants in social interaction and knowledge construction processes. Through interactions in the classroom, White students are affirmed and validated as learners on multiple layers while

international students and students of color are ignored, unheard, dismissed, and turned out (Diangelo). Diangelo's research indicates how racism plays out in classroom and how the power relations within a society affect the equal opportunities that international students and students of color could have.

Racism is not just isolated in discrete incidents or specific privileges that one group has over the other groups, but rather is "a set of practices" (Diangelo, 2006, p. 1984; Johnson, 2005; Rothenberg, 2002; Young, 2000). Researchers claim that White primacy and superiority are pervasive in the United States and are often felt in social and academic settings (Diangelo; Johnson; Rothenberg; Young). They insist that effective solutions to inequitable educational outcomes for racialized groups of students be directed to the dominant culture, not to the racialized others; but blaming the victims is a common practice in reality, making it difficult for the oppressed to form positive self-perception and identity.

Diangelo (2006) also points to the issue of English as the instructional language in American higher education and how it disadvantages students who are non-native English speakers. She claims "Power relations play a crucial role in social interactions between language learners and target language speakers" (p. 1985). Therefore, lack of language proficiency often negatively affects international students' participation, performance, and self-confidence. It in turn affects how Americans perceive international students (Diangelo; Hsieh, 2006; Parks & Raymond, 2004). Even those students who are competent in the English language are accused by local students of lacking language proficiency and being responsible for problems in study groups (Parks & Raymond). They are often rejected from learning opportunities that are readily available for domestic students, such as getting questions addressed during class sessions (Diangelo), forming willing study groups (Parks & Raymond), and using local community

resources. Hence, international students are not validated or affirmed in educational settings; instead, they are often ignored and refused a full access to educational opportunities (Diangleo).

Possible consequences of social and cultural contexts on identity development are also demonstrated in Hsieh's (2006) research on Taiwanese students studying in the United States. Hsieh finds that the experiences of identity development for her research participants are constrained by American ideology of cultural homogeneity. The developmental needs of her participants were often overlooked and the imposed identity was hard for them to negotiate and reconcile. Hsieh also points out that her participants tend not to confront the American ideology of cultural homogeneity in social interactions, because their ethnic cultural background, with Confucianism at its core, advocates harmony and avoids confrontation, which poses an additional constraint on their identity development. Hsieh's research points to the importance of looking at both the cultural context of the United States and the culture international students bring with them when we examine their experiences. The distance and compatibility between the host culture and home culture seem to have an effect on identity conflict, negotiation, and development for international students.

Cultural Identity and Cross-Cultural Exchange

Culture is an important factor in shaping one's identity (Berry, 1980; Hsieh, 2006; Sussman, 2000). "One's culture imperceptibly forms a mental framework through which individuals define their ontology, motivate and select their behaviors, and judge and evaluate the action of others" (Sussman, p. 356). Similarly, Berry (1980) suggests that culture provides a frame of reference for self-definition and how one defines oneself in social relations. Yet, cultural consequences and cultural identity are unrecognized by its members in their daily interactions with culturally similar others (Sussman). Nevertheless, cultural identity becomes

salient when group members come into contact with other groups that are culturally different (Tuner et al., 1994). When Chinese graduate students come to study in the United States, they have plenty of opportunities to engage in cross-cultural interaction and exchange with other cultural groups, through which their cultural identity might become salient. Conflicts might ensue because of the differences in cultural norms, values and beliefs.

Four categories of theories that address psychological processes and consequences of cross-cultural exchanges are briefly reviewed here, as they would be helpful in examining Chinese graduate students' experiences when they study in the United States. They include contact hypothesis, cultural hybridization, acculturation theories, and social identity theories.

Contact hypothesis aims at understanding whether contact improves intergroup relations through attitudinal and behavioral changes (Stephan, 1987). Amir's (1976) research confirms that individuals in cultural contact evaluate out-groups more favorably, which indicates a reduction in prejudice regarding other cultural groups. Based on Stephan and Amir's findings, it is possible that when Chinese graduate students engage in cultural contacts and exchanges, they evaluate other cultural groups more favorably. The same result might also be possible for the cultural groups with which Chinese graduate students interact. Therefore, increased frequency of cultural contact might lead to a higher degree of mutual understanding and acceptance, creating a more favorable environment for Chinese graduate students and other participants within the same environment.

The second category is cultural hybridization. Theorists of cultural hybridization consider cultural identities as co-existent and integrative for the individuals who are culturally hybrid or bicultural (Sussman, 2000). For example, when an individual is socialized into both individualist and collectivist world-views, the person incorporates both world-views into oneself instead of

using one to replace the other. Cultural selves and identities seem to have permeable borders that respond to situational contexts (Sussman). Chinese graduate students have been socialized into Chinese culture in China, forming their cultural identity with collectivist world-views and values. When they study in the United States, they learn and adapt to the new culture, forming a new cultural identity with the mark of individualist world-views and values. The possible consequence is that the new and old cultural identities might co-exist or integrate within individual Chinese graduate students, which means that their new identity does not replace their old cultural identity.

In contrast, acculturation theorists hold different views on cultural identity changes. Berry (1980) concludes that an identity shift away from home cultural identity might occur through prolonged cultural immersion as happened in some immigrants. Those who have few contacts with their country of origin transform cultural identity into a new one that is distinctively different from their home cultural identity. Alternatively, it is also possible for individuals to strengthen their home culture identity in sustained contact with a new culture, resulting in a separated or marginal identity relative to the dominant culture. Put together, these two categories of theories provide a repertoire of cultural identity changes that might have predictive and explanatory value to Chinese students' experiences when they develop their cultural identity.

The fourth category is social identity theories that suggest that becoming a member of an out-group heightens the sense of salience of one's identity via the membership of this out-group (Sussman, 2000). One's cultural identity tends to become more salient in intergroup contact while personal identity is more salient in intra-group contexts (Tuner et al., 1994). Social identity theories speak directly to cross-cultural transition (Sussman). As one moves into a new

culture and comes into contact with other cultural and racial group members, one's cultural identity and racial identity become salient, and often, need to be attended (Ghosh & Wang, 2003). For example, Lu's narratives on her cross-cultural experience of becoming more "Chinese" showcase her heightened sense of cultural and ethnic identity when she moved abroad (Ghosh & Wang). For Chinese graduate students, social identity theories might also be applicable in examining their awareness and self-knowledge of cultural and racial identity in cross-cultural exchanges.

Graduate Students' Experiences and Identity Development

Existing literature on graduate students is also informative to the current study, because Chinese graduate students are graduate students in the first place. They probably have similar experiences that are shared by other graduate students. In addition, because they live and study as minorities in a cross-culture setting, they might also have some experiences that are only shared by certain sub-groups of graduate students, for example, graduate students of color. In the next few pages, I briefly review literature on graduate students' experiences and identity development. I also include literature on the experiences of minority graduate students.

Guentzel and Nesheim (2006) note that graduate students are often out of the radar of student affairs professionals who focus on undergraduate students as a tradition of the profession. Understanding and meeting the needs of graduate students are presumably the responsibility of individual academic departments and the graduate school. This responsibility includes supporting graduate students academically, socially, and professionally. However, the psychosocial aspect of graduate students' experiences is often neglected, even though the cognitive and intellectual development aspect of graduate students is emphasized (Guentzel & Nesheim). Research indicates that graduate students need support that goes beyond their

academic experience to grow and develop as a whole graduate student (Golde & Dore, 2001; Nyquist et al., 1999). Student affairs professionals and faculty need to work together to better support graduate students (Guentzel & Nesheim).

Graduate students' experiences are not always pleasurable and satisfying that provide personal and professional growth, realization, and fulfillment (Adler & Adler, 2005; Austin, 2002). It is common for graduate students to find in their experiences the "elements of uncertainty, self-doubt, insecurity, personal embarrassment, feelings of isolation, and hopelessness" (Nyquist et al., 1999, p. 19). Graduate students not only need support in areas such as orientation, advising and registration, financial aid, community building, social interaction and activities, counseling, professional development, and career planning (Austin; Nyquist et al.), they also need guidance and support as they proceed through various stages of their programs assuming new roles and identities (Adler & Aldler). This might be even more so for Chinese graduate students because, in addition to attending graduate school, they would also encounter challenges that are associated with English language, adjustment to a new educational system, social adaptation, and cultural learning (Greer, 2005; Huang, 2012; Huang, 2005; Jiang, 2012; Rui & Antony, 2012; Wan, 2001; Wang, 2004; Zhou, 2012).

Mendoza (2007) considers that graduate students experience two processes of socialization, one of which is related to the academic profession while the other to their status as graduate students. Both processes of socialization are important for their success in their graduate education, but both entail complexity and difficulty (Adler & Adler, 2005; Austin, 2002; Mendoza, 2007; Nyquist et al., 1999). A successful socialization and integration into graduate programs is directly related to graduate students' persistence (Tinto, 1993), providing a pathway

to their professionalization. As a result, graduate students transform their identities from novice to scholar, and from knowledge consumers to producers (Adler & Adler).

None of the two socialization processes takes place easily. It involves adapting to new environments, learning new cultures, changing values and forming new identities (Adler & Adler, 2005; Mendoza, 2007; Nyquist et al., 1999). Nyquist et al. have found that a significant portion of graduate student development involves efforts to learn the values of the academy. They indicate that some graduate students understand and internalize a new set of values after a few terms in their program, while other graduate students struggle for a long time to understand and demystify the values and expectations of the academy.

According to Nyquist et al. (1999), graduate students receive mixed messages on important issues from various authorities within the academy, which means confusion and difficulty for graduate students in their understanding and demystification of the values of the academy. For example, they received contradictory messages concerning the relative value of the teaching and research in official discourse and rewarding practice. Even more confusing and difficult are that those values, norms, and rules are often implicit and hidden, and at times different from what is conveyed in explicit messages and discourse. Therefore, it is difficult for some graduate students to figure out, let alone assimilate and integrate these values and norms into their value systems. It might be more difficult for graduate students who come from another culture and have language barriers, such as Chinese graduate students.

Nyquist et al. (1999) have also noticed the difference between developing a coherent understanding of academic culture and values and an actual acceptance and internalization of these values. They suggest that if graduate students' expectations and values mesh well with the demands of their academic environment, it is easy for these students to integrate and internalize

the perceived values of the academy. However, for some other graduate students, “coming to terms with the academy’s values entails disillusionment and setting aside many of their own values and goals” (p. 20). Some of these graduate students have decided that they do not agree with or embrace academic values. Subsequently, they leave their programs. If they do stay, they tend to view the academy as amoral or even vicious, feeling that they are deliberately stripped of their values and identities (Adler & Adler, 2005).

Adler and Adler (2005) suggest that graduate students go through stages of identity transformation as they proceed in their graduate education and that the pathway for them is challenging and difficult. “Students often undergo radical changes in their values and consciousness as they progress through their programs” (Adler & Adler, p. 25). According to Adler and Adler, graduate students feel like they are outsiders or imposters who have little knowledge or training in the field, lack previous identities to draw upon, and suffer from low self-esteem in the initial stage of their graduate programs. As they proceed to the next stage of their study, they could also have difficulties in defining themselves, finding their calling, identifying areas of interest, and choosing a line of research to pursue. While some graduate students feel comfortable with their role as a teaching assistant and a few others find their scholarly pathway in professional community or specialty societies, most graduate students experience a great deal of anxiety about their burgeoning academic identity as a teacher or a scholar in this stage (Adler & Adler).

According to Adler and Adler (2005), many graduate students experience a great deal of frustration, anxiety, and pressure as they transform their identities from a student, a consumer of knowledge, to a scholar, a producer of knowledge. Even if they have managed to make it to the dissertation stage, many graduate students still feel unstructured and directionless. However,

graduate students do begin to solidify their identity as emerging professionals after they pass the comprehensive exams, defend their dissertation proposals, present at conferences, or publish journal articles. These positive experiences affirm and reinforce their performance and ability as a capable student and emerging scholar.

Oftentimes, the pathway in graduate school is challenging and difficult for graduate students (Adler & Adler, 2005). It is even more difficult for graduate students of color. Their race, culture, language, and other factors play a significant role against them in their journey in the academy (Murakami-Ramalho, Piert, & Militello, 2008). Graduate students of color are often silenced, discriminated against, and marginalized in academic settings (Gonzalez, Marin, Figueroa, Moreno & Navia, 2002; Murakami-Ramalho et al.; Nettles, 1990). It is a more arduous task for them to form a positive identity through their experiences in graduate education (Boylorn, 2006; Murakami-Ramalho et al.)

Nettles (1990) has found that African American doctoral students are discriminated against in graduate school; they receive fewer teaching and research assistantships that provide not only financial support but also the opportunities to try on new roles and identities as a teacher or a scholar. Gonzalez et al. (2002) have found that the academy was conservative, restrictive, and racist to Latina and Latino students. Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, and Smith (2004) indicate that African American students feel isolated and experience difficulty in their negotiation in their doctoral programs. Chicana and Chicano students also experience self-doubt, survivor guilt, imposter syndrome, and invisibility as they struggle through their graduate education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). To a certain extent, the experiences of graduate students of color overlap with that of other graduate students. However, the task of development becomes more challenging for

graduate students of color, because they have to deal with prejudice and oppression in their searching for and forming of new academic identities (Murakami-Ramvalho et al., 2008).

Chinese Graduate Students' Adjustment and Identity Issues

Due to historical and political reasons, mainland China had not sent its students to the United States for around three decades following 1949 when the People's Republic of China was founded. Only after a formal diplomatic relationship between China and the United States was established and China adopted reform and an open-door policy in the late 1970s, did students from mainland China start to come and study in the United States. In the following three decades, the number of students from mainland China, however, has increased dramatically, jumping from 28 in 1978 (Young & Wehrly, 1990) to 157,558 by 2011 (Open Door, 2012a). The presence of Chinese students has caught the attention of an increased number of researchers. Research on this student group has been increasing accordingly, though the research scope is somehow still limited.

Many researchers focused their attention on Chinese graduate students' adjustment problems and challenges, because they are commonly experienced among this student group (e.g., Greer, 2005; Huang, 2012; Jiang, 2012; Lou, 1989; Wang, 2004). In general, these challenges and difficulties include language incompetence, social and cultural adaptation, academic problems and challenges, and adjusting to a new academic culture as a learner (Huang; Huang, 2004, 2005, 2006; Rui & Antony, 2012; Wan, 2001; Wang, 2009; Wang; Zhou, 2012). In most cases, academic problems and adjustment have attracted researchers' attention.

For example, Wang (2004) and Greer (2005) devoted their dissertations to academic challenges and problems of Chinese graduate students. Wang organized Chinese graduate students' experiences around five categories: language adjustment, learning strategies, adjustment to a new education system, faculty-student relationship, and the effects of socio-

cultural environment on academic adjustment. Greer investigated similar areas, but focused more on specific learning strategies that are important to her participants, which include improving spoken English skills, speaking up in class, asking questions in class, engaging in critical discussion, writing research-based papers, and relating to an academic advisor.

The language problem is most cited in the research on Chinese graduate students. Even though other groups of international students also need to adapt to American English, Chinese graduate students prove to be among those who experience the most difficulties (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005; Greer, 2005; Hsieh, 2007; Huang, 2004, 2005, 2006; Lou, 1989; Parks & Raymond, 2004; Rui & Antony, 2012; Wan, 2001; Wang, 2004; Wang, 2009; Zhou, 2012). English language is a stumbling block for many Chinese graduate students in social and academic domains (Geer; Huang; Rui & Antony; Wan; Zhou), limiting their access, participation, performance and achievement (Diangelo, 2006; Hsieh; Parks & Raymond). Lack of English proficiency affects Chinese graduate students' self-perception and self-confidence, as well as how they are perceived by Americans, their fellow students and faculty (Diangelo; Hsieh; Parks & Raymond; Wan; Wang). Negative experiences coming from language inability sometimes threatens Chinese students' academic identity as capable student and personal identity as capable person (Li & Renn, 2008). In my pilot study, one participant described his experiences this way:

I remember the first time I went shopping in Goodrich. When I proceeded to check out, the lady asked me "paper, or plastic?" I didn't understand. It took me a while to figure out the words she used, but failed to figure out why she asked me paper or plastic. I asked "what?" The lady rolled her eyes and reluctantly repeated, "Paper or plastic?" She waved both bags in her hand with indifference on her face. Then I understood that she was talking about what kind of bag I wanted to use. I felt faint

and very much ashamed. I didn't feel like to go shopping there anymore, afraid of seeing that lady again.

In addition to language, many problems that Chinese graduate students experience come from cultural differences (Greer, 2005; Pedersen, 1991; Wan, 2001; Zhang, 1998; Zhang & Rentz, 1996). Researchers have concluded that the greater the difference between the home culture and the host culture, the more complicated and difficult the adjustment (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992). Chinese graduate students have grown up in a culture with Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist philosophies at its core that advocates harmony and avoids confrontation (Deutsch, 2003; Greer; Hsieh, 2006), dictating their cultural values, norms, and corresponding behaviors. Chinese collectivistic culture is very different from the American individualistic one (Greer; Kim, 2005; Kodama et al. 2002; Yeh & Huang, 1996). Therefore, cultural differences contribute to the difficulties that Chinese graduate students experience in their academic work and daily life (Greer; Wan; Zhang & Rentz).

Because Chinese and American cultures are so different, the distance for Chinese graduate students to travel in bridging the two cultures is huge (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992; Zhang & Rentz, 1996). This is why making changes either in behavior or mindset becomes very difficult and painful to many Chinese graduate students. One example is that Chinese graduate students find it difficult to take on desirable academic behaviors in classrooms (e.g., speaking up in class), because it involves value change (Greer, 2005). The banking model (Pratt & Associates, 1998) is often used in higher learning in China where instructors are seen as the dispenser of knowledge and students are considered as more of an absorber. That students concentrate on lecture, follow the instructor's pace, memorize whatever is taught, and do what the instructor asks is considered to be a good student's behavior in the Chinese context. A Chinese notion of active participation in the classroom does not

necessarily involve questioning, speaking up in class, presenting, or engaging in discussion (Greer). The different notion of active participation plus the concerns over their English proficiency propels Chinese students into certain patterns of classroom behaviors that are often perceived as passive in the United States (Greer).

It is useful to note that some behaviors that are desirable or acceptable in American education violate Chinese cultural values and norms, therefore, creating difficulty for Chinese students to adopt such behaviors (Greer, 2005). For example, voicing a viewpoint different from the instructor in class is perceived by Chinese students as disrespectful. Therefore, expressing opinions different from a perceived authority is difficult for Chinese students (Greer). Similarly, critiquing what they read in academic journals is also difficult for Chinese graduate students, because published articles are seen as a form of authority. Writing a critique article could be a problem for them due to this cultural belief.

Greer and Jian (2012) also pointed to different understandings of plagiarism and integrity between American and Chinese academic cultures in her research. Plagiarism is not much of a concern in Chinese academia, because intellectual property is conceived as shared by the society in its collectivist-oriented culture (Jian). This is the academic culture and tradition in which Chinese students are educated and trained, so they are used to memorizing classical texts and incorporating these texts into their own work (Fu & Townsend, 1998). Even though this is changing in China, it is still common that people use academic sources in their work without feeling obliged to acknowledge them (Jian). For Chinese students, learning to cite and reference academic sources properly in their writing might not be just a technical issue. It might involve changing to a new way of thinking and doing things in their academic work that are not in line with their cultural norms and beliefs.

One limitation of the existing research on Chinese graduate students is that researchers have failed to address how social and academic problems and adjustment affect Chinese graduate students' identity. In reality, the identities of Chinese graduate students shape their cross-cultural experiences and change as a result of these experiences (Li & Renn, 2008). Additionally, Chinese students also experience identity conflict and confusion that they have not experienced before (Li & Renn). Academic adjustment problems and struggles among Chinese graduate students could be attributed to cultural differences (Greer, 2005), but it might also be attributed to perceived identity threats for Chinese graduate students and to their efforts in restoring their identity as capable students. Unfortunately, few researchers go beyond the surface of academic problems and struggles to explore identity issues of this student group such as how their identity changes in the process of their academic adaptation. It is refreshing to see that the concept of identity has started to appear in a few studies on Chinese students in recent years, even though systematic and focused research on Chinese students' identity development is still lacking.

Parks and Raymond (2004) suggest that some strategies that Chinese graduate students adopt are tied to their personal identity. Seeing herself as a capable student and wanting to be a contributing member in her class, one participant in their research reports that she changed her reading strategy from highlighting and underlining to note-taking in order to understand the textbook and remember the content for better engagement in classroom discussion. Another participant works harder and fights back when she is blamed for the delay of a group project in order to demonstrate that she is a capable and competent student. Participants have also reported that some Chinese students change their work habit when working with local students in a study group in order to maintain a good image for the Chinese people as a whole. Through changing their behaviors, they try to maintain a Chinese identity that they perceive as desirable.

Identity change was also experienced by Lu, an immigrant and graduate student in Canada. She vividly described her cross-cultural experience and how this experience affected her identity as a Chinese in her autobiography. “I find I am becoming increasingly more ‘Chinese’ than I was in China. Not only have I self-consciously retained Chinese values and traditions, I have also been trying to dig out the Chinese culture that I long neglected” (Ghosh & Wang, 2003, p. 271). Her ethnic identity became apparent and salient when she came to Canada, and she started intentionally to maintain and develop her Chineseness and her ethnic identity. When she saw that a lot of Chinese individuals had adopted English names, she felt uneasy about this change. She considered her Chinese name as part of her identity that she could not easily give up. “Is it possible to accept someone calling me Lisa or something else? No, they are just not me. Although my name is simply two letters, to me, it’s myself” (Ghosh & Wang, p. 271). Even though she retained her Chinese name adamantly, she found herself changed gradually in other aspects. After a trip to China and back to Canada, she had a feeling of not belonging to either culture.

At the same time, however, I had a sense of alienation and estrangement in China. I did not feel the same as my friends did during conversations, nor could we share common experiences...Surprisingly, I began to miss Toronto. The pictures of China my imagination used to feature had been replaced by the image of Toronto. I do not know why this happens, or where, then, my real home is. Am I just transnational, flying back and forth between two countries without either of them being my destination? After returning to Toronto, similar feeling of homelessness occurred to me. I started missing my holiday in China. (Ghosh & Wang, 2003, p. 272, 273)

Lu's narrative provides insights and perspectives to look at identity issues of Chinese students, but her narrative is hard to count as research evidence on identity issues of Chinese students. She relied only on her own reflection and experience.

Matsui (1995) researched the perception of identity change, comparing the gender role perception of Japanese and Chinese female students in American universities, providing evidence that culture is not the only influential factor in gender identity reconstruction. Chinese and Japanese women have come to view their gender identity, sexuality, career and family role, and educational experiences quite differently. The Japanese women have explored the American lifestyles and have been more influenced by American culture than the Chinese, who tend to mix with other Chinese, focus on their academic work, and keep a critical distance from American culture. Matsui attributes these differences to the current socioeconomic conditions in the two countries, not to the common Confucian cultural tradition shared by two societies. Matsui's study provides yet another angle to look at identity issues of Chinese graduate students.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed research literature that shapes and influences the framing of this study. I first discussed several theories of identity and human development that have contributed to my understanding of identity development as a lifelong endeavor. I also compared psychological, sociological, and ecological approaches to identity research in order to explain why I adopt an ecological approach. Then I moved on to the social and cultural context in which Chinese graduate students develop their identity, because the context is very important to their identity development.

I also reviewed literature on cultural identity, how it changes in cross-cultural settings, and possible outcomes of such a change. Then, I devoted a section to graduate students'

experiences and identity development, because my research participants are graduate students in the first place. They might share some commonalities with other graduate students in their experiences and identity development. Finally, I discussed literature on Chinese graduate students' adjustment and identity issues, as these are closely related to this study.

In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology that I have used in the study. I discuss, in sequence, the overall research design and strategy of the study, hermeneutical phenomenology, research site, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, strategies for validating research data and findings, ethical issues and concerns, and brief summaries of participants. Putting it all together, I attempt to provide readers with a sense of how I have conducted this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I outline the methodology that I've used in the study on Chinese graduate students' lived experiences of identity development when they study in the United States. I open the chapter with the overall research design and strategy of the study. Then, I describe the hermeneutical phenomenology that I've chosen for this study. I specify the research site and how the research sample was selected before I present a series of snapshots for participants. Following the data collection and data analysis sections, I discuss the strategies I've used for validating research data and findings. I then move on to addressing ethical issues and concerns that impacted the study. I end the section with a brief summary.

Overall Research Design and Strategy

The purpose of this study was to understand the essence of the lived experiences of Chinese graduate students' identity development in a cross-cultural setting in the United States and draw implications for the stakeholders in higher education institutions. I had the presupposition that Chinese graduate students would continue to develop their identity when they are in graduate school because I adopted a lifelong identity development perspective established by Erikson (1968) that is shared by other researchers (e.g., Kegan, 1994; Levinson, 1984).

Meanwhile, I was convinced to look closely into both the agency of the individual person and the environment in which one resides to see how Chinese graduate students' identity is sustained, changed, and developed through complex processes. My conviction not only came from Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1993) Human Development Ecological Model but also from the findings of the pilot studies and my experiential understanding of identity development. Therefore, I selected participants and designed interview questions accordingly to gather data

about Chinese graduate students as agents and the environment within which they develop their identity.

Considering the qualitative nature of phenomenological investigation, I used interviews as the main instrument to collect data on how Chinese graduate students experienced identity development through the stories told by participants. I felt confident in using interview as the main technique to fulfill the purpose of developing a description and reaching an understanding of Chinese graduate students' lived experiences pertaining to identity development, because Creswell (2007) and other methodologists (Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) suggest that interviewing is the most appropriate data collection strategy in qualitative studies. Furthermore, Moustakas (1994) considers interview as the typical method for a phenomenological investigation specifically.

Hermeneutical Phenomenology

Because I considered the lived experiences of Chinese graduate students' identity development as a phenomenon that interested me greatly, I used hermeneutical phenomenology as my research method. I felt that a phenomenological investigation would serve the purpose of developing a deep understanding of their lived experiences. In addition to having an accurate description of their developmental experiences, I wanted to go beyond the surface to reach a deep understanding of the essence of their lived experiences through a continual and collective interpretative process with participants. Through sharing and telling their stories, we could construct knowledge collectively for the purpose of gaining deep understanding of their identity development, inform faculty, educational practitioners, service providers, and Chinese graduate students, and thereby, improve educational practice and maximize developmental outcomes for this group of students.

Even though some qualitative research methodologists (e.g., Moustakas) who advocate transcendental phenomenology that requires researchers come from an objective standpoint to look at the phenomenon under examination through setting aside their own experiences in order to retain objectivity, I felt I was more in agreement with Van Manen's insistence on interpretive or hermeneutical phenomenology. Because I adopted more of a social construction philosophy under which I saw conducting research as engaging in a process of knowledge construction, I did not see it is necessary to set aside my own subjectivity as a researcher. Therefore, I drew upon my existing knowledge and understanding of identity development in the research process even though I honor the obligation of being consciously aware of what I bring to the table and the need to separate my own experiences from that of participants. My perspective toward this study was in line with what is supported by Creswell (2007) and Van Manen (1990), who argue that the interpretive component is an integral part of phenomenological investigation. I felt confident and comfortable in choosing hermeneutical phenomenology to fulfill the purpose of this study.

Research Site

A Midwestern research university served as the site for this study where I collected research data in the spring semester of year of 2010. This university is among the top 20 American universities that accept most international students (Bhandari & Chow, 2007). According to the statistics from the university, it enrolled more than 6500 international students from 130 countries and regions in the fall of 2012, among which more than 3700 students are from mainland China. Mainland China sends the most international students to this university, followed by Korea, India, Taiwan, Canada, and Japan.

In the past, Korea took the lead and sent the most students to this university; this was overtaken by mainland China in 2008. In recent years, the university increased recruitment of

undergraduate students from mainland China under its “China strategy”. As a result, undergraduate enrollment from mainland China jumped sharply from 242 in 2007 to 2845 in 2012. Even though the number of Chinese graduate students has not changed as dramatically, it has also achieved a steady gain in the last decade, increasing from 483 in 2003 to 788 in 2012. The increased presence of the Chinese community is changing the dynamics among student groups on campus. The university has become a good site for the research on Chinese graduate students, where it is comparatively easy to find research participants.

Sample Selection

Following the recommendation of interviewing 5-25 participants in phenomenological research by Polkinghorne (1989), I examined and answered the research question, which is “What are the experiences that Chinese graduate students have regarding their identity development when they study in the United States?”, with a sample of 15 Chinese graduate students from mainland China. Participants are graduate students who had completed their undergraduate education in China and are now studying in graduate school at the Midwestern university in the United States. I formally interviewed each of them once or twice and then followed up with at least one phone conversation or email correspondence. I used a snowball sampling method to select participants (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994), starting initial contact through talking to Chinese graduate students directly and using the listserv for Chinese Students and Scholars Association. Two email requests were sent out through the listserv approximately one month apart.

I created a table of all willing participants whom I initially recruited, organizing their basic information obtained through email, phone call or brief face-to-face talk, including disciplinary area, age, gender, year of study, and degree level. This categorical information helped me decide with whom to start the first few interviews with the intention of including interviewees in different

categories. As the study proceeded, I also used the categorical information to select more students and then expanded the pool of participants to include more categories. The basic information of the newly recruited participants was added to the table, giving me a clear picture of all participants. It helped me in my effort to achieving a maximum variation of the experiences of identity development through choosing participants of various categories.

My effort resulted in a diverse sample that included 15 participants with an age range of 23 to 41 years of age, averaging 29 years old. Ten of them are female while five are male. Eight are single and seven married. Twelve participants are PhD students and three are Master's. They are attending 14 different degree programs in humanities, social sciences, education, business, engineering, and natural sciences. Two-thirds of the participants are in the third and fourth year of their program while one-third in their first, second, and fifth year. This sample of participants enabled me to obtain a wide range of experiences related to identity development.

In a zigzag process of identifying participants, interviewing, and analyzing data, and then moving to another cycle, I followed the practice recommended by many qualitative research methodologists, which is succinctly described as: “out to the field to gather information, into the office to analyze the data, back to the field to gather more information, into the office, and so forth” (Creswell, 2007, p. 64). I stopped identifying more participants and interviewing them when I felt that maximum variation of their experiences and conceivable saturation had been achieved (Creswell, 2007).

Data Collection

Even though I briefly introduced myself and the research to potential participants during initial contact, I proceeded with an introduction in the first formal interview with each person. I informed participants of the purpose of the study, research process, confidentiality of identifiable

information and the rights of participants. I formally interviewed each participant once or twice with seven participants having two interviews and eight having one interview, which generated 25 hours of interview tape-recording all together. In addition, I contacted all participants with at least one follow-up through email, phone call or informal face-to-face conversation. I discussed with them the questions that needed further clarification.

Each formal interview lasted from one hour to one and a half hours. The interviews with participants who had only one interview tended to be longer, lasting close to one and a half hours. All interviews were semi-structured to maintain flexibility for interaction, allowing for follow-up questions and diversions of conversation. Participants' mother language, Chinese, was used in all interviews to maintain the flow of thoughts and in-depth conversation, even though the option of using English as the interview language was also given to participants.

Based on the interview protocol specified in Appendix Three, I intended to use the first interview to start conversation and build rapport with the participants. Rapport-building was important because it affected how much information the participants were willing to share. In addition to discussing their basic information, I asked participants to provide a simple visual presentation such as a drawing or a concept map to show how their identity had been influenced before they came to the United States. Then, I asked the participants to explain the drawing after it was finished.

Building on the first interview, I interviewed participants for a second time with the expectation that substantial data would be obtained through extensive and in-depth discussion. But with eight participants, I was able to move smoothly in the first interview, so I kept going and proceeded with the questions that were originally planned for the second interview. For other participants, I conducted the second interview as I had originally planned. The focus of the

second interview was on a few specific and important aspects of lived experiences of identity development that are especially relevant to a particular participant.

I also prompted the participants to draw another simple visual representation of how their identity had been influenced when they studied in the United States. Upon its completion, I asked participants to explain their drawing. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1993) Ecological Model, I asked questions about the agency of the participant, environmental factors, and the interplay between the participant and his or her environment, referring to the two drawings that had been completed by the participants. I expected this second interview to provide the richest, most insightful, and in-depth data.

I planned to conduct a third interview if it was necessary after I was done with the data analysis of the first two interviews. The third interview was intended to focus on unaddressed topics or emerged themes that might require further investigation and to ask for additional information that the participants might want to provide. However, in the research process, I found that a third formal face-to-face interview was not necessary. So I only followed up with participants through email correspondence, informal telephone interview, or face-to-face conversation.

I audio-taped all of the interviews (double-taped to insure successful recording). A third person transcribed the interviews. I checked on the accuracy of transcripts before analyzing the data. The transcripts had been sent to participants for their feedback. Participants gave positive comments for the tedious work of transcribing the interviews, but no additional data were provided in the communication.

Data Analysis Procedures

I followed the method of data analysis for phenomenological study specified by Moustakas (1994), because it provides systematic steps and guidelines for researchers to follow (Creswell, 2007). First, I went through interview transcripts and highlighted significant statements that provided an understanding of how Chinese graduate students experienced identity development. Each relevant statement was treated with equal value and listed as a meaning unit. This step is called horizontalization by Moustakas because it involves horizontalizing the data that regard every statement or horizon as having equal value. Second, I clustered all listed meaning units into common categories and themes, and removed overlapping and repetitive statements.

Third, I used the clustered categories and themes to develop a textural description about the experience of identity development for each participant, through which I also wrote a structural description of the context or setting that influenced how each participant experienced identity development. I also used other sources of data including phone conversation, email message, and informal talks with participants to supplement interview data in the process. The drawings I asked participants to do in the interviews were used in framing and writing the textural and structural descriptions as well.

Fourth, I constructed for each participant a synthesis of the textual-structural description of the meanings and essences of their lived experiences of identity development through using the textual and structural descriptions. I then sent the syntheses to participants for validation. I assumed that the syntheses were valid and accurate because I received no requests from participants for corrections or additions.

For each participant, I went through the above steps when interview data were analyzed. In the process, I also engaged in conceptualizing and constructing a composite description that represented the essences of Chinese graduate students' lived experiences of identity development as a group. I put together the emerged meaning units, categories, and themes to form a composite representation of participants' collective experiences of identity development as I was analyzing the data for individual participant. The composite conceptualization and representation had gradually become more comprehensive and inclusive when more participants' data were analyzed and added. I considered the composite description as complete and stopped collecting more interview data when there were no new categories and themes that emerged.

In addition to the aforementioned steps of systematic and rigorous data analysis, I also used memoing throughout the research process, writing down ideas and insights about the participants' experiences and questions I had that deserved further investigation and clarification (Creswell, 2007). I also used sketches, drawing, and concept-mapping in the memos, as graphic representation of the relationship between categories and themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Acting as an important step between data collection, data analysis, and writing the draft of the dissertation, memoing helped keep me involved in the analytical processes, maintain a distance from the materials, increase the level of abstraction, and improve effectiveness and efficiency as a researcher, which are advocated by qualitative methodologists (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Strategies for Validating Data and Findings

I used data validation strategies in data collection and data analysis as these two processes were interwoven in this study. I sought constant input and feedback from the participants to understand their lived experiences and realities of identity development. In order

to increase research trustworthiness and establish credibility, I also used member checking, the most critical technique for validating data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I not only sought input from participants in the process of interviewing, but also stayed open to their feedback on a continuous basis through email, phone communication, and informal talks until the completion of the study. In addition to making interview transcripts available to participants, I made the synthesis of textual-structural descriptions available to them for their feedback and validation. Of no less importance, I used a third person to transcribe the interviews so I could validate the transcriptions as an auditor for accuracy.

Even though interview was the main format for data collection, it was combined with other data collection methods, including email communications, phone conversations, and informal talks with the participants. I also collected data from observation of participants when I happened to see them in social or cultural gatherings, from reading the postings and comments that participants put on the mailing listserv, and from talking with people who were friends of participants. Therefore, I was able to triangulate data from various sources in order to interpret interview data in context. This triangulation contributed to increased creditability and trustworthiness of the research findings (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002).

I asked for input from my cohort colleagues who had received training in qualitative methodology as peer debriefers. Their knowledge and experiences also contributed to the creditability and trustworthiness of the study. In addition, I received valuable advice and feedback from my advisor in the process of interpreting data and drafting the dissertation, who often reminded me to separate my own experiences from that of participants, anchor in the data in the analytical and conceptualizing process, and support each claim with research evidence. The input that I obtained from my advisor prevented me from overreaching and over-stretching

to draw conclusions that were not sufficiently supported by the data, which also helped ensure the quality of the study and of its final product, this dissertation.

Ethical Issues and Concerns

This qualitative study did not pose any serious ethical problem for participants. I did not expect any traumatic impact that could result from answering interview questions and discussing their lived experiences of identity development. However, I discovered that participants at times felt uneasy when they reflected on challenging issues regarding identity development such as identity conflict. I referred one student for counseling service because her emotional distress was discernible. I felt that counseling would be beneficial to her because she had been emotionally impacted in the interview.

I was fully aware that there were cultural issues inherent in the study that demanded special attention, even though the research itself did not pose serious ethical concerns. I exerted additional caution in the research process, trying to create a friendly, equal, non-threatening, and secure environment for the participants. I wanted to make sure they could be open, able and willing to say what they really wanted to say, without being pressured to say what they might think I wanted them to say. I tried to be attentive to the issues that were not apparent on the surface. For instance, even though I considered that I had equal status with the participants, this was not the case in the eyes of Chinese graduate students I interviewed. More often than not, my age and seniority influenced their interaction with me. It is because age and seniority are associated with authority and power in Chinese culture.

Therefore, I paid close attention to my role in interacting with participants, being aware of the factors that might have an influence over their responses. These factors include, but are not limited to, that I am male and older than most Chinese graduate students, and that I have studied

higher education, have had many years of work experience as an administrator and university teacher, have been exposed to western culture for a longer time, and had come to interview as a researcher. Caring about participants, hearing their real stories, and constructing genuine knowledge with them had become an important part of my ethical conduct of this research.

Another issue that I became aware of is that I was a research instrument, not a distant observer. In my pilot studies with Chinese graduate students in the United States and in China, I had found that it was very difficult to maintain the so-called objectiveness that is embraced dearly by quantitative researchers. It was also very hard to “bracket” out my own experiences and perspective as some methodologists advocate (e.g., Moustakas, 1994). Admittedly, I had passion in my research that functioned in positive ways and I understood the subjective nature of qualitative study in which participants and I constructed knowledge together. I had not expected to be detached from my participants.

Nevertheless, I realized that my role was that of a researcher. I needed to avoid projecting my autobiography onto my participants’ experiences of identity development. Therefore, I kept reminding myself that I was a researcher who needed to live up to professional standards in my interactions with research participants at all times. I had become more aware of my interpretive lens and its effect on my analysis, so I was more able to avoid over-stretching participants’ narratives and overreaching in stating research findings.

A final ethical concern that I had was what would happen after the research was done. Should I assume an attitude that “business is business” and now it is all over? What if participants wanted to talk again, asked for help, or saw me as a friend and wanted more interactions? It is difficult to separate a professional relationship from a personal one in Chinese culture, because Guanxi (personal connection and ties) is such an important part of Chinese

social and personal life (Chen & Chen, 2004; Hackley & Dong, 2001; Warren, Dunfee & Li, 2004; Yi & Ellis, 2000) that Chinese students might see me as becoming a part of their Guanxi.

So, in my interaction with research participants, it was quite possible for the participants to take my friendliness as friendship and want to continue the relationship after the research was done. For example, one participant called me for help when she had an issue with her landlord long after our interviews. Being aware of this cultural tendency, I tried to draw a smooth closure to my professional relationship with participants, which required much cultural sensitivity and discretion. I did not want to leave my participants feeling abandoned in any way when I was done with the study, because it was unethical to do so if Chinese culture is taken into consideration. Therefore, I tried my best to act on my conscience and integrity, striving for a fine balance between meeting professional standards and functioning as a caring and loving Chinese person, which had become an unshakable principle that I upheld in the process of conducting this research.

Summaries of Participants

To give readers a general picture of participants, I present a series of snapshots of them here. More detailed profiles of participants can be found in Appendix Two. There is no specific order for the snapshots, which are listed alphabetically according to the pseudonyms that I have given to participants.

Bo Zhao is 26-years-old, male, and third-year PhD student in Material Science. He has a female significant other who is also a Chinese graduate student. Bo Zhao grew up in a middle-class family in a city in northeastern China. Both of his parents have received a college education. He attended a top university in Shanghai where he studied Material Science. He had a minor in English. Upon graduation, Bo came to study in his current PhD program in the United States.

Fen Qian is 29-years-old, female, and a fourth-year PhD student majoring in Media and Information Studies. She is married with a few-month-old daughter who has been sent to her parents in China. Fen grew up in a capital city in central-western China. She attended a top university and then studied in a master's program for a year. She stopped her master's program and came to continue her academic pursuit in the United States when she received an offer. Fen completed two master's programs in American Studies and Marketing and Communication respectively. She then started her current PhD program, moving from the southern to the Midwestern section of the United States.

Jia Sun is 32-years-old, female, and third-year PhD student in Accounting. She is married with a son who is only a few months old. Jia grew up in a middle-sized city in central China but attended a top university in the northeastern part of China. Jia came to the United States as a spouse when her husband was pursuing his PhD. She started her master's program a year later. Within a year of graduation, she started her current PhD program.

Jie Li is 31-years-old, female, and first-year student in a MBA program. She is married to a PhD student at the same university. Jie grew up in a small city in southeastern China. She attended a university in a capital city in Southwestern China. After her graduation, she taught at a four-year college in southern China for a year before she moved back to her alma mater to earn her master's degree in accounting. She then moved to a booming city in the south of China working for an insurance company for three years. Having come to the United States as a spouse, she started her MBA program in a business school two years later.

Jun Zhou is 30-years-old, female, and fourth-year PhD student majoring in Teacher Education. She is married to her husband who works for an American company. Jun grew up in a province in central China. She studied computer science and earned a master's degree in linguistics

in China. She came to the United States to continue her academic pursuit in linguistics but transferred to a PhD program in teacher education a year later.

Han Wu is 24-years-old, female, and first-year master's student in Human Resources. She grew up in a middle-class family in a capital city in northern China. Han's parents both worked and provided a very stable familial environment for her. Han learned to work hard, be self-reliant, and make decisions for herself. She attended college in another province and decided in her junior year to study overseas. A year after her graduation from college, she came to study in her current program in the United States.

Hao Zheng is 27-years-old, male, and second-year master's student majoring in Statistics. He grew up in a capital city in eastern China. Hao studied biology in a college in the same city where he grew up and lived with his parents. Upon graduation, he found a job in a pharmaceutical company in Shanghai and worked there for two years as a salesperson. Hao felt that he had experienced a profound impact from working for the company as a salesman.

Linli is 29-years-old, male, and fourth-year PhD student in Civil Engineering. He is married to his wife who is now staying with him in the United States. He grew up in a remote mountainous area in southwestern China. Linli studied at a top university in northwestern China and then continued his study in graduate school in northern China where he earned a Master's in civil engineering. Upon graduation, Linli came to study in his current PhD program in the United States.

Ming Feng is 27-years-old, female, and fourth-year PhD student in Chemical Engineering. She has a male significant other who is American. Ming Feng lived in a small city in Southern China and then moved to the capital city of the same province when she was eight years old. Ming Feng attended a key high school that had top-notch facilities and teachers. She excelled in the National

College Entrance Exam and attended a top university in a cosmopolitan city in northern China. She came to study in her currently PhD program in the United States upon her graduation.

Si Chen is 23-years-old, female, and fourth-year PhD student in Mechanical Engineering. She has a male significant other who is American. She is from a capital city in northern China. Si studied in a special program for gifted children and spent four years completing her secondary education that normally takes six years. She then attended a top-ranking university in Shanghai. She came to study for her PhD in the United States at age 19, much younger than most PhD students, which was a point of pride for her.

Wentian is 30-years-old, female, and fourth-year PhD student in Educational Psychology and Technology. She has a male significant other who is American. Wentian grew up with her extended family in Beijing. She attended a top university in the capital city majoring in Education. Upon graduation, she taught English for two years while she was applying for a graduate program in the United States. She studied for her master's program in a predominately white university before she moved to her current PhD program in the Midwestern United States.

Yuwen is 41-years-old, female, and fourth-year PhD student in Education Psychology and Technology. She is married with two children, age 10 and eight. Ying lived with her uncle's family in a capital city in central China until the age of 10. She returned to that city upon college completion and worked there for nine years as an English teacher. Ying came to the United States as a spouse when her husband was pursuing his PhD. She started her master's program two years later in Exceptional Education. Yuwen then moved with her husband to the university where he found a job. She started her current PhD program at the same university one year after their move.

Yuexiao is 27-years-old, male, and third-year PhD student in Plant Pathology. He grew up in a lower-middle class family in central China. He attended a college in the province where his family

lived. After graduation, he spent two years preparing for the English language tests and applying for his PhD program in the United States. Yuexiao studied Plant Science in college in China and continued to study in the same area in his PhD program in the United States.

Zexiao is 37-years-old, male, and fifth-year PhD student studying Linguistics. He is married with a five-year-old daughter who, along with her mother, has stayed as Zexiao's companion in the United States. Zexiao's wife came as a spouse, who completed a master program in the United States. She applied for a PhD and was admitted and offered a multi-year scholarship package. Zexiao had eight years of work experience in China, first teaching English at a university where he received his Bachelors' degree in English and then, upon obtaining his master's degree, working at another university in big city in southern China.

Zhe Han is 25-years-old, female and third-year PhD student majoring in Biochemistry. She has a male significant other who comes from India. Zhe Han grew up in a lower-middle class family in a capital city in central-western China. She had been a top student since middle school and attended a magnet high school. She attended a top university in Beijing before she came to study in her PhD program in the United States.

Table 1: Basic Information of Participants

Name	Age	Sex	Program level	Discipline
Bo Zhao	26	male	3 rd year PhD	Materials Science & Engineering
Fen Qian	29	female	4 th year Ph.D.	Media and Information Studies
Jia Sun	32	female	3 rd year PhD	Accounting
Jie Li	31	female	1 st year Master	Business Administration
Jun Zhou	30	female	4 th year PhD	Teacher Education
Han Wu	24	female	1 st year Master	Human Resources
Hao Zheng	27	male	2 nd year Master	Statistics
Linli Wang	29	male	4 th year PhD	Civil Engineering
Ming Feng	27	female	4 th year PhD	Chemical Engineering
Si Chen	23	female	4 th year PhD	Mechanic Engineering
Wentian Chu	30	female	4 th year PhD	Education Psychology and Technology
Yuwen Wei	41	female	4 th year PhD	Education Psychology and Technology
Yue Xiao Jiang	27	male	3 rd year PhD	Plant Pathology
Zexiao Chen	37	male	5 th year PhD	Linguistics
Zhe Han	25	female	3 rd year PhD	Biochemistry

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experience of Chinese graduate students' identity development when they study in the United States. I used a phenomenological approach to fulfill my research purpose of understanding the essence of lived experiences of Chinese graduate students' identity development. A snowball sampling technique was used because it is an effective way to collect data for a qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). I interviewed 15 participants at a Midwestern research university to collect data until maximal variation and saturation were achieved. Informal conversation, email correspondence, phone conversation, and observation were used to obtain supplementary data.

I followed the steps of data analysis specified by Moustakas (1994) for a phenomenological study, including horizontalizing the data, listing meaning units, clustering listed units into common categories or themes, developing textural and structural descriptions, constructing for each participant a synthesis of the textual-structural description, and developing a composite description of the meanings and essences of participants' lived experiences of identity development as a group. Through the interwoven process of data collection and data analysis, I used various data validation strategies, which included seeking constant feedback from the participants, triangulating data, using peer debriefers, and obtaining continuous input from my academic advisor, to increase creditability and trustworthiness of the study.

In order to conduct the study ethically, I maintained my cultural sensitivity, drew upon my cross-cultural experiences and background, and applied professional standards to my interaction with the participants in the process of our collective knowledge construction. I have presented a series of participants' snapshots for readers. I also put more detailed profiles of participants in Appendix Two for readers who desire to know more about individual participants. In the next chapter, I discuss the themes and findings of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THEMES

In this chapter, I present a composite description of participants' lived experiences of their identity development. I begin with participants' prior identity that they developed before they came to the United States and its effect on their further identity development in the new environment. I then present five themes that signify the major identity dimensions that participants have engaged in exploring and developing with rich experiences.

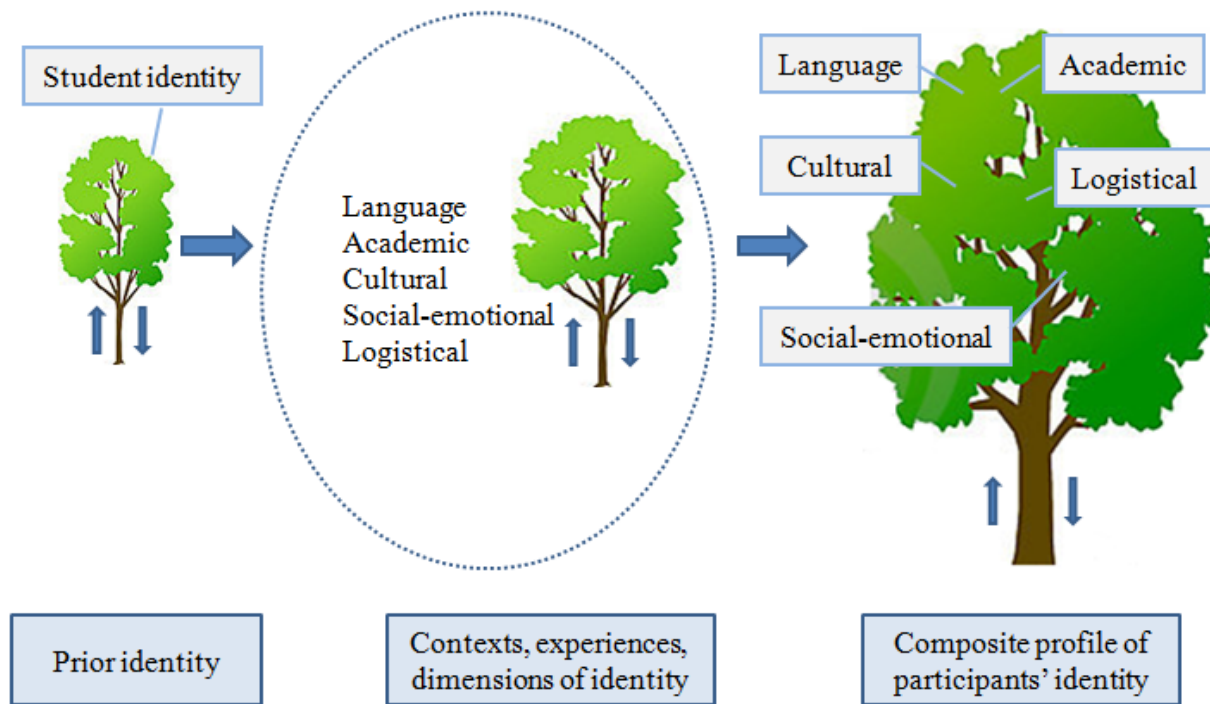
The themes are language barrier and language identity, academic adjustment and academic identity, cultural adaptation and cultural identity, social adjustment and social-emotional identity, and managing logistics and logistical identity. These themes also represent five contexts that coexist in forming an enmeshed developmental environment for participants. Even though the contexts coexist and the experiences of developing different identity dimensions intertwine in the process, I discuss them separately for the purpose of clarity.

At the end of the chapter, I provide a general contour of participants' identity development to illustrate their overall developmental experiences. In brief, it goes as follows: participants' multiple dimensions of identity gradually differentiate from their personal identity while differentiating identity dimensions integrate into personal identity at the same time. Consequently, they increase the level of complexity, consistency, and integrity of their identity through a continuing two-directional movement of identity differentiation and integration.

Before I move onto lengthy textual description, I use a figure to capture general features of participants' lived experiences of identity development. It shows the contexts, processes, and outcomes of participants' identity development. The figure starts from the left side with prior identity that participants brought with them when they entered the new environment and continues through the middle part that shows the five themes as the developmental contexts

within which participants have developed their identity. The figure ends with the outcome of their identity development on the right side, signified by a grown tree that indicates a fuller-developed identity. The figure flows from left to right, indicating the process of growth and development of participants' identity over a long period of time. The growing tree represents the developing person. The two-way arrows along the tree trunk represent a continuing process of two-directional movement of identity differentiation and integration.

Figure 1: Contexts, Processes and Outcomes



Legend of Figure 1: For interpretation of the references to color in this figure, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation.

Prior Identity and Its Effects

All participants in this study completed their K-12 and undergraduate education in China. Six of them had worked for a number of years and four received a master's degree before they came to the graduate school in the United States. Through their upbringing, schooling, work

experiences, and other life experiences, participants formed a prior identity that they drew upon when they came to the United States. Their prior identity affected their aspiration, self-confidence, and coping strategies when facing academic, social, cultural, and other difficulties, which in turn, affected the scope, depth, and quality of their experiences in the new environment. As they accumulated new experiences, their prior identity changed and developed over time.

The majority of participants (12 out of 15) formed a strong and positive identity in China. They tended to believe they could make it when facing challenges and difficulties. It is evident that succeeding in a very competitive educational system in China helped them form a prior identity as a capable student and being able to come to study in the United States reinforced their perception of this identity. With some truth in it, there is a notion among the Chinese community that only the very best students come to study in graduate school in the United States. To a large extent, their prior identity gave them confidence, courage, and perseverance in facing challenges, and in restoring and developing their identities in the new educational, social, and cultural system.

With a strong prior identity, participants were able to make a successful transition, navigate the new educational system, venture out of the academic sphere to learn new cultures, and expand their horizons along various dimensions. They were seldom in doubt about their potential to succeed in the new academic environment. When they faced difficulties, their prior identity often acted as a filter through which they interpreted reality in their favor; so they were able to persist in challenges and overcome difficulties.

For example, participants Bo Zhao and Si Chen had some challenging experiences when they initially assumed teaching assistant positions. Instead of questioning their ability to teach, Bo Zhao attributed the setback to his limited teaching experience while Si Chen attributed it to

students' lack of motivation and preparation. Neither Bo Zhao nor Si Chen interpreted reality in a way that negatively affected their confidence. Their logic goes like this: if the problem is due to their lack of teaching experience, they would improve over time as they gain more experience; and if the problem is to do with students' motivation and preparation, they are not the ones to be blamed.

In both cases, Bo and Si's interpreting filter worked to their favor in the sense that it preserved their self-confidence and courage to move on in the face of difficulty, which was very much needed in their initial adjusting to a challenging environment before their strong footing was established. Si Chen asserted, "Yes, it is their (students') problem. I learned it in high school and they study it in college. I explained clearly to them, but they could not get it. What can a teacher do if the students are not prepared and motivated?"

Similarly, Linli and Ming Feng had difficulty in following lectures due to language deficiency, but they did not get paralyzed and take it as their inability to learn in a new educational system. Instead, they remained calm and clear-headed. With a strong prior identity as capable students, they showed the confidence that they would make a successful transition in spite of the difficulty, which helped them alleviate emotional burden that could have impaired their coping ability. Linli said, "I knew I could make it even though I was having difficulty in language when I realized that the knowledge taught in class was not difficult for me to grasp."

Therefore, he was content with understanding the lecture through guesswork based on his prior knowledge and relied on the figures and graphs used by his professor. Subsequently, he made satisfactory progress in his study. Ming Feng's prior identity worked in a similar way. She said, "There was pressure for sure but I was not too worried because I knew I could make it. Other students also struggled. I was not the worst in class. I knew it was only a transition." With

this realization, Ming Feng was able to take proactive actions instead of being overwhelmed by the pressure she felt. She sought help from classmates, worked very hard to prepare for each class, and engaged actively in each class session. In combination, her confidence, clear mind, proper actions, and strong academic background had worked for her. She caught up in her study within a relatively short period of time.

Not all participants had strong prior identity to draw upon, though. Three participants, who graduated from less prestigious universities, came to the United States initially as a spouse of a graduate student, had difficulties in their upbringing, came from lower social-economic-status family, or lived in rural area or small cities, had less strong prior identity to start with as they embarked on their new adventure in the United States. They tended to have less faith in their ability to overcome difficulties in their study and other areas of their life. They struggled more in academic, social, and cultural adjustment and adaptation. As a result, they had more struggles in restoring and developing their academic identity as a capable student in their academic pursuit. And they had more difficulties in expanding and deepening their experiences in developing other aspects of their identity as well.

For example, Yuexiao's prior identity limited his development in the new social and cultural environment. He contained his experience primarily to his study and research, and seldom ventured out the academic sphere to develop other identity dimensions. He was so cautious about his relationship with his advisor that he saw its possible deterioration as catastrophic and therefore, prevented it from happening at all cost. He said, "I have to work very, very hard to avoid displeasing my advisor, because my success is maybe, 50% through my effort, but 50% decided by him." As a result, his experiences were mostly confined to his study, research projects assigned by his advisor, and his lab environment. He was barely able to expand

himself outside the academic sphere to explore, examine, and develop other aspects of his identity.

Another participant, Jun Zhou had low self-esteem and lacked self-confidence because of her upbringing. While she tried to follow her interest, she was often over-concerned with the choices she made. She was constantly worried if she was moving in the right direction or doing the right thing. She became apprehensive when she was learning new ways of critical thinking, because she was fearful that she might have become too liberal. She said, “it is scary to think that I might have gone too far, becoming someone who is not accepted or gets lost.” She was also worried about her future, believing that nobody would hire her when she completed her PhD. It is evident that Yuexiao’s and Jun Zhou’s prior identity negatively affected their attitude, aspiration, choices, and experiences in further developing their identity.

Noticeably, participants’ prior identity mainly manifested as student identity, which had been developed in a very competitive educational system and a culture that so much emphasizes educational success in China. Participants conflated their student identity with their personal identity that entailed a core sense of themselves. They hardly differentiated the two when they came to the United States, which means their self-perception of who they were was dependent on their student identity. This conflation either worked for them or against them in their cross-cultural experiences that were associated with their growth and identity development, depending on the strength of their prior identity.

For those who had a strong student identity, the conflation worked for them favorably. As shown in earlier examples of participants Bo Zhao, Si Chen, Ming Feng, and Linli, their strong student identity made them believe themselves not only as a capable student but, more generally, as a competent person who could learn, improve, and succeed in whatever they do. As a result,

they did learn, improve, and succeed more often in their study and other areas of identity development.

Conversely, when participants did not have a strong prior identity, the conflation of personal identity and student identity worked against them. These few participants tended to have a filter that interpreted the difficulties they encountered to their disadvantage. For example, participant, Jie Li failed her English test several times as she was preparing for her MBA program. She doubted her ability to learn the language and equated the failure of the test to the failure of herself as a person, which challenged her perception of self-adequacy and self-worth. As a result, she felt defeated and very frustrated. She said, “I had never felt so awful in my whole life. I felt so stupid and useless.” It had a negative effect on her overall confidence, which in turn, had a negative impact on her experiences of identity development. In this case, a shake in her student identity shook her personal identity, which had far-reaching effects on her in her development of academic, cultural and social-emotional identity. Jie Li’s experiences are not unusual but shares commonality with other participants who have a less strong prior identity.

As participants accumulated and expanded their cross-cultural experiences, their prior identity evolved and developed over time, which was often affected by what they did, how they engaged themselves, and what they achieved in the academic, social, and cultural domains. Consequently, participants’ various dimensions of identity gradually differentiated from their personal identity. In the mean time, as they explored and developed new aspects of their identity, they incorporated and integrated these aspects into their personal identity, which was gradually strengthened.

Because participants invested much of their time and energy in developing their student identity, this identity dimension often differentiated into sub-dimensions, becoming more

developed and complex than other identity dimensions, and therefore occupying a special position in the whole developmental process. But before I move onto academic identity development, I will first discuss language barrier and language identity in the following section, because participants' experiences as language learners manifested first and had an impact on their experiences in other aspects of identity development when they entered the new and challenging linguistic context.

Language Barrier and Language Identity

Even though some participants had a better command of English than others, language barrier became apparent for participants upon their arrival, which put a strain on many aspects of their experiences of identity development in the new environment. To varied degrees, all 15 participants reported that they had challenges with the English language in their academic work, social interaction, and cultural learning that were associated with the development of various identity dimensions.

They reported that the English language was especially problematic when they first arrived in the United States, presenting itself as a stumbling block in their daily experiences in academic, social, cultural, and logistical spheres. Even though participants gradually improved their English as they advanced in their program, it remained as a constraint for participants at late stage of their study, who felt varied degree of inhibitive effect on their academic, social-emotional, and cultural identity development.

More than two-thirds of the participants found they were underprepared in English language when they first came to the United States, even though they had high proficiency test scores on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and GRE (Graduate Record Examination). What they learned in China did not equip them well for daily social interaction,

cultural learning, and academic demand. English language became one of the stumbling blocks that created much difficulty, challenge, and frustration for participants. One participant, Han Wu sheds tears as she spoke of her experience, “I knew it would be hard, but I did not know it was *that* hard.” As a result, she felt very frustrated and had a strong sense of inadequacy that went beyond the language difficulty itself. She was challenged in her perception of her identity as a capable person and her self-confidence in succeeding in her study became shaky as a result.

Communicating in English was difficult for two-thirds of the participants who must push themselves very hard in order to participate in academic and social settings. Participants reported that they had problems in understanding other people and getting themselves understood in daily social interaction and academic domain. One participant, Yuexiao said, “What I learned in China is not applicable here. Our way of expression is different from what they use in real life situations. They speak very differently. I do not understand what they say. They do not understand what I say either.”

Another participant, Linli said, “Communicating in English is the most difficult. When I talk to people, they cannot understand me, even though I try very hard to get through and get very excited.” Participants reported that these experiences affected their confidence, social interaction, cultural learning, and academic performance that were closely related to the development of academic identity, cultural identity, and other aspects of their identity.

Communicating in English became a very painstaking experience for at least one-third of the participants. As a result, they started to avoid or reduce social interactions as much as possible, leading to decreased opportunities to interact with native-speakers, learn new culture, build confidence, and try on new social identities. Jie was such a case, who commented, “I did not want to go out and socialize with people. If I had to, I would hide behind my husband and let

him talk instead.” The difficulty, pain, and embarrassment of communicating in English became so hard that Jie’s willingness to engage in social settings gradually waned. As a result, Jie believed that she missed a lot of opportunities to develop herself through interacting with people, which contributed to her strong sense of not-belonging in the host environment.

Even if participants had adequate language skills and the courage to venture out, it was still hard for them to take on an identity they desired in interacting with people who are native English speakers. As English learners, they had to compromise and assume the listener and subordinate roles that were assigned for them. Their language identity was often taken as who they were in social interactions. For example, Si Chen joined a hockey team. She said it was not only a hobby for her but also a vehicle to cultural learning and social integration. So she was very passionate about it. However, she did not feel comfortable with the social role that was imposed on her in the team.

She was a listener and a subordinate most of the time, even though she was older and more mature than her American teammates who were mostly undergraduates. She knew she would never become the person she would like to become, who could lead a conversation or joke around with her teammates. She said, “I enjoy being the center of a group, cracking jokes and amusing others. That is what I do when I am with my Chinese friends. But I cannot have that essential part of myself that I cherish when I am around my teammates.” Because she was a language learner, her language identity overshadowed her other parts of identity in the eyes of her teammates. To stay in the hockey team, she had to compromise and accept an imposed identity that she was not content with.

Lack of language proficiency also had negative effects on participants’ study, hindering them from developing a positive academic identity. More than two-thirds of the participants

found that it was very difficult for them to finish reading assignments on time, understand fully the text they read, and feel adequately prepared for class, especially at the beginning stage of their study. Writing assignments were challenging, time-consuming, and frustrating as well. Language incompetency also limited their opportunities to participate and engage in class. For example, participant Han Wu reported that she had a hard time following lecture and class discussion. She said, “I hardly figured out what they were saying, they had finished talking.” Therefore, she felt that she could not learn much in attending class and she was excluded from learning opportunities that were available to American students.

Another participant, Jia Sun felt the English language was a hindrance on her learning, preventing her from using and developing her intellectual capacity. She said she could not raise questions and participate in class in ways that she wanted, because she needed more time to process information. As a result, she could not respond to her professors as quickly as her classmates, which frustrated her very much. She asserted, “I would speak more and ask more questions if I were a native speaker, definitely. I would definitely learn more if I could do that.”

Many participants expressed a desire to participate more, but they were often stripped of such opportunities one way or another. The main reason was lacking language proficiency, but being a non-native speaker all by itself put participants in a disadvantaged position in developing their identity. Si Chen’s experience presented previously showed how she was disadvantaged in non-academic settings. Zexiao’s experience in the following example shows how he was similarly disadvantaged in academic settings where his language identity led to diminishing opportunity for full participation to develop a positive identity as a learner.

This disadvantageous position of being language learners was something that participants had to wrestle with in their identity development, something to overcome on their part in their

identity negotiation even when they had good English language mastery. Once an English teacher, Zexiao reported that American students often dominated classroom discussion and that he and other non-native English speaking students did not get an equal opportunity to participate and talk. He found that he and other non-native English speakers often played audience to American students in spite of his good command of English. He said, “You can say it is just their way or they have talkative personality, but it has turned out to be that five or six American students speak most of the time in class. This is how it happens.”

As it happened, participants could not have equal learning opportunities to affirm their identity as a learner and develop academic competencies. While all participants strived hard to develop a positive identity, some of them did end up accepting, to various degrees, an image of passive learners who kept silent in class, a stereotype that Americans hold for Asian students. This imposed identity came mainly from language identity through a gradual process, but the effect went beyond language identity to affect participants’ development of academic identity and partially, their perception of who they were.

With an underlying sense of deficiency of the imposed identity, participants could not develop their academic identity as fully as their American counterparts. Even though participants disliked this imposed identity, they found that it was very difficult for them to push it away. Full participation in class and other academic or non-academic settings was out of reach for the majority of the participants, which was not limited to their experiences in the beginning months of their study. Even if they were able to gradually improve their English and acquire adequate language proficiency, they still needed to bear the consequences of being a non-native English speaker that often disadvantaged them.

As shown in previous examples, language competence and confidence had profound impacts on participants' experiences of identity development in various domains. Those participants, who were less competent in English, including Han Wu, Yuexiao, Linli, and Jie Li, struggled more in their academic study and social adjustment, and therefore, their experiences were more constrained and limited. On the contrary, five other participants, who had a better command of English, had fewer struggles in their academic pursuit and social interaction. They had more opportunities to explore broadly and extensively on various aspects of their identity.

These participants, including Zexiao, Bo Zhao and Wentian, obtained and kept teaching assistant positions, enabling them to explore teacher's identity in new linguistic, social, and cultural context. They also moved further in other aspects along their path of identity development, with some having explored and developed their gender identity, researcher identity, and professional identity. While other participants were still thinking and planning to get involved with professional community, Zexiao, Wentian and Bo Zhao had conducted research projects and attended conferences. Zexiao and Wentian had also published in academic journals, which gave them a strong sense of accomplishment as emerging scholars. Even though there were other factors involved, having a better command of English gave them an advantageous edge that facilitated their identity development.

Just like they conflated their prior student identity with their personal identity, participants conflated their language identity with their personal identity as well. This conflation worked favorably for five participants who had a good command of English, because they saw their language competence as their overall competence and global ability. As a result, they had more confidence in themselves and thus performed better in reaching their developmental goals. But for two-thirds of the participants, the conflation of language identity and personal identity

worked against them in their experience of identity development. Oftentimes, language incompetence was seen and felt as personal and global incompetence.

As participants mistook their difficulty in the English language with their overall ability and self-worth as a person, they induced stress, anxiety, and sometimes desperation in their personal development and academic pursuit. This shared experience was evident, as exemplified in participant Jie Li's comment that described how her frustration with English affected her globally, "I had never felt so defeated. It brought such a strong sense of failure that I even had suicidal thoughts. I started to lose self-confidence and to increase self-doubt. I felt worthless." Jie's feeling of her global competence and self-worth had resulted from her incompetency in English. It had negative consequences on her overall experiences and her identity development nevertheless.

Academic Adjustment and Academic Identity

Academic identity development appeared to be the most important aspect of identity development for participants, which remained as a focus for them in all stages of their study in the new academic context. This came as no surprise, because after all, they came to the United States to study as graduate students in order to obtain a good education, develop professional competence, and prepare for the job market. In general, participants' experiences in academic identity development fell into two successive but distinctive phases. First, they resolved identity dissonance and restored prior good student identity in the form of academic adjustment and adaptation. Second, they further explored and developed academic identity that was possible in a particular academic environment they found themselves.

Generally speaking, all 15 participants experienced strong dissonance in their identity during their initial adjustment to a new educational system. They encountered various academic

difficulties when they started their first semester. They reported that they had problems preparing for class, understanding lectures, participating in class, and finishing assignments on time, which were mainly associated with lack of English language proficiency. They also reported that they had problems finding academic resources, getting needed support, understanding procedures and policy, and learning academic culture, which were more associated with their lack of both explicit and implicit knowledge of the new academic environment.

As a result, they became disoriented, perplexed, and inhibited. They felt that they were out of place, which challenged their self-perception as capable students who could cruise smoothly through academic terrains. Academic difficulties created uneasiness and discomfort in some participants while caused frustration and desperation in others. It led to a dissonance in their identity that demanded participants' immediate attention. All participants reported that they commonly felt a strong need to restore a status of equilibrium in their identity.

For example, participant Zexiao experienced a lot of tension and stress in the process of his academic adjustment. He reported that his problems mostly came from the fact that he was not familiar with the new educational system. He did not know how to use his advisor as a resource, so he struggled to select courses by himself. Nor did he know that his professors had office hours that he could use, so he left his questions unaddressed, which made him feel very uneasy. Furthermore, he felt very insecure and worried because he did not know how closely he should relate to his "boss", who supervised his assistantship work and who was also his academic advisor.

Even though he had gone to graduate school in China, he found that he could not draw upon his prior experiences and transfer his knowledge to the new system because of the drastic differences between the two educational systems. He said, "I felt that everything was different; I

had to unlearn and re-learn everything, which was very difficult.” Consequently, he felt out of place and had a lot of struggles in the first semester. He continued, “I felt very much disoriented. It was so stressful that I felt like I was rushing and bumping around like a fly without a head.”

The dissonance that participants experienced varies in intensity, but all participants have worked very hard to resolve this dissonance in order to restore a status of equilibrium in their identity. For them, a challenge to good student identity was viewed as a challenge to their identity as a person, because they conflated their student identity with their personal identity. Therefore, they attached more meaning than necessary to their academic survival and success, which worked to their advantage academically, but unwittingly encroached their psychological well-being and inhibited their cultural learning and other aspects of development as well.

In practice, participants put their study as the top priority in the transitional period of time. Their effort and attention gravitated around academic survival, with limited time and energy being invested in social adjustment, cultural learning, and other aspects of adaptation and development. The first few months or so of their academic experiences were difficult, intense, and very stressful for most participants as they tried their best to dissolve the dissonance in their identity and regain confidence and control in their study, attempting to reaffirm and restore their good student identity.

Participants agreed that high proficiency in English, strong academic background, self-confidence and belief in oneself, a welcoming academic environment, and support from friends in the Chinese community were important factors that facilitated their academic adjustment process. It was evident that participants who were from more prestigious Chinese universities including Si Chen, Ming Feng, Bo Zhao, and Zhe Han had less difficulty and bounced back quickly in their academic transition while some other participants who were from less prestigious

universities including Yuexiao, Jie Li, Han Wu, and Hao Zheng struggled longer and experienced more difficulty in restoring their academic identity.

It was also evident that participants who kept close contact with the Chinese community and gain constant support from it as well as participants who happened to fall into a welcoming, supportive, and encouraging academic environment adapted and adjusted better and quicker than other students. Moreover, participants with a strong prior identity had an advantage in making academic adjustment as they did in other areas of adjustment. They resolved dissonance and restored equilibrium in their academic identity without too much distress, frustration or panic.

In general, most participants were able to make a successful academic transition, had a sense of relief and gained control in their study, resolved dissonance in academic identity, and restored their good student identity after they had gone through their initial setbacks and difficulties in academic adjustment. Two-thirds of the participants achieved this goal within a semester while one third of the students achieved it within a year or so. For participants, successful academic transition and re-gaining academic confidence were all important, not only making it possible for them to continue their study, but also affirming their identity as a capable student that had been challenged.

With this affirmed identity, they became self-assured in their ability to make it in the new educational system and ready for new adventures in their further academic endeavor. Unfortunately, not all participants were able to move to the second phase of academic identity development after they succeeded in the first phase. Due to program structure, duration of study, and the rare chance of getting an assistantship, three participants who were master's students stayed in the first phase of academic identity development. PhD students, on the other hand, were able to move onto the second phase to explore and further develop their academic identity.

Depending on the resources and opportunities they had in their academic environment, 12 participants who were PhD students were able to develop one or several sub-dimensions of their academic identity after they completed the first phase of development. One of their efforts was to re-examine and evaluate their genuine academic interests and explore new areas of study that would deepen, consolidate, and expand their academic identity. Participants reported that they did not have the chance to do so when they were in China because their choices were mostly influenced by their parents and teachers. When they were coming to the United States, their decision regarding what to study was made based on disciplinary continuity, the possibility to get an admission and scholarship, and the future job prospect.

Therefore, their genuine academic interests had not been carefully examined and evaluated by themselves. Alternatives had never been explored, which might have weakened the foundation of their academic identity and accounted for decreased passion experienced by several participants in their late stage of study. Five participants reported that they had started to question their disciplinary choices, examine academic interests, explore existent opportunities, and discover new areas of study after they restored their good student identity. For example, participant Zhe Han reported that she gradually realized that her disciplinary choice was made to please her parents but sacrificed her own interest, which accounted for her lost passion in biology in the PhD program. She planned to study for a MBA after she completes her PhD program, because she now knew that she loved working with people instead of doing basic research in the lab.

Participant Linli, who studied civil engineering in China, found that he also had a strong interest in law that originated from his accumulated new experiences in the United States. So he decided to explore an interdisciplinary area that overlapped both civil engineering and law. Si

Chen found that she had an interest in computer sciences and felt at the same time that having skills in software design would provide an extra advantage for her career advancement in the future, so she enrolled in a master's program of computer sciences as a supplement to her PhD program in mechanical engineering.

Participants' academic identity development in the second phase also involved developing teacher identity when they held teaching positions. Eight participants assumed teaching responsibilities at different stages of their study. Their teaching assistantship not only provided them financial support, but facilitated their identity development through changing role from being a graduate student to being a teacher who was expected to make a contribution through teaching courses, instructing groups or giving tutorials to individuals. No less significant, being able to assume a teacher role in the new academic environment also provided these participants a point of pride because they felt that they were validated, valued, and trusted by their department and the university.

Through fulfilling a teaching role and interacting with teaching faculty, other graduate instructors, administrators, and students, participants had the opportunities to learn new responsibilities and develop professional competencies as an instructor. For example, participants, including Bo Zhao, Ming Feng and Wentian, found that they accumulated rich experiences in teaching undergraduate students, learned to handle conflicts of interest, increased confidence and competence in interacting with people from difficult cultural backgrounds. They also gained an elevated sense of empowerment, self-worth, and self-esteem.

Participant Bo Zhao said: "TA (Teaching Assistantship) experience is invaluable. It has not only increased my confidence in interacting with American undergraduate students, but boosted my confidence in general which I can transfer to other areas." Another participant, Jun

Zhou found that her teaching experience in a nearby community college was meaningful and fulfilling, which affirmed and developed an important part of her identity. She said, “Teaching makes me happy. It is very rewarding. It has become an important part of me. Students’ positive feedback always gives me a sense of accomplishment.”

Participants’ academic identity development also involved developing researcher identity through a process of identifying research interest, engaging in research projects, clarifying research agenda, presenting at conferences, and publishing in academic journals. All 12 participants except one who were PhD students held research assistantships, which in most cases facilitated their academic identity development as researchers. It was especially true in natural sciences, technology, and engineering fields where participants were able to work with their professors on research projects in the lab, present research findings jointly at conferences, and co-author and publish papers in academic journals. Often, the research projects they work on became their dissertation or a part of it, combining the assistantship work seamlessly with the research training component of their PhD program.

Through engaging in research activities, participants worked collaboratively with colleagues, acquired new research skills, applied what they study in the classroom, learned about their fields, and understood academic norms through first-hand experiences. Consequently, they gradually obtained a sense of accomplishment and a feeling that they were changing their role from a knowledge consumer to a knowledge producer. For example, participant Bo Zhao reported that it was very beneficial to work with his advisor who brought him to a professional conference to meet people and learn new developments in the field even before he had a research project ready for presentation. At the time of the interview, he was working on a paper and preparing to present at an upcoming conference. He said, “I feel like that I am on the right track

and that I am changing to be someone who is less of a graduate student, but more of a scholar through this process.”

Four participants who were in social sciences and humanities reported that the research work they did as a research assistant was not directly related to their dissertation. Three of them reported that their work were irrelevant to their research interests. But they found that working with their professors and sometimes, a research team was helpful in opening their eyes to new research areas, broadening their perspectives, expanding research interests, learning new research methods and skills, and getting familiar with research procedures, all of which provided extra research training for them to become a researcher.

Lastly, participants’ academic identity development also involved developing a dimension of identity as an emerging professional. It was an ongoing process in the second phase of academic identity development but became more evident among participants at their middle or late stage of study in the PhD programs, who started to think more about the profession they were going to enter and to get prepared accordingly. Because participants had not yet moved to their career stage, they developed this component of their academic identity in anticipation, trying to develop professional competencies and getting prepared in the areas that they believed were the most important for their intended career.

For example, participants Zexiao, Wentian, and Jia Sun envisioned a career in the academia, so they attempted to acquire professional competencies accordingly. In addition to accumulating teaching experiences, they engaged in research projects, networked in professional communities, presented at conferences, and published research papers in academic journals. Participant Linli, whose goal was to become a top-notch engineer, took initiatives to get

involved with a professional organization of local engineers to help him think more like an engineer and learn to solve practical problems in real world.

Through this organization, Linli worked with local engineers with a special interest in learning what kinds of problems they encountered and how they worked together to find solutions, which, he said, had expanded his professional horizon and increased his practical question-framing and problem-solving capacity. Participants reported that a clear career goal, the ability to self-direct, supportive and resourceful environments, the opportunity to try on new roles associated with the intended profession, guidance and support from academic advisors, and the accessibility of professional communities were facilitating factors in their development of an emerging professional identity.

Cultural Adaptation and Cultural Identity

As participants came to study in the United States, they entered a cultural system that was very different from the one at home. They changed from cultural majority to cultural minority, which made their cultural self a salient dimension of their identity. Participants faced the immediate tasks of cultural learning, cultural adaptation, and cultural integration. In the process of fulfilling these tasks, they negotiated and developed their cultural identity in the new cultural context. However, participants' experiences were difficult because of many factors that were involved in the process of developing their cultural identity in a new context.

As a result, two thirds of the participants were not able to develop a positive cultural identity but had moved in the direction of developing an isolated and marginalized cultural identity with a strong feeling that they did not belong to the new cultural environment. The feeling of cultural alienation was succinctly expressed by one participant, Yuwen: "This is definitely not home, culturally speaking! No matter how long you stay."

Participants' experiences indicated that learning a new culture as a language and cultural minority, the drastic differences in cultural beliefs, values and practices, pervasive cultural prejudice, racial discrimination, and anti-China sentiment were often obstacles in their cultural identity development, frustrating and discouraging them from sustaining effort and prolonging immersion in cultural engagement and cultural learning. Consequently, instead of staying open and continuing to learn the new culture, many participants choose to withdraw and cling tightly to their own culture as a protective mechanism.

Two-thirds of the participants reported that language barrier was one of hindering factors that were commonly experienced among participants in their cultural learning and developing their cultural identity. With exception of around five students whose English was strong, the difficulty of English language prevented the majority of the participants from participating fully in their cultural environment, learning cultural knowledge, and increasing cultural competence, which often led to diminished learning opportunities for them. As discussed earlier, participants like Jie withdrew from interacting with Americans while other participants like Hao Zheng confined themselves to the Chinese community. Both formats of disengagement in effect sealed them off culturally, preventing them from immersing themselves in the new culture and therefore, from understanding and absorbing new cultural norms, values, and beliefs to develop their cultural identity.

In addition to language difficulty, more than two-thirds of the participants also found that their lack of cultural background knowledge and reference limited the effectiveness of cultural learning and obtaining in-depth cultural understanding when they ventured out to interact with American peers. This was true even among the five participants who had a good command of English as indicated by participant Bo Zhao's comments that will be soon presented as an

example. Participants reported that they had a hard time understanding group conversations, especially conversations among Americans. They reported that it was extremely difficult for them to understand jokes that their American peers made. Participant Bo Zhao said, “Conversation with American peers is customary and often stops at a superficial level. It is hard for Chinese students to engage in in-depth and meaningful conversation with Americans. You often do not understand unspoken words, and especially the points behind the jokes they make—why it is funny and why they laugh.” More than a half of the participants considered understanding jokes as the hallmark of cultural adaptation but they were frustrated by their own inability to reach it.

Participants experienced yet another layer of difficulty in developing cultural identity, which was the drastic differences between host and home cultures. More than ten participants reported that they sometimes encountered conflicts in cultural values that left them puzzled, stressed, and turned off in interactions with Americans, because the individualistic nature of the host culture was very different from their own culture that had a collectivistic orientation. For example, participant Han Wu said that she was confused and frustrated when her study group members failed to show up in a scheduled meeting because they had other personal commitments to attend that arose suddenly. She sighed, “I thought Americans valued teamwork; but in reality, it is not the case. They put themselves first, which is frustrating.”

Some other participants found that their cultural values were not validated and affirmed in their daily experiences, feeling they were put down or rejected. For example, Linli remembered that at one time he gave his seat to an old man who walked into a waiting room in a car repair shop. He was shocked by the response he received from the old man who challenged him instead of being appreciative: “Am I that old?” the old man refuted. Linli thought he had

acted with a good intention and tried to be respectful to the old person, which reflected a cultural value in his own culture. But neither his behavior nor his cultural self were validated and affirmed in the encounter. He felt rejected and hurt.

Furthermore, participants also experienced cultural prejudice, racial discrimination, and anti-Chinese sentiment that put a strain on their cultural identity development. In general, the effects on participants were negative and damaging, making them feel that they were unwelcomed and that their cultural, racial, and ethnic self were rejected in the host cultural environment. Eight participants reported that they had encountered negative experiences inside or outside the classroom, on-campus or off-campus, and in academic or non-academic settings. While a couple of participants downplayed the significance of discrimination and saw it as understandable and tolerable, other participants were troubled by their experiences and felt very indignant about the pervasive nature of prejudice and discrimination that was hard for them to dismiss.

For example, Jie's anger remained strong when she recounted her experience in class where her professor attributed the current financial quagmire in the United States to China and then camouflaged it as a joke. Apparently, the incident affected her very deeply. She said, "He (the professor) said it was a joke at the end, but none of us believed it was a joke. He did it intentionally. Very annoying." Another participant, Zexiao felt very disappointed and upset when he and his friends were yelled at in the street in the downtown area, "Chinese go back to China." On reflection, he considered racial discrimination as a social ill entrenched deeply in American society and disliked the fact that it was so pervasive that they were insulted in public just because they were Chinese. It was clear that the negative impact of the incident on him was quite significant.

Despite the difficulties, all participants felt that cultural learning and adaptation were both necessary and important to developing their cultural identity and facilitating their overall development and growth in the new cultural environment. They expressed a strong desire to increase their cultural understanding, acquire cultural competence, and become more integrated culturally. For two-thirds of the participants, however, efforts often fell short and gradually diminished as they proceeded in their study. Consistent and systematic cultural learning and adaptation over a prolonged period of time, though vital to developing a positive cultural identity in the new environment, were not common among participants.

Many of these participants agreed that the difficulties and frustration in cultural learning and cultural encounters, a busy schedule with coursework, research and sometimes, teaching, and the demands and challenges in other areas of life as graduate students in a foreign country put a strain on their efforts in sustained cultural learning and prolonged cultural exposure. Consequently, the majority of the participants gradually reduced their efforts to a minimum and some even gave up their efforts all together. As participant Si Chen put it, “Many Chinese students are very ambitious in cultural learning and adaptation when they first come, but they end up with staying within the Chinese community instead, interacting mostly with other Chinese students.”

Si’s observation was accurate for two-thirds of the participants. Indeed, they were ambitious in the beginning and took proactive approaches to increasing cultural contacts and exposure after their initial entry into the new cultural environment. They used many strategies that were feasible and practical, including learning the new culture through American families, going to church (often used as a means to improving English and increasing cultural exposure,

not so much as an means to exploring religious beliefs, according to some participants), and attending cultural activities organized by the university and local community.

But for one reason or another, most participants failed to sustain their efforts in maintaining constant cultural exposure and learning over a long period of time, though these efforts were indispensable to understanding, absorbing, and integrating new cultural norms, values, and beliefs that would facilitate the formation of a positive cultural identity. Among all participants, there were a handful of exceptions, including Si Chen who joined a hockey team with American undergraduate students, Bo Zhao who moved to live with local residents, and Wentian who chose roommates with different cultural and racial backgrounds. These participants have used successful strategies and created opportunities to keep themselves in frequent cultural contact, prolonged immersion, and sustained cultural learning to expand their cultural horizon. Therefore, they had more chances to develop a more inclusive and accommodating cultural identity that had higher cultural compatibility in the host environment.

As successful as some participants might have been, two-thirds of the participants nevertheless felt that they did not obtain an in-depth understanding of American culture, or at least, not learned its core cultural values, norms, and beliefs that would help them navigate smoothly in the host cultural terrain. They did not believe that they had developed a trans-cultural identity that would accommodate new cultural values and beliefs while retain their cultural cores. Several of these participants did not feel that they culturally belong. Instead, they had a sense of cultural isolation, alienation, and marginalization. They felt they had not integrated in the host cultural environment.

This feeling of not belonging not only decreased participants' psychological well-being but also negatively affected their plan to stay in the United States in the future. Participants

including Linli, Yuexiao, Han Wu, and Jie Li decided to go back to China after they complete their study, believing that their lack of cultural capital and their deficiency in cultural identity would hinder career advancement, prevent them from fitting into American society, and more importantly, keep them in constant cultural conflict that crushes their cultural self. Participant Jie saw a gloomy picture in the future, commenting “Even if I buy a house here, I will still feel it is only a place to live and sleep, not a home. I will not feel at home in this house, in the community, in this country.” Jie believed she would never make it in developing and realizing her cultural self even if she became successful in other aspects of her life in the United States.

Commensurate with the disappointment and frustration in cultural learning and adaptation, Chineseness, which was indicated by a heightened sense of being a Chinese person, occupied an important position in participants’ shared experiences of cultural identity development. Participants demonstrated a heightened awareness, sensitivity, and alertness of their Chineseness in the process of cultural learning and cultural adaptation. This phenomenon seemed natural in the initial stage of their experiences, given that they came to the United States for the first time. Their ethnic and cultural identity became salient as a result of stepping out of their familiar home cultural environment and moving into a new cultural context.

What was surprising was that more than a half of the participants’ strong sense of Chineseness did not subside over time, even after several years of living in the United States. For example, they reported that they tried to maintain a good Chinese group image and condemned other Chinese students who they felt did not live up to this image. They always kept a strong sense of cultural pride and defended their country and culture at times; they felt very indignant when hearing or seeing other Chinese fellows were discriminated against.

It seemed that a heightened sense of Chineseness and overemphasis on cultural pride was not a positive outcome of cultural identity development, but a move away from it—toward developing a narrow-minded ethnocentric cultural identity which resulted from frustrated cultural adaptation and failed cultural integration. It functioned in actuality as a protective mechanism that provided a buffer or a safe psychological space for participants in the challenging cultural context, but at the same time, prohibited their cultural learning and led to more cultural isolation, alienation, and self-marginalization. Only around one-third of the participants were able to examine, question, and reflect on their Chineseness in conscious and somehow systematic ways, learn to incorporate various cultural values, beliefs, norms, and practices in their cultural adaptation and move in the direction of transcending a narrow cultural or national identity to develop a more trans-cultural and trans-national identity.

Social Adjustment and Social-emotional Identity

In addition to linguistic, academic, and cultural contexts discussed in previous sections, participants also faced the new environment as an important social context that impacted their social-emotional aspect of identity. Despite individual differences, participants' experiences in developing this aspect of their identity shared considerable commonalities. In general, all participants experienced a strong sense of discontinuity in their social-emotional identity when they moved from a familiar social context to a new one within which they rarely had any personal and social connection. They used their old networks in China and social resources accessible to them in the new environment to maintain, affirm, and restore a sense of continuity of their social-emotional identity.

Later on, participants commonly came up to a social plateau that stagnated their expanding social connection when they attempted to meet expansive needs in developing their

social-emotional identity after their initial social adjustment. Social constraints and difficulties were experienced among more than a half of the participants in this phase of development, who experienced frustration, social isolation, and marginalization that were gradually intensified and increasingly felt. At the same time, a similar amount of participants reported positive developmental outcomes of increased emotional strength and independence in their social-emotional identity as a result of confronting the challenges. Two subgroups of participants, namely female students who dated non-Chinese boyfriends and the students who were married, had some experiences in social-emotional identity development that had distinctive characteristics, which will be presented after the presentation of whole-group experiences.

When participants first came to the United States, they experienced a lot of emotional anxiety and difficulty, accompanied by a strong need for social and emotional support. They reported that they had left behind almost all of their social networks that were very significant to them. Because they had grown up in a society that emphasized groups and “GuanXi” (personal contacts and social connection), their social-emotional aspect of identity was strongly determined by external factors such as family, schoolmates, peer groups, and other social networks to which they belonged.

When they moved into a new social environment, they left behind their social networks and experienced the change as painful disruption of their social-emotional identity. Quite commonly, participants relied on their parents in China and relatives and family friends in the United States not only to meet their social emotional needs but also maintain a sense of continuity of identity. For example, participant Ming Feng used her parents as an important resource. She said, “I called my parents very often in the beginning. I knew they could not provide any tangible help, but the emotional connection and support was very important.”

She found that her cousin who was studying in the west coast also helped her a lot in maintaining the continuity of her social-emotional self in addition to giving her useful advice for academic, cultural, and social adjustment, saying “I felt lucky to have someone to relate to in this country, so I did not feel that I was completely lost in the new environment.” Another participant Hao Zheng found his two uncles and their families in the United States very helpful in helping him sustain his social-emotional identity as well as providing a lot of intangible help. He said, “I talked to them a lot on the phone, not only to seek advice, but to dispel a sense of loneliness. It would have been more difficult if I had felt all alone by myself without any connection in the States.”

Even though parents, relatives, and family friends were of great value in maintaining identity continuity, they cannot substitute for new social networks that participants wanted to build in the new environment. All participants reported a strong need to make new friends, form personal connections, and build new social networks in the host environment. Accordingly, they exerted a lot of effort in meeting this need through actively engaging in social interactions in various spheres of their life. However, two-thirds of the participants acknowledge that their circle of friends was limited in scope. They admitted that they only managed to make friends with other Chinese students whom they came to know through various avenues: coming to the university on the same airplane, knowing through picking up at the airport, meeting in the orientation, attending the same program, through Chinese student association and its activities, or being introduced by other Chinese friends.

Even though limited in scope, this circle of friends proved to be important, not only providing social support, but also affirming their social-emotional identity. Participants report that they gained a sense of affirmation, acceptance, connection, and belonging from this circle of

friends because they were welcomed as a full member of the social group. Participant Zhe Han said, “It is great to have a group of Chinese friends who share the same background. You can relate to them and feel accepted without needing to change yourself. You feel at ease in being yourself.”

As they proceed in their studies, participants tried to expand their circle of friends. They attempted to connect with locals and other social groups in order to become members of multiple groups, try on new social roles, expand their horizons, and develop their social-emotional identities. However, more than two-thirds of them experienced difficulties and frustration in their efforts in making friends with Americans and internationals from other nations. Participant Yuexiao said, “I went to social gatherings in my boss’s house a few times but never felt I belonged there. I could not talk to people and made no friends at all.” Like Yuexiao, participants including Linli, Jie Li, Ming Feng and Han Wu had similar experiences. They exerted considerable effort socializing with their classmates, lab mates, research associates, and people on and off-campus, but they were often not well received. They reported that it was extremely difficult to relate to people on a deep emotional level. They believed that language difficulty and cultural barriers often stood in their way, as well as their lacking of social skills and experiences.

In addition, the demands to develop other aspects of their identity also competed for their time and energy, weakening their devotion and commitment to social-emotional development. Many participants felt that they have reached a social plateau that is hard to break through. As a result, participants could not have access to a full range of developmental resources existing in the university community when they were writing their new pages of social-emotional biographies. Several participants reported that lingering feelings of being an outsider of social life always stayed with them in relation to many social groups on campus and the larger local

community. They felt they were socially excluded and marginalized. Their efforts in achieving social engagement, participation, and integration had often been dwarfed.

Participants reported that they often had strong feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and fear deep within, but they had to push themselves and became courageous in dealing with the difficulties and problems arising in the process of their social-emotional adaptation. Participant Bo Zhao said: “There is no way out if you play turtle, hiding your head in the shell when you have problems and difficulties. You have to push through.” This playing-no-turtle metaphor reflects a shared revelation among participants. In practice, many participants often used various methods to encourage themselves in order to confront difficult social situations. For example, participant Linli often used a quotation from Nietzsche, “If it does not kill you, it makes you stronger”, which he found useful and effective for him.

As participants persisted in the face of hardship and adversities, more than a half of the participants reported significant gains in developing their social-emotional identity. They believed that they became more independent, self-reliant, and resilient. And they were more patient with themselves and other people. These participants especially emphasized the emotional independence they had developed, viewing it as a great accomplishment, a huge step toward maturity that they had not accomplished in China.

In addition, participants Yuwen, Zhe Han, Jia Sun, and Fen Qian reported that they had developed internal standards for themselves, feeling that external standards and social pressure became less influential over or important to them. They learned to pay more attention to their own feelings, following their heart, and understanding their deep values. As a result, they gradually changed from outwardly-oriented to be more inwardly-oriented in their social-emotional identity, which is significant for them who grew up in a group-oriented culture where

one's social-emotional identity were largely outwardly determined and who had the tendency to be affected by external standards and social influences.

It is noteworthy that two subgroups of participants have some distinctive experiences in their social-emotional identity development. One such subgroup consists of female participants who engaged in cross-cultural dating that provided them an avenue to new emotional, social, and cultural terrains. Cross-cultural dating seems to have helped in penetrating many layers of barriers when they tried to expand their social interactions and build new social networks. For example, participant Zhe Han had a boyfriend from India. Her circle of social contacts expanded to include a group of Indian friends. Participant Ming Feng's friends were all Chinese before she dated her American boyfriend, but she then became connected with Americans through her boyfriend and his family.

In addition, all four participants who engaged in cross-cultural dating reported that they learned to be open-minded, accepting, and more tolerant in general in the process, because they had to negotiate and reconcile personal, social, and cultural differences between their boyfriend and themselves. They found that it was important to develop emotional independence in their intimate relationships, but it was difficult to accomplish. At times, they must compromise in order to accommodate different values, beliefs, and expectations held by their boyfriends and their families in regard to how to play their social, familial, and gender roles. For example, participant Wentian reported that she had taken a supportive role in her relationship and would treat her career as secondary to that of her boyfriend, a drastic change that would not have happened otherwise.

Another subgroup of participants with distinct experiences consists of students who are married. They experienced different social and emotional dynamics in developing their social-

emotional identity. After all, living with the family is very different from living alone as an international student. Participants acknowledged that the family unit functioned as a source of emotional support that contributed to their strength, persistence, and success. For example, participant Linli said, “I was very isolated and alone in the beginning. I felt very different after my wife came. I lack social skills but I have more friends because my wife is outgoing and sociable.”

Participants also reported that living with the family could cause conflict and emotional turmoil at times and that it was very hard to balance their developmental needs and familial demands. Sometimes they must compromise and make sacrifices to accommodate the needs of their family. For example, participant Fen Qian had been occupied with the tasks of taking care of her new-born on her own, feeling physically exhausted and emotionally distraught. She commented, “It is impossible for me to have any social life. Friends? Don’t bother me. I have no time, no energy. ” As a result, she had to limit her social life considerably and postpone a large part of her academic work in order to fulfill her role as a mother.

Another participant, Zexiao spoke of how difficult it was during a period of time when he was painfully struggling with family affairs and emotional issues with his wife. It is evident that spouse and children have challenges and need support in their own cultural and social adaptation, which often demands participant s’ attention and energy and puts a strain on their social-emotional development. Participant Fen Qian and Zexiao’s examples show that married participants had to balance their needs and those of their family members. They had to negotiate with their family in setting up priorities and working together to accomplish important tasks in social emotional adjustment and adaptation of their family and of their own.

Managing Logistics and Logistical Identity

Managing logistics was a shared concern among participants when they came to the United States because of the immediacy of need upon arrival. To varied degrees, all participants reported that they had logistical difficulties and challenges in areas of shopping, ordering at a restaurant, learning to drive, getting a driving license, buying a car, banking, seeing doctors, making phone calls, obtaining required documents from government agencies, taking care of children, and many other things they had to do to meet their logistical needs in the new environment. Two-thirds of the participants felt that they were challenged as they had to take care of themselves in ways they had not done before. Many of them had gone through a lot of psychological pressure and emotional distress in facing the difficulty of learning life skills such as cooking for themselves and other new ways of living.

As participants gradually learned to manage and increased their logistical competence, they explored and developed one aspect of identity that I term as logistical identity. It was felt as a “missing part” of participants that was developed. The development of logistical identity gave them a sense of self-assurance and confidence, because they became competent in taking care of themselves and living independently in a new country. In general, participants took pride in their accomplishment and had a heightened sense of self-worth and competence. They put a lot of value on the development of logistical identity because it was a missing part of identity that had not been developed before.

In later stages of their studies, one-third of the participants tried out and adopted new strategies in managing logistics, which indicated a new phase of logistical identity development. It reflected their effort to meet new developmental demands through making new arrangements in logistics. It also indicated their increased ability to see the relevance of logistical issues in

relationship to other areas of their development and the capacity to make changes proactively in order to meet developmental priority. New logistical strategies helped them prioritize their lives so they could have more time and energy to focus on the development of the most salient part of their identity, such as a teacher's identity or a researcher's identity.

For more than two-thirds of the participants, successfully managing logistics was not a given. It presented extra challenges for them in addition to those in academic, social, and cultural adjustment and adaptation. Similar to other aspects of their new life, these participants were challenged in managing logistics and experienced a dissonance in their identity as they were trying to take care of themselves. Participants reported that they felt a sense of lacking in themselves and were frustrated and had self-doubt as a result of having encountered so many troubles in logistical management because they did not have practical skills and competencies that were needed. They also reported that their sense of inability in logistical area was compounded by the difficulties in language, cultural understanding, and social adjustment.

“Simple things became so difficult, complicated, and frustrating” participant Fen Qian pointed out, “you felt very bad about the things you needed to do but couldn't do well and felt bad about yourself at the same time”. For her, going shopping and carrying many bags on a bus felt out of place; explaining a broken stove to her landlord over the phone was not an easy task to accomplish. Similarly, participant Zhe Han found calling UPS (United Parcel Service) on the phone was hard to do. Eating in a Subway restaurant as a makeshift meal did not save her energy at all, because she could not order sandwich ingredients without exerting great effort and gathering enough courage to face the embarrassment.

A half of the participants attributed their nerve-racking encounters to their lacking of experiences in managing logistics while the other half also acknowledged the impact of living in

a new cultural, social, and logistical context. Participants thought it was because they had not taken such responsibilities in their upbringing and nor had they dealt with so many logistical issues when they were in college in China. It was clear that another layer of difficulty from using English language and bridging the drastic social and cultural gap was also present in their experiences. The impact of their ability to manage logistics on participants was significant. Because they were not able to separate logistical difficulty from their overall adjustment difficulty, their difficulty and inability in managing logistics were unwittingly seen as difficulty and inability in general, which, combined with adjustment challenges in academic, cultural and social-emotional areas, threatened their identity as a capable person.

It was important for participants to increase their competence and confidence in managing logistics, because they had to be self-reliant in taking care of themselves. It was even more important for them to resolve identity dissonance and develop a corresponding part of their identity in the process. The urgency to do so, however, was not felt as great as it was to resolve the dissonance in academic identity, which was perceived as more threatening to their good student identity. In general, participants dealt with the most imminent logistical issues such as banking, housing, and grocery shopping at first, but postpone other tasks such as learning to drive or changing apartment until they successfully restore their academic identity. It was strategic to do so for participants, because they could then focus on academic adjustment and avoid being overwhelmed by taking on too many tasks at one time. As participants recovered their academic identity, they started to take on more tasks in logistics including learning to drive, buying a car, changing roommates, and moving to an apartment in a new neighborhood, the tasks that they had postponed.

More than two-thirds of the participants reported that one strategy they commonly used in managing logistics was to rely on the Chinese community at the initial stage and then gradually became self-reliant and did more on their own. They found it was convenient to ask and receive help from other Chinese students in making the initial transition. It was also linguistically, culturally and socially familiar and comfortable for them. They could, as participant Zhe Han put it, “talk in Chinese, eat Chinese food, see Chinese faces, and get help from friends who understand your needs” and, as Ming Feng and Han Wu put it, “feel more like at home within the community”. However, it was precisely this convenience and comfort that the Chinese Community provided that made it hard for them to become independent later on, according to more than a half of the participants’ accounts. It became evident that in order to gain new experiences and further develop logistical identity, participants had to become conscious of what they were doing and take initiatives to explore opportunities outside the community.

For most participants, their identity dissonance that resulted from logistical issues gradually resolved after they made initial transition and adjustment in the first semester or so. Participants still experienced identity dissonance later on when they took on more challenging tasks that had been put off. But it became less threatening because they now had more confidence in their ability to manage logistics. As participants proceeded in their study, further identity development and growth related to managing logistics varied due to the differences in individual circumstances, including variances in awareness, willingness to take proactive actions, and financial resources that were available to them.

More than a half of the participants became content with getting things done in a habitual manner if no crisis was in sight. But half a dozen participants actively sought to make changes in

managing logistics as they saw new demands of identity development arise. For example, participant Yuwen negotiated familial responsibilities with her husband so that she could have more time and energy to develop her academic identity. Participant Jia Sun hired someone to cook for her family, so she could focus more on her teaching and developing her professional identity. Participant Fen Qian waited for several months after her newborn daughter became a little more established and then sent the baby to her parents in China. She then could re-focus on developing her researcher's identity.

In general, these participants who proactively sought change in managing logistics had a higher level of awareness of their needs of identity development and responded accordingly. Changing how to manage logistics reflected one of their responses to meet their developmental needs, which often facilitated the development of salient parts of their identity.

In most cases, meeting academic demands and developing professional identity took precedence for all participants. But they found no less significance in learning to manage logistics and developing their logistical identity. After all, it was a “missing part” of themselves that they had not developed before and practical skills and competencies they developed were indispensable in surviving in the new environment. More importantly, participants were not able to differentiate this “missing part” from their personal identity. Therefore, it was not surprising for participants to attach high significance to their increased competence in dealing with logistical issues and took it as their overall growth and development that went beyond the acquisition of practical skills.

Participants felt that they had become a different person after they learned to handle their life outside of the academic sphere, and that they had become more confident, independent, and adaptable as a result. For example, participant, Bo Zhao remarked enthusiastically about the

change that he felt after he learned to manage logistics and the different self-perception that he held for himself. He said,

It is a big change in my ability in managing logistical issues, a huge improvement! It was simple in China. I ate in the cafeteria and did not need to cook. If anything went wrong in school, there was always someone I could turn to. But here I have to do it all by myself. I have done almost anything. I have improved self-management ability tremendously, and the ability to live independently, really. It is actually more than the ability to manage logistics. It is about survival capability. When you have done everything yourself in a foreign country, you have the confidence and courage to face anything in a new environment. You have done it, so you are sure that you won't have big problems, and that you can make it and live well. This is the most remarkable thing that happened to me. I guess it is the same for many Chinese graduate students.

Bo Zhao's comment is not an overstatement. Other participants resonated with him. They reported, in aggregate, that they increased their self-confidence, self-assurance, emotional independence, ability to make decisions, and willingness to take on challenges through struggling through and triumphing over many logistical problems that they had encountered. Reflecting on her experience, participant Ming Feng commented that managing logistics had given her the opportunities to make decisions and learn to live with ensuing consequences. She became a more responsible and independent person.

Another participant, Fen Qian felt she increased her self-confidence and determination to finish her PhD after she managed to take care of her newborn baby for several months on her own, commenting, "comparing to looking after the baby, PhD is a piece of cake." It was evident

that learning to manage logistics in a foreign country was more than a necessity or learning practical skills for participants. In fact, it became an important part of educational experiences that contributed to their personal growth and identity development.

Identity Differentiation and Integration

In the process of adapting to the new educational, social, and cultural environment in the United States, participants had ample opportunities to develop multiple dimensions of identity through their cumulative experiences in various spheres of life. With some variance among participants, a general contour of their identity development appeared to be as follows: their multiple dimensions of identity gradually differentiated from personal identity; at the same time, differentiating identity dimensions gradually integrated into their personal identity. Through a two-directional movement, their identity differentiated and integrated simultaneously. Consequently, participants' identity increased in levels of complexity, consistency, and integrity over time.

In general, this two-way movement resulted in a strengthened identity that entailed increased adaptability and a greater capability in participants. However, a strengthened identity sometimes came at a high price in the form of conformity in meeting the demands of their social and cultural environment, leading to an alienated and rigid identity instead of an identity that signified a developed and unified self that was full of potential, creativity, strength, and vitality. Only in rare cases, participants could pierce through their personal identity and go through a process of self-transformation to develop an identity that was in touch with their essential self in the process of ongoing identity development.

As discussed in the previous sections, participants' prior identity manifested as student identity that was conflated with personal identity when they came to the United States. Their

prior identity began to differentiate and develop along various dimensions soon afterwards. Because participants mistook their student identity as their personal identity, they devoted most of their time and energy to resolving their identity dissonance in student identity in the beginning of their study. Subsequently they recovered and developed this dimension of their identity. Over time, their student identity further differentiated into sub-dimensions of academic identity, including teacher's identity, researcher's identity, and anticipatory professional identity. The degree and the range of differentiation depended on individual circumstances and the opportunities and resources for development that existed in the environment.

Even though student identity was the most urgent to deal with for participants, other dimensions of their identity became salient and demanded attention with varied urgency and intensity. Language and cultural identity dimensions became apparent immediately because participants became the "other" in their new linguistic and cultural context, which caused them much distress and difficulty in social and cultural encounters. Logistical and social-emotional aspects of identity became salient too as they were challenged to take care of themselves both physically and emotionally in the new environment. But these two aspects had often been postponed until imminent needs were met because other dimensions of identity including academic identity, language identity, and cultural identity demanded immediate attention. Therefore, these dimensions of identity became more differentiated and developed later after participants took a strong foothold in the new environment. As participants proceeded in the program and accumulated experiences in various spheres of their academic, social, and cultural encounters, more identity dimensions appeared on the scene and became possible to be differentiated from personal identity.

The general trend among participants was quite recognizable that they gradually developed and differentiated their various dimensions of identity. Commonly, the dimensions of identity that were gradually differentiated include language identity, academic identity, cultural identity, social-emotional identity, and logistical identity. Gender identity, socioeconomic status, and faith and spiritual identity dimensions also emerged among certain numbers of the participants, ranging from one-third to one half of the sample, but did not spread across board; neither did these dimensions differentiate as much as other dimensions did. For each participant, the level of differentiation and development along each dimension of identity was different, varying from gaining some awareness to having conscious exploration and commitment.

In general, as participants proceeded in their studies in the host environment, they increased the level of development and differentiation in their identities, even though time was but one important contributing factor. Master's students such as Han Wu and Hao Zheng and some PhD students in the early stage of their study such as Yuexiao did not stay as long in the United States. They occupied the lower section of the spectrum of identity differentiation. On the other hand, PhD students in the advanced stage of study including Wentian, Yuwen, and Zexiao, who had more time and opportunities to develop their identity, moved up on the spectrum of identity differentiation. In addition, those participants who moved to the advanced stage of their PhD programs also had more dimensions of identity developed and differentiated to a higher level. So, their overall identity developments had moved further along the direction of differentiation and possessed a higher level of complexity.

As participants engaged in the process of identity differentiation, they simultaneously engaged in the process of identity integration. They gradually formed a strengthened entity of identity through constant interactions between differentiating identity dimensions and personal

identity. Participants felt that they deepened their understanding of themselves and confirmed who they were as they were developing various dimensions of their identity. As a result, both the complexity and consistency of their identity increased over time. The level of complexity increased as more dimensions of identity differentiated and integrated into personal identity.

For participants, academic identity was the focus in the beginning of their studies and continued to demand their energy in the later years of their program. But language identity, cultural identity, logistical identity, social-emotional identity, and other dimensions of identity also became differentiated and developed at different times and rates, contributing to increased complexity of their identity through integrating into their personal identity. As each of these dimensions differentiated and integrated, it added new content to the identity and made it more complex. Moreover, the level of complexity of identity also increased as integrated identity dimensions possessed a higher degree of differentiation, because the higher the degree of differentiation of an identity dimension, the more content it would have to add to the whole of identity entity. Therefore, participants who had more identity dimensions involved in the process of differentiation and integration and who had more identity dimensions differentiated to a higher level, had a higher degree of complexity of their identity. Wentian, Zexiao, Jia Sun, Yuwen, Bo Zhao, and Linli were among these participants who had a higher degree of complexity of their identity.

In addition to complexity, participants also increased the consistency of their identity in the ongoing two-directional movement of identity differentiation and integration. When participants first came to study in the United States, they faced many demands to adapt and adjust quickly in various areas. Accordingly, their many dimensions of identity had the possibility to come to the fore. However, participants were not able to tend to and develop all of

these dimensions of their identity simultaneously because they would have been overwhelmed had they done so. In order to save psychological and physical energy for the most urgent needs in restoring their student identity, participants often compromised and complied with the external demands of the social and cultural environment in negotiating other identity dimensions. As a result, they took on identity dimensions that were in line with external requirements but might lack internal consistency among these dimensions and between those dimensions and their personal identity.

However, as participants succeeded in restoring their student identity, they started to invest more time and energy in developing various dimensions of identity—be it cultural identity, professional identity, social-emotional identity or gender identity. As these dimensions of identity became further differentiated and developed, they became more in line with the values and beliefs that bestowed participants' personal identity, because participants now had more time and energy to engage in critical examination and incorporate their values and beliefs in the process. Therefore, participants achieved more consistency between their personal identity and various dimensions of identity in the ongoing process of differentiation and integration. Accordingly, they achieved increased consistency among various identity dimensions, because, with each identity dimension becoming more aligned with personal identity, various dimensions became more aligned with each other as well.

Another aspect that manifested in the process of identity differentiation and integration was increased integrity, a hallmark for participants' development and growth. With increased integrity, participants developed an identity that was increasingly in line with their essential self, which was indicated by their strengthened connection with the core being. However, a profound transformation involving personal identity rarely happened among participants. It was a slow

process for most participants to increase their identity integrity, making gradual and incremental progress over a long period of time. Only in very rare cases have participants experienced more dramatic change in a short time frame, which often followed a critical incident or personal crisis as in the cases of participants Zhe Han and Linli. Incremental change started to accumulate when participants increased awareness of their deep values and beliefs in the process of developing a certain dimension of their identity and then intentionally advocated and strengthened such values and core beliefs afterwards.

For example, participant Jun Zhou discovered her true love of teaching and helping others in developing her teacher's identity. She sought more teaching opportunities, worked in a refuge center and served as a writing tutor for non-native English speakers to strengthen her values and beliefs through cumulative experiences in her identity development. Similarly, Yuwen identified her love and spiritual longing for truth, compassion, and kindness. She subsequently strengthened and implemented these values in developing her gender identity, cultural identity, and other identity dimensions through more conscious effort and consistent practice. Even though external forces often demanded conformity and compliance, participants did not lose themselves completely in meeting these demands. Instead, they adapted to the new environment and developed an identity that reflected more of their true self as they moved further along the path.

Participants' experiences confirmed that they increased the complexity, consistency, and integrity of their identity over time. As a result, they gradually strengthened their identity that entailed a heightened adaptability through the ongoing process of identity differentiation and integration. However, not all participants were able to make progress in the same way or at the same rate. For instance, it appeared that one-third of the participants in the late stage of their

study accomplished more balanced and proportional growth in identity complexity, consistency, and integrity than others had. Even though participants increased their adaptability over time in general, a handful of the participants showed the signs of mal-adaptation and alienation.

It became evident that, to avoid developing an alienated identity, participants had to recognize the importance of balancing all three aspects of complexity, consistency and integrity in their process of identity development. More importantly, they had to become consciously aware of the external forces that demanded compliance and conformity in order to keep in touch with their inner self in the whole process of identity development. Participants including Zexiao, Yuwen, Wentian, and Zhe Han embarked on a journey of spiritual development. Their experiences indicated the importance of spirituality and its potential in consolidating one's experiences and achieving balance among the three aspects of complexity, consistency, and integrity in identity development. In particular, participant Zhe Han's story of self-healing, self-discovery, and self-exploration also demonstrated how rewarding and fulfilling it could be to achieve integrity through a systematic process of examining one's personal identity and consciously incorporating one's true values and fundamental beliefs in all dimensions of identity development.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The research question for this dissertation is “What are the experiences that Chinese graduate students have regarding their identity development when they study in the United States?” To answer this question, I interviewed 15 Chinese graduate students through a phenomenological investigation. Based on the data, I have presented in the previous chapter five major themes and a composite profile and description that capture the essence of their lived experiences of identity development, including their prior identity and its impact, their various identity dimensions and corresponding developmental contexts, and a general contour of developmental processes and outcomes. In this chapter, I discuss research findings and make recommendations for educational practice as well as for future research.

Discussion

Chinese graduate students came to the United States with a strong student identity that conflated with personal identity. They continued to develop their identity in the new environment. They encountered five significant contexts that wove together to form an overall developmental environment, which, along with their prior identity, determined the range, variety, and quality of interactions that they had. As a result, they developed multiple dimensions of identity through a bidirectional movement of identity differentiation and integration. In the process, they maintained a dynamic interactional relationship among multiple identities that they had developed. They focused on academic identity but simultaneously met the demands of developing multiple identity dimensions that became salient. The capacity to prioritize and keep balanced proved to be crucial in the process.

Even though their identity development was cumulative, it exhibited the characteristics of a nonlinear process where drastic changes could happen when triggered by critical events as in the case of participants Linli and Zhe Han. Individual students had varied developmental trajectories and outcomes but fell into a general trend as a group. Their identity development often involved changing values and beliefs. However, deeply-rooted values and beliefs, especially those regarding personal identity, were the most difficult to change. Therefore, systematic exploration and development of personal identity was seldom achieved among participants.

In the following sections, I discuss various aspects of the research findings in more details. They include nine aspects, which are continuity and complexity of identity development, dynamic interactional relationship in identity, impact of prior identity, contextual effect on identity development, importance of setting priorities in identity development, individual variations in identity development, seeming contradiction in academic identity development, changing values and beliefs in identity development, and development of personal identity.

Continuity and Complexity of Identity Development

Through this research, I have found that participants, with an age range from 23 to 42 years old, continued to develop their identity after they came to the United States. This finding supports the idea that identity development continues to take place in adulthood, which has been advocated by researchers on human development (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Levinson, 1984; Kegan, 1994; Tatum, 1997). Nevertheless, the study also shows that their identity development has its own complexity that cannot be fully captured and explained by existent development theories and models. I attribute this complexity to the great change in developmental context that impacts identity development in adulthood as a result of participants' moving from the East to the West, from one end of cultural spectrum to the other end. The complexity of identity development

cannot be accounted for by developmental models and theories that do not take into account the drastic contextual change in cross-cultural exchange.

The research findings indicate that participants developed multiple dimensions of their identity in complex processes, which were influenced by the new linguistic, academic, cultural, social-emotional, and logistical contexts. Their prior identity served as a portal of entry (Josselson, 1996) that continued to differentiate and integrate, leading to increased complexity, consistency, and integrity in their identity over a long period of time during their stay. Their identity development happened in graduate school but also in a cross-cultural context that added to its complication. I have not attempted to build a model for identity development of Chinese graduate students. Instead, I have presented a general contour to capture the overall trend and main characteristics of their experiences of identity development, which is in line with the nature of phenomenological investigation. For future research that attempts to build a model or develop a theory for the identity development of this student group, I will present in later section of this chapter some suggestions that emanate from this study.

Dynamic Interactional Relationship in Identity

I found through this study that an interactional relationship existed between participants' personal identity, which was experienced as good student identity that gave participants a core sense of self, and various identity dimensions that participants developed in the new environment. It was a dynamic interactional relationship that was increasingly strengthened within their developing identity. An identity dimension often conflated with personal identity before its differentiation (i.e., the two were experienced as one), be it academic identity, language identity, or cultural identity. Meanwhile, in the process of differentiation, an identity dimension integrated into personal identity, increasing and strengthening the connection between this particular

identity dimension and personal identity. The more these identity dimensions differentiated and integrated, the stronger the connection. It appears that there was no separated space but an increasingly strengthened connection between personal identity and various identity dimensions.

Similarly, among various identity dimensions, a closer and strengthened connection also appeared as each of these dimensions became more and more differentiated and integrated. Instead of becoming separate units, various dimensions of identity remained synergistically connected in the process of increasing the complexity, consistency, and integrity of identity. Therefore, the relationship within participants' identity looks more like a tree trunk with growing branches where the true trunk represents personal identity while the branches represent identity dimensions. Branches grow out of the tree trunk, and they grow in relation to each other and to the tree trunk, which is implied in the figure that has been presented in the last chapter.

Using a tree trunk and its branches to illustrate is a different visual presentation from the ones used by Jones and McEven in their Conceptual Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity and Abes, Jones, and McEven in their Re-conceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (2007), in which identity dimensions are portrayed as intersecting rings circling around a core that represents personal identity. The illustration that I use complements these two models of multiple dimensions of identity in increasing understanding of the structure, dynamics, and interconnection of multiple dimensions of identity and personal identity by adding a more organic, lively, and synergetic flavor.

Impact of Prior Identity

Participants' prior identity had a great impact on their experiences of identity development. Above all, prior identity was where participants started off to further develop their identity. It was also the place where all their new developments of identity were based. In

manifesting its effect, participants' prior identity seems to have both the functions of meaning-making capacity, an essential concept in the revised Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes et al., 2007), and developmentally instigative characteristics, important concepts in Bronfenbrenner's Human Development Ecological Model (1979, 1989, 1993). Abes, Jones, and McEwen emphasize one's meaning-making capacity as playing an important role in constructing multiple identities through acting as a filter that mediates one's perception and subsequently, his/her interaction with the environment. It seems that the same effect manifested in participants' identity development.

Due to variations in their prior identity, participants had varied meaning-making capacity, so they interpreted and interacted with reality differently, which contributed, along with other factors, to the differences in their experiences and outcomes of identity development. For example, some participants viewed racist behaviors and anti-Chinese sentiment that they encountered as understandable, which they did not take personally. So they tolerated or accepted the phenomenon without being too negatively affected. In contrast, with the same phenomenon, some other participants had been put off, got angry, felt very frustrated, and withdrew from social interactions. In effect, participants' different meaning-making capacity reduced or amplified the contextual influence of racism and anti-Chinese sentiment in their environment and consequently, modulated its impact on their identity development.

In addition, participants' priority identity also contained developmentally instigative characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1993) that affected the interaction with their environment and therefore, had an impact on their identity development. These instigative characteristics include participants' personal attributes that invite or hinder responses from the environment, "selective responsivity" that determines how a person explores and responds to one's surroundings (p.12);

“structuring proclivities” that indicate how a person engages and persists in increasingly complex activities (p.12); and “directive beliefs” that refer to how a person perceives his/her agency in relation to the environment (p. 13).

Participants exhibited in their prior identity all these four types of characteristics that had varied effects on their identity. In general, they had a moderate to high level of self-confidence, high aspiration and expectation to be successful, willingness to explore, expand, and take proactive actions, strong sense of personal responsibility, high value on individual effort and taking initiatives, and strong belief in achievement ideology and self-efficacy, which were conducive to positive interactions with their environments that advocated and valued similar personal traits and characteristics. It appears that these instigative characteristics contributed to participants’ transition, adaptation, retention, and academic success.

There were individual variations and differences in terms of instigative characteristics among participants. Some demonstrated a higher level of confidence, willingness to take initiatives, determination, and persistence. They played a more active and consistent role in interacting with their environments. At times, they selected or shaped their immediate environment so that they had more opportunities to grow. For example, participants Bo Zhao and Wentian proactively increased their cultural exposure in developing their cultural identity through moving into local community and living with roommates who came from different racial and cultural backgrounds.

In contrast, some other participants were not as proactive, confident, willing to take initiatives, or persistent in the face of difficulty. For example, participant Jie Li started to avoid social contact and interaction with local people after her initial difficulty of the English language, which consequently limited her social learning and cultural understanding. It appears that

variations in participants' instigative characteristics led to the differences in the interaction between them and their environment, which at least partially, accounted for the different experiences and outcomes of their identity development.

Contextual Effect on Identity Development

It was also evident in this study that the contexts within which participants resided had a great effect on their identity development. I have identified five major contexts that proved to be significant, which were linguistic, academic, cultural, social-emotional, and logistical contexts. Not only did these contexts influence the salience of each corresponding dimension of participants' identity, they also affected developmental processes and outcomes. For example, participants' cultural and ethnic identity would not have become salient and occupied such an important position, had they not come to the United States where they became culturally and ethnically a minority. In the meantime, participants' cultural and ethnic identity development had largely been constrained as well as facilitated by many factors in the new cultural context, including its dominant cultural values and beliefs, availability of cultural resources and support, presence of diverse cultural groups, large Chinese community, and cultural openness and receptivity of community members in and outside of the University.

The five significant contexts wove together in forming an overall developmental environment for participants. Along with prior identity, the developmental environment determined the range, variety, and quality of interactions that they had. The importance of developmental environment and its contextual influences on development and growth was in line with the other research findings (e. g., Jones & McEwen, 2000; Hsieh, 2006). Here I use Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1993) categorization as an analytical tool to discuss in more detail the interaction between participants and their environment.

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989, 1993) categorizes developmental contexts as four nesting rings of environments surrounding the developing person. He labels them as Micro-, Meso-, Exo-, and Macrosystem, which refer to, respectively, immediate settings containing the developing person, the interconnectedness between and among these settings, settings that do not contain the developing person but what happens in them has an effect on the developing person, and overarching and generalized patterns that manifest in social organizations and institutions reflecting particular cultural, social, and political ideology.

The study indicated the four levels of environment were all important to participants' identity development. Their Microsystems, the most immediate environment containing participants, included their contacts in China, friends they made in the new environment, roommates, classmates, lab mates, academic advisor, the professors they worked with, family if married, male and female significant other for those in a dating relationship, people in the Chinese community and local communities, and members in academic, social, professional groups that participants were associated with. The variety, quality, and quantity of interactions that participants experienced within their Microsystems had a direct effect on their identity development.

For example, some participants such as Hao Zheng, Han Wu, and Ming Feng made friends mainly within the Chinese community, thereby limiting their personal, social, and cultural horizons, as compared to some other participants who were more open and made friends from different social and cultural backgrounds. Another example is that participants such as Zhe Han and Jia Sun had a positive and productive relationship with their advisor. So they had more personal guidance, advice, and support that were directed to their needs. Their interactions with

their advisor were of high quality, conducive to academic development and personal growth, which confirmed research findings of other researchers (e.g., Wang, 2004; Greer, 2005).

Participants' Mesosystems consisted of the interconnectedness between and among their Microsystems. Such interconnections beyond single Microsystems were sometimes decisive for development to happen as Microsystems were (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, participants who were married reported that their spouse's knowledge and understanding of academic demands in graduate school directly affected how supportive they were, which in turn, affected the level of participants' stress and their ability to face academic challenges, develop academic competence, and perform successfully in their programs. Clear communication and information sharing between academic and family settings strengthened the interconnection between the two Microsystems, which became very important for participants.

It was evident that participants used a variety of ways to build and strengthen the interconnections across Microsystems. Besides clear communication and information sharing that participants strived for, joint participation was also commonly used. For example, participants often made friends with other graduate students, which enabled them to do a lot of things together and jointly participated in several Microsystems. When they attended classes and seminars, worked in the lab, went to social events, and enjoyed similar interests and hobbies in their spare time, they actually built and strengthened the interconnections among several Microsystems across academic, social, and cultural settings. Oftentimes, they expanded their Mesosystem through joining their friends' Microsystems that they were not in before. Therefore, they were able to create more developmental opportunities through expanding Microsystems and increasing interconnections among Microsystems that constituted their Mesosystem.

As developing persons, participants were at the center of Micro-, Meso-, Exo- and Macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1993). However, they had different interactions with each level and exerted varied degree of influence over their developmental environment. For Microsystems, participants played a more active role in influencing or shaping the most immediate environment. To a certain extent, they were able to change the quantity and quality of interactions with this level of environment through their own actions and initiatives. For example, they could make new friends, form study groups, participate in more activities on- and off-campus, or keep constant interaction with a professional community to influence and shape the configuration and function of their Microsystems. As discussed earlier, participants also had some control in influencing their Mesosystems through strengthening the interconnections between various settings via joint participation, communication, or sharing information. So for Micro- and Mesosystems, it seems that encouraging participants to take initiatives and actions in a welcoming environment is effective in increasing the opportunities for growth and development.

However, participants had different interactional relationships with Exo- and Macrosystems, the two outer levels of environment. They had less power to exert influence, so they assumed a passive position in interacting with them. Nevertheless, learning, understanding, and adapting to these two layers of environment were important tasks for participants to become more integrated into their environment. It was precisely these tasks with which participants encountered great difficulty, mainly because of language and cultural barriers. Participants' lack of cultural and social capitals plus the distant nature of Exo- and Macrosystems minimized their ability to participate, learn experientially, make changes, or exert influences in these two levels of environment. Increasing participants' awareness of the importance of these two layers of

environment and helping them deliberately and systematically gain knowledge and understanding seem to be very important to their experiences of identity development.

Importance of Setting Priorities in Identity Development

Participants' identity development involved multiple dimensions of identity. It was so complex that the capacity to prioritize and keep balance was crucial. They became a cultural alien, racial and ethnical minority, non-native English speaker, and graduate student, and person away from his/her family and social network all at once, which made many identity dimensions salient that called for attention and to be developed. Each component of these experiences by itself was challenging enough to present a developmental demand for participants. Combined, they bestowed a formidable myriad of tasks of developing multiple dimensions of identity. The tasks that stood in front of participants were more complex and demanding than those relating to developing any single dimension of identity.

It would have been overwhelming and debilitating for participants, had they dealt with all identity dimensions at once, especially in the very beginning of their study. Therefore, the capacity to deal with psychological stress and tension, prioritize tasks, manage all aspects of life effectively, and develop selectively and progressively in accordance with personal circumstances was called forth. The majority of participants demonstrated that they had this capacity in general. For example, they were able to prioritize the need to develop academic identity over other dimensions of identity. Only after they resolved the dissonance in academic identity had they spent more time and energy on developing other identity dimensions. In developing their logistical identity, participants limited logistical tasks to the minimal in the beginning. They postponed less urgent tasks such as buying a car and learning to drive. They only dealt with these tasks after they gained a foothold in the new environment.

However, participants were unable to adopt strategies and manage developmental tasks consistently and systematically because they did not have a conscious awareness of what they were doing. They often tried to manage as much as possible and dealt with the most urgent tasks at hand. What seemed to be missing was a clear understanding of the complexity of developmental tasks, what they had been going through, what challenges to expect, what effective coping strategies were available, and what a strategic plan looked like. To a certain extent, lacking this clear understanding contributed to the psychological stress and difficulty that they went through. It also undermined their effectiveness in the process of adaptation and developing multiple dimensions of identity.

Individual Variation in Identity Development

I have mapped out the general contour of participants' identity development, which is intended to provide a guideline for Chinese graduate students as well as educational practitioners who work with this group of students. To apply what has been learned to educational practice, another aspect of participants' identity development needs to be recognized. With the general trend that has been identified, there are also variations of the trajectory and outcome of identity development among participants.

It was true that all participants prioritized their academic identity and developed this dimension of identity as much as they could. But what other dimensions would they spend more time and energy on when they needed to deal with many dimensions of identity that became salient? How deep would they go with developing each dimension of identity than merely meeting the demands of the environment? For one participant, it could be cultural identity. But for another, it could be social-emotional or gender identity. Participants could only touch the surface of an identity dimension, or they could also go deep and change some of the deeply-

embedded values and beliefs. Participants' experiences demonstrated that the interplay and dynamics of their prior identity and environments was so complex that many ramifications could follow for each individual person.

It appeared also that more than a linear process was at work that contributed to the complexity of participants' identity development. It involved a nonlinear process as in non-equilibrium systems where drastic change could be triggered at times (Prigogine, 1984). Participants' experiences were cumulative, so development and growth in their identity often seemed to be gradual and incremental. However, this seemingly linear process of development was sometimes interrupted by radical change in certain dimensions of identity, which was triggered by a critical incident experienced by an individual. Depending on the effect of the critical incident on the person involved, it could cause rapid development in a certain identity dimension. It could also cause significant change in one's personal identity, which in turn, could cause further changes in multiple identity dimensions.

For example, participant Linli's critical incident with his advisor heightened his awareness of low socioeconomic status and how much he was constrained by it. As a result, it caused rapid development of social economic identity. But for participant Zhe Han, the change in relationship with her boyfriend went beyond the development of gender identity. It caused intensive exploration and development of her personal identity, which then caused more changes and development in other dimensions of identity, including academic interest, professional identity, social roles, and marital responsibility that she would like to fulfill as a more independent and self-aware human being.

Seeming Contradiction in Academic Identity Development

There is a seeming contradiction in participants' academic identity development that is worth discussion. Many researchers insist that it is difficult for graduate students to develop their academic identity (Adler & Adler, 2005; Austin, 2002; Mendoza, 2007; Nyquist et al., 1999) and it is even more difficult for minority graduate students (Boylorn, 2006; Gonzalez, Marin, Figueroa, Moreno & Navia, 2002; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies & Smith, 2004; Murakami-Ramallo, Piert & Militello, 2008; Nettles, 1990; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). However, participants had developed their academic identity quite well even though they faced many disadvantages in the new educational system. Their success seems to contradict research findings in existent literature.

It appears that three major sources that could sufficiently explain their success in developing academic identity and dispel the seeming contradiction. First, participants focused on academic identity and invested a lot of time and energy in it. Because they conflated good student identity with personal identity, they treated the threat to the former as threat to the latter. So they used all their might to resume and develop academic identity. Second, they had the intellectual capacity to overcome academic challenges and difficulties in resuming their good student identity, because they had been "pre-selected" as top students in very competitive Chinese educational system before they came to study in the United States.

The third is that the participants had internalized academic values and beliefs that did not need to endure great changes, which was very likely the reason why they did not experience as much difficulty as other graduate students in developing academic identity. It was not that understanding, accepting, and internalizing academic culture and values were easy for participants. It was because they had already internalized academic values and beliefs when they became successful students in college or graduate school in China. So they did not have to do it

all over again in the United States where they encountered similar values, norms, and beliefs that were embraced by the academia.

Researchers (Adler & Adler, 2005; Austin, 2002; Mendoza, 2007; Nyquist et al., 1999; Tinto, 1993) assert that graduate students have struggles in understanding, accepting, and internalizing academic culture and values. It is so, because on the one hand, academic values, norms, and rules, which are often implicit and hidden, and sometimes in conflict with explicit messages and discourses, often confuse and frustrate graduate students. On the other hand, even if graduate students are able to demystify and understand academic culture and values, there is possibly a strong resistance to accepting and internalizing these culture and values when they conflict with those that graduate students hold.

These findings are not challenged by participants' success in developing their academic identity, because participants only bypassed the difficult tasks of understanding and accepting academic values in their academic socialization and integration. Participants' pre-existing values and beliefs matched well with that of academia in the new context, which eased their academic transition. Otherwise, they would probably have had more struggles and therefore, could not have achieved as much in developing their academic identity as they did.

Changing Values and Beliefs in Identity Development

Now I move to the issue of changing values and beliefs and the difficulty it entails in participants' identity development. As indicated in academic identity development, when the process of identity development did not involve major changes in participants' internalized values and beliefs, it tended to be less difficult. However, when the development involved fundamental changes in values and beliefs, it became painful and difficult. This situation manifested not only in participants' academic identity development but also in their experiences

of developing other dimensions of identity, including cultural identity, social-emotional identity, gender identity, and spiritual and religious development.

It appeared that participants' experiences became more challenging and difficult when their deeply-held values and beliefs were involved in the developmental process. When it happened, participants exhibited two general tendencies that affected their experiences and developmental outcomes. One tendency was that they showed the courage to stay open and the tenacity to go through the stress-laden and painful changing process, as shown in participant Bo Zhao's experience of developing logistical identity. When they reached a threshold and achieved a breakthrough in the patterns of deeply-held values and beliefs, they experienced considerable growth and development in their identity. The other tendency was that, when they felt their fundamental values and beliefs were challenged, they became protective, withdrawn, and closed off. They refused to explore any further of certain identity dimensions that were involved and lost the opportunities for growth and development.

To illustrate in more detail, I use participants' experiences in cultural identity development as an example. Having moved from group-oriented culture to individualistic culture, participants had to understand and reconcile conflicting norms, values, and beliefs in the new social and cultural context, which was challenging and difficult. At the same time, as Hsieh (2006) confirms, the cultural environment in the United States is not conducive for international students to develop positive cultural identity, because Eurocentric culture is dominant and treats other cultures as inferior. In addition, participants also faced discrimination and anti-Chinese sentiment on- and off-campus, which was frustrating and even intimidating at times.

According to the narratives from participants, their challenges came not only from understanding, bridging, and reconciling the two cultures at the polarity as the East and the West,

but also from the unwelcoming environment that threatened their cultural self. It was very hard for them to stay open to the host culture for long, endure the painful process, and sustain their efforts in learning, understanding, accepting, and internalizing new cultural norms, values, and beliefs. As a result, some of them closed off from further cultural exploration and developed a rigid ethnocentric cultural identity that protected and marginalized themselves at the same time. Only a few participants including Wentian and Bo Zhao were able to keep themselves exposed in frequent cultural contact, prolonged immersion, and sustained cultural learning to allow fundamental changes to happen in their cultural values and beliefs.

Researchers (e.g., Amir, 1976; Stephan, 1987) claim that individuals in cross-cultural contact increase cultural understanding and decrease prejudice over other cultural groups in cross-cultural exchange. As a result, positive attitudinal change occurs, which leads to more cultural contact and interaction that is conducive to developing a positive cultural identity. This claim is not necessarily correct in cross-cultural adaptation. From what I have found in participants' experiences, it can be just the opposite, depending on how threatened participants felt when their cultural values and beliefs were challenged in cross-cultural exchange. In this study, participants including Zexiao, Yuexiao, Jie Li and Han Wu became more negative toward the American culture because of the challenges, rejection, prejudice, and discrimination that they experienced.

Only one-third of the participants such as Wentian and Bo Zhao were able to respond positively to the mainstream culture and other culture groups, which supports contact hypothesis. These several participants, who were more culturally prepared, adapted successfully and developed a cultural identity that integrated conflicting cultural norms, values, and beliefs. Their cultural identity enabled them to activate corresponding cultural selves to situational contexts, a

developmental result of cultural adaptation that Sussman (2000) terms as cultural hybridization. For cultural hybridization to happen, it seemed that participants needed to be very tenacious to face constant cultural challenges, go beyond their cultural self, and transcend their cultural values and beliefs. They needed to accommodate and embrace both the host and their own cultures at a higher level of their consciousness, so the two sets of contrasting cultural beliefs and values were able to co-exist without constantly conflicting with each other. It seemed that personal strength and cultural preparedness of the developing person as well as a welcoming, inclusive, diverse, and safe cultural environment were the contributing factors to cultural hybridization.

Development of Personal Identity

The last aspect to discuss is participants' personal identity development. Participants' experiences demonstrated that they had more or less developed their personal identity when certain dimensions of identity were differentiated and integrated. But systematic exploration, development, and transformation of personal identity were very rare among participants. It seemed that their deeply-rooted values and beliefs about who they were and their personal traits and characteristics were very resistant to change, even though some aspects of their self-perception and competence could have changed as result of their effort in developing multiple dimensions of identity.

For example, in developing academic identity, participants such as Zhe Han questioned whether their disciplinary choice had been made in accord to their intrinsic academic interest or simply to meet other people's expectations, which led to not only the exploration of their genuine academic interest but also what was the most important to them in various spheres of their life. Another example is that some female participants such as Yuwen experienced growth and

development in personal identity as a result of developing their gender identity, because their exploration was not limited to their self-concept of being a female but further extends to how they were defined in general as a human being.

It is commonly accepted by researchers in human development (e. g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975) that one's early childhood plays a significant role in forming one's personal identity. It follows that it is necessary to explore one's developmental experiences in childhood when one engages in the development of personal identity in adulthood. In this study, more than a half of the participants related their personal identity in the interviews to childhood experiences and reflected on the significant events that happened when they were young.

For example, participant Jun Zhou related her low self-esteem to her interaction with her parents in her childhood and the environment she lived in. She felt that she had been deeply affected by a traumatic event that her father put a sign on her bedside that read "Being fat is a shame!" in order to pressure her into losing weight. She commented that she succeeded in everything she attempted except losing weight, because she had been deeply hurt and could never overcome it.

However, among these more than half a dozen participants who related their identity to their early experiences in life in their narratives, only one participant, Zhe Han, showed that she had gone through systematic self-analysis and re-lived her childhood to understand her personal identity. Most participants in this study were not able to engage in systematic exploration and development of their personal identity. It seems that personal identity possesses the highest stability among multiple identities and therefore, the most resistant to change and further development.

In summary, I have discussed major research findings in this section. They include continuity and complexity of identity development, dynamic interactional relationship in identity, impact of prior identity, contextual effect on identity development, importance of setting priorities in identity development, individual variations in identity development, seeming contradiction in academic identity development, change values and beliefs in identity development, and development of personal identity. Now I move onto making recommendations for educational practice.

Recommendations for Educational Practice

Based on the findings and themes in the previous chapter and the discussions in this chapter, I propose five recommendations for educational practice. These recommendations are intended to inform higher educational institutions as well as faculty members, academic advisors, program directors, student affairs professionals, administrators, and other people who work with Chinese graduate students. They are also intended to be informative for Chinese graduate students who study in the United States.

Increase Understanding and Support for Chinese Graduate Students' Identity Development

First, I recommend administrators, faculty members, academic advisors, international office staff, counselors, and student affairs professionals increase their understanding of the complexity of Chinese graduate students' identity development, so they realize the importance and necessity to provide resources and support for this group of students. This study shows that Chinese graduate students come to the United States with the intention to get quality education. In their educational pursuit, however, they engage in a process of developing themselves in many aspects of identity that go beyond the academic dimension.

Their development of multiple identities is very complex and presents many challenges. They might be able to navigate through the terrain with less difficulty and maximize their developmental outcome if sufficient guidance and support were provided for them. However, participants' experiences indicated that they had not received sufficient guidance and support from their institution. With increasing population of this group on campuses, various stakeholders in higher education institutions who work with students might need to pay more attention to the importance of understanding developmental experiences of Chinese graduate students and its implications for institutional policy, resource allocation, program design, and supportive service provision. Higher education institutions might consider making adjustment and changes in educational practice including advising, counseling, programming, curriculum-designing, and institutional policy-making to create a more supportive campus environment for Chinese graduate students' identity development.

Keep Chinese Graduate Students Informed of Their Identity Development

The second recommendation is for academic advisors, program directors, counselors, and other student affairs professionals to work collaboratively to keep Chinese graduate students informed of the complexity of their identity development and provide them sufficient information, timely feedback, support and encouragement in their developmental process. Coming from a cultural context in which identity is a foreign concept, Chinese graduate students are not well equipped for the tasks of developing multiple identities in the new context. They are not able to foresee the challenges that are involved, the obstacles that lie ahead, the many aspects that are to be developed, and how to get access to supportive resources when they are in need.

In addition, Chinese graduate students lack the knowledge to differentiate personal identity from various identity dimensions. It is not uncommon that, if there is a problem with a

specific area of identity development, they unwittingly put their overall worth as a person at stake. As a result, it is hard for them to see the problem as it is. Instead, they often generalize and overstate its difficulty, which affects their psychological well-being and the ability to cope with developmental tasks more effectively. This situation might be prevented if Chinese graduate students have a general understanding of the dynamics between various identities and personal identity.

The study indicates that participants' efforts toward various areas of identity development were, in general, not well planned and orchestrated. Some participants did plan and take initiatives in developing themselves, but it was often to do with a specific aspect of identity development. It did not involve a strategic plan that covered all aspects of their identity and maximized their developmental opportunities in the whole span of their study. With an understanding of the general contour of identity development or a map of developmental terrain, Chinese graduate students might become more aware of where they are, what they are doing, what is involved, what challenges they face, what pitfalls to avoid, and what to expect in the process of their identity development. Having a bird's eye view of the developmental process, Chinese graduate students might be able to have a systemic approach to their identity development and potentially "design" their developmental experiences in advance.

Assess Students' Prior Identity and Its Effect on Identity Development

The third recommendation is to understand Chinese graduate students' prior identity and its importance in their identity development in order to provide effective guidance and support. Their prior identity serves as a portal of entry (Josselson, 1996) when they come to the United States, which not only determines individual student's aspiration, confidence, coping ability, courage, perseverance and many other personal qualities but also determines how the developing

person sees him/herself, the environment, and his/her interaction with the environment. Prior identity contains “developmentally instigative characteristics” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1993) and acts as a filter that mediates one’s perception of reality (Abes et al., 2007), both of which have a direct impact on their further identity development. So the importance of understanding Chinese graduate students’ prior identity cannot be over-emphasized.

Many Chinese graduate students have a strong and positive prior identity, which serves them well in the new environment. However, some Chinese graduate students have a less strong prior identity, who have more difficulties in developing their multiple identities and tend to have a limited scope and depth of identity development. For these students, more guidance and support are needed. For example, students like Han Wu, Hao Zheng, and Yuexiao who had attended less prestigious universities in China have less strong prior identity. They would need more support and encouragement to restore and build academic identity. They would also need more encouragement and guidance to explore other aspects of their identity after they have become more or less established in their study.

A few categorical factors might be useful to assess Chinese graduate students’ prior identity and anticipate its impact on their developmental experiences. They include the prestige of the university they previously attended (rankings by Shanghuai Jiaotong University can be used as reference), socioeconomic status of the student’s family, whether they came as spouse or as student at the time of entry to the United States, and whether their family lives in big city or in rural area. These categories might be used as a reference for faculty members, academic advisors, counselors, career service personnel, and other student affairs professionals to make preliminary evaluation of students’ prior identity and its possible impact when they work with Chinese graduate students. For example, students from disadvantaged backgrounds have less strong and

positive prior identity. They might need to obtain a sense of security in the new environment before they lower their guard to allow change to happen in their identity and to explore various dimensions of identity that they have not explored before. They might also need more assistance in improving their competence in certain areas.

However, these categories should be used with caution. They need to be combined with close and prolonged contact with students. Faculty members, academic advisors, counselors, staff in international office, and student affairs professionals need to assess Chinese graduate students' prior identity on an individual basis through intensive interactions with the students and gaining in-depth knowledge of their disposition, the social economical situation of their family, parents' education and career, family configuration and atmosphere, educational and life experiences, and other factors that have contributed to their identity formation. The better Chinese graduate students' prior identity is understood, the better educators and practitioners are positioned to comprehend these students' developmental experiences and provide effective guidance and support for the individual students.

Create Favorable Developmental Environment

The fourth recommendation is to understand the importance of the developmental environment and create a favorable environment to facilitate development and growth of Chinese graduate students. Four levels of environment, as defined in Bronfenbrenner's Human Development Ecological Model (1979, 1989, 1993), are all important for Chinese graduate students' identity development. Therefore, institutional efforts need to be directed at improving all four levels of environment that constitute the overall developmental context.

For Micro- and Mesosystems, efforts could be focused on encouraging, empowering, and facilitating Chinese graduate students to play more active roles in shaping their immediate

developmental environment. So they might be able to make more one-one connections within and across different Microsystems to use both Micro- and Mesosystems more effectively. They could make more friends, increase interactions with classmates and faculty members, become part of their friends' or academic advisor's networks to expand their social connections, engage in more campus activities, join study or social groups, and enhance communication and interconnections across academic, social and cultural settings.

To improve Exo- and Macrosystems, institutional efforts could be focused on internationalizing campus and creating a welcoming, safe, diverse, and equal environment. A safe and inclusive environment is instrumental to affirmation, acceptance, exploration, and discovery of Chinese graduate students' identity while an unequal, discriminative, and restrictive environment turns them away for protection and security, limiting their chance to open-up, learn, and integrate new experiences. Therefore, policy, regulations and procedures could be made to provide international students including Chinese graduate students equal treatments as domestic students in their developmental environment.

Creating a campus environment that values equality, multiculturalism and internationalization is very important, not only for Chinese graduate students but for other groups of international students. Institutional efforts could focus on promoting cultural contact, meaningful engagement, and formation of personal connections among people with different social and cultural backgrounds. Higher education institutions could also go through a systemic change to facilitate the development of trans-cultural and trans-national identity for all students especially international students to meet the demands of the increasingly globalized world.

One important developmental environment for Chinese graduate students is the Chinese community, which consists of Chinese students, visiting scholars, and faculty and staff who are

originally from China. It was generally agreed by participants that the presence of Chinese community was very helpful in their initial adjustment and adaptation, but became constrictive and confining later on if they were overly dependent on it. Identity affirmation through the Chinese community is important, but it is even more important for Chinese graduate students to further develop their identity through diversifying their experiences in the new environment. Frequent and close contact with other social and cultural groups and making friends with people from various backgrounds are essential for them to have more stimuli in expanding personal horizons, get out of their comfort zone, see different perspectives, learn new cultural codes and norms, develop new ways of communicating and interacting with people, and better understand their own culture and themselves.

Therefore, utilization of the Chinese community as a source of growth while being able to avoid its constraints needs to be well understood. Higher education institutions can provide assistance to help Chinese graduate students make the transition out of the community and re-connect with it on a different level—connect and separate easily with no attachment and confinement. It takes collective effort to build a Chinese community that is open, supportive, culturally inclusive, multifunctional, and growth-oriented. It can become an important resource to meet the cultural, social-emotional, and educational needs of Chinese graduate students. International office, counseling service, graduate school, residential services, and other departments of student affairs might work with Chinese faculty, student leaders, and members of Chinese community to build such a community.

Provide Support for the Development of Multiple Identities Strategically

The fifth recommendation is to understand the developmental needs in multiple identities that Chinese graduate students develop and provide institutional support strategically. As seen in

this study, when Chinese graduate students come to the new social, cultural and educational context, many dimensions of their identity become salient and need to be developed. From developmental point of view, all identity dimensions are important and need to be supported accordingly, so they might become a whole and well-integrated person.

In order to achieve optimal developmental outcomes, both Chinese graduate students and the institutions that support them need to be strategic and selective in directing their energy and resources. In the following, I focus my recommendations on the five identity dimensions commonly developed by participants and provide strategies for each dimension according to their developmental experiences.

Strategies to Support Language Identity Development

According to participants' experiences, the development of language identity and its associated competence cannot be underestimated for Chinese graduate students. It not only affected their sense of self-adequacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem, but limited their developmental opportunities in social, academic, and cultural settings. It affected many aspects of identity development through determining the quality and quantity of the interactions they had in academic, social, and cultural spheres of life.

One important thing for educators and practitioners to do is help Chinese graduate students differentiate language identity as a non-native English speaker from personal identity in their interactions with the students. The ability to separate the two might release Chinese graduate students from the pressure that is partly from being unable to, and partly from the shame of being unable to, use the English language effectively. Without attributing their language inability to the lack of personal quality, they would have more psychological drive and energy to adopt effective strategies to increase their language proficiency. It is also important for

educators and practitioners to help Chinese graduate students form a positive attitude toward the English language. It is not a rhetorical exercise to call English a second language instead of foreign language, which means that Chinese graduate students are learning and using their second language, not something foreign or alien that is imposed onto them. Claiming ownership of the English language might reduce resistance and the feeling of victimization in learning and improving the English language.

In addition to changing perspective on language identity, Chinese graduate students need to improve language proficiency in order to participate more effectively. Sufficient language support from higher education institutions plus their own consistent efforts are the key to reach a level of mastery that the English language is no longer a stumbling block on their path to success. This recommendation is line with the conclusion that has been drawn by many researchers on Chinese international students (e. g., Greer, 2005; Hsieh, 2007; Huang, 2004, 2005, 2006; Wan, 2001; Parks & Raymond, 2004; Wang, 2004), to which higher education institutions are encouraged to pay more attention in educational practice.

According to the participants' experiences, Chinese graduate students in sciences, technology, engineering, and math fields would need support on listening, speaking and writing. But for graduate students in social sciences and humanities where language is more contextualized in social, political, cultural, and philosophical assumptions, values, and foundations, reading and understanding academic papers often becomes very challenging. Language support could be more focused on providing background knowledge and deconstructing the texts to make hidden message more explicit for Chinese graduate students to comprehend.

In general, language support should be consistently provided for Chinese students for their academic success (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005; Greer, 2005; Hsieh, 2007; Huang, 2004, 2005, 2006; Lou, 1989; Parks & Raymond, 2004; Wang, 2004). Forming study groups with native speakers, engaging them in research projects with faculty, co-teaching courses, co-presenting at conference, and co-authoring academic papers are good formats for Chinese graduate students to improve language competence through doing, participating, and working together with faculty and classmates who are native speakers. In addition to achieving academic success, language support and assistance also need to meet the changing needs of Chinese graduate students when they develop different aspects of their identity that demand increasing English language capability in self expression, communication, and gaining in-depth understanding of the people they interact with. Through increasing language capacity, they increase the likelihood of achieving a higher level of social and cultural integration that facilitates the development of various dimensions of identity, which was shown in experiences of several participants including Wentian, Bo Zhao, and Zexiao who have a good command of English.

Strategies to Support Academic Identity Development

Academic identity development occupies the central position of Chinese student identity development. So providing support in this respect should be a focus for higher education institutions. Similar to language identity, it is important to help Chinese graduate students differentiate their academic identity from personal identity. It is true that seeing failure to perform academically as failure of a person provides a strong drive for Chinese graduate students to achieve academic success. However, the inability to differentiate induces tremendous pressure

for Chinese graduate students as well, which has the potential to turn academic challenges into personal crisis.

The ability to differentiate academic identity from personal identity could help them to release pent-up pressure and handle academic challenges better, which is important for the academic adjustment and their psychological well-being throughout the duration of their study. So its importance needs to be communicated and well understood by Chinese graduate students, especially those with less strong prior identity who tend to encounter more academic challenges and have more struggles. Its importance also needs to be communicated to faculty, academic advisors, and program directors, so they are able to emphasize the value and worthiness of Chinese graduate students as a person when they help them deal with academic challenges.

In addition, institutional strategy needs to be in line with the trend and characteristics of Chinese graduate students' academic identity development. This study shows that the first half year or so is crucial to Chinese graduate students' academic identity development. It is the time that they strive to resolve their identity dissonance and regain their identity as good students. Sufficient encouragement and support would help them greatly during this period of time. It prevents attrition and also lays a good foundation for late stage development of sub-dimensions of academic identity including researcher's identity, teacher's identity and professional identity.

The study also shows that some participants explored and discovered their genuine academic interests. To discover and pursue their real interest in an academic area was an essential move on their part to developing a solid academic identity. Leaving unexplored, their commitment to academic discipline could be shaky. If they lose interest in academic pursuit and find their interest lies somewhere else in the late stage of their program or after they have received their PhD, the cost would be very high for the individuals and for the society as well.

Therefore, when Chinese graduate students choose to take courses in other disciplines, double major or change the area of study, they should be encouraged and fully supported by academic advisors, the professors they work with, program coordinators, and the department and college they are currently enrolled.

Providing a variety of experiences including teaching, conducting research and engaging in professional community is conducive to developing Chinese graduate students' academic identity including teacher's identity, researcher's identity, and professional identity, as shown through participants' experiences. The purpose of involving students may need to be more focused on students' development and growth instead of using them as cheap labor and exploiting them institutionally as claimed by several participants. Due to the challenge in teaching itself and the challenge in association with using a second language to teach, supportive programs and professional development opportunities could be put in place for Chinese graduate students who hold teaching assistantship. This might help Chinese graduate students fulfill their teaching responsibility more effectively and with fewer struggles. It might also help them build teaching capacity and develop their teacher's identity.

When a research assistantship is granted, it might be more efficient if it is combined with research training that is a part of the graduate program. So students' research interest can be explored and discovered, research skills honed, and the ability to work independently and collaboratively enhanced. This is often the case in sciences and engineering but less frequent in the humanities and social sciences where research work as a research assistant is often irrelevant to students' own research interests, as reported by participants. While Chinese graduate students can find their own way to connect with the professional community to develop their professional identity as participant Linli and Wentian did, academic advisors, faculty members and program

directors can be instrumental in this regard. They can bring Chinese graduate students to conferences, co-present and co-author academic papers, introduce them to people in the field, and connect them to professionals in local community.

Academic advisors and faculty members could be role models for Chinese graduate students and have a strong influence over their academic identity development through formal and informal interaction. Building healthy faculty-student relationships not only help Chinese graduate students develop positive academic identity but also help them develop social-emotional identity and cultural identity when their cultural heritage and tradition are valued by their professors and academic advisors. Participants such as Jia Sun, Yuexiao and Zhe Han believed that faculty and academic advisors who had explored and fully developed their own identity were well positioned to help Chinese graduate students. They also believed that faculty and academic advisors with international backgrounds as well as those with first-hand cross-cultural experiences were better equipped to understand Chinese graduate students' experience and provide effective support. They insisted that faculty members and academic advisors who understood Chinese graduate students' cultural inclination have more sensitivity in helping Chinese graduate students.

Becoming a self-directed learner and scholar and assuming an identity of knowledge producer does not come easy for graduate students (Adler & Adler, 2005). It would be even more difficult for Chinese graduate students who are used to looking up to authoritative figures for direction in their own culture. Those faculty and academic advisors with in-depth cultural understanding are more likely to make intentional and specific effort to convey the hidden expectations and make them explicit for Chinese graduate students. They probably provide more support and allow Chinese graduate students the time to develop the ability of becoming

independent and self-directing learner and scholar. Therefore, institutional effort on faculty and organizational development including expanding faculty personal and professional horizons, increasing their cultural sensitivity and understanding, and internationalizing faculty experiences seems to be a good strategy to support Chinese graduate students' identity development.

Strategies to Support Cultural Identity Development

In supporting Chinese graduate students' cultural identity development, institutional effort could be directed to creating a diverse, inclusive, open, and welcoming campus environment where their cultural self is accepted, embraced, and valued. The effort could include building a strong and dynamic Chinese community that supports and affirms Chinese graduate students' cultural identity and gives them a sense of belonging as discussed earlier. It could also include building multicultural communities with various cultures and traditions, increasing their visibility and accessibility, bridging cultural gaps, and encouraging cross-cultural outreach and engagement that increase Chinese graduate students' cultural exposure and expand their cultural horizons.

To more actively engage Chinese graduate students, it is useful to make explicit their cultural tendency and its potential negative impact. Hsieh (2006) specifies that students with Confucian cultural background tend to avoid conflict and confrontation and advocate harmony. This cultural tendency and its effect need to be understood, because it hinders the development of positive cultural identity in an environment that requires participation, negotiation, debate, initiative, challenges, and risk-taking. Higher education institutions might set up programs and activities that incorporate role-playing, experiential learning, and active engagement for Chinese graduate students. They might also provide cultural adaptation courses and leadership workshops

to help counteract Chinese graduate students' limiting cultural tendency that prevents them from effectively engaging in cultural learning and adaptation.

The development of Chinese graduate students' cultural identity involves learning new cultural values, norms, and beliefs as well as that of their own, which often creates tension and conflict due to the drastic cultural distance between the East and the West. The tension and conflict might increase to a degree that threatens Chinese graduate students' sense of inner security. In such circumstances, they might withdraw from cultural engagement and learning, close off, become ethnocentric, and develop a rigid cultural identity that serves as a protective mechanism, as in the case of several participants. Therefore, it is important for higher education institutions to create a safe, diverse, and inclusive environment on the one hand, and to educate Chinese graduate students about the dynamics of their cultural identity development in order to stay open and engaged in the face of challenges and difficulties, on the other hand.

The developmental goal of cultural identity for Chinese graduate students might need to be set up high, aiming at developing a trans-cultural or trans-national cultural identity, if higher education institutions mean to cultivate their students as global citizens (as many colleges and universities claim). It cannot be left to serendipity, but needs to be accomplished through implementing strategically incorporated and institutionally designed programs and initiatives. Higher education institutions might consider it as a desirable goal to engage Chinese graduate students in a process of deconstructing their cultural self and reconstructing their cultural identity that integrates conflicting cultural values, norms and beliefs of the East and the West so that they might be able to develop a cultural identity that transcends their cultural limitations, which will serve them well in the increasingly globalized world.

Strategies to Support Social-emotional Identity Development

For the development of Chinese graduate students' social-emotional identity, intuitional strategy might center on helping them achieve social integration in the new environment. In the initial stage, Chinese graduate students have an urgent need to keep a sense of continuity of social-emotional identity, as experienced by participants. Because Chinese graduate students have a social-emotional identity that is very much dependent on their social connections and networks, their "Guanxi" (Chen & Chen, 2004; Hackley & Dong, 2001; Warren, Dunfee & Li, 2004; Yi & Ellis, 2000), building a supportive social network becomes very important for them in the new environment.

To minimize the impact of disruption of social-emotional identity, institutional support might focus on helping them connect socially in the initial adjustment. Later on, institutional effort could be shifted to helping them expand social networks and diversify social experiences through social engagement and interaction with Americans and people from different social and cultural backgrounds. Because social interaction is compounded with language difficulty and cultural barrier, guidance and support from international office, student affairs, residential services and community peers to create more interpersonal, interactive and engaging developmental environment could be helpful for Chinese graduate students.

Being far away from family and friends, Chinese graduate students often have difficulty in building sufficient social network in the new environment, as reported by participants in this study. They try hard to push themselves and become self-reliant in their social-emotional life. In order to develop a social-emotional identity that signifies emotional interdependence, they need to be able to engage in social groups they desire, connect with a diverse group of people, and move in and out of social networks freely. Institutional effort to help Chinese graduate students

might include setting up programs that connect them with local families, allocating resources to support social functions and activities, providing courses and programs on improving social skills and competence, holding workshops on cross-cultural friendship, and creating close-knit living learning community in residential areas.

Strategies to Support Logistical Identity Development

The development of logistical identity assumes its importance in Chinese graduate students' experiences of identity development mainly due to the fact that it constitutes a missing part of their selves and that its development and growth is very tangible to be felt. Therefore, it had been given significant meaning and seen as a part of their becoming a whole person by participants.

Institutional strategy to helping Chinese graduate students develop this dimension of identity could have a different focus in two discernible phases of their development as experienced by participants. The first phase is the initial adjustment when Chinese graduate students face a lot of pressure in learning to take care of themselves logistically and having to acquire a lot of important life skills in a short period of time. This pressure not only comes from learning practical new skills, but might also come from the frustration and self-doubt caused by the inability to do seemingly simple and easy things. Institutional support could be in the form of tangible help with handling logistical issues. Orientation programs might consider including sessions about how to manage logistically in the surrounding community. Buddy programs and peer mentoring programs might be set up to help Chinese graduate students deal with logical issues such as banking, grocery shopping, cooking, buying textbooks, getting a bus pass, and knowing their whereabouts.

The second phase of logistical identity development includes learning important practical skills such as driving. It also includes trying out new ways of managing life such as changing lifestyle to meet the demands of developing more salient dimensions of identity. Higher education institutions might consider providing classes, lectures, and workshops on driving skills, life management, priority setting, and self-leadership to support Chinese graduate students in this phase of logistical identity development.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on this phenomenological study, I make the following recommendations for future research that is relevant to Chinese graduate students' identity development. They include conducting research to build theoretical models, having more participants at the advanced stage of study in research samples, and conducting research with Chinese graduate students who drop out of their program, with those who have completed their degree, with other groups of graduate students from the countries that are major sources of international students, and with Chinese undergraduate students whose numbers are rapidly increasing on American campuses.

Conduct Research to Build Theoretical Models

The first recommendation is to conduct research that is designed for building theoretical model/s regarding Chinese graduate students' identity development to inform and direct educational practice. This study indicates that current theories and models of student development cannot fully capture the complexity of their identity development. So, they fall short when employed to inform educational practice and student supportive services. The main goal of my dissertation research is to understand lived experiences of Chinese graduate students regarding their identity development. Therefore, I have not selected research participants for the purpose of building an evidence-based theoretical model.

Through an intensive phenomenological investigation, I have identified common themes that exist for Chinese graduate students' identity development. For example, all participants have developed their language, academic, cultural, social-emotional, logistical identities and some other aspects of identity that have been influenced by the new academic, social, and cultural context. A general contour of developing multiple identities that constitute identity differentiation and integration has been depicted and discussed.

It would be inappropriate to generalize the research findings and use the general contour of participants' experiences as a theoretical model to apply to and interpret the experiences of the general population of Chinese graduate students on American campuses. Nevertheless, future researchers can use the research findings to help in framing research questions, research design and methodology selection to build a theoretical model of identity development that has more explanatory power for Chinese graduate students studying in the United States.

Research Sample to Include More Students at the Advanced Stage of Study

The second recommendation for future research on Chinese graduate students' identity is to include more participants at the advanced stage of their study who are likely to have a higher level of identity development. Even though there are many contributing factors, the time of stay in the United States is an important one that is related to the complexity, consistency and integrity of their identity. Identity development of Chinese graduate students is in general cumulative over time despite that dramatic changes can happen at times as a result of critical incidents in one's life. PhD students at the advanced stage of the program are more likely to provide rich data relating to their identity development and to more dimensions of their identity due to the fact that they have accumulated more experiences of identity development than those who have only been in their program for a year or two.

Rich data from students at the advanced stage of study possibly enables future researchers to understand more of the outcomes of identity development and substantiate the knowledge of configuration and development of multiple identities that have been identified by the current research. It is likely that future researchers are able to understand how Chinese graduate students engage in gender identity development, socioeconomic status, faith and spiritual development as suggested by some of the evidence that has been gleaned in this study. It is also likely that future researchers are able to understand more of how Chinese graduate students engage in the process of personal identity development and self transformation. Because the need becomes stronger for Chinese graduate students to integrate and make sense of their identity development experiences at the advanced stage of their study, and they have increased linguistic, intellectual, cultural, and social-emotional competence to do so, the likelihood for them to embark on the challenging and rewarding journey of exploring and discovering their personal identity becomes higher.

Conduct Research with Students Who Drop out

The third recommendation is to conduct research with Chinese graduate students who have dropped out of their program. The sample of the current research consists of Chinese graduate students who were making progress in their program despite their challenges and difficulties in cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation. Participants were successful, or at least persisted, in their programs. Research findings, discussion and recommendations in this study are based on the data from their experiences of identity development, not from the experiences of those who have failed and left their graduate programs. Research on Chinese graduate students who have dropped out would be helpful in pinpointing what phase of identity development is the breaking point for them to quit, how their identity development plays the role in making their

decision to leave, and which dimension of identity is the most troublesome that possibly causes them to depart.

Even though there might be technical problems in recruiting drop-outs of Chinese graduate students, research on them would shed new light and complements the research that is conducted on students who stay and succeed in their graduate programs. It shows the relationship between identity development and departure, which provides valuable information for faculty, academic advisors, and student affairs professionals who are interested in prevention and retention. Retention of Chinese graduate students will gradually become a concern as more Chinese graduate students come to study in the United States as the result of booming Chinese economy. Those less elite students are going to face different challenges and follow different developmental trajectories, and are more likely to depart from their program before completion.

Conduct Research with Students Who Have Completed Their Study

The fourth recommendation is to conduct research on Chinese graduate students who have successfully completed their degree and entered into career stage in the United States. Existent research indicates that high proportion of Chinese graduate students stays and enters into workplace in the United States after the completion of their programs. This study, however, finds that more than one third of Chinese graduate students are planning to go back to China as a result of feeling alienated and having developed marginalized identity, especially in social-emotional and cultural identity. Even though it is a fact that booming economy in China provides more career opportunities for Chinese graduate students, which affects their decision-making of where to start their career and settle down, there appears to be a clear connection between identity development and their decision to stay or leave the United States after they complete their degree.

Research on Chinese graduate students who have succeeded in PhD programs and who have settled down in the United States would provide information on the relationship between identity development and successful transition from being graduate students to a professional life in the host environment. It is likely to generate information for higher education institutions in creating better strategies to facilitate Chinese graduate students' identity development and to retain them in the United States to serve its economy after their graduation. Research on the relationship of identity development in graduate school and the success in career and life can also provide useful information on the long-term effect of identity development and its importance in one's career and life.

Conduct Research with Graduate Students with Other Country Origin

The fifth recommendation is to conduct research on graduate students from other countries such as India, Korea, and Japan that constitute the major source of international students for higher education institutions in the United States. It would help obtain a deep understanding of the experiences of identity development of more international graduate student groups, which might be just as complex and challenging as that for Chinese graduate students. It could provide research findings to inform educational practice and help international graduate students grow and develop through their cross-cultural experiences.

Research on different groups of international graduate students' experiences of identity development would provide data for cross-section comparison and add new knowledge and understanding of identity development processes and outcomes. Research on identity development of graduate students from India or other countries who have sufficient English proficiency is of special interest. It could show the effect of language identity on developing

other aspects of identity. It would be an interesting comparison with the identity development of Korean, Japanese and Chinese graduate students who have challenging language barriers.

In addition, common themes of identity development across various international graduate student groups might increase the awareness of higher education institutions to change policy, re-assign and increase resources, take initiatives, provide new services and programs to meet the needs of international students and increase institutional effectiveness and efficiency in supporting and educating them.

Conduct Research with Chinese Undergraduate Students

The last recommendation is to conduct research on identity development of Chinese undergraduate students. With a rapidly increasing Chinese undergraduate student population on American campuses in recent years, the need to understand their experiences and provide effective support for them increases. Even though coming from the same culture, Chinese undergraduate students differ greatly from Chinese graduate students. Their prior identity, developmental environment, and the interaction they have with their environment are all different from that of Chinese graduate students, so their experiences of identity development would differ accordingly. Is it easier for them to adapt socially and culturally because they are younger and therefore, have more flexibility in accepting new things? Is it more difficult for them to develop their academic identity because they have not developed academic values and beliefs as Chinese graduate students have before they come to the United States? Do they encounter more difficulties and challenges in developing logistical identity?

Research on the identity development of Chinese undergraduate students would not only provide understanding of the developmental process and outcomes of this student group, it would also provide comparison with identity development of Chinese graduate students. Common

themes are likely to be identified, but differences are more likely to be found. This will provide research evidence and support for higher education institutions to design and provide different supportive services and programs to meet the varied developmental needs of Chinese graduate and undergraduate students.

In summary, I have discussed nine aspects of major research findings in the first part of this chapter. Then, I have put forth five recommendations for educational practice, based on the discussion as well as the themes and findings in the previous chapter. At the end, I have presented six recommendations for future research that are related to identity development issues of Chinese graduate and undergraduate students as well as other groups of international graduate students.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have focused on the lived experiences of Chinese graduate students' identity development through a phenomenological study. By interviewing 15 participants at a Midwestern research university, I gathered rich qualitative data. Common themes emerged from analyzing the data of lived experiences of participants. A general contour has been depicted and presented to capture the essence of their identity development experiences. I have also engaged in extensive discussion of research findings in the last chapter of this dissertation, following the presentation of research findings and themes in a separate previous chapter. Based on the research findings and detailed discussion, I have made recommendations for both educational practice and future research, which I consider as part of the contribution that this research makes for higher education.

APPENDICES

Appendix One: Researcher's Identity in Detail

Before my first overseas experience, many factors had shaped my identity. Born as the first son, I had learned from an early age to take on family responsibilities. The sense of responsibility continued to grow and expand in later years of my life and shaped the person I have become. I lived in a poverty-stricken rural area in central China where I had to work for survival when I was young. Working against adversities fostered in me the qualities of hardworking, fortitude, resilience, and perseverance which are responsible for my success in later years. It also infused in me a sense of rejection, victimization, insecurity, fear, resentment, and anger, which became the backdrop of my personality.

The influence of schooling was also profound, transforming me from an average kid to a first-generation college student. I was successful in college, graduating with good grades and a multitude of honors and awards. I found immediate employment at the university as one of the high-achieving graduates. My college years laid a good foundation for me in terms of competence and confidence, helped me shape a positive academic identity as a capable student, and pointed to the professional direction that I have followed thereafter. During the same period of time, I gradually formed an achievement ideology with a strong drive to compete and succeed. Although I had achieved most of my career and life goals in general, I always felt a deep dissatisfaction and a divide that separated me from the essence of life, which I could not understand at the time.

It is clear to me that my identity had been continuously shaping and reshaping. My prior identity played a significant role in the process, but social and cultural environments also had a profound impact. As a doctoral student in the United States, I have been developing my identity along various dimensions, which include working to be a successful graduate student, an

emerging scholar, a good Chinese person, a Chinese man in the western culture, and a loving father among many other things.

My beliefs and values have guided me in what I do and how I prioritize my busy life. However, what I do is always contained and constrained in a specific social and cultural context. The differences between eastern and western cultures are often felt, and cultural clashing effects are a regular part of living. The longer I stay, the deeper it goes. I have had so much struggle and pain in adapting to the new culture and developing my identity along the way within the new cultural and social contexts.

One salient part of my identity relates to the role that I assume in my family. Familial roles demand a lot of physical, emotional, and psychological energy that is especially scarce in this pivotal period of my life. I study in a competitive doctoral program and have to work as a graduate assistant in order to finance my education. English is my second language but I am supposed to read and write as well as other colleagues who are English native speakers. I need to work twice as hard as them who are no less smart than I am. I also need to navigate through unfamiliar educational, social, and cultural systems, not only those related to study and work, but also those related to everyday life.

I have kept my son with me, looking after him as a single father for the last seven years. When exhausted after a demanding day, I have to prepare dinner, help him with schoolwork, read bedtime stories, and comfort him whenever he is in need. This experience has changed me profoundly and the impact can be felt on both personal and professional levels. In fulfilling familial responsibilities, I have also devoted time and energy to my wife far away in China, who is often pressured at work. I used to drive to Canada to apply for a visa nearly every year in order

to visit home each summer. Because I had not succeeded in getting a visa in Beijing before 2009, it was too risky for me to apply for a visa in China.

Additionally, I need to call my father, who has a heart condition, at least once a week, telling him everything is great here in the United States even though things are often quite rough. I have taken on all these tasks by myself mainly because of the sense of responsibility I had formed in the early years of my life. However, this has also taken a heavy toll on my physical health and psychological wellbeing. At several points of time, I felt that I had become so physically and psychologically exhausted that I was going to break down.

Another salient part of my identity development is about professional identity. I have studied in different disciplinary areas, worked in various jobs, moved to several places in China as well as overseas, and experienced distinct cultures in several continents. For a fairly long period of time, I had been thinking and exploring what I was going to do in my career that best suits me. After I studied in Australia, my desire to be an accomplished scholar in higher education had become so clear and strong that I committed myself to obtaining a terminal degree in a top program in the United States.

I was so determined that I had devoted my whole heart to this goal. In order to come to the United States, I had to overcome many obstacles that stood in my way, including applying for a student visa nine times in three countries to get here. My fighting spirit and strong will to win had proven once again its value. Even though my future career is still not certain, the doctoral program has prepared me well during the past eight years. I have taken every opportunity to learn, develop new skills, and grow as an emerging scholar. I am purposeful, committed, and willing to take on any tasks that help get myself better prepared.

Another component of my identity that I touch upon here is my racial and cultural identity. The time that I have spent overseas provided me many opportunities to look at this aspect of identity that I had never considered when I was in China. In moving from one country to another, I had experienced several cultural and social contexts in which I had to deal with the recurring issue of racial and cultural identity. Being a foreigner and “the other” has made me very sensitive to this part of me. I have been paying a lot of attention to what it means to be Chinese and to how I relate to my peers who share the same cultural heritage and to the members of other cultural groups in the new social and cultural contexts.

It is fortunate for me to have lived long enough in each country that I have visited to understand the distinct cultures and explore the societies quite extensively. During my stay in each country, I had the time to make friends and get close enough to understand their inner-most struggles of cultural adaptation and identity conflict. I have been fascinated by the ubiquitous, important, and complex nature of racial identity development among overseas Chinese, which is one of the reasons why I want to research identity issues of Chinese graduate students.

Studying in the United States has had a strong impact on my racial identity, too. The university where I am studying is a multicultural campus that welcomes and embraces people with various cultural backgrounds and heritages. One story that I love to tell is about my name. A lot of people want to know my Chinese name when I address myself as Hugo, the name I was given when I was in Australia. Some of my friends from China have had similar experiences of being asked for their Chinese names. We deem it as a sign that our culture has been acknowledged and respected. But at the same time, we feel somehow a sense of rejection of the new part of our self that we are developing in the new cultural context, which, to some degree, is indicated in our attempt of using an English name.

As I become more familiar with the new cultural environment, my defense level decreases to some extent, allowing me to scrutinize more objectively the strengths and weaknesses of my culture and myself. With a calm and peaceful mind, I have the time to observe and reflect on my own cultural and racial identity. In addition, I have also had the opportunity to experience and learn about other cultures on this multi-cultural campus. As my cultural awareness rises, I have begun to understand and accept that my culture is just one of the many cultures that should be appreciated and valued, not the only one or the very best one. This has increased my comfort in living with other people and my ability to appreciate the differences among our distinct cultures.

In the process of preparing and getting ready for conducting this dissertation research, I have taken several courses relating to identity development. I have also conducted two pilot studies with Chinese graduate students. This work has helped me understand better the complicated issues of identity development of Chinese graduate students, not least of my own. Being aware of people taking various pathways or approaches to developing their identity, I became more capable of separating my own experience from others', feeling less defensive and upset when I see some people from my racial/ethnic group acting and behaving in ways that I deem as inappropriate. My acceptance of my own racial/ethnic group has increased accordingly.

I have become more able to see people experiencing identity conflicts at different intensities at different times, and dealing with the conflicts very differently too. I feel like I am connected with my racial/ethnic group yet separate from it at the same time. I feel comfortable with the balance between the connectedness and separateness. I am also happy with the fact that I am able to speak up for my racial group at times that I think appropriate but keep quiet at other

times when I need to stay open to different viewpoints. I start to feel a strong sense of belonging and wellbeing as I live at ease with my groups and myself.

Appendix Two: Individual Profile of Participants

Profile of Participant Bo Zhao

Bo Zhao is 26-years-old, male, and third-year PhD student in Material Science. As the only child in the family, Bo grew up in a city in northeastern China. He lived in a middle-class family. Both his parents received a college education. His mother is a college teacher; his father is an engineer who works in a managerial position in a company. Bo's parents were very nurturing and supportive to him when he was little. They encouraged him to explore his interests and motivated him to follow his passion. They held high expectations, but never forced him to do anything. They influenced Bo profoundly through providing books for him to read, casual discussion about his study, and creating an enriching familial environment. Bo described it this way,

In the whole process, I had not worried about a thing. I used most of my energy on my study and the improvement of myself. I knew my parents were always behind me. They'd support me no matter what. I felt very secure. So I was willing to try new things. I am always willing to try new things. It does not matter what the result might be, but I am willing to try. I seldom set a limit for myself.

Bo had done well in school which gave him a lot of confidence. To him, getting a college education was a given. The question was not whether he would attend college, but where and which college to attend. After high school, he moved to Shanghai to attend a top university where he studied material science. Even though the major was not his first choice, he enjoyed it very much and did well academically. He had a minor in English too, because he had always been strong in the subject. Upon graduation in 2007, Bo came to study in his current PhD program. He has changed his focus of study a little, but it is still within the area of material

science. The choice he made was mostly out of his interest, but he also took into consideration the possibility of getting an offer and future job perspective.

Bo has made a smooth transition to the new cultural environment. His confidence and willingness to try new things has worked favorably for him. When he first arrived, he lived on campus where he found a lot of Chinese students along with many other international students. The community served him well through providing a comfortable environment and a cultural group for him to relate to. However, Bo lived there only for a year. He then moved to a residential area and lived with local Americans. He wanted to expand himself culturally through interacting and living with Americans who are different from him in many aspects. Bo said, “I wanted to get out of the small circle of students to learn more about American culture, see how Americans live, and meet average Americans.”

Bo has learned a lot about American society and culture through interacting with Americans in the neighborhood where he lives. He has also learned a lot through helping other students. He bought his car shortly after he arrived in the United States. Afterwards, some of his friends started to ask him to help them buy cars. Bo had met a lot of sellers, car dealers, and mechanics, talking, negotiating, and making deals with them. Bo said, “In helping friends, I have had many opportunities to interact with people outside the university and the neighborhood where I live. To me, it provides another contact point to American society.”

Bo worked as a teaching assistant in his first year. It was challenging in the beginning, because he had not had teaching experience, let alone teaching in English. All of sudden, he needed to teach in the lab, explain procedures, grade papers, tutor students, and help them with assignments, using his second language. Bo was not intimidated though. He proceeded with a can-do attitude and improved through doing. Bo said, “I felt pressured at the start, but I soon

realized that students only care if I could help them. I only needed to focus on helping them learn. After all, scientific language was not as difficult as I had thought.” In a month or so, Bo found that he was able to relate well with student through his patience, honesty, and easy-going manner. Bo felt that the teaching experience gave him a lot more confidence and helped him become more relaxed in interacting with Americans.

Bo has not had much struggle in his academic adjustment. Language has not posed much of a problem for him in his study. He could read papers and write assignments quite well in English. However, he did have a little difficulty with his study at first. Bo attributes it to the fact that he was pursuing a new area of study in material science, not what he had studied in China. With the help of his professors, he caught up very quickly and was able to put the picture together. After having completed most of his coursework, he directed his attention to research. Last year, he attended a conference with his advisor in order to meet people in the field and network in the professional community. He has done some experiments in the lab this year and is now preparing to present his research at another professional conference. Bo said, “I am making the transition from studying to conducting research, changing my role from a student to an emerging researcher.”

Bo attributed his easy adjustment and adaptation in the new cultural context to several factors. First, he is a person willing to try new things and take on challenges as a result of his upbringing. Because of this, he has had many opportunities to expand his cultural and personal horizons. Second, he had a goal to study in the United States early on, so he prepared himself well linguistically and culturally when he was in China. Therefore, he had an advantage to adapt quickly. Third, he attended a top university in Shanghai, enabling him to lay a good foundation

for academic achievement. He also met many foreign teachers at the university that he attended, who helped him prepare for living in a culturally diverse society.

Bo feels that he has experienced a lot of changes during his PhD program. Most noticeably, he has increased his ability to live with people who have different backgrounds. In addition, he has become more courageous and confident to face a new environment and challenges, because he has managed to live independently. Bo also feels that he has become more open-minded and receptive, able to see multiple perspectives and hear different viewpoints. He is more capable of engaging in critical thinking and has become less idealistic and dualistic in his worldview.

Bo feels that even though he has internalized a lot of cultural norms and values that are prevalent in American society, he has maintained his cultural core. He said, “I can’t change my core values that are deeply rooted within me because I grew up in China. It defines my cultural identity that I don’t want to change. It is not necessary for me to change it.”

Profile of Participant Fen Qian

Fen is 29-years-old, female, fourth-year PhD student, majoring in Media and Information Studies. She was the only child in her family that lived in a capital city in central-western China. Fen started to attend a boarding school when she was 12 years old, which helped her learn to be independent. She stayed in the boarding school for all of her secondary education. Having excelled in the National College Entrance Exam, Fen attended a top university in the same city and upon graduation, studied in a master's program for a year.

After she received an offer from an American university, she stopped her master's program and came to continue her academic pursuit in the United States. She then completed two master's programs in American Studies and Marketing and Communication in three years. Finding no job opportunity, she started her PhD program in 2006, moving from the south to the Midwest of the United States.

Fen attended good schools and a top university in China. She had formed a capable student identity as a result of her academic achievement. She said, because she considered herself as a top student, she wanted to study for advanced degrees in the United States. However, after several years of study in the United States, she had become more cautious about her definition of good students as well as her self-perception regarding her student identity. She said,

If we look at the test scores, I was a good student. I was seen that way because we over-emphasized test scores and student ranking in China. But every student has strength. We can't judge one as a good student or not only by test scores. There are many things that can't be measured by test scores but are important.

Fen's comment reflects that she has examined her self-perception of her academic identity as a good student during the course of her study in the United States. Because she has been

assessed differently in the United States, she learned to use a different set of criteria in self-assessment, which is much broader than the one she was used to. Additionally, she has also learned to use more internal assessment criteria, which reflects that her ideology of achievement has changed from competitiveness to self-mastery. She said, “As for now, I am content with what I do. If I want to do something, I know I can do it well. I can pose questions and know how to find answers for them, so I still consider myself as a capable student.”

Fen’s transition to the United States was not without pain. Even though she majored in English when she was attending college in China, she encountered language problems when she came to study in the United States. This was especially true in the first few months. For her, communicating in English was very difficult in daily life. At one time, her kitchen stove didn’t work. So she called her landlord. She was frustrated during the conversation, because she could not explain the problem to the landlord clearly.

In addition to language problem, Fen found that adjusting to a new way of living in the United States was difficult too and very frustrating at times, even though she had learned to be independent at a young age. For example, going shopping was not an enjoyable experience for her. Not understanding the store clerks who spoke with a strong accent was already difficult. Carrying many plastic bags full of groceries on a bus made her feel clumsy and awkward.

Challenges did not exist only in daily life though. They appeared in her academic work as well. Fen found that her reading was too slow. It was hard for her to catch up with her peers, which gave her a lot of pressure. She found that expressing her opinions in class discussion was very difficult and hard to overcome. Some courses that required background knowledge that she did not have were very challenging to her. She often worried about how to pass these courses.

Because of the heavy workload, she found herself busy with reading, writing papers, and doing projects.

Fen didn't enjoy her coursework as much as she had expected. It was not so much for the purpose of satisfying her intellectual interest and curiosity, but for the sake of finishing the courses and getting the credits. It took quite a while for her to learn how to organize and prioritize her work as she was trying to keep all the balls in the air. Fen found it very demanding to make satisfactory progress in her program, do assistantship work, maintain non-academic aspects of life, and navigate in a new cultural context.

Fen taught courses during the first two years of her PhD program as a graduate instructor. She later worked as a research assistant in her third and fourth years. She does not feel the arrangement worked well for her. Instead of helping her develop competence and confidence in teaching and research, she feels she has been pulled apart in various directions. She finds no connection among teaching, working for professors as research assistant, and taking courses. It is hard for her to find coherence in what she does. It seems to her that she has learned a lot from doing coursework and teaching, but does not know how to use what she has learned in her research.

She finds herself to be a "knowledge collector" and consumer. Being busy with teaching and coursework, she has not been able to explore her research interests, let alone conduct her own research project. She has not presented at professional conference, nor has she had publications, which frustrates her. Fen said, "If I had not worked as teaching assistant during the first two years but worked a research assistant instead, it might have turned out to be better." She feels that she needs to focus more on her research, but lacks the time, drive, and energy to do so.

Fen feels she has always been busy with coursework, teaching, and assisting in research work for her professors. Lacking a sense of accomplishment, she starts to question if what she has been doing is worthwhile at all. She becomes discontent with the sacrifices she has made and the imbalanced life she has been living. To some extent, she has lost passion for what she has been doing and does not want to think too much about long-term goals. She feels physically and psychologically exhausted, which has negatively affected the quality of her life. Overdrawing physically and psychologically has resulted in negative consequences in many facets including her study and her social life. Fen said,

I feel so exhausted that I want to sleep right away when I get home. I feel it is a luxury if I don't need to use my mind. I feel that it is the happiest thing in the world if I can get enough sleep. I used to have a lot of friends, but now I would say to them, "no time, no mood, don't bother me!"

Fen has an 11-month-old daughter. She had raised her single-handedly for the first seven months before she sent the baby to her parents in China. Fen's husband has been working in another state and could hardly help. It is a hard decision for Fen to send her baby away, but it is also hard for Fen to raise the baby on her own while she is studying in her PhD program. Without doubt, her pregnancy and the time she had spent on raising the baby has had an impact on her personal and professional growth, contributing to her feeling of exhaustion and lacking of drive in her study and social life.

She said it was impossible for her to do any academic work when she was taking care of the baby single-handedly. Fen needs emotional support to sustain her passion and energy, which is difficult to get because her husband is not with her. Meanwhile, with her baby being sent to her parents, she worries about them in China. Fen feels that she is supposed to take care of her

parents as she is the only child in her family, but she has asked help from her parents, which makes her feel guilty.

However, Fen is determined to continue her journey, leading to her terminal degree. She values the process of exploration and learning, which increases her self-understanding and self-development. Feeling grateful for the resources she now has, Fen wants to make full use of them to develop her professional competence. She also wants to have a sense of accomplishment that comes from the completion of her PhD. She hopes that she will have better life and career choices when she is finished. Furthermore, Fen's determination to complete also comes from her desires for leaving no regret for the future. She said, "One of the reasons that I keep going is that I need to see the result of so many years' effort. I don't mind how other people see me; but if I don't finish, I will regret."

Profile of Participant Jia Sun

Jia is 32-years-old, female, third-year PhD student in Accounting. She is married with a son who is only a few months old. Her husband works as a post-doctoral fellow at the same university that Jia attends. Jia grew up in a middle-sized city in central China, but attended a top university in northeastern China. Jia came to the United States as a spouse when her husband was pursuing his PhD. She started her master's program a year later. Upon graduation, she worked for a Japanese company and at the same time, passed the exams to be a certified accountant. Within a year, she started her PhD program. Jia enjoys her study very much and has a clear goal for her future.

As the only child in her family, Jia felt very much loved and lived a care-free life. Jia was very close to her mother and has kept a close relationship with her till today. She gets on the phone and talks to her mother almost every day. Jia said, "My mum is my dearest in this world, my closest friend who understands every aspect of me. She is very strong, and she is my role model." Jia is very proud of the fact that her mother became the head of a big factory in her early thirties and later on, had the courage to start her own company that engaged in international trade. Jia's mother has provided a good living for the family, but more importantly, showed Jia that a woman could be strong, independent, and successful. Jia's mother has influenced Jia's view of herself and what a woman can do. She is very proactive in what she does, and jokes that she "dictates" her husband in her family.

Jia has also received strong influence from her dad's side. Her grandmother was from a very rich family that owned vast areas of land in the Northeast China. The sons and daughters of the family were well educated and had high social status, but some of them were persecuted or killed when the People's Republic of China was established. The survivors had a hard time again

in the Cultural Revolution. Politically ostracized and oppressed, the family was strongly against the political system and the Communist Party. From early on, Jia picked up the message from the conversations at the dinner table and family gatherings. She said, “One of the reasons that I came abroad is because of political discontent. I wanted more freedom.”

When Jia was little, her grandmother kept telling her that she should aim high, pursue excellence, be outstanding, and become upper-class. Many people in her extended family have set up examples that they could work their way up without compromising their integrity in an oppressive society. Jia was impressed by one of her aunts who studied journalism at a top university but decided not to work for Xinhua News Agency. Instead, her auntie chose to be a artist of painting, because she didn’t want be a part of the system. Jia said, “I have learned that you can live your own life that is not determined by other people, that you can be yourself and have high and noble pursuit within the constraints of a social environment.”

Jia found her dreamed freedom and liberty in the United States. She said, “When I stepped off the airplane, I felt it was my home. Absolutely, it is my home! I would never go back to China.” Her decision to stay and her strong feeling of belonging motivates her to work very hard in order to learn and assimilate into the new culture. She said,

A lot of Chinese students are blind to the benefits of freedom that American society provides, or they take it for granted. But to me, it is a huge benefit. I feel so much freedom here. I feel I am free at last! Free from the prison. I will never go back to that prison!

Jia cherishes this new freedom and makes great use of it. She believes that her values are mostly in line with American values, so there is little conflict or struggle. She said she is more

than willing to get rid of those values that are inconsistent with the new cultural environment and is ready to replace them with American ones.

Coming as a spouse, Jia stayed at home as a housewife for a year which she found boring and unpleasant. She felt that she had lost her sense of self and couldn't find her self-worth, because her professional identity was lost and her independence was jeopardized. Even though, she joined conversation groups to improve her English and sought many volunteering opportunities to fit in, she still felt that she was out of place and lacked confidence when interacting with people. So she went for a master's degree in accounting which she considered as instrumental for her to re-establish herself in the United States.

Jia studied Japanese Literature and International Trade in China. However, she thought studying accounting was the most cost-effective in the United States, because it was the easiest for her to succeed in business school and it would provide a means for her to achieve her life goals.

Jia soon realized that she needed to have a PhD. With a master's degree in accounting, she probably could have a steady job with a desirable salary in a company as an accountant. But it would not provide the high social status that she wanted. She believed that getting a PhD and then becoming a tenured professor in her field was the quickest way to achieving both her economical goal and social goal. She then proceeded to apply for a PhD program in accounting but failed to get an offer. She persisted. Having worked for a Japanese company as a cost accountant and then passed the certified exams, she had added much weight to her second application. She became one of the two people chosen out of approximately one hundred applicants to the PhD program. Jia said, "I am so happy now. Everything has worked out for me!"

Achieving high social status is paramount for Jia. She wants to be a social change agent who makes a difference in society. She thinks she will have more political influence when she establishes herself in her field. Jia has explored new ways of expressing her political ideals since she arrived in the United States, but feels she has not been successful. Using a pseudonym, she wrote political articles and published them in a newspaper in Singapore. To her surprise, she received numerous “attacks” instead of support from people who held different political views.

She said, “Political pleading doesn’t work. I have to seek other ways. I will work hard to be a full professor, and then I will have more power. I might have a blog, so I can influence more Chinese people.” Additionally, Jia wants to influence more women through her career success and achieving high social status. She said, “I am going to write books to inspire women. I want to show them that they can be strong, successful, and independent.” She feels that woman should be given more support and social resources so they can succeed in the society and become role models for other women.

Jia admits that she is a little confused with her ethnic identity. It is hard for her to articulate what Chineseness means to her. She does not belong to Han, which is the dominant group in China, but instead, belongs to Man, an ethnic minority group that ruled China in Qing dynasty. As a member of a small ethnic group, Jia said she is culturally marginalized too, though to a lesser degree, compared to political marginalization. She has not had a chance to learn the language, culture, or tradition of her ethnic group. Instead, she has been immersed in Han culture and tradition. She said, “I have never felt that I am a part of Han. I felt that I was different from my classmates in china. I feel the blood in my vein is different.” She once visited the land in northern China where the Man group resides and had a profound feeling that her root was there.

Jia finds it is difficult to define her Chineseness in the United States, because she was somehow culturally uprooted as a member of an ethnic minority in China. When she searches for the meaning as a Chinese person in the United States, she finds culturally, nothing strong enough for her to hold on to. To her disappointment, she finds very little Confucian cultural influence in Chinese student groups from mainland China. Instead, she sees more of the Confucian tradition in Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese students. She attributes this cultural deprivation of mainland Chinese student groups to the destroying of tradition and heritage under the ruling of the Communist Party that has lasted for more than half a century.

She laments that overseas Chinese can't find cultural linkage with the new generation from mainland China who grow up in a tradition- and culture-deprived modern era. She resonates with a Chinese professor at Princeton who once said that wherever he goes, his China goes with him, "It is the bamboo garden in front of my house, not the motherland I dream of day and night, which has been destroyed and no longer exists."

Being both politically and culturally marginalized in China, Jia feels at home in the United States. She doesn't believe she has experienced any racial discrimination. Instead, she feels that she is somehow privileged as a racial minority. She said Americans are far more tolerant than Chinese—Americans allow Chinese to build so many China towns in the country, but it would not have happened the other way around—there would never be an Italian town in Beijing. She appreciates the fact that diversity is embraced and multiculturalism practiced in the United States. She believes individual ability is the key to success. Those who fail to move upward have no one but themselves to blame.

Jia believes she has undergone many changes since she came to the United States, with the biggest one being that she has learned to think critically and think on her own. She said she

could not think critically when she was in China, because there was no accurate and reliable information in the first place. Secondly, different voices and opinions were discouraged, ignored, and silenced over there. So she had not learned that important skill. She feels very different in the United States where critical thinking is encouraged and valued. She has learned this from media, classrooms, and daily interaction with other people. She said,

Have a look at the *New York Times*. There are so many different voices in it. See also Fox News, they always bring various perspectives to an issue. Only through debate, we can find truth. Like in our paper, we need to critique this and that to learn critical thinking skills.

Another big change is that she feels more relaxed in the United States, because she does not feel pressured to do anything. She said,

There is a lot of peer pressure that pushes you to do this or that in China. People judge you by the clothes you wear or the car you drive, so you are confined to external standards and expectations. But here, you can do whatever you want. It is totally your personal preference.

Jia feels that when she is relaxed, she starts to have the luxury to find and develop her self. She finds that she refers to her internal standards more often and is able to align what she does with what she truly values. She feels much happier about herself and her life. She said,

I don't need to judge myself against other people. No need to do this. Instead, I can focus on my own goals and work to achieve these goals, for example, to be a good citizen, instead of driving a certain car to show I am better than the next person.

Jia feels that she has benefited very much from her advisor who is from India. Her advisor's cross-cultural experience and cultural sensitivity have worked to her advantage. Jia said, "He understands Asian culture and has the ability to anticipate cultural issues that you might have. His guidance is far better than what a white advisor can give me." At one time, Jia was told, "Go and spend five hundred dollars to do an accent reduction in the summer!" Jia said she would have never done that if her advisor had not told her, even though she knows she needs to improve her English. Jia feels it is important to internationalize faculty in order to create a welcoming and international-student-friendly campus that facilitates international students' cultural adaptation, integration, and overall development and growth.

Profile of Participant Jie Li

Jie is 31-years-old, female, first-year student in MBA program. She grew up as the only child in her family in a small city in southeastern China. She was a top student in local schools and attended a university in a capital city in southwestern China. After her graduation, she taught at a four-year college in the south for a year before she moved back to her alma mater where she earned a master's degree in accounting. She then moved to a booming city in the south, working for a big insurance company for three years. She came to the United States as a spouse in 2007 when her husband was pursuing his PhD. In 2009, Jie started her master's program in a business school at the university where her husband was attending.

Jie's transition was not easy at all. Being a successful professional in China, she found that the life in the United States was very different and difficult. The contrast was so drastic that she described the adjustment as being "very painful" and making her feel that she "doesn't want to live." She was frustrated by her inability to communicate in English, which negatively affected her self-confidence. She was not prepared for the language difficulty she encountered. She thought her English was okay, because she did well in her English classes and had an average score in TOFLE test in China. Jie reflects on her initial experience and feelings of shock, "I never knew that my English was so poor until I came. I couldn't even understand the staff that was helping me at the airport, let alone the recorded prompts when I was making a phone call."

Unfortunately, her English did not improve very much after her arrival, which negatively affected her adjustment experience. She felt her wings clipped and became socially withdrawn. Jie comments, "I did not want to go outside to meet people. If I had to, I would let my husband talk. I felt very bad, because it became such a challenge that I had changed to be a different person." Jie had a much heavier blow when she was trying to pass the TOFEL test for her MBA

program. She failed the test six times, which made her life miserable. With each failure, she was getting closer to her psychological breaking point. However, she did not give up. Her upbringing and life experience told her the importance of perseverance. Finally, she made it on her seventh attempt.

Jie had a short relief when she was admitted into the MBA program. Then she plunged into her busy schedule after the semester started. Her English was still a hindrance, even though she spent a lot of time on it. She continued to vigorously push herself to improve and spoke up when she had the opportunities. However, teamwork was very challenging for her and went beyond language issue itself. Jie found the learning environment was not very welcoming and encouraging to her and other international students. Her American teammates always kept a distance from her and discouraged her from making contribution in team projects.

In group discussion, she was seldom listened to, given credit, or respected, even though she knew the subject matter very well. Jie said, “They are not willing to pay attention to us. They ignore us. They don’t think we know anything. They interject frequently and cut us off abruptly when we speak.” Jie persisted in many occasions, trying to say whatever she had to say; but the attitude and reaction from her American colleagues made her feel excluded and that she does not belong.

Jie feels it is more difficult to deal with when discrimination comes from the professors. It makes her feel vulnerable and powerless. Jie mentioned a professor who made demeaning remarks about international students in class when more than twenty international students were present. It was damaging because she believed it was intentional and blatant. Jie said, “He said that the current economic recession was caused by China, and this and that, and said it was a joke at the end, but none of us believed it was a joke. He did it intentionally. Very annoying.” Jie and

her Chinese peers felt upset and offended. They reported it to the department, hoping someone would intervene. To their dismay, the department did nothing with the professor. Jie and her peers were even more frustrated when they learned that this professor had been working in the college for seven years and kept doing the same thing every year.

Jie's experience in her program has had an impact on how she feels about the cultural environment and how she might fit into the host society in the future. She feels it is hard for her to be accepted, valued, and affirmed as who she is. It is also hard for her to overcome the cultural barriers that exist between her and American colleagues who are not willing to accept her. Jie said, "Interaction with Americans is on the surface. They are not willing to get close, not willing to become friends with you. They don't care about you." Sometimes Jie pushes herself to join their conversation and tries hard to understand their jokes, but they seem to have no interest in getting her involved. Jie's experience with Americans is very limited outside her program. Her perception is that it is hard for her to fit in no matter how hard she tries. She projects that it will be the same when she gets to the workplace if she stays in the United States.

Jie plans to go back to China in the future. She thinks it might be good for her to work in the United States for a few years to gain some experience, but she and her husband will return China in the end. Jie said, "Even if I buy a house here, I will still feel it is only a place to live and sleep, not a home. I will not feel at home in this house, in the community, in this country." Jie believes she will never find the close-knit human relationship in the workplace in the United States that she had enjoyed so much in China, which affects her decision on where she will work and live.

Profile of Participant Jun Zhou

Jun is 30-years-old, female, fourth-year PhD student, majoring in teacher education. She is married to her husband who has earned a master's degree in the United States and now works for an American company. As the only child in the family, Jun grew up in a province in central China. Even though she was from a middle-class family, she didn't have a playful and happy childhood. Her parents were very strict with her and pushed her to achieve in school. They held a high expectation over her that she felt she would never satisfy her parents no matter how hard she tried. Jun said, "They were never happy with what I had achieved. When I had a high test score, they'd say my ranking was not high enough. When I received a high ranking, they'd say my test score was not high enough."

Jun studied computer science in college. But she did not like it. She felt it was her parents' choice, not hers. When she was considering graduate school, her parents wanted her to continue in a computer science program. Jun didn't like the idea, feeling that everything in her life had been arranged by her parents. So she wanted to decide by herself this time. Having taught English while she was an undergraduate student, she thought she was good at language. Therefore, she chose to study linguistics and earned a master's degree. In 2005, Jun came to the United States to continue her academic pursuit in linguistics. As she proceeded, she found she didn't like the program very much. Having consulted with her professors and explored the possibilities, Jun transferred to a PhD program in teacher education in 2006.

Jun's experience in her PhD program is a mixed one. Jun likes the program. She enjoys the courses that she has taken and the self-exploratory journey that she has embarked upon. However, some courses have challenged her, which brings her both excitement and uneasiness.

For example, one of the courses asks students to address an issue of the rights of illegal immigrants. Jun finds it takes her breath away. She said,

We were asked if we would give permission to immigrant students to join a protest for their rights. If we do, how do we explain their absence to the rest of the class? I was struck by this question, because protesting is illegal in China, and they are protesting for their rights as illegal immigrants. And we are giving permission to the kids to join illegal protest and justifying their participation! I thought that it was too much. If I kept learning like this, my mind would go wild. I would have a difficult time if I go back to China. I felt fearful to be too open-minded.

Jun finds that some of her beliefs, values, and assumptions have become barriers to her learning in the new cultural context. She feels that she has refused a lot of things that are new to her because of her false assumptions and mis-education. It was hard for her to open her mind initially to let new ideas filter in. At one time, she was challenged in class to think if her body was disadvantaged in some ways. It was not easy for her to make the connection between the concepts of prejudice, discrimination, and oppression and her daily experiences, because she had never been taught to see things that way.

She had always been self-blaming for the lack of self-discipline in her lifestyle, but never thought that society might have contributed to her emotional stress and her obesity. She later realized that the difficulty she had encountered in China when she was trying to buy clothes could be an indication of discrimination. However, it was still a leap for her to recognize the oppressive nature of her dad's action when he put a sign that read "Being fat is a shame!" at her bedside.

Jun finds that the lack of background knowledge and training in the discipline creates problems for her. She feels that academic writing is not the only issue of English, but her discipline has its specific terminology and patterns to express ideas, which makes her struggle even more in her writing. Jun commented, “Every discipline has a certain way of addressing problems, its own knowledge tree, and its own audience. If you don’t know this, you would not be able to write properly. But you have no way of knowing this beforehand.” Jun also finds that the terminology confuses her at times. She feels very embarrassed when she uses some technical terms incorrectly in the classroom.

Despite of the difficulties, Jun feels her choice to study in the PhD program is right one. She agrees with her cohort peers when they say, “You are going on an exploratory journey that you explore yourself more than anything else.” Jun has enjoyed the journey of examining, challenging, discovering, and developing her self. However, she is torn between following her inner call and meeting the expectations of other people who are close to her. She feels bad when her husband keeps saying that her study is useless and that she will never find a job when she finishes. She feels a lack of self-worth when she compares herself with the members of her husband’s family, who keep asking why it takes so long for her to complete her PhD. Jun sighs, “You can’t just be yourself, because you are somebody else’s wife, daughter, niece, or cousin at the same time. You are a part of a social network.”

Even though Jun is studying in a very top PhD program, she lacks self-confidence in her academic competence. She is very worried about her dissertation even though she is not at that stage yet. She is also very worried about her job prospects, believing that no one will want to hire her. She believes that not getting a scholarship from her department is a sign that she is not as good as other students in her program. Even though Jun is very active in seeking the opportunity

to teach and to work in a research project with her professors, she has been turned down many times. She feels disappointed, concluding that it is because of her incompetency and incapability.

Jun is eager to prove and affirm her self-worth through external evidence, but tends to dismiss the evidence when it presents. She has saved the money her parents gave her and worked in a bakery to self-support in order to prove that she was no less capable than others. She has found an assistantship job at the writing center helping other students with their writing. But she attributes it to her luck instead of her writing ability and other qualifications. Jun has been hired to teach by two departments at a nearby community college. She has received very good feedback on her teaching. Students like her so much that they buy her many gifts at the end of the semester. Even though Jun enjoys her success in teaching, she somehow depreciates her experience at the community college, saying that it has less value than what her peers have in their teacher education program. Not feeling affirmed has an impact on how Jun sees herself and her integration in her PhD program.

Jun does enjoy working with students in the community college though. She has found teaching is enjoyable and rewarding, affirming a part of her self. She feels very happy and a sense of accomplishment when she receives positive feedback and appreciation from her students. Jun has also felt affirmed when she works at a refugee development center in the local community. She is glad that she has been helpful to the refugees at the center. At the same time, she feels that she has learned so much from the people she works with, which is very rewarding and satisfactory to her. She has also found that she becomes more appreciative and grateful as a result of working at the refugee center. She feels affirmed when she sees her personal qualities of perseverance and willingness to work hard manifested and reflected in the refugees who are struggling for a better life in a new country.

Profile of Participant Han Wu

Han is 24-years-old, female, first-year master's student in Human Resources. She grew up as the only child in a middle-class family in a capital city in northern China. Han's parents both worked full-time and provided a very stable familial environment for her. They encouraged her to be independent from an early age and to form a good habit of doing things. From her parents, Han learned to work hard, be self-reliant, and make decisions for herself. She attended college in another province and decided in her junior year to study overseas. A year after her graduation from college, she came to begin her study in her current program in the United States.

Han experienced adjustment difficulties when she first arrived. The problems that she encountered were more than she had expected. English language was the most apparent. It seemed that what she had learned in China was hardly enough for her to handle the daily tasks that she faced. She found it was especially hard to follow American peers when they spoke in group discussion. She felt very embarrassed at times. Han commented, "They spoke very quickly. Before I realized what they were saying, they had stopped and finished." Therefore, she barely understood group discussion, which hindered her learning. It was also difficult for her to express herself in English in class. She often found it very difficult to translate her thinking from Chinese into English.

In addition to her difficulty with language, Han also experienced cultural barriers in her adjustment. For example, she felt unsure about how to get along with American professors and peers. She was puzzled by some behaviors of her American peers and felt lost when she tried to figure them out. At one time, her American teammates failed to attend a group meeting without letting her know in advance. She felt very frustrated, because she could not understand her teammates' behavior. She wondered if she had done something wrong or her American

teammates had prejudice over her that caused them to treat her that way. After she talked to a friend who had come to the United States for a longer time, she felt even more frustrated. She was told that Americans would pay more attention to themselves than to their team, which was different from the preconception she had about Americans. Han said, “I thought Americans value teamwork; but in reality, it is not the case. They put themselves first, which is frustrating.”

Han tried hard to improve her English. She spent a lot of time enhancing her listening comprehension. She used various strategies that she considered as effective. She said, “I took advantage of every opportunity to improve. I often watched news broadcasting such as CNN news. That helped me follow lectures in class.” In order to increase her ability to understand informal conversation, she used a computer lab in her department where she often found American students working together on group projects. She sat there listening and trying to understand their discussion without disturbing them. It seems the strategy worked for her. She made noticeable improvement in her English in a few months.

To her disappointment, Han has not found a way to make friends with Americans. She feels that she could not understand their jokes; neither could she relate to the things that they are interested in discussing. She finds that it is hard for her to enter into their circle and become a part of their group. There is always a distance that she feels uncomfortable with but finds impossible to bridge. She wants to enjoy close friendships with Americans like she does with her Chinese friends, but she has not been able to make it happen. She said, “It feels weird that Americans treat you well if you are a stranger to them, but if you become their friend, you can’t feel the closeness and warmth anymore. You can’t make real friend with them.”

Han feels that there is a hidden racial discrimination in American society. She had experienced subtle discrimination on the plane she was on coming to the United States. She

observed that whites got served before people of color by the airline attendants. Her casual conversation with her friends confirmed her observation. At one time, one of her friends who stayed in a hotel learned that only the white person in his group had received extra service. But Han is happy that she has seldom experienced racial discrimination on campus. She feels her advisor and professors treat her not differently than with other students.

Han has increased her racial and ethnical awareness through her cross-cultural experience in the United States. In her interaction with Americans, she feels she needs to stand tall no matter what other people might say about China. She feels it is normal that some Americans are interested in China while others are not, but she needs to be proactive in interacting with Americans. In some occasions, Han feels that she has strong feelings toward China that she did not have before. For example, at one time, a NBA player came to her college and talked about the potential Chinese market for the NBA. When he mentioned Chinese history and culture, Han found that a strong sense of pride and patriotism arose inside her that she had never felt when she was in China.

Han feels that she has become more mature since she came to study in the United States. She became stronger as she dealt with many difficulties she encountered in her study and her life in general. She became more able to face life challenges. She said, "If I was given a new task in the past, I would feel afraid and doubt if I could do it. But now, I do not feel scared. I know I can handle it. One step at a time, I will solve it." In addition, Han feels that she is more willing to help people whom she does not know. Her attitude toward strangers has changed because she met many people who don't know her but are willing to help her.

Han plans to go back to China when she finishes her study. Finding no sense of belonging, she feels she is an outsider of American society. She said, "My home is in China. If I

can't adjust well here, I don't have to stay. I am always thinking of going back to China." Han foresees a lot of difficulties lying ahead if she stays in the United States. She said "It is hard to get a work visa. Even if I get it, there are many constraints for my career development and advancement. My future is very limited here. Going back to China is a better choice for me in the long run."

Profile of Participant Hao Zheng

Hao is 27-years-old, male, second-year master's student, majoring in Statistics. As the only child in his family, he grew up in a capital city in eastern China. Hao's father worked for the local government as a public servant and his mother worked as a school teacher. Together they provided Hao a middle-class familial environment. Both of his parents emphasized the importance of education and wanted him to perform in school. Hao's mother was very strict with him. She pushed him to study hard for good grades. Hao's father was less strict, but he also wanted Hao to do well in school in order to get a good job in the future.

Hao studied biology in college in the same city where he lived with his parents. Upon graduation, he found a job in pharmaceutical company in Shanghai. He worked there for two years as a salesperson, which had a profound impact on him. He had learned people skills, persuasion strategies, persistence, and to take initiative. Even though he did well in his work, Hao did not see a promising future in his career that would satisfy him. So he decided to quit his job and come to study in the United States, fulfilling a dream that he had held for a long time. Hao came to his current program in 2008. He had chosen statistics as his major, which he perceived as having a good job prospective in the United States. Hao said, "Studying statistics is for practical reasons, not because I like it. Combined with my background in biology, it would be good for me to do bio-statistics in the future, which would help me find a good job."

Hao did not have much trouble in making the transition to his new cultural environment. His work experience as a salesman had given him a lot of confidence in facing new challenges. He was not afraid of talking to people and asking for help when he needed. He would ask for clarification and articulation in his communication with other people when he did not understand; therefore, English seemed less problematic to him. Hao was also lucky to have a family friend, a

professor at the university to help him settle down when he first arrived. Hao said, “I felt very good when the professor came to the airport to pick me up. I’d feel different if I had to get to the university by myself and settle down on my own.” In addition, Hao has two uncles who have lived in the United States for many years. Hao was able to talk with them over the phone from time to time and get their advice on the issues that he faced in his adjustment. Hao feels good that he has people to turn to, should any problem arise.

However, Hao did experience difficulty in adjusting to his studies. He felt overwhelmed in the first semester. Because he had worked for two years before he began his master’s program, he needed time to re-adjust to the rhythm of student life. It was also because he needed to adjust to a new educational system. As the semester started, he felt he was put on a fast lane right away and he had to proceed at a speed that was not comfortable for him. There was a lot of homework each day. There also were frequent quizzes that created extra pressure for him. He studied as hard as he could, but did not do as well as he wanted. Hao somehow started to doubt himself, wondering if he could make it through. He had attributed his low performance to his lack of a strong mathematical foundation. Hao said, “It was tough, really difficult. It seemed I had forgotten all mathematics. I started to question my decision to come here and thought of quitting and going back home.”

But Hao persisted. He told himself that it was his decision to come to study in the United States and that he should stick to it no matter how difficult it might be. He was not the kind of person who ran away from his problems. Besides, he had gone through great effort and had given up his job in order to come to study. He simply could not quit. Hao said, “I started to calm down and stopped panicking. I compared myself with some of my classmates who came here as a spouse and with no background in mathematics. If they can succeed, why can’t I?” Hao resolved

to stay calm and work on his problems. He sought help from his professors, classmates, and friends. They encouraged him and helped him overcome his difficulties.

Hao has many Chinese classmates in his cohort who form a close circle among themselves. They take classes together, work in group after class, and help each other in their studies. They have also formed a self-contained social group that provides support for students who face difficulties. Hao has found this group to be very helpful to him, especially during the time when he was struggling with his academic adjustment. However, he has also found that he was too confined by the group, which led to his slow cultural learning and adaptation. He has given up opportunities to talk and make friends with Americans because of the convenience of the Chinese group. He has seldom ventured out. Hao said, “We stay together so much that we seldom get out of the group. As a result, we have not improved our English very much; neither have we learned American culture.”

Hao has a strong sense of Chineseness. He recognizes that Americans might not pay attention to it, but he considers it necessary for Chinese students to maintain a good image. Hao said, “Chinese students have to work hard and mind what they do. We can’t let other people look down upon us. We have to keep a good image in front of Americans.” Hao does not just talk the talk, but walks the walk too. He strives to be as honest as possible in his interactions with other people and be responsible for whatever he does. Hao thinks it is not just an issue for him as an individual, but it is also important for the whole Chinese group. It is unacceptable for him to take shortcut or do things that damage the good image of Chinese group.

Hao feels that he has become more independent as a result of studying in the United States. Even though he had worked and lived in a different city away from his parents when he was in China, Hao feels that living in the United States demands a higher level of independence

and self-reliance. He does not have the kind of guidance, support, and care that he used to have from his parents, teachers, or supervisors, so he has to learn to make decision on his own and manage life by himself. In addition to making academic progress, he has to take care of himself and deal with many challenges associated with living in a foreign country. Consequently, he has learned so many things in the past two years that he could not have imagined before. The learning that happens outside of the academic arena is very important to Hao as it makes him a more self-reliable, independent, and resilient person.

Hao plans to stay in the United States after he finishes his studies. He is taking his last course this semester; so he has more time for himself. He wants to take some certification exams in order to better prepare for the job market. But somehow he lacks a strong motivation to take action. Hao finds that he is wandering around without focusing on his goal. He has spent a lot of time surfing online recently, sometimes so late at night that it affects his next-day's work. Hao said, "I don't know why, but it seems I have lost motivation all of sudden. I can't focus on my studies as I used to. But I have to re-focus and work hard, because I am running out of time."

Profile of Participant Linli Wang

Linli is 29-years-old, male, fourth-year PhD student in Civil Engineering. He grew up in a remote rural mountainous area in southwestern China. In order to support the family, his father left home and worked on a cargo ship as a temporary worker. His mother looked after Linli and his sister while she farmed on small plots of arable land. Both his parents did not have much education, but they wanted their children to do better than they did. When Linli entered middle school, his mother was determined to transfer him and his sister to a better school because she worried about the low quality of the education they were receiving. It cost the family a fortune, but Linli and his sister successfully moved to a better school in the city. His mother moved with them and sold vegetables at a stand in an open market to make ends meet. Three of them crowded into a small rented room.

The move was essential for Linli. He not only had better teachers in the new school, he began to work hard in his studies. His mother's determination and sacrifice had touched him deeply. He felt he could not afford to let his mother down, because his mother did everything possible for him and his sister. He became very focused on his studies and determined to succeed. In a short period of time, Linli turned himself from an average student to a top student. Because of his academic performance, he was accepted by a key high school that was reserved for high-achieving students in the region. Though faced with fierce competition, Linli did great academically in the key high school. Later on, he excelled in the National College Entrance Exam and was admitted to a top university in northwestern China where he studied civil engineering. He continued his study in the same discipline in graduate school when he moved to a cosmopolitan city in northern China. Upon graduation, Linli came to study in his current PhD program in the United States in 2006.

Linli possesses many qualities that lead to his academic success despite that odds were stacked against him. As a kid who lived in a humble family in a rural area, he was disadvantaged in many ways. By having his mother as his role model, he learned to be courageous, assertive, persistent, hard-working, and focused. These personal qualities have had a positive impact on his cross-cultural experience as he embarked on his new academic endeavor in the United States. He was willing to take on challenges no matter how big they seemed, because life had taught him first-handedly, “If it does not kill you, it makes you stronger.” Meanwhile, Linli has found that his introversive personality, low self-esteem, and lack of people skills have impacted his experiences too. As he proceeded in his program, Linli felt the necessity to work on his personal limitations and develop himself more broadly along dimensions outside his professional competence. Linli said, “I am still below average in terms of dealing with human relations. I have been trying to improve myself, but I am still lagging behind.”

In his transition to the new environment in the United States, the first obstacle Linli encountered was the English language. It was not so much a problem in his studies as it was in his daily interactions. He often could not communicate effectively. He felt he was awful in his speaking ability and listening comprehension. Linli said, “I went shopping at Meijer. I did not understand when the check-out staff asked for my zip code. I stared at her and tried to figure out. I just could not get it until my friend helped me.” Fortunately, Linli did not feel English language was such a problem in his studies. He was very strong academically and had studied in civil engineering for his bachelor’s and master’s degrees, so he was very confident in his academic competence.

Linli often could not understand his professors in class. This did not bother him too much because he followed lectures most of the time by educated guess and the formulas that were

written on blackboard or overhead transparency. So his academic performance was not negatively affected by his language deficiency. However, Linli did find that he had to improve his English, because it was extremely difficult for him to do oral presentation. He has no doubt that his English would hinder his professional performance in the future if he does not try hard to improve.

Linli stayed focused on his studies and did not venture out very much in his first year. He kept his social interactions to a minimum. After the arrival of his wife in his second year, Linli's social circle enlarged. At the same time, Linli felt his English language, introversive personality, and lack of people skills were increasingly troublesome for him. He started to take opportunities to develop himself in these areas. He tried to make friends with Chinese students in his department and often invited them over to his place for dinner. He took advantage of a friendship program and connected with an elderly American couple who became a resource for him to learn more about American culture.

He had also volunteered on many occasions to increase his opportunities to interact with more people. Last year, Linli took a significant step and ventured into a professional organization for engineers. He started to attend their meetings regularly. He found that he learned so much that he could not get in his PhD program. Linli said, "I have exposed myself to those engineers in a professional atmosphere. I have changed a lot through interacting with them and hearing what they have to say about their work and the problems they face."

Linli knew how important it was to maintain a good relationship with his advisor who not only played a vital role in guiding him in his academic pursuit, but more importantly, hired him as a research assistant, which provided financial means for him to support himself. Linli was fully aware of the cost if the relationship deteriorated, so he worked very diligently to avoid any

problems that might rise. However, Linli approached his advisor as he did in China, expecting him to act in his best interest. His assumptions had not been challenged until conflict of interests became apparent in the relationship. Linli was shocked and felt betrayed when his advisor denied his dissertation proposal a couple of days before his defense of the proposal. He was told that the proposed project was not sufficient for a dissertation and was asked to change to another project in order to work with a newly hired junior faculty. Linli was devastated.

Linli could have said no and walked away. He had the choice to graduate and get a master's degree at that time. He also had the choice to transfer to another university. However, he decided that running away was not an option for him. He had to face the problem and deal with it. Linli said, "I can't run away. The same thing might happen in the workplace in the future. If I keep running away from problems, I will not be able to achieve success in my career and life." So Linli agreed to change his research topic and re-write his dissertation proposal, even though it meant that he had to work on a totally new project and that he had to prolong his program. Linli tried to treat it as a learning opportunity for him and grew stronger as a result.

Linli plans to work in the United States for a few years after he obtains his PhD. He then will go back to China and work in the southwestern region where he grew up. He believes that what he has learned in the United States will be useful for the remote mountainous area where civil engineers are desperately needed. Linli said, "I am the only one that has had the opportunity to study overseas in the entire high school that I had attended. I need to go back and use my expertise to serve the people who need me the most."

Profile of Participant Ming Feng

Ming is 27-years-old, female, fourth-year PhD student in Chemical Engineering. She lived in a small city in southern China before she was eight years old. Then she moved with her parents to the capital city of the same province. Her parents both worked as professionals in order to support a middle-class household. As the only child in the family, she had almost anything she wanted. Rui's parents valued education and were very strict with her schooling when she was little. But they changed parenting styles from authoritative to democratic as she grew older. Ming then was able to discuss many things with them and make her own decisions. Ming attended a key high school that had top-notch facilities and teachers, which provided her rich learning experience. She excelled in the National College Entrance Exam that enabled her to attend a top university in a cosmopolitan city in northern China. Upon graduation in 2006, Ming came to study in her PhD program in the United States.

Ming had a strong interest in chemistry in high school. She liked doing experiments in the lab. She was encouraged by her parents and teachers to further her study in this field. They believed it would suit her as a female and lead to a promising career in the future. So Ming studied chemical engineering in college. She enjoyed it very much and succeeded in a very strong program. She continued her study in the same area in her PhD program. She believes she has equal intellectual capacity to compete with male colleagues in the field, but she is concerned that as a female, she would be disadvantaged in the workplace because of the responsibilities associated with marriage, family, and children. In addition, Ming has been concerned about what she has been doing in the lab which constitutes a big part of her work. She said, "We have to use a lot of chemicals. I have worries over the effect it might have on my health, because I will have children in the future." Even though Ming has mixed feeling, she does not want to change her

major. She feels that she has invested so much in it. After all, she has no idea what else she would like to do.

Ming has a strong sense that she is a good student, because she has been doing great along the way in schools and in college. She is very confident in her intellectual capability and her academic competency, which has a positive impact on her adjustment experience in the United States. Ming had some difficulties in her academic adjustment during the first semester of her PhD program. It was hard for her to work as a graduate instructor at first because she did not have any teaching experience before that. She also felt overwhelmed by the difficult courses she was taking and by so many assignments that were time-consuming. In addition, she was pressured to catch up very quickly because she would need to pass a high-stake qualifying exam at the end of the first year.

However, she was not panicky. Instead, she stayed calm and focused, putting all her energy into her studies. By the time of the mid-term, she felt she was on the right track. Ming said, “It was hard, but my confidence was still there. I compared myself with my classmates from India and the United States and found they were in a similar situation. I knew I was not the worst, and I only needed to go through the process of adjustment.”

Ming had worked as a teaching assistant and instructed students on her own in her first year. It was not an easy task for her, even though her English was not bad. She had not taught courses before, let alone in her second language. She felt very nervous when she stood in front of the class and could not speak in whole sentences. It seemed very hard for her to get the ideas through to her students. As a result, students’ feedback was negative, which was very frustrating for her. Some students became unfriendly and hostile toward her. At one time during class break, Ming attempted to join a group of students in the hallway, hoping to strike up a friendly

conversation. A student told her to back off and said they did not like her. Even though she felt embarrassed and frustrated, Ming did not take it too personally. She said, “It was a little frustrating, but I did not take it as a big deal. If the students did not like me, I accepted that. If I had a teacher who was barely able to teach, I might have reacted the same way.”

Ming focused mostly on her studies in her first year, so she did not have much of social life. Her interaction with people was limited to her colleagues in the lab and her fellow students. They were mainly Chinese. She lived on campus for two years and found a large group of Chinese students that she could easily relate to. From time to time, Ming and her friends got together on the weekends, eating, talking, and relaxing. She liked to watch sports and read novels in Chinese as a pastime. Ming said, “I admit that all my friends are Chinese except my boyfriend who is American. But he is not a typical American. He does not see it as strange when I eat Chicken claws.” Ming had never gone to Church and was very resistant to religious teachings. Ming said, “What they believe is not allowed to be questioned, disputed, or tested, and what they preach cannot be scientifically proven either. So I am very resistant and have no interest in it.”

Ming asserts it is important for Chinese students to keep their own cultural traits and characteristics. It does not hurt for them to adapt to the new cultural context in their own way. In so doing, they are also able to influence their cultural environment. Ming sees it as advantageous to have a self-contained Chinese student group. Her personal experience testifies that the group gives newcomers a sense of belonging. Ming said, “I would have felt lonely if there were no Chinese group. This is a group that I relate to culturally. It does not matter if you have friends in it. What matters the most is the feeling of cultural belonging.” However, Ming also realizes that the group has a negative impact on her cultural learning and adaptation. For example, Ming

seldom interacts with students from other nations or cultural backgrounds, which prevents her from expanding her cultural horizons.

Because she cannot wait for her parents or her teachers to help her with decision-making as she did in China, Ming feels that she has to make a lot of decisions on her own and learn to live with the consequences of those decisions in her cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation. She calls her parents sometimes and discusses the issues she faces, but their advice is more of emotional comforting than of practical value and relevance. Learning to be self-responsible has given her a strong sense of independence, empowerment, and confidence. Ming said, “You can put me anywhere in the world, I know I can adapt to it. I know how to start and do the necessities. This is the biggest change that I have had, the increased ability to adapt, be self-reliant, and independent.”

Ming plans to stay in the United States after she graduates. She enjoys the personal freedom and the living environment that the United States provides. Ming said it would be ideal if she finds a job upon graduation. But she is somehow worried over her job prospects. For one, she doesn't have many choices. She either works in academia or in industry. She knows she does not want to work in academic field, but she does not know what she can expect in industry, nor how to get prepared. In addition, she has no work experience which puts her at a disadvantageous position if she applies for job in industry. Ming feels that her PhD program does a disservice to her and her colleagues, because they are not prepared for future jobs. Instead, they are used as cheap labor. Ming wishes that the program would help them prepare for the job market through bringing companies and successful alumni to campus. Ming feels it is important to help international students know what to expect and how to get prepared for the future.

Profile of Participant Si Chen

Si is 23-years-old, female, fourth year PhD student in Mechanical Engineering. She is from a capital city in northern China. Growing up as the only child, she lived in a middle-class family where she had pretty much everything that she wanted during her childhood. Upon completion of elementary school, she entered into a special program that recruited gifted children through a screening exam. She then spent four years completing her secondary education that normally took 6 years to complete. She excelled in the National College Entrance Exam afterwards and attended a top-ranked university in Shanghai at age 15. Upon graduation, she came to study for her PhD in the United States at age 19. She is much younger than most PhD students, which has become a point of pride for her. Si has formed a strong identity as a capable student and her academic success gives her a lot of confidence.

Si lived in a very democratic and supportive familial environment where her parents gave her the freedom to do whatever she wanted. She commented, “There were few, if any, limits or constraints on what I could or could not do. It was all up to me.” Unlike many singletons (only-children) in China, she did not have too much pressure to excel in what she did. She was sent to after-school drawing class and piano lessons when she was in elementary school, but was not pressured to perform. What she did was seen as a form of play, exploration of interest, or immersion into the world of music and art. She loved playing with building blocks, toy cars, and toy trucks that led to, she claims, her interest in mechanics. She also went to an athletic school for a period of time that she loved and enjoyed, which had a profound impact on her. She said, “I liked it so much and felt very happy there. I got along well with my coach and teammates. As a result, I had changed my personality from a reserved and shy person to be more open and outgoing person. I started to have more self-confidence.”

Si attributes her schooling success mostly to self-effort and self-reliance, even though she acknowledges the way she was raised as important. She said, “From the very beginning, I took care of my studies and saw it as my own responsibility.” She believes she is one of the most important factors that have shaped who she is. Her parents, schoolmates, and the larger society have accounted for no more than 50 percent of the early influence that she received. She sees herself as a person who is not easily influenced by other people or environment. She is self-determined and confident in what she does. She asserts she will not change for anyone including her boyfriend who is an American.

Si feels that she had made a smooth transition to her studies in the United States. She didn’t have much of a problem with her English and successfully managed other aspects of her daily life when she first came. She said, “It was fun when I arrived. We had a lot of activities. I liked it here right away.” She thinks things were good in general. She was happier, compared to the four years she spent as an undergraduate in China. She was especially impressed by the way the professors taught in her classes and how the textbooks were written, which was easy to read and understand. Si said, “Professors explained things clearly to ensure that students understand, which was very good. Textbooks were well written for students, but the textbooks we used in China were hard to understand.” Si enjoys her studies and makes satisfactory progress in her program. Her identity as a capable student has been affirmed and strengthened by her continual academic success in her PhD program in the United States.

Si worked as a teaching assistant and found the experience somewhat unpleasant. She believes working as a teaching assistant was good for her because she had the opportunity to interact with a lot of American students. It was helpful for her to practice English and adapt to the new culture. However, the introductory engineering course was very difficult because it

required strong background knowledge in math, which a lot of students were lacking. Si found that it was hard to tutor her students. She spent a lot of time explaining, but the students simply could not understand her. At times, students became frustrated and impatient with her. Si sometimes felt it was threatening because she was younger than the students she was tutoring. However, Si did not attribute the ineffective instruction to her English ability or teaching skills. Instead, she stressed the difficult level of the course and students' lacking of prior knowledge and preparation. Her academic identity was not challenged or put into question. She said, "I think the problem has to do with the students. Those are simple things that I could do when I was in middle school."

Si has done some exploration along academic and professional dimensions. She had started college with a major in mechanics, but then changed to automation in her second year because of its popularity at the time. When she was applying for a PhD program in the United States, she factored into consideration her interest and the probability of getting an offer. Therefore, she avoided the fierce competition in electrical engineering that her undergraduate major normally leads to, and applied for mechanical engineering instead. Looking into the possibility that she might need to design computer software in her future work, she is studying for a masters' degree in computer science while she is working on her PhD. Si said, "Interest is important, but future employment is more important when it comes to choose what to study. If you can't find a job, you can't make do no matter how strong your interest might be. It is better to take both into consideration"

Si embraces an achievement ideology that people succeed or fail on their own terms. She said Chinese students tend to stay together, not willing to venture out into other cultural groups. So they isolate and marginalize themselves. They are the ones to blame. The university has

provided all sorts of resources. Students need to have a clear idea of what they want to do and learn how to use their resources to their advantage. Si is a part of an ice hockey team which consists mostly of American undergraduates. She said, “Honestly, I don’t feel as comfortable with them as I am with Chinese students. Sometimes I don’t know how to express myself and can never be the center of a conversation, which I don’t like. But I have to push myself out of my comfort zone.” She said she has chosen hockey, not badminton or ping pang, which are more popular among Chinese students, because it provides a vehicle for her learning and adaptation to the new culture.

Si does not just treat playing hockey as a hobby. She sees its connection with her future career as well. She said she might be able to use the knowledge that she has acquired in mechanical engineering in designing hockey gear that needs to be light and strong. It would be a good combination of her interests and job possibilities. Si also considers it as a possible attention grabber on her resume. She said that people in the field are often eccentric and lack social skills. It might be alright for them if they stay in academia, but will be inhibiting if they enter industry. She is intentional in what she does.

As a female student in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields, Si has confidence in her academic capability. She does not feel that she has any disadvantages as a female engineer in a male-dominant field. She said, “I don’t think my intellectual ability and my way of thinking prevent me from excelling in my field.” She attributes the uneven distribution of males and females in STEM fields in the United States to the early education that children receive, not because of innate gender differences or structural constraints. Gender roles and expectations are played out, and drilled into people’s mind from early on. She said, “If you go to a toy section in a store, you will see pink Barbies are placed on one shelf, reserved for girls, and

cars, tools, and building blocks are put on another shelf, reserved for boys. Your interest and what you will do are shaped and determined from early on.” Compared to her own childhood experience, she said, “I grew up in non-biased environment, playing with building blocks and toy cars and such. I liked them. That’s why I chose to study engineering.” She thinks early experience has a profound influence on how one defines his or her gender identity.

Si has a strong sense of her ethnic and cultural identity as Chinese, very conscious of maintaining a good image for the group. She said,

As a Chinese person, we need to mind our self-image. It is okay to do whatever you want with other Chinese people, but you have to mind yourself when you interact with Americans. Because whatever you do, they will take that for Chinese people as a whole.

She continues, “I don’t care too much about how other people see me as an individual, but I need to have a sense of pride as a Chinese person, and I need to live up to it.”

Profile of Participant Wentian Chu

Wentian is 30-years-old, female, fourth-year PhD student in Education Psychology and Technology. She is originally from Beijing, the capital of China. Her grandfather was able to keep a traditional house in the heart of Beijing, which was a privilege reserved for only a small portion of Beijing natives. So Wentian was able to grow up with her extended family in a small community within the big city. She attended a local school with children mostly from the same community. Wentian was a self-disciplined student and excelled in her studies. Her teachers liked her very much, and she had a lot of friends. Being a singleton, Wentian had very nurturing and supportive parents who kept free communication within the family. They shared everything with her each day at dinner table. Story-telling and information-sharing were a family tradition that had a profound impact on Wentian. She was very close to her parents, willing to share everything with them. Even now, Wentian gets on the phone to talk with her parents regularly.

Wentian attended a top university in Beijing, majoring in education. Even though education was not her first choice, she loved the major as she proceeded in her program. Upon graduation, she taught English in a school for two years while she was applying for a graduate program in the United States. She came to her master's program in a predominately white university in 2004. Wentian did not experience culture shock during her transition to the new cultural environment, which she attributes to her early exposure to Western cultures through media and her parents. She liked the quiet university town and the slow pace of life in general, which was in a sharp contrast with the modernity and quick pace of Beijing. She felt people were mostly friendly. But occasionally, she met white people who showed arrogance and superiority, which annoyed her. She was invited to attend a local church where she was welcomed. While she enjoyed interacting with friendly locals, she could not appreciate Christian preaching. She said,

“Brought up as an atheist, I couldn’t believe in God, honestly. I did not become a Christian, and will not become one in the future. The more I listen to the preaching, the more I believe in Darwin’s evolution.”

Wentian had a unique experience in her master’s program. There were only a few international students in the college; and she was the only international student from mainland China. She thinks it was good for her because she had no choice but to communicate in English and adapt quickly to the new culture. She received a lot of attention and encouragement from her professors and classmates, making her feel welcomed in the community. It helped her make progress in her studies and make friends with American students. Wentian said, “They were very patient and supportive when I spoke in class. Even though I couldn’t speak in whole sentences, they were nodding and smiling. At the end, they say, ‘You have done a very good job’. It gave me confidence.”

However, Wentian did not see the downside of being the only international student until she came to her PhD program where many international students joined her. She was very excited that she had a lot of international students to relate to and enjoyed the various cultures they brought with them. She was happy for no longer being singled out in class as the only international student as she had been in her master’s program in the predominant White university. Equally important, she found the multi-cultural environment was more open and enjoyable than the previous one where white dominance and superiority were sometimes felt even though she was welcomed there.

Wentian has continued her PhD program in education. She followed her interests, not job prospects when she chose the area to study. She said, “I have an interest in it. I never worry about employment. If I can’t find a job here, I can always go back to China.” With a strong sense

of self-assurance, she is not worried about her future. Nevertheless, she has been doing well in her program. She has presented several times at professional conferences and published a few journal articles, which is quite an accomplishment for a graduate student. However, she is not very excited about it, saying “It all depends on who reviews it. I was happy the first time, but then, I know it all depends on who reviews it.” She believes the only benefit in attending conferences is to know the current research trend, not to confirm her identity as an emerging scholar who is making contributions to the field.

Wentian has worked as both research assistant and teaching assistant in her PhD program. The work she has done as a research assistant is separate from her studies and her own research projects, so it is not very helpful to her in terms of exploring research interests and developing her research agenda. On the other hand, she has benefited tremendously from the teaching experience, which increased her professional competence. Through interacting with her students, she has learned new ways to teach and relate to her students. She praises students more and criticizes them less, affirming their progress and providing positive feedback. She has also learned to present herself with more confidence and less modesty, which is different than what she usually does. She sees the necessity for her to adapt to the new teaching environment. Through learning to adapt and adjust, she has increased her teaching competence and prepared to teach in a new cultural context.

Wentian has changed in some important aspects over the years. She has become a mature, more appreciative, happier, and calmer person that she likes. She is now less competitive and more relaxed, because of the time she has spent in the different cultural environments of the United States. She has realized that she used to have a mentality of comparing and competing with others that prevented her from becoming the person she really wanted to be. So she has

made a conscious choice to change. She also realized that being happy is very important to her, so she has changed her attitude toward achievement. She pays more attention to self-effort, which is under her control, and less attention to the results. She is able to enjoy the process of exploring and doing. In addition, she has learned to be appreciative and grateful for what she has, focusing less on what she doesn't. Finally, Wentian feels that she has become mature in her way of thinking and doing things. She has learned to look at things from different perspectives and listen patiently to other people when they are expressing different viewpoints. She said, "I have learned to listen even when I do not agree. I have also learned to take my time when making decisions. I slow down and think through before take any action. I am more mature. "

Profile of Participant Yuwen Wei

Ying is 41-years-old, female, fourth-year PhD student in Education Psychology and Technology. She is married with two children, 11 and 8 years old respectively. Ying grew up in her uncle's family in a capital city in central China and returned to her hometown to live with her parents at the age of ten. She came back to the city upon college completion and worked there for nine years as an English teacher. Ying came to the United States as a spouse in 2000 when her husband was pursuing his PhD. Two years later, she started her master's program in Exceptional Education and received a degree in a year. She then moved with her husband who found a job in another state where they now reside. In 2006, Ying started her PhD program at the university where her husband works.

Coming to the United States as a spouse, Ying took on a supportive role in her family. For the first two years upon arrival, she stayed at home as a housewife. However, she felt bored and empty as time went by. She wanted to find her place outside the house and learn more about American society. So she started her master's program. However, she didn't go out to find a job or begin to study in a PhD program after she received her master's degree. Instead, she moved with her husband to another city where he landed a job. Once again, she became a full-time housewife for another two years. Through volunteering in her husband's work unit, she did some work in curriculum design and teacher training. She liked it. So she applied for a PhD program there and was admitted. Ying said, "I chose to study for a PhD because I felt bored as a housewife. It was also because I don't want to lag far behind my husband."

Ying finds that she has been following her husband's steps for many years with her choices being made mostly around the family. When she first arrived in the United States, she focused her attention solely on taking care of her husband and the children without considering

her academic or career pursuit. She has no regrets, though, because her family has always been important to her. What she did is in line with her values and gender notion that females should take on a subordinate and supportive role in a family. However, Ying has confidence in her own academic ability, believing that she is no less intelligent or capable than her husband. In fact, she thinks that she could have done better than her husband, had she not intentionally chosen a subordinate role in her family and sacrificed her own professional pursuit. Ying said, “Chinese men do not like their wife to do better or become more successful than them, so we have to lower our position to accommodate. We even have this notion in our subconscious.”

Nevertheless, studying for a PhD has brought far more change in her than she had expected. In order to meet the demand of her rigorous studies, Ying has to re-think the roles that she has been playing in the family. It has become infeasible for her to keep up with her studies while continuing to do what she has always been doing, including taking care of two children, cooking, doing laundry, shopping, and running family errands. She finds that the distribution of labor in the family is neither feasible nor fair to her as she tries very hard to juggle many roles at the same time. After all, she needs to maintain high academic performance and increase her professional competence; otherwise, she would not succeed in her PhD program. She cannot spend as much time on her studies as her colleagues because she has to get home before the children come back from school and can’t start reading and writing until she tucks the children into bed. She often feels she is lagging behind academically. Ying said, “I know these are undeniable responsibilities, but they definitely affect my studies. It is okay for me to sacrifice, but I will not let it prevent me from achieving what I am trying to achieve in my academic pursuit.”

Ying starts to question her gender notion and values that have been shaped in a patriarchal Chinese society. She wants the equality in her relationship that she finds in American families where husband and wife treat each other more equally and with respect. As a result, Ying has started to have more expectations of her husband and attempts to negotiate family responsibilities with him. Ying is persistent and determined to make a change in the family dynamics although she encountered initial resistance from her husband, because it is a not just an issue of necessity. She uses various strategies to achieve her goals, including nagging, persuading, and communicating her expectations. At one time, she said to her husband, "I did all the chores last time when you were preparing for your presentation. I have a presentation coming next week. I want you to cook, wash dishes, and do family chores this time!" At times, Ying leaves the children with her husband who has no choice but to take care of the children. She said,

Like today, this Saturday, I left home very early in the morning and worked the whole day at the university. When I get home, I will ask if the children have studied Chinese, finished their homework, and what else they have done during the day. I do this check to make sure things have been done properly. But I kind of force my husband to take on more family responsibilities.

In addition to the relationship with her husband, Ying examines other aspects of her life and questions the underlying beliefs. For example, she reflects on the way she raises her children and what it tells about herself. She finds that she was overprotective with her first child when she first came to the United States, because she was carrying with her Chinese cultural values.

Learning from American parents, she has changed her way of parenting. She said,

For the second child, I tried not to over-protect. When the kid falls, I will not rush and get her up right way like many Chinese parents would do. Instead, I will ask,

“Are you hurt? Are you ok? If you are not hurt, get up and go play.” I have become more cold-hearted.

Ying also finds that she used to take on other people’s values as her own and impose those values in raising and educating her children. For example, she wanted her children to play piano. It was not because they were interested, but because it was popular among Chinese parents and to some extent, was seen as an indicator of “having made it.” She pushed hard and forced her children to learn, but encountered strong resistance from them. She later decided that she should not have done it and quit what she had been doing. She said, “It was out of my vanity. I wanted to do what other people did, have what other people had. Now I know there is no need to do that. If the kids don’t like it, why push?”

Ying has gradually developed a stronger sense of self as she progresses in her PhD program and stays longer in the United States. She said, “I did not have myself, no awareness of self in the past, but now I think more about myself, considering myself as important.” She finds that it was easy for her to get influenced by other people in the past, but she has changed to be more self-aware, self-directed, and self-determined. She refers more often to her internal standards, knowing what she needs and what she values the most. She has become discontent with the passive roles she played in the past and has learned to be more proactive in what she does. Ying asserts that she has stronger, more independent thinking and better judgment as a result of her academic training. She also attributes her change to the cultural environment in the United States. Ying commented,

If I had not come to the United States, I would be following the same life track as I used to. I would do everything according to Chinese traditional virtues for women, be obedient, be subordinate to my husband, be content with being an average

woman, not knowing what is important to myself, not knowing that I am important as a person.

Even though Ying recognizes the American cultural influence, she has maintained much of her Chinese cultural values and practices. She said, “My family celebrates Chinese New Year and watches CCTV (China Central Television) Spring Festival Party every year. We also celebrate other Chinese traditional festivals. That is a part of me that I was born with.” Ying feels it is important to keep her core Chinese values such as perseverance, persistence, and hard work; and she is very determined to pass on these values to her children. She wants her children to learn the Chinese language, insisting that they speak Chinese at home. Interestingly, as Ying has started to learn more about Chinese culture, her attitude toward her own culture has changed to be more positive. Ying said, “When I was in China, I was very critical about Chinese stuff, but now I appreciate it more and enjoy it more. I feel it is close to my heart.”

Profile of Participant Yuexiao Jiang

Yuexiao is 27-years-old, male, third-year PhD student in Plant Pathology. The second child in the family, Yuexiao grew up in a lower-middle class family in central China. His parents worked for a company but then self-employed after being laid off. Having been busy with their work, his parents did not have much time to be directed toward their son's schooling. Yuexiao mostly took care of himself in his studies. Upon graduation from high school, Yuexiao did well in the National College Entrance Exam and attended a college in the province where his family lived. Influenced by his friends, Yuexiao made a big decision to study for a PhD in the United States. So, Yuexiao spent two years preparing for the English language tests and applying for American universities. Yuexiao was successful in his attempt and came to study in his current PhD program in the United States in 2007.

Yuexiao studied plant science in college with a focus on Plant Protection. He continued to study in this area with a slight change in his focus when he came to his PhD program. He said his choice was mostly based on practical consideration instead of academic interest. Getting an offer from a PhD program and being able to land a job after graduation weighed heavily in his decision-making. Yuexiao said, "If I had to choose again, I might not choose to study in this area. But what would I choose? It is difficult to find one area that has a good job prospective and also interests me." Weighing his academic interest against the job prospect of the future, Yuexiao leaned on the side of the latter. Despite his lack of strong interest and passion, Yuexiao has decided to stick with his choice and finish his PhD in the field of plant science. He will move onto the workplace afterwards.

Yuexiao found that English language was the major barrier in his transition to the new environment. He had encountered difficulty in his communication with other people when he

first arrived. He found Americans could not understand what he was saying and he could not follow when they were talking to him. Yuexiao said, “What I learned in China is not applicable here. Our learned way of expression is different from what they use in real life situation. They speak very differently. They do not understand what I say.” Yuexiao got better as he stayed longer and exposed himself more to both formal and informal conversations. He got used to and picked up more and more English expressions as time went by.

Yuexiao experienced difficulty in his studies because of his limited English. It was very hard and frustrating in the beginning. He could not understand his professors in class because there was a lot of terminology that he had not learned yet. He could not pronounce some words correctly, so he was unable to communicate effectively in academic settings. Yuexiao often felt pressured due to his lagging behind. He thought he did not learn as much as his American peers. Additionally, he felt very nervous each time he met with his advisor because he was worried about his English and doubted his ability to communicate clearly. He needed to write everything down and practiced several times before their meetings to make sure he could communicate well.

In addition to English language, Yuexiao found that his lack of cultural understanding made him uneasy in interacting with other people. At times, he felt he did not know what was appropriate and what was not when socializing with Americans. Yuexiao said, “It is hard to know what you can ask and what you cannot, what you can say and what you cannot when you are with Americans. It makes me feel uncomfortable and uneasy.” Yuexiao found that his interaction with American colleagues was often superficial. It was hard for him to go beyond a functional level and engage in in-depth conversation with them. It seemed impossible for him to make friends with Americans, which was very discouraging. Yuexiao felt the cultural gap was hard to bridge and that time would not make a difference.

Lacking of time was another factor that affected Yuexiao's experience in his cultural adaptation and social integration. He was so busy with his studies and doing research in the lab that he seldom had the time to go outside his program to socialize with people and make friends. He was very cautious about his work and worried if his advisor was happy with him, so he forced himself to stay focused on his work. He did not want to do anything wrong on his part that would negatively affect his relationship with his advisor. He called his advisor "boss" and believed that he had a lot of power over him. Yuexiao said, "Ask anybody, you will know that your boss is the most important. Your boss determines everything. If your boss is happy with you, things will be easy. If your boss is unhappy, he can kick you out anytime." Yuexiao's view of his relationship took a toll on him. He was very apprehensive with his advisor, always wanted to show his good side, took a lot of preventative measures, and never dared to joke with his advisor.

Yuexiao's attention was centered on his research after he had completed most of his course study. He wanted to make satisfactory progress in the work he was doing in the lab and sought the opportunity to publish his work in academic journals. He took a proactive approach in communicating with his advisor about what he had been doing in his research, so he could make sure there was no misunderstanding between him and his advisor. Yuexiao said, "It is very important to communicate with your boss. If you have difficulty, you need to tell him. You can't afford to wait. Otherwise, you create problems for yourself and waste your time." Yuexiao wanted to publish journal articles as soon as possible. He believed it would be helpful when he looks for job. He was eager to improve his academic writing skills and learn more about how to write for publication in his discipline.

Yuexiao hopes everything goes smoothly in his study and research, so he can graduate in time and find a job upon completion. He does not want to get distracted and put his energy in

anything beyond his studies. He said, “I might be narrow-minded, but I don’t have much time and energy. Studying in a foreign country as an international student is a great achievement if you finish your study and find a job at the end.” Yuexiao wants to find a job in the United States, work for a few years, and then go back to China. He feels that his cultural background and language limit his career advancement in the future if he stays in the United States; and his lack of cultural and social capital makes him always feel like he is living in a foreign land.

Yuexiao feels he has changed a lot as result of living and studying in the United States. He has become more organized and more focused on what he does. He said, “I am better at planning for my studies and daily life. I know what I need to do and I am able to do it step by step.” Yuexiao also finds that he is better at self-management and more able to think things through before he takes action. He said, “I have learned to see things from different angles, anticipate possible outcomes, and avoid things that are undesirable, in both my work and daily life.”

Profile of Participant Zexiao Chen

Zexiao is 37-years-old, male, fifth-year PhD student, studying Linguistics. He is married with a five-year-old daughter who, along with her mother, has stayed as his companion in the United States most of the time as he progresses through his PhD program. Zexiao's wife came as a spouse, but entered a master's program at the same university later on. Unable to find a job upon graduation, she applied for a PhD program, hoping to continue her studies. At the time of the interview, she had been admitted and offered a multi-year scholarship package. Before coming to the United States, Zexiao had eight years of work experience, first teaching English at the university from which he graduated and then, upon obtaining his master's degree, working at another university. Zexiao said that his childhood experience, his family, and his work experience were important factors that affected his experiences in the United States.

Zexiao had a childhood experience that was different from a lot of people's experiences. He lived with his mother's family when he was a child. His father was far away, working in another province and coming back home to visit at Spring Festival once a year or two years. His mother lived with him but went to visit his father quite often, leaving him in the hometown with his grandparents. This situation, which lasted until Zexiao was a teenager, had a profound impact on him. For Zexiao, family means more than anything else in the world. Within his mother's family, the most influential figure was his uncle who was a principal at a local school. Being a protective figure in his childhood, his uncle influenced his career choice. Zexiao said, "Because of my uncle, I became very interested in becoming a teacher."

Zexiao attributes his strong interest in language, which led to his choice of study in college and graduate school, to his childhood experience. He lived in a small town in south-central China where three dialects were spoken, thereby immersing him in a linguistically-rich

environment. Additionally, many miners and their families from other parts of the country came to work in his hometown, bringing more dialects into Zexiao's early life. Zexiao became acquainted with, accustomed to, and interested in various dialects as he interacted with the children and their families in the local community and in school.

Having majored in and taught English for several years in China, Zexiao didn't have much difficulty with the language when he first came to the United States. He said that the English language was not at all a problem to him academically. However, he initially did have some difficulty in understanding colloquial and idiomatic expressions when interacting with Americans. But he picked it up and felt at ease in a matter of a few months. In spite of the advantages that his language proficiency provided, his transitional experience was not without pain. Navigating through a different educational system in a new cultural context and understanding how it worked were not easy tasks for him. His comments succinctly describe his initial experience in the United States, "In the first semester, I was like a fly that has lost its head. I didn't know what to do. I didn't even know I needed to talk with my advisor before I took courses, because I was unfamiliar with the system."

Zexiao also found that not understanding the nuance of cultural differences lead to frequent frustration and an escalated level of stress. At times, he did not know what cultural code to follow when interacting with his advisor and professors. He said that he didn't know to whom he should ask questions and whether his questions were appropriate at all. He didn't know that professors had office hours that could be used to help with his studies, so he often left his questions unaddressed. In addition, he was not clear what his responsibilities were as a research assistant, what expectations his advisor had of him, and what his relationship with his advisor should look like. He feels that the frame of reference that he had formed in China as a graduate

student and a faculty member did not serve him well in the new context of the United States. He had to go through a lot of guess work and trial and error, which took time and effort, and more often than not, lead to frustration and distress.

Zexiao found that adjustment pressure also came from learning a new way of studying. He said the reading load for each class was very heavy and assignments were difficult and time-consuming. He often stayed up until two or three in the morning in order to finish the reading and other assignments. It was an academic world that was very different from what he used to know. But he was very impressed by the quality of teaching that he was receiving. He liked course organization that had a syllabus that detailed what was going to happen during the semester, teaching and learning activities that included student presentation, class discussion, professor-led analysis of research papers, and course projects that provided the opportunity to learn from doing and practice. He felt that doing coursework had served him well, connecting him with the field that he was entering. He not only acquired a strong knowledge base, but also understood how research was done, which prepared him as an emerging scholar.

Zexiao believes the availability of resources has facilitated his academic and professional growth. Compared to the university where he had worked in China, he said it is “night and day” in terms of getting resources for his academic work. He said he has almost everything he needs at his fingertips. He has an easy access to books, journals, and electronic resources at the university libraries, and he said inter-library loan service provides him a very convenient tool to gain access to academic resources that go way beyond the boundary of his institution. Moreover, the support he gets from his department to help him prepare for and attend professional conferences is very important to his professional growth. He has received travel funding for several conferences. More importantly, he gets help with each conference presentation from his professors and peers

within his department. He feels better prepared and has more confidence in presenting his work to a larger audience at conferences after he receives feedback and input from his colleagues. In turn, his positive experience at various professional conferences gives him a sense of accomplishment and success, which helps him to form his professional identity as an emerging scholar.

Zexiao's motivation to attend graduate school in the United States came from the combination of following his academic interest and creating a better living for his family. He said "After all, it is for my kid that I came here". However, in juggling the various roles of student, emerging scholar, husband, and father at the same time, Zexiao finds it is hard to keep a satisfying balance. He feels stressed and frustrated when there is problem in his relationship with his wife. He regrets that he could not find enough time for his daughter, especially in the early stage of his studies when he had less control over his time. He emphasizes his frustration of being unable to fulfill his familial roles and he has doubts if he has done things right. He plans to find a job and settle down in the United States, but the gloomy outlook of the job market in the economic recession makes him worry about his career prospect and the future for his family.

Zexiao has a strong sense of cultural identity and considers keeping Chinese culture as important. He emphasizes the importance of learning Chinese to his daughter and sends her to Sunday Chinese School, saying,

Language is an important part of a culture. It is a means to sustain one's culture.

She not only needs to learn how to speak Chinese, but also how to read and write.

We as parents need to spend a lot of time helping her with the language. If she can only speak but not read, she will miss so much that is out there.

Zexiao feels it is unimaginable for him to lose his own culture. He thinks he would lose himself if he lost his cultural identity. He said Americans would look down upon him if that happened. He asserts that he wouldn't do things that go against his core cultural values, even when these values might not be valued as much by Americans. He tries to maintain a good image for China. He said that if he hears people say inaccurate information about his home country, he would offer his perspective and attempt to dispel misunderstandings.

Zexiao is not ethnocentric, however. He sometimes adopts a principle of "when in Rome, do as the Romans do". He learns and accepts American cultural practices and values that he considers positive. For example, he has learned to greet strangers and hold the door for people walking behind him, which he never did in China. But he is selective, retaining some of his Chinese cultural practice and values that he holds dear. When two sets of cultural values conflict, he said, he would carefully compare and evaluate, and then decide which one to follow. Zexiao integrates new cultural values that he has learned. He said he would retain some of the newly-learned cultural values even if he goes back to China.

In talking about racial discrimination, he mentioned two unpleasant encounters. At one time, when he and his friends were walking in the street after an art festival, they were yelled from across the street by a man who seemed drunk, "Chinese go back to China!" Reflecting on the incident, he said,

There are some people in America who are racist. Discrimination runs deep in this country: discrimination against Chinese, against people from other countries.

Whites discriminate against Asians, Blacks, and Mexicans; they are against all people of color.

Unfortunately, his unpleasant encounters happened within the university as well, which is harder for him to ignore. He said that he has the impression that his program director treats American and non-American students very differently. When the director talks to American students, he jokes and laughs with them. But when it comes to Chinese students or other international students, he becomes somehow serious and distant. Zexiao said when he asks the director questions, the conversation would be limited to the questions only. Nothing else. No jokes, laughter, additional conversation or free exchange of ideas, which seem to be reserved for American students. He and other international students have to address the director in a formal way, using his title as “doctor”, not by his first name. But Zexiao observed that American students used the director’s first name at ease. This makes Zexiao feel that he and other international students are not as welcomed in the department as American students.

Reflecting on his own changes while in the United States, Zexiao identifies four areas that he considers as accomplishment. First, he has acquired professional competence. He feels that the program has prepared him well academically and professionally. He is able to keep abreast with the field and feels confident in his research capacity. He has also met some influential figures in the field and started networking with them. Second, he has gained much in language and cultural competence that he could not have obtained, had he not come to study in the United States. Third, he and his wife have survived all the difficulties in their relationship during their struggles in the new environment over the years. He is glad that they have learned to understand, support, and encourage each other to achieve familial goals despite the conflicts and differences they have had. He sees that as a very big accomplishment. Fourth, he has made changes with his values in the acculturation process during which he integrates positive American cultural values while he examines and maintains his Chinese cultural identity.

Nevertheless, Zexiao stands at a crossroad as he moves to the final stage of his study. Facing the unfavorable job market as a result of the economic downturn, he has become worried about his future. He said if he can't find a job, all his effort will have been for nothing. Even if he has a PhD, it will be of no use. Without a job, there will be no way for him to follow his academic interests; nor will he have a means to support his family. He has started to question if he had made the right choice of his discipline area in the first place. Zexiao has also started to think more and reflect often on how he has done in the last few years with the various roles he assumed. He has doubts that he has done well in fulfilling these roles. He wonders if there will be any meaning for what he has done if he fails to find a job in the end.

Profile of Participant Zhe Han

Zhe is 25-years-old, female, third-year PhD student, majoring in Biochemistry. She grew up in a lower-middle class family in a capital city in central-western China. Zhe's early influences came from her parents and other members of her extended family, teachers, schoolmates, and friends. She also received influences from reading books and newspapers and her exposure to Chinese literature and arts. Zhe believes that the impact from her parents was strong and affected her more negatively than positively. She notes that the cultural environment, which was restrictive, oppressive, and dictating, also had a deep imprint on her.

Zhe's transition to the United States has been smooth. No dramatic event happened that caused her deep conflict. Though she did experience some difficulties including, most noticeably, English language and cultural differences. She found that English language was not so much a problem in her studies, but more so in daily living. It was disconcerting when she used spoken English to complete tasks such as placing an order at Subway, obtaining a driver's license, talking to people in non-academic settings, and going shopping during the weekend. It was challenging, even intimidating, for her to make phone calls because non-verbal communication could not be used as an aid. Moreover, cultural differences added another layer of difficulty, affecting her transitional experiences. She felt it was embarrassing, to say the least, when she did not know how to put together a sandwich at the Subway and did not understand what "ranch" meant when it came to the choices of dressing. She felt excluded when her American peers talked about pop stars, clubs, and plans for weekend excursions. She hardly understood their conversation, let alone participating in it.

Zhe has been a top student since middle school. The fact that she attended a magnet high school, excelled at a top university in Beijing, and is studying for a PhD in a competitive

doctoral program in the United States have confirmed her identity as a capable and competent student. However, her motivation to work hard and excel was only to make her parents happy until she was in graduate school in the United States. Striving to be a “good” daughter, she put aside her love for the humanities and social sciences and instead, chose food sciences as her major in college. However, it was hard to give up her interest completely. She attempted to strike a balance between her interest and her parents’ will by transferring to a biology major which she considered as “close enough to humanities and social sciences”.

As she progressed on her journey in the United States, she started to question her choice for her future profession, finding that studying biochemistry and doing research in academia is not her inner calling. There is a feeling that something is missing in her. She feels she is lost at times. She acknowledges her interest in the field, but she does not want it to be her lifelong profession. She finds that she is very good at writing and plans to write in the future, but a writing career seems not very promising or appealing to her in practical terms. She also wants to study for a MBA after she finishes her PhD. She figures she can then face the “real world” and work with people by using the business skills she intends to learn, such as negotiating and resolving conflicts. Yet it seems that she needs more exploration to discover her passion and identify her “inner calling” before she makes a firm commitment.

Zhe was the only child in her family. Being a girl, she did not feel that her parents treated her differently. However in her extended family she felt that she was not valued as much. It upset her that her maternal grandparents gave most of their attention to her uncle’s son, not so much attention to herself and her cousins who were the children of her three aunts. She considers Chinese gender notions as detrimental to girls and limiting to their potentials since girls are

expected to be docile, dependant, submissive, and obedient. On the other hand, boys are valued and believed to be tough, independent, assertive, and persistent.

She feels girls tend to lose their true nature and suppress their desire in this gender-biased cultural environment. She deems the world as male-dominant in which females have a hard life to live. If given the chance, she'd rather be a boy. Although her upbringing and early experiences in China affected how she sees herself and her roles as a female, she somehow still thinks that she is just smart as her male counterparts and can do anything that she puts her mind to, including studying for a PhD in the field of science. Not surprisingly, she started to reflect on and examine her gender notions, beliefs, and values as she embarked on her journey in a new cultural environment in the United States.

Zhe's experience has been affected by many factors, but most fundamentally by her boyfriend from India. Because of her boyfriend, she has had more exposure to differences and diversity than her Chinese peers. She is forced to use English to communicate with her boyfriend, and as a result, has improved her English dramatically, especially her spoken English. Also, she interacts with a large circle of friends, mainly Indians, which helps her break away from her tendency to cling to Chinese friends. So she has more exposure to differences and diversity than her Chinese peers. This has given her the opportunity to reflect on her habitual way of thinking and doing, which would not be readily available if she interacted mostly with Chinese friends. She admires many qualities that her boyfriend possesses such as open-mindedness, honesty, assertiveness, energy, and leadership skills—qualities that she believes she is lacking but wants to develop in herself. She was expecting to get married in half a year or so before her boyfriend broke his marriage promise, pronouncing that he was not yet ready for family responsibilities.

This critical incident not only made her shocked and panicky, but also propelled and catalyzed many transformative changes in her identity development.

Zhe began her deep reflection on marriage and many other important issues after her initial emotional reaction to this critical incident. She started to figure out who she really was as a person and what was the most important to her in her life. Her ideas and thoughts about marriage started to change, as well as the role she would play in the relationship. She used to think that marriage was a must and that she needed to get marriage at around age 25 and would have children before age 30. But she now sees marriage as an option, a choice that people make, not a must. Like other human relationships, marriage is social construction to which people attach various meanings. So, it is silly to follow suit when seeing other people get married at a certain age. She feels that she has not found her real self yet. It is unwise and unnecessary to get married at this stage. Otherwise, she will lose the opportunity to find her lost self, because her energy will be consumed by family, husband, and kids, instead of focusing on her self.

Zhe has engaged in a lot of work that increased her self-understanding, self-knowledge, and self-development. In order to understand who she truly is, she started to observe her feelings. She has been working on owning her emotions, mainly negative ones. She had acted her anger and fear out through tearing books, beating pillows, screaming, and crying at the time of the critical incident by herself. She thought it was important because she wanted to get in touch with her soul that had been ignored and suppressed for so long. Additionally, she dug deep into her upbringing, her personal and family history, her cultural background, and her education to examine and understand the assumptions, beliefs and values she holds. She lowered her defense level when interacting with people and tried to experience emotional pain as part of her self-discovery and self-development. She changed her assumptions, beliefs and values when they are

in conflict with reality, as long as her core values are not violated. She also read a lot of self-help books in psychology to gain practical knowledge and understand the impact of her early childhood experiences. Consequently, she has been able to make connections between her present problems and childhood traumas and wounds. She has engaged in self-talk with her parents, especially her mother, to heal her psychological damage. Through extensive effort and a lot of hard work, Zhe realized that she had increased her self-confidence and had become more independent. She feels she is like a “pluripotent stem cell” that is full of possibilities for differentiation and development.

Zhe deems it would have been quite impossible for her to go through the changes that she has experienced, had she not come to study in the United States. She values very much her experience of identity development in the United States, which she believes is a journey of self-exploration, self-discovery, and self-development.

Appendix Three: General Interview Guide

The interviews in this study are semi-structured. I will ask the following questions, mostly in the first two interviews, in order to evoke comprehensive accounts of the participants' experiences regarding identity development. Questions will be asked in a way that facilitates full disclosure of the participants' experiences and participants will be probed further based on their answers to the questions.

If there are unaddressed topics or emerged themes that require further investigation, I will conduct a third interview. The questions for this interview are going to be designed after data analysis of the first two interviews.

1. Introduce the research project and ask basic information questions on discipline, program level, length of stay, etc., creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere for the interview.
2. Could you please describe who you were before you came to the United States?

I will probe for the participants' educational background and experiences, familial, social and cultural environments in which they grew up, influential people, pivotal events, and defining moments in their life in order to understand their prior identities before they came to the United States.

3. Could you please draw a picture to show the factors that had influenced you to be who you were when you were in China?

After the drawing is finished, I will ask the participant to explain it to me.

4. Now tell me what your adjustment experiences looked like after you came to the United States? What are the factors that have mostly affected your experiences?

I will probe for the participants' experiences and challenges that they have had in various aspects including study, work, and daily life. I will also probe for the important factors that have influenced how the participants dealt with the obstacles and difficulties in their cross-cultural experiences.

5. What are the issues that you have encountered relating to your personal, academic, or professional and other aspects of development and growth? How did you deal with the issues? How have you been affected? What are the issues now?

I will probe for the participants' experiences in various aspects of their lives including study, work and daily life to understand their social, cultural and academic integration.

6. How have you changed in terms of who you are over the time you have stayed in the United States? How have these changes happened? What has contributed to these changes?

I will probe for the participants' identity changes along various dimensions, the most salient factors that have affected these changes, including demographics, personal traits, or environmental factors, and identity exploration and conflict.

7. Could you please draw a picture to show what have influenced you to become who you are during the time you have studied in the United States?

I will ask the participant to explain the drawing. I will compare it with the former drawing to see the differences and ask for explanations for these differences. I will pay attention to environmental factors, individual developmentally instigative characteristics, and the interactions between the two in our discussion.

8. Is there anything that you think is important to the topic we've been discussing that we haven't touched upon? Please contact me if you come up with anything that you want me to know either through email, phone call or a meeting. I value your continuous involvement and input in this research project.

访谈问题大纲

本研究的访谈是半开放式的。我会在两次访谈中间询问研究参与者下列研究问题，旨在充分详实地了解研究参与者人格发展经历。提问的方式和顺序根据需要适当调整，并根据参与者对问题的回答进行追踪，进行进一步深入的探讨。

如果必要，我会进行第三次访谈。第三次访谈问题的确定是在对第一、第二次访谈资料的分析的基础制定的，主要用于解决前两次访谈的遗留的或新出现的话题，所以不包括在此大纲中。

1. 向参与者介绍本研究课题，询问参与者的基本信息，旨在营造宽松、信任的对话环境。
2. 您能否谈一谈来美国之前的自我发展状况？包括您的教育背景、生活经历、家庭和社会成长环境、对您有重要影响的人和事，等等。

旨在了解研究参与者来美之前的自我和人格发展状况。

3. 请您画一幅图，在图上表示您在中国时对您产生影响的各因素？也就是哪些因素促使您成为当时的您的？请您解释一下您的画图。
4. 您能否谈一谈来美国之后的调整、适应情况？您觉得哪些重要的因素影响您在美国的留学经历？

旨在了解研究参与者来美国之后的生活、学习和工作等等各个方面的经历、可能经历的困难和挑战，以及哪些因素影响研究参与者克服困难、迎接挑战，参与到个体、群体及文化人格的形成中。

5. 您在学业、个人以及职业发展等方面碰到过哪些突出的、需要解决的问题？您是怎样处理和解决这些问题的？对您的影响是什么？您感觉当前面临的问题和困惑是什么？

旨在了解研究参与者学习期间生活、学习和工作等等各个方面的经历、可能面临的困难和挑战，是如何适应美国文化、社会和专业学习的。

6. 您觉得留学期间您的人格发展发生了什么样的变化？这些变化是怎样发生的？哪些因素影响了这些变化？

旨在了解研究参与者人格各个方面的发展变化、人格探索和冲突状况，以及各种影响因素。

7. 请您再画一幅图，在图上表示留学期间对您产生影响的各種因素？也就是哪些因素影响了您的人格发展，促使您成为现在的您的？请您解释一下您的画图。

旨在了解研究参与者在美國留學期間的人格發展的各种影响因素，包括个人、环境、以及个人与环境的互动是怎样影响研究参与者的人格发展的。根据研究参与者所作的两张图示之间的差异，询问和探讨差异出现的原因。

8. 您觉得有没有哪些重要的方面我们没有涉及到？如果有什么疑问，或者是想起了该谈却没有谈到的问题，您可以给我发电子邮件、打电话或者面谈。您的参与和持续的支持是该项研究成功的关键。

Appendix Four: Participant Consent Form (参与研究协议)

My name is Kang Li, a doctoral student in Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education Program at Michigan State University. I am conducting research on how Chinese graduate students develop identities in their cross-cultural adjustment and acculturation processes when they study in the United States. (我叫李康, 是密西根州立大学高等、成人及终生教育专业的一名博士研究生。我现在进行的是一项关于留美的中国研究生人格发展方面的研究。)

The study involves 12 to 15 participants engaging in up to 3 interviews that last around half hour to an hour each. Participation is voluntary, however, you must be 18 years or older to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. You may also choose not to answer specific questions but to answer others. Your name will not be associated with any of your responses, nor will any identifying personal characteristics be included in data analysis, conference presentation or other publications. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum allowed by law. (此项研究设计包括十二到十五个参与者, 每人2到3个访谈, 每个访谈大约要半个到一个小时左右。研究的参与是自愿的, 参与的研究生应该是十八岁以上, 参与者可以在中途退出。参与者有权拒绝回答某一个或几个研究问题。根据相关的法律规定, 参与者的隐私权达到最大程度的有效保护。参与者的姓名在资料分析、研究报告、学术交流以及发表的论文中都不会出现。)

It is important for you to know I will be using an audio recorder during the interviews. This is for the purposes of data collection and analysis. Only you, a transcriber and I will have access to the audio recordings. Please notify me if you do not want your interview to be recorded. (我会在访谈中使用录音设备。录音资料是用来进行数据处理和分析的。只有您、我本人和打字员才有权接触录音资料。您作为研究的参与者, 有权了解这些或者拒绝录音设备的使用。)

If you have any questions about the study, I can be reached by email likangl@msu.edu, or by phone 517-355-1239. If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, or would like to register a complaint about this research study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Director of MSU's Human Research Protection Programs, Judy McMillan, at (517)432-4502, FAX 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu, or regular mail at: 202 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824. (如果您对此项研究有任何疑问, 可以通过电子邮件, 也可以通过电话和我联络。我的电子邮箱是: likangl@msu.edu, 电话是 517-3551239。如果您想了解您作为研究参与人应该享有的权利, 您可以与密西根州立大学的大学涉及人类研究委员会主席, Judy McMillan 博士联系。她的联系方式如下: 电话 (517)432-4502, 电传(517)432-4503, 电子邮件(irb@msu.edu) 或者信件方式 (202 Olds hall, East Lansing, MI 48824, USA).)

Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participating in this study. (您的签名表示您自愿参与此项研究。)

Signature of Participant (研究参与者签名)

Date (日期)

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