Moving Identities:
An exploration of the Lived Experiences of Chinese International Students
at a Private School in Ontario

by

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Abstract

The growing trend of Chinese international student migration to Ontario has become a hot topic of discussion among government officials, the news media, and in the education sector. Through these discussions, the Chinese youth who participate in this temporary educational migration are framed as both psychologically fragile due to separation from families or culture, and hardworking, responsible economic assets. This process of framing becomes even more complex when we consider the discourses of globalization and neoliberalism in the global education industry and the industries that surround it. This thesis examines how Chinese youth navigate and form their own identities through their experiences of coming to study at a private school in Ontario.

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Chapter I – Introduction

Youth migration and movement are key facets of an increasingly globalized world.

UNICEF reports that nearly 35 million, or about 17 percent of youth between the ages of 10 and 24, have been migrating in the past decade.¹ This rapid growth of youth mobility has attracted attention from government officials, news media, and the education sector as well as scholarly interest. Media reports, for instance, have brought attention to the wave of students coming from China to study in Canada. In 2015, CBC news reported a 92 percent increase in international student enrollment in Canadian high schools since 2008 and that Chinese students make up nearly half of this enrolment.² In October 2016, then Immigration Minister John McCallum announced that the Liberal government would be working with China to double or triple the number of application centers in Ontario to receive student applications.³ This move would increase the number of visa applications accepted and grant more opportunities for express entry to international students. By increasing student migration, the Liberal government hoped to grow the Canadian economy through the newly booming field of “edu-business”⁴ and the global education industry⁵.

¹ The World Youth Report, “Youth and Migration”, The United Nations (2013), <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/nyin/wyr/2013/report.pdf>

² CBC News, “Canada wants to double its international student body,” January 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/canada-wants-to-double-its-international-student-body-1.2497819>

³ CBC News, “Canada wants more Chinese workers, students and tourists, says immigration minister” <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/chinese-immigration-canada-china-1.3725202>

⁴ This thesis will draw on Antoni Verger’s definition of edu-business and the global education industry. Verger argues that the privatization of education is a global phenomenon with multiple manifestations. Those institutions that profit directly from providing educational services, such as private schools and tutoring or test taking services are referred to by Verger and other scholars as edu-businesses.

⁵ In comparison, Verger argues that the global education industry emerges from the global privatization of education and educational services. However, he uses this term to explore the social field created by policies and practices of edu-businesses and other actors who participate in this social field (such as international school offices, real-estate companies, ect. as well as parents and children seeking educational services.)

In academe, anthropology of childhood and youth scholars have recently begun to explore questions pertaining to movement and migration.⁶ Scholarly interest ranges from human rights challenges⁷ involved in exploitative situations connected to lived experiences of mobile youth to investigating the complexity of the process of mobility from the view of youth themselves.⁸ This thesis will explore how Chinese international students appear within the global education industry in ways that collate and contrast with the migratory experiences of youth from the view of youth themselves. It will specifically focus on how youth navigate and shape the new spaces in which they find themselves against the backdrop of how the industry constructs their identities. For this research, I will explore the lives of a select group of Chinese international students studying at a private school named Oakland College⁹ in Ontario, Canada. Although it is difficult to generalize the experiences of this select group of youth to all Chinese international students, through this exploratory study, the intent is to understand some of the ways these students navigate and negotiate mobility processes that may provide clues about mobility from the view of lived experience. Specifically, I am interested in how these students are impacted by mobility processes including the reconstitution of their identities and lives through the discourses that serve to position them in new contexts.

⁶ Angela Veale and Giorgia Dona “Complex Migrations, the migrant child and globalization” in *Child and Youth Migration: Mobility-in-Migration in the Era of Globalization*, ed. Angela Veale and Giorgia Dona, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 1.

⁷ See Bhabha, Jacqueline. *Human Rights and Adolescence*. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

⁸ Cristine Hunner-Kriestel and Sabine Bohne, *Childhood, Youth and Migration: Connecting Global and Local Perspectives*, (Switzerland: Springer International, 2016),1.

⁹ School names in this study are disguised to protect the identity of the youth.

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

From 2010 to 2017, Canada experienced a 119 percent increase in international student enrolment across middle schools, high schools and colleges/universities.¹⁰ In 2017 alone, estimates indicate that approximately 494,525 students travelled to Canada for education. Chinese students make up nearly 30 percent of this enrolment. In Ontario, they are the largest international student group.¹¹

According to the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE), Ontario boasts 48% of the international students in Canada, more than any other province, and the largest number of Chinese international students.¹² A recent study by CBIE concluded that the top three reasons international students choose Canada (over competing English-speaking countries such as the USA, Britain or Australia) are the reputed quality of the Canadian education system, Canada's reputation as a tolerant and non-discriminatory society, as well as its reputation for being a safe country.¹³ Shimeng Wang's 2017 study of Chinese international student motivations for choosing universities in Ontario revealed that the aforementioned reasons were prominent reasons among the Chinese population as well.¹⁴ Unfortunately, no data could be found on motivations of Chinese international students studying at the high school level in Ontario. According to the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), at the high school level, these students are mostly coming from large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Chengdu. However, they note that populations from mid-sized cities across

¹⁰ See website of The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) for infographic on inbound student mobility in Canada: <https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Infographic-inbound-EN.pdf>

¹¹ CBIE Infographic: <https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Infographic-inbound-EN.pdf>

¹² CBIE Infographic: <https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Infographic-inbound-EN.pdf>

¹³ CBIE Infographic: <https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Infographic-inbound-EN.pdf>

¹⁴ Shimeng Wang, "An Exploration of the Motivation of Chinese Students for Studying in Universities in Canada." Theses and Dissertations, Brock University (2017).

China are beginning to participate in this trend of sending students abroad at the high school level.¹⁵ They also explore the social class aspects of this movement, observing that youth participating in this migration are predominantly children of China's growing upper class (whose parents are often government or business workers) but noticing that increasingly, youth from middle class families (whose parents may be employed in lower paying but well respected salaried jobs such as teaching) are participating as well.¹⁶

Since 2010, increasing scholarly interest has focused on investigating various facets of this increased movement of Chinese international students.¹⁷ This includes assessing different methods of language acquisition,¹⁸ performance of teachers and schools,¹⁹ psychological impact of experiences of migration,²⁰ effective methods of acculturation,²¹ and the global economic impact of this movement.²² One theme emerging from this scholarship indicates that students who travel internationally for educational experiences can bridge social, economic, and cultural gaps with adult intervention via proper schooling. They suggest that education is viewed as a method of bringing about utopian visions of a globalized future. Critics suggest that this envisioning draws on and reinforces neoliberal celebrations of individualism while ignoring broader societal roadblocks to youth after they leave school.²³ Some scholars also highlight how this attends to youth only as future workers, rather than valuing their current experiences or their

¹⁵ Center for China and Globalization (CCG) Report (Jan 2nd, 2018): <http://en.ccg.org.cn/>

¹⁶ Center for China and Globalization (CCG) Report (Jan 2nd, 2018): <http://en.ccg.org.cn/>

¹⁷ Majorie Johnstone and Eunjung Lee, "Canada and the Global Rush for International Students" *Critical Sociology* 43 no. 7 (2017): 1065.

¹⁸ see Hao Tang and Yanyin Zhang (2015), Alexandra Gottardo et al. (2017), and Jiannian Song (2016).

¹⁹ see Jun Lei and Guangwei Hu (2015), Hetty Roessingh (2010), Tasha Riley (2014), and Yan Guo (2010).

²⁰ see Zhe Jia et al. (2018), Huijun Li and Frances Pratt (2010), and Yang Ying et al. (2016).

²¹ see Chun Cao et al. (2017), David Bertram et al. (2014), Michelle Brunette et al. (2011) and Zhen Li et al. (2017).

²² see Verger et al. (2016), Sangaralingam Ramesh (2013), and Zhang Li-Wen (2006).

²³ Henry Giroux. *Pedagogy and The Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture and Practice*. (New York, Westview Press, 2008), 12.

identities beyond work.²⁴ Accordingly, the present study focuses primarily on the current experiences of youth as they travel and settle abroad for educational purposes within the context of the growing global education industry.

A number of conceptual strands combine to serve as a framework for this study. These include the social study of childhood's theorization of youth as agentic, fully human members of society whose voices and perspectives should be heard and given due weight in matters that affect their lives. A second important strand is theorizing the concept of 'movement.' This concept is broader than mobility or migration and particularly useful when considering the idea that in addition to bodies that move in space, relationships, identities and aspirations move as well. In this regard, theoretical insights emerging from the childhood and globalization literature, specifically the literature that examines youth on the move, are particularly useful. A third strand of the theoretical framing of this thesis emerges from the work on the anthropology of education that argues that educational contexts impact the cultural understandings of the category 'student.' Finally, the concept of power as it informs processes of identity construction through social lines of difference according to age, gender, race, class, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and locality, is a key element of the conceptual framework for this study.

Moreover, in addition to bringing together these conceptual strands into a theoretical framing for the questions posed in this study, the emerging literature on the lives of migrant, mobile and diasporic children and young people, emphasizing the situated and contextualized nature of migrant children's negotiations of home and belonging, is particularly useful.²⁵

Anthropological contributions to this literature explore children's and young people's

²⁴ Rivzi, Fazal. *Encountering Education in the Global*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

²⁵ See Ellen Bal and Roos Willems (2014), Pam Nilan and Charles Fiexa (2006) and Vered Amit and Karen Fog Olwig (2011).

constructions of home and belonging, often negotiated in contradictory or challenging circumstances and frequently destabilizing powerful assumptions about the nature of migration, mobility and childhood. This includes destabilizing ideals of childhood based on notions of residential fixity. Residential fixity, at its barest bones, is the opposite of movement, living in a single place for an extended period of time.²⁶ However, this concept has become enmeshed with notions of stability, home, settlement and safety.²⁷ Because of the entanglement of these concepts with residential fixity, youth who move are often cast as psychologically unstable, between, away from or without homes, and youth on the move are often hyper-surveilled from concerns about safety.²⁸

Childhood and youth scholars have brought attention to how these notions of stability and fixity often shape the representation or framing of the youth who move. In their book on children's roles in transnational migration, Allen White and Caitriona Ni Laoire argue that representing migrant youth as "passive, needy and different"²⁹ silences their voices with "adultist discourses about migration decision-making and experiences"³⁰ and "westernized hegemonic assumptions about, and constructions of, childhood, family, and migration."³¹ White and Ni Laoire attempt to counter this adultist discourse by opening up a space for the voices of youth to emerge out of the contexts of migration. Michele Statz names the process of framing youth as "passive, needy and different" as "scripting the vulnerable child" and highlights how migrant

²⁶ Lauren Heidbrink, *Migrant Youth, Transnational Families and the State: Care and Contested Interests*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 134.

²⁷ Heidbrink, *Migrant Youth*, 134.

²⁸ Heidbrink, *Migrant Youth*, 134.

²⁹ Allen White, Caitriona Ni Laoire, and Fina Carpena Mendez. *Transnational Migration and Childhood*. (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), 3.

³⁰ White et al. *Transnational Migration*, 9.

³¹ White et al. *Transnational Migration*, 10.

children are often cast between two extremes: the innocent, passive child of trauma and an (potentially dangerous) outsider.³² She examines how Chinese youth who participate in this temporary educational migration are framed as both psychologically fragile due to separation from families or culture, and hardworking, responsible economic assets (who may threaten the future prospects of Canadian-born youth). This thesis takes up her call to feature the voices and experiences of youth in experiences of movement and migration with a view to subverting this process of scripting that White and Ni Laoire point out above.

While not specifically focused on Chinese youth, anthropologist Jacqueline Bhabha's work on youth experiences of migration is insightful for understanding the ways youth are scripted and fixed.³³ As Bhabha points out, illegal migrant youth are stripped of "the right to rights" because of both our understanding of youth as 'not yet political beings' and therefore, drawing on Arendtian principles, not yet human.³⁴ Further, Lauren Heidbrink, in her 2014 study of migrant youth, transnational families and the state, analyzes how a vision of "a romantic, middle class childhood" becomes fixed and embedded in law. She argues that migrant youth who fall outside this image are reimagined in a number of contradictory ways including as a criminal alien in need of swift punitive measures or a refugee who requires humanitarian response.³⁵ Heidbrink points out that the representation of migrant youth in policy has more to do with the adult-centered negotiations for power over the youth than the experiences or desires of the youth themselves.³⁶ However, she emphasizes the choices and activities that youth make throughout

³² Michele L. Statz, "Between Children and Transnational Economic Actors: The Discounted Belongings of Young Chinese Migrants." *Polar: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 39, no. 1 (2016): 4.

³³ Bhabha, *Human Rights and Adolescence*, 10.

³⁴ Bhabha, *Human Rights and Adolescence*, 23.

³⁵ Heidbrink, *Migrant Youth*, 13.

³⁶ Heidbrink, *Migrant Youth*, 14-16.

these experiences as demonstrations of their agency and their right to be regarded as fully human beings who are involved in making decisions about their migration experiences.³⁷

Vered Amit and Noel Dyck take a different view in their work focusing on youth who move from Canada to other places in the world in search of educational experiences and personal transformation. Amit and Dyck note that while youth cultures are often envisioned as transitory spaces where youth are socialized into the adult world they argue that, like other adult cultures, youth should be viewed in their own right.³⁸ Amit and Dyck bring attention to the incredible scale of youth travel and emphasize that understanding both the category ‘youth’ and the concept of travel as a liminal state have contributed to shaping the experiences of these youth.³⁹ They examine how youth shape self-identities through travel and movement. Furthermore, they argue that by participating in different social, cultural and economic worlds these understandings transform the cultural frameworks of youth cultures.⁴⁰ Amit and Dyck emphasize youth participation as a way to “revision” youth as reflexive and transformative actors within a social, cultural and economic context. This thesis takes up these questions in exploring the lives of Chinese international student migration to Ontario.

In addition to anthropological scholarship on youth, migration and movement, education scholars have examined youth who move for educational purposes. Their work focuses primarily on socialization, psychological development, effective teaching methods and/or cultural

³⁷ Hiedbrink, *Migrant Youth*, 16.

³⁸ Vered Amit and Helena Wulff (eds). *Youth cultures: A cross-cultural perspective*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5-6.

³⁹ Vered Amit (ed). *Going first class? New Approaches to Privileged Travel and Movement*. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 11.

⁴⁰ Amit, *Going first class?*, 3-4.

transmission.⁴¹ This research often frames education and/or schooling as a “cure” to bring about social, cultural or economic reform with a view to the future.⁴² However, anthropology of education and critical pedagogy scholars offer different perspectives given their interest in the tremendous shadows that this futurity casts upon youth.

In her study of global perspectives on schooling, Kathryn Anderson-Levitt sees the lived experience of schooling as always contextually different. She explores the ways that schooling as a practice has brought parallel kinds of sorting, such as the delineation of students by levels, grades, marks, and more, to all countries, assigning life chances to youth based on standardized achievement markers.⁴³ Anderson-Levitt finds that the way we “do schooling at present”⁴⁴ leads us to categorize children by micro-age grades and by newly defined traits like “maturity” and “intelligence.”⁴⁵

Scholars have also highlighted a hidden neoliberal agenda at work behind the allure of the global education industry and the new focus on children’s participation in schools.⁴⁶ While acknowledging the legitimacy of the concern of neoliberal narratives in schools, childhood scholar Rebecca Raby, for instance, argues that this focus fails to acknowledge youth as able to collectively identify domination and respond to it. Raby acknowledges the multiple contested

⁴¹ Francesca Meloni, Karine Vanthuyne, and Cecile Rousseau. “Towards a relational ethics: Rethinking ethics, agency and dependency in research with children and youth.” *Anthropological Theory* 15, no 1 (2015): 106-108.

⁴² Giroux, Henry. “Education and the Crisis of Youth: Schooling and the Promise of Democracy” *The Educational Forum* 73, no. 1 (2008): 9.

⁴³ Kathryn M. Anderson Levitt, *Local Meanings, Global Schooling: Anthropology and World Culture Theory* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8.

⁴⁴ Anderson Levitt uses the phrase “do schooling at present” to mean the institutional practice of schooling such as separating children in classrooms by age and ability, having a grading system, teacher authority, scheduling the day by subjects, etc. She explores how Western origins of these practices and how their spread is indicative of globalization as Westernization.

⁴⁵ Anderson Levitt, *Local Meanings, Global Schooling*, 10-11.

⁴⁶ Rebecca Raby, “Children’s participation as neoliberal governance?”, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 35, no. 1 (2014): 77.

definitions of neoliberalism and defines neoliberalism as “a context which favours privatisation, liberalised trade, the erosion of the welfare state and individual autonomy over citizen interdependence.”⁴⁷ Within this neoliberal context “the ideal global, neoliberal subject is autonomous, self-reliant, responsible and able to personally negotiate risk and the marketplace without relying on outside support.”⁴⁸ Thus, Raby explains, other scholars have argued that this goal of encouraging child participation in governance is really about creating the ideal, self-determined, autonomous, individualised child for a neo-liberal climate. However, She argues that children and youth in schools already participate in the “creation of social interaction and practices...and have legitimate views on and investments in what social interactions and participation should look like” and that this participation, although rarely acknowledged, often disrupts current dominating trends by introducing diverse understandings and interpretations.⁴⁹

This project will pay attention to a neoliberal agenda that may underscore arguments linking schooling and futurity while evoking Raby’s call to focus on youth agency in responding to this agenda. It will also attend to Anderson Levitt’s focus on how the practices of schooling influence the academic framing of youth. Beyond these scholars, this project will also draw on the work of David A. Yon who brought attention to how race, gender and multiculturalism have changed with global schooling and how this affects the lived experiences of youth.⁵⁰ It also benefits from the work of Bruce Curtis⁵¹ and Xiaobei Chen⁵² who have brought attention to the

⁴⁷ Raby, “Children's participation”, 82.

⁴⁸ Raby, “Children's participation”, 82.

⁴⁹ Raby, “Children's participation”, 83-84.

⁵⁰ Yon, David. *Elusive Culture: Schooling, Race, and Identity in Global Times*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000) 15.

⁵¹ Curtis, Bruce. *Ruling by Schooling Quebec: Conquest to Liberal Governmentality*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) 11-28.

⁵² Chen, Xiaobei. “‘Cultivating Children As You Would Valuable Plants’: the Gardening Governmentality of Child Saving, Toronto, Canada, 1880s-1920s.” *The Journal of Historical Sociology* 16, no.4 (2003): 486.

function of governmentality in structuring social/economic/cultural settings in schools, as well as scholars like Avi Shoshana,⁵³ who has explored the way students translate this governmental rationality into specific self-understandings. All of these scholars brilliantly emphasize that schooling ideologies and practices both conceal societal inequalities and transform our understanding of youth. Often these schooling ideologies are based on a developmental model in which adolescence is framed as a period of identity formation that proceeds as a series of steps.⁵⁴ Recent child and youth scholars have questioned this imaging of youth as “in-progress” and have begun to look at how youth negotiate or navigate their identity through their economic, social and cultural contexts.⁵⁵

With regard to processes of identity formation, one focus of educational scholars is on youth identity as a negotiation of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class and ability/disability.⁵⁶ While useful for understanding elements of youth experience, John Raible and Sonia Nieto argue that these categories are always messier than they appear and give the illusion that identities are static when in fact they are always partially fluid as they manifest differently in every action and every context.⁵⁷ Furthermore, they argue that identity must be studied as a social and political action through which youth develop a sense of self in relation to the broader social context.⁵⁸

⁵³ Shoshana, Avi. “Governmentality, self, and acting at a distance” *Social Identities* 17, no. 1 (2011): 771-791.

⁵⁴ See the work of Erik Erikson.

⁵⁵ Issues with the framing of youth as “in-progress” is raised by Vered Amit and Helena Wulff (1995). These issues and how youth navigate them are further developed in Francesca Meloni et al (2015), Allison James and Adrian James (2010), Rebecca Raby et al. (2018) and Nancy Worth (2009).

⁵⁶ Michael Sadowski, “Introduction” in *Adolescents at school: Perspectives on youth, identity and education*. ed. Michael Sadowski (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 28.

⁵⁷ John Raible and Sonia Nieto, “Complex Identities of Adolescents” in *Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity and Education*. ed. Michael Sadowski (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 207.

⁵⁸ Raible and Nieto, “Complex Identities”, 210.

For scholars of youth who move, the focus is on the ways people in a global context negotiate their identities between continuity and change, and between similarity and difference. Recently, Marie Gillespie argued that transnational youth develop “hybrid identities” by indicating that migrant youth have multiple belongings in and adaptations to several cultures.⁵⁹ Arjun Appadurai furthered this notion by looking at how identity is produced among people in diaspora through mediascapes.⁶⁰ He also argued that identity is tied to future imaginaries through a process of “spectral imaging.”⁶¹ This is a particularly useful idea for the purposes of the present study because of the intense focus on futures within an educational context. More recently, Ardis Storm-Mathisen and Jo Helle-Valle have argued that all identity is a process of hybridity and is built through navigating context and discourse.⁶²

With this broad theoretical and conceptual frame in mind, this thesis will draw on this literature to understand the ways in which identity is discursively produced in particular contexts by this local group of Chinese international students. It will examine how the students that participated in this study understand the discursive space they occupy and respond to it through conformity and creativity. It locates identity within practices and in context by exploring identity as social, cultural and relational.

Moreover, this study aims to contribute to anthropological interest in the experiences and perspectives of Chinese youth who travel internationally for education by examining the cultural dimensions of this student movement. A number of scholars have written about aspects of this

⁵⁹ Marie Gillespie, *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.

⁶⁰ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: the Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 22-23.

⁶¹ Arjun Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*, (New York: Verso Books, 2013), 14.

⁶² Michael Sadowski, “Introduction”, 30.

cultural dimension including Wei Liu who explores the role of Chinese educational culture as a “push-factor” for outbound student mobility and their choice of Canada as a destination.⁶³ Zhihua Zhang writes about Chinese international students learning outcomes in Canada by examining the challenges of learning in a second language.⁶⁴ Xiaoyu Jiang’s quantitative study explores Chinese international student decision-making and attitudes towards studying in the United States.⁶⁵ Yinni Peng investigates the use of social media by Chinese students studying in the United Kingdom to maintain relationships abroad.⁶⁶ Wenli Yuan examines the academic and cultural experiences of Chinese students at an American University.⁶⁷ Glen Stanford delves into the experiences and personal transformations of Chinese students studying in Australia.⁶⁸ However, of the anthropological research carried out on the topic of students seeking international educational experiences, little to no research exists that focuses specifically on Chinese students moving to Canada from the view of youth themselves.

This thesis aims to address this gap in the literature by documenting the experiences of a select group of young people moving from China to Ontario for study. It seeks to bring attention to their lived experiences and how they participate in, transform, and are transformed by, the contexts in which they are situated. It views youth participation as a valuable entry point to understanding the complexity of young people’s lives seen as actively engaged in producing their

⁶³ Wei Liu, “The International Mobility of Chinese Students: A Cultural Perspectives”, *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 46, no. 4 (2016): 41-59.

⁶⁴ Zhihua Zhang, “I came, but I’m lost: Learning stories of three Chinese international students in Canada”, *Canadian and International Education* 43, no 2. (2014): 1-15.

⁶⁵ Xiaoyu Jiang “Chinese international student’ decision making and attitudes towards study in the United States” (2012) Graduate Thesis and Dissertations. Iowa State University. 12946.

⁶⁶ Yinni Peng, “Student Migration and Poly Media: Mainland Chinese students’ communication media use in Hong Kong.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no 14. (2016): 2395-2412.

⁶⁷ Wenli Yuan, “Academic and Cultural experiences of Chinese students at an American University: A Qualitative Study.” *Intercultural Communications Studies* 20, no 1. (2011): 141-157.

⁶⁸ Glen Stanford, “The Unexpected Transformations of Chinese International Students studying in Australia.” (2010) Theses and Dissertations. University of Adelaide.

own social lives as viable subjects of research.⁶⁹ Specifically, my research presents an opportunity to understand how these students embody, navigate, situate themselves in, challenge, transform, and become transformed by, the discourses and the contexts that surround them in order to create a complex view of movement from the view of young people themselves.

Research Questions

The key task of this thesis is exploring how the category of “Chinese international student” is constituted both materially and discursively by the global education industry and, in turn, how this category is ‘lived’ by actual young people. Thus, in exploring these young people’s experiences of educational migration in different social and cultural settings, the thesis includes an analysis of the material and discursive elements of these contexts. It will then explore how their experiences shape and are shaped by the interactions in these spaces.

The main questions that this thesis seeks to answer are: 1) How do a select group of Chinese international students shape self-identities through travel and movement? 2) How does the complexity of these identities differ from the images of Chinese international students produced by private schools in Ontario? 3) How does this participation transform the social and cultural facets of their lives and the lives of those with whom they interact?⁷⁰ To this end, the thesis explores complex questions regarding the social and cultural ideas/practices that influence this migration and movement and documents responses from young people. It points out how the lived experiences of these youth compare with the current representations of Chinese

⁶⁹ Allison James and Adrian James, *Key Concepts in Childhood Studies*, (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 12.

⁷⁰ Amit, *Going first class?*, 3-4.

international students by researchers and other groups with a stake in the global education industry mentioned above. This comparison relies in part on the materials available in the contexts in which Chinese international students live that includes school websites, recruitment brochures and school information packets that are used to market the school to prospective students and their families.

Chapter Outline

This thesis is divided into six chapters. In the introductory chapter, I have briefly sketched the context out of which the research questions that guide this thesis emerge. This context includes the global education industry, migration and movement scholarship, and the steady rise of the social study of childhood discourse. It also explores the changing understanding of education, schooling, and the category ‘student’ in the context of globalization and discusses theoretical approaches to understanding identity. My specific interest lies in exploring how Chinese international students who come to Canada to study embody, navigate, situate themselves in, challenge, are transformed by or transform the discourses and the contexts that surround them as they endeavour to live their lives in new contexts and surroundings.

Chapter two presents an analysis of materials that are used by schools to attract students to study in Canada with a view to understanding how Chinese international students ‘appear’ in these materials. The materials make up part of the discursive space that surrounds Chinese international students. Thus, the chapter will explore how Chinese youth are positioned within this discursive space. It concludes with a discussion of how to envision youth who move as

actors who navigate through the discourses of passivity, vulnerability, futurity and economic investment that surround them and how they participate in and/or transform these ideas.

Chapter three introduces the setting for this study and provides a description of community life and social organization at Oakland College. The second section of this chapter outlines the methodological approach within this context.

Chapter four begins with an investigation of how Chinese youth make their way through comparative experiences of schooling in China and in Canada. It explores how power and discourse play into Chinese international student's self-understandings within their educational context. It highlights that these youth understand their discursive context and actively seek to position themselves within it in ways that accommodate, disrupt and reshape this discursive context.

What elements of a person's life are able to move with the youth throughout this migration process is the question that guides the discussion in the fifth chapter of this thesis. It examines how youth move, what elements of the social and cultural capacities learned within a Chinese context move with them to their new context at Oakland College, how they may be reconstituted in this new setting and what newly emerges in these contexts. Through an exploration of language, humour and social media amongst Chinese international students at Oakland College, this chapter highlights how these youth use these capacities to shape identities against images of passive, vulnerable students and form a shared sense of communal belonging at Oakland College.

Chapter six presents some of the preliminary conclusions that can be drawn from this exploratory research.

Chapter II – Discursive Spaces, Materiality and Chinese International Students

Child and youth scholars argue that youth are often imaged by adults in ways that may not reflect their experiences and identity. In the case of Chinese youth seeking international educational experiences in Canada, this imaging may affect the ways that they participate in the global education industry. Accordingly, this thesis examines how Chinese international students are imaged by adults in this particular context of education as well as how Chinese international students studying in Ontario respond to this imaging from their own perspectives. It also examines how they create their own self-identities within this discursive context. In service of this task, this chapter will offer an analysis of the materials that circulate in the global education industry.

The materials used for this analysis are promotional private school materials created by institutions that participate in the global education industry to attract Chinese international students and their families. This chapter will explore how Chinese international students are positioned within this discursive space created by schools via images found in these promotional materials. Following this analysis, the thesis considers how young people navigate, accommodate, resist and reshape these positionings and spaces.

Discursive Spaces

Discursive spaces are formed through a conglomeration of materials and practices that produce a subject by drawing together multiple different discourses. Following from the work of Michel Foucault, poststructuralists have highlighted how those in power control and produce discursive spaces giving them the ability to position others in this space. According to Foucault,

discourse is a way of constituting knowledge that together with social practices forms subjectivities and power relations that inhere in such knowledges and relations. For Foucault, his interest in discourse was to explore how knowledge is produced and materially instantiated.⁷¹ More recently, discourse has been used to describe disembodied narratives that structure society and dictate relationships/behaviours.⁷² Louise Phillips and Marianne Jorgenson argue that discourse has become a fashionable academic term that is either used so vaguely as to be meaningless or given more precise but divergent definitions based on context and discipline.⁷³ For subjects such as Chinese international students, the concept of discourse assists with understanding how these young people are implicated in a number of discourses that serve to situate them in contexts of movement and migration. Multiple discourses compete to form a discursive space that shapes the ways the youth navigate their lives. Drawing on Foucault's notion of discourse therefore, I will look at how discourse is materially enacted in practice to create a discursive space.

One of the ideas that frames my examination of the discursive space of youth draws on what Derek Hook emphasizes as the importance of seeing 'the discursive effects of the material, and the material effects of the discursive'.⁷⁴ He emphasizes that discourse interrelates with four different aspects of materiality—bodies, spaces, objects, and practices—which offer some important avenues for further empirical investigation.⁷⁵ However, as Wanda Orlikowski and Susan Scott argue, bodies, spaces, and objects are not separable from or detached from practice.

⁷¹ Louise Phillips and Marianne Jorgenson, *Discourse as Theory and Method*. (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 7.

⁷² Phillips and Jorgenson, *Discourse as Theory and Method*, 8.

⁷³ Phillips and Jorgenson, *Discourse as Theory and Method*, 1.

⁷⁴ Derek Hook. "Discourse, Knowledge, Materiality, History: Foucault and Discourse Analysis" *Theories and Psychology* 11, no. 4 (2001): 525.

⁷⁵ Hook, "Discourse, Knowledge, Materiality, History", 530-531.

Instead, they argue that “bodies, spaces, and objects are, at any given time, what practices have made them. In other words, practices are constitutive of the world.”⁷⁶ Since discourse lacks a self-contained existence apart from the material instantiation, they argue that the material-discursive practices are performative in so far as they configure reality.⁷⁷ Put plainly, a discourse cannot be viewed as a thing in itself, but rather as a constantly material performance which positions bodies and objects in particular ways.

In order to explore the discursive landscape of this student migration, this chapter will explore the written and visual material that Chinese international students encounter as they navigate through private education in Ontario. This analysis will be a useful starting point to further explore how Chinese international students participate in maintaining, disrupting and transforming these discursive spaces.

When considering an educational opportunity abroad, some of the students with whom I worked, along with their families, attended information sessions hosted by Oakland College at large private school fairs in China. These private school fairs were hosted by a large real estate firm which hoped to market real estate in large urban Canadian cities alongside private educational opportunities to tap into the market of parents and prospective students entering the global education industry. These fairs take place annually in July, in locations including Hong Kong, Beijing, Guangzhou, Nanjing and Shenzhen. Parents and prospective students find out about the fairs through advertisements around these cities and online. At these events, parents and youth are able to talk to administrators, view presentations about school offers, and collect/examine school viewbooks (a type of magazine advertising the school’s offerings) and

⁷⁶ Wanda Orlikowski and Susan Scott, “Exploring Material-Discursive Practices” *Journal of Management Studies* 52, no. 5 (2014): 679.

⁷⁷ Orlikowski and Scott, “Exploring Material-Discursive Practices”, 700-701.

brochures. Within these conversations, presentations and material advertisements, private schools present a narrative about who these students are and will become if they attend their institution.⁷⁸

Private school narratives in their marketing materials are shaped by the tailored language and images chosen to convey the goals and aspirations of their school as well as their understanding of what qualities constitute the category ‘student’. Thus, language and imaging have profound effects on the ways meanings about people's lives are conveyed. Language concretizes experiences and makes them appear ‘real’ while images convey emotions and meanings that sometimes escape the written word.⁷⁹ For schools and school personnel interested in attracting international students, language and imaging play a key role in conveying to interested consumers the product (international education) that they are attempting to sell in the marketplace through their marketing materials.⁸⁰ Images are particularly potent given the rising interest in international/global education and movements of young people seeking enriched educational experiences, along with the privatization of education in Canada. Images of students placed alongside narratives of school life can capture some of the ways Chinese international students appear in the discursive space produced by these promotional materials.

⁷⁸ Information in this paragraph was attained through an interview with the Head of Teaching and Learning at Oakland College who attended these fairs for the last two years.

⁷⁹Phillips and Jorgenson, *Discourse as Theory and Method*, 12.

⁸⁰Antonio Verger et al., *The Privatization of Education: A Political Economy of Global Education Reform*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2016), 10.

Imaging Youth in Privatized Education Materials

Childhood scholars, including Allison James, Adrian James⁸¹ and Barrie Thorne⁸², who analyze the imaging of youth by private schools, highlight the dichotomous thinking used to describe young people. These include “good/bad student”, “risky/at risk” and “future worker/current child.”⁸³ Michele Statz points out that these oppositional narratives get caught up in the discourses about internationalization, globalization and futurity around youth who move.⁸⁴ In her work on girlhoods in international aid and education, Jackie Kirk explores how these oppositional narratives get mapped onto the bodies of youth in promotional materials produced by some schools that, in turn, impact on policy and practice.⁸⁵ She calls for a re-view (interrogation) of the images alongside what is written about youth in promotional materials used by schools. Kirk examines imaging of girl’s education by UNICEF by asking who is imaged (and who is not) in particular settings, how girls are positioned in relation to the viewer and others in the photographs, and how these images reflect or do not reflect narratives in the text that are placed alongside them.⁸⁶ Kirk also examines how these images may or may not reflect the lived experiences of the UNICEF students who participated in her focus groups.⁸⁷ Kirk’s approach is particularly insightful for the present study that seeks to investigate how students are imaged in school promotional materials.

⁸¹ Allison James and Adrian James “Tightening the Net: Children, Community and Control” *British Journal of Sociology* 52, no 2., (2001): 211–28.

⁸² Barrie Thorne, “Pick Up Time at Oakdale Elementary School: Work and Family from the Vantage Points of Children” *Berkeley Center for Working Families, Working and Occasional Papers* (1999), 1-2.

⁸³ James and James, *Key Concepts in Childhood Studies*, 57.

⁸⁴ Michele Statz, “Between Children and Transnational Economic Actors: The Discounted Belongings of Chinese Youth Migrants.” *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 39, no. 1 (2016): 4-18.

⁸⁵ Jackie Kirk, “Sight Unseen: Re-viewing Images of Girls’ Education.” *Girlhood Studies* 3, no 1 (2010), 11.

⁸⁶ Kirk, “Sight Unseen”, 21.

⁸⁷ Kirk, “Sight Unseen”, 22.

A Private School Fair in Ontario

The Private School Expo (held in a large urban city in Ontario) is an annual gathering of private school representatives who display their marketing materials to parents of children seeking a private school experience. It is hosted by “Our Kids,” a for-profit organization that employs child development specialists, educational consultants, and other professionals to gather data on academic and recreational programs around Canada.⁸⁸ Their goal is to help families gain a sense of their options, and discover, compare, and choose between schools, camps, and programs that will shape their children's future. Our Kids hosts private school expos in Montreal, Halton-Peel, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver. The particular fair I attended for this study is also sponsored by InSchoolWear, a company that makes school uniforms that are used by many of the private schools within the city in which this research was conducted.

Approximately 16-20 schools attend this fair each year. Each school pays an undisclosed amount to advertise at the fair. The gathering is held at a large conference space in the downtown core of the city. The fair takes place in mid-October. To attend the fair, parents must pay \$20 for admission. The fair is advertised on OurKids.net, in the annual Our Kids Private School Guide, in the monthly Our Kids e-newsletter, in national and local newspapers, on the radio, in television commercials, at sports centers, in community e-calendars, at private and independent schools, on independent school association websites, on parenting and education websites, on google AdWords, at embassies and High commission offices, at libraries, and in legal, dental and medical offices. Ourkids.net asserts that “thousands of parents and children” attend this event.

⁸⁸ See their website: <http://www.ourkids.net/>

Sixteen private schools attended the Private School Expo hosted in the city in which this study was conducted in October of 2017. Of these sixteen schools, five schools serve middle school and high school aged youth. These schools also offer a boarding option. Each of these schools has a website that can be translated into Chinese; some have promotional materials written in the Chinese language available at the private school expo. The materials presented at the fair are in the form of school news magazines, viewbooks and brochures. The analysis below draws from all of these materials as well as from images found on the school websites; most of the viewbooks direct the reader to the websites as well.

Analysis of Private School Materials

Materials drawn from the five schools serving middle school and high school aged students are the primary focus of this analysis. I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork at one of the five schools in this analysis, Oakland College. I selected the other four schools because they were similar to Oakland College in their size, tuition costs, and boarding options. Furthermore, the schools selected had promotional materials that were translated into Chinese - indicating that they sought to attract Chinese international students. This selection of schools allowed me view images in the promotional materials that sought to present a vision of Chinese international students' lives at Oakland College and similar schools.

I collected viewbooks from all of these schools and examined all of their websites including the school news books that were offered on these websites. I selected photos that included the names of students pictured in a box below them in order to verify that the students in the images I analyzed had a Chinese last name. However, there was no way to verify that these

students were Chinese international students. I then selected twenty-two photos from this set of photos containing Chinese students—four from each school (and an extra two images from the Oakland College viewbook.) I analyzed these images by aligning them beside the other images in the viewbooks and using Jackie Kirk’s approach of examining gaze and positionality in the images.⁸⁹ I then sorted the images into the different sections, adding an additional photo (imaging non-Chinese youth travelling abroad) from each school to demonstrate an area where the Chinese youth are not often imaged. This brought the total number of images analyzed to twenty-six.

A number of common themes emerged throughout this project which I wrote down into concept charts. In analyzing the materials for the five schools (Joy Academy, Basswood School, Riverland College, Triad College, and Oakland College) three broad themes common to all five schools emerged: 1) a focus on individual transformation through international travel and the construction of integrated global communities, 2) the education of the ‘whole student,’ and 3) the focus on schooling as an investment in students’ futures. The next section offers an analysis of each of these main themes.

Theme One: Individual transformation through international travel and the construction of a global community.

Two narratives featured prominently in the materials used by private schools to advertise to prospective students and their families. The first narrative had a focus on travel as a method for personal transformation; the second involved creating global communities. Both of these narratives draw on discourses of multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and visions of

⁸⁹ Kirk, “Sight Unseen”, 15-17.

internationalization. What is interesting to note is that while Chinese international students are imaged clearly within the narrative of creating global communities, they are entirely left out of the narratives of travel as a vehicle for personal transformation.

With regard to a focus on travel, Joy Academy, for instance, a school that is part of a chain of private schools across Ontario, focuses on international travel as an educational tool for personal transformation. Throughout the full year “global school” program, Joy Academy attempts to “allow students to experience the transformation that comes through travel” by sending a cohort of students around the world to “experience other cultures, adapt to new surroundings and recognize that we are a global society.” The first stop is Beijing, China where the students stay for a couple of days before heading out on their eight-week tour of Asia. The focus of this Asia tour is “history, anthropology and early human cultures” and the main clients for this school are Canadian born students.

Basswood School is an independent all-girls school that offers community service trips through the “Me to We” volunteer program⁹⁰ with past trips mostly focusing on India and Kenya. It also offers opportunities for “educational travel to exciting destinations” such as New York City, Boston and Washington D.C. Riverland College is a coed independent school that offers two to three international service project trips a year with a focus on India, Kenya, Thailand, China, Ecuador and the Galapagos, Costa Rica and Peru. It also offers students the opportunity to

⁹⁰ Me to We is a for-profit “social enterprise” that seeks to change the “perspectives” of youth (from “me thinking to we thinking”) and “empower global communities” through global international volunteer travel. It was founded by Craig and Marc Kielburger who founded the company after a middle school trip to Africa “changed their lives and hearts.” For more information please see: <https://www.metowe.com/>

travel to India, Cambodia, Kenya and Peru to help build schools, dig wells or lay pipe that will provide clean water through the Round Square program.⁹¹

Triad College is a co-educational, independent boarding/day school two hours' drive from the city in which this research takes place. Its viewbook has less of a focus on internationalization than the other schools in this analysis. However, it does offer a volunteer trip to Ecuador during its "Week without walls campaign." This campaign involves "develop[ing] habits of the heart and mind for a life of purpose and service." It also offers students various educational trips around Canada and Europe as part of their commitment to "travel education" which "enhances learning through meaningful hands-on experience." Oakland College, the school that is the site for this thesis, espouses multiple times in their viewbook their commitment to international engagement and a dedication to "fostering open-minded perspectives, international understanding and global responsibility." They offer multiple international volunteer trips including service trips in Africa that are said to be "transformational and promote a lifelong commitment to global understanding."

These schools use images alongside the above text in their viewbooks and websites to further advertise these travel opportunities. As explored above, images as much as the texts found in the private school promotional materials offer conceptual clues about how the schools position youth.⁹² First, Chinese international students are imaged to reflect particular social and

⁹¹ Round Square is a not-for-profit membership network based in the United Kingdom that seeks to promote the educational philosophy of Kurt Hahn. Specifically, the program is based on fostering six ideals (Democracy, Service, Internationalism, Adventure, Leadership and Environmentalism). This network hosts annual conferences, offers exchange between participating schools and runs international service trips to South America, Africa and Asia open to all participating schools. Despite Round Square's non-for profit status, these trips do cost between 1000 to 2000 pounds to participate in. Students are also expected to cover the cost of their flight. Currently, schools in 50 different countries across six continents participate in Round Square. For more information please see:

<https://www.roundsquare.org/>

⁹² Kirk, "Sight Unseen", 21.

cultural groups but in limited geographic spaces. Figures 1 through 4 contain the pages in the school's viewbook dedicated to service learning and international travel. None of the students represented in these images of travelling students are Chinese international students. Through the portrayal of almost exclusively white students pictured teaching, talking with, and smiling with children in places including Africa and South America, Chinese international students are invisible and do not appear as target clients for this type of international travel. While not prohibited from participating in these activities, these service travel opportunities appear to be offering opportunities for Canadian students to travel abroad.

Ofra Koffman, Shani Orgad and Rosalind Gill argue that that the increased imaging of youth humanitarian aid, often by the Northern youth themselves, turns the gaze away from the those in need and onto the individual donor of aid. They argue that this reframes 'helping others' in terms of entrepreneurial and narcissistic self-work.⁹³ Pippa Biddle, a youth advocate, has examined this imaging of white middle class children providing "aid" to children in developing nations and the way that this relationship functions primarily as a performance of "kindness" through which white middle class youth form particular self-understandings.⁹⁴ She also importantly notes that most of these youth service projects not only fail to bring about real change but often stunt it by getting youth to do jobs they are untrained for, granting unfettered access to vulnerable children, and imaging westerners in professional jobs rather than supporting the professionalization of workers within these countries.⁹⁵ Anthropologist Vered Amit concurs noting that the imaging service travel is often paired with the valorization of travel as a method

⁹³ Ofra Koffman, Shani Orgad and Rosalind Gill. "Girl Power and Selfie Humanitarianism." *Continuum* 29, no. 2 (2015): 10.

⁹⁴ Pippa Biddle. "The Problem with White Little Girls and Boys: Why I Stopped Being a Voluntourist." *Huffington Post* (2014).

⁹⁵ See Biddle (2014).

of personal transformation among western youth.⁹⁶ Gareth Barkin notes that this focus on travel as a vehicle for personal transformation fosters an “uncritical discourse of (just) going” which often hinders the pedagogical goals of educational travel.⁹⁷

Many of the Chinese international students I interviewed noted that they did not participate in these trips because they often happened over school break, a time when many of the students returned home or met up with family abroad. This is not to say that the narrative of transformation through travel was not present in the words of Chinese international students themselves. In fact, in the interviews and focus groups conducted for this project, many of the students framed their experience at Oakland College as a journey of personal transformation. Similarly to how Amit frames the personal journeys of students from Canada traveling abroad⁹⁸, these youth highlighted how their experience in Canada “broadened their vision of the world”⁹⁹ and highlighted that other cultures were “just like them, they didn’t have any like special skills or anything, they were just people.”¹⁰⁰

Beyond a focus on international travel, each of the schools advertises their programs using similar language and narratives of multiculturalism and internationalization that inform the promise of “global communities” in private schools. Basswood boasts in its viewbook that their student body represents over 30 different countries from around the world and notes that they are “proud to have such a diverse community that offers students a truly global perspective.”

⁹⁶ Amit, *Going first class*, 10.

⁹⁷ Barkin, Gareth. “Either Here or There: Short-term Study Abroad and the Discourse of Going.” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* Vol. 10, no. 1 (2018): 1548-1492.

⁹⁸ Vered Amit. “Before I Settle Down: Youth Travel and Enduring Life Course Paradigms” *Anthropologica* 53, no. 1 (2011): 80-81.

⁹⁹ Personal Communication from Ava, female Grade 12 Chinese international student, obtained during an interview in early January.

¹⁰⁰ Personal Communication from Olivia, female Grade 10 Chinese international student, obtained during an interview in late January.

Similarly, Triad College boasts a 45% junior student international boarding population (out of 110 students) and a 27% international senior student boarding population (out of 464 students). It promises its future students the opportunity to “make friends from many different countries, learn acceptance and inclusivity and develop your worldly self.” Oakland College, with the school motto “the world starts here,” boasts that it has students from over 52 countries including 100 boarding students making it the “perfect learning ground for international understanding.”

Education scholars have highlighted that the language of multiculturalism and internationalization is part of the framing of schooling as a method of intervention to bring about future social reform. Stephen Ball notes that the language of multiculturalism is written into “policyscapes” that move globally with the rise of the global education industry. He observes within the educational policyscape, multiculturalism and internationalization are both presented as ‘magical solutions’ to global inequality.¹⁰¹ However, scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm have highlighted the simplistic and the static representation of “cultures” within these celebrations of multiculturalism.¹⁰² Meanwhile, Fazal Rizvi notes that privatization of education as a global phenomenon uses the language of multiculturalism to tap into global markets and ties this language to images of utopian futures in order to sell their products.¹⁰³ As Arjun Appadurai similarly notes, the reduction of culture to a symbol of a piece of an envisioned future is then offered and is “commodified” and “consumed.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Stephen Ball. *Global Education Inc: New Policy Networks and the Neoliberal Imaginary*. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 4.

¹⁰² Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions.” *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 12.

¹⁰³ Fazal Rizvi. *Encountering Education in the Global*. (New York: Routledge, 2014.), 10.

¹⁰⁴ Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact*, 167.

While Chinese international students are entirely left out of the discursive space surrounding international travel and service work, Chinese students are brought to the center of the discursive space surrounding global communities at private schools. For instance, figures 5 and 6 of the viewbooks advertise global communities beside images of Chinese international students and other non-white student populations who are imaged smiling for photos. Figures 7 to 11 are pages from the viewbooks aimed at advertising international student experience in boarding houses as a space for realizing global communities. These pages feature Chinese international students almost more than any other population. In figure 7, the only image on the page features a female Chinese student studying diligently. In figure 8, another female Chinese student is stretched across her dorm room bed smiling at her phone with a textbook close by. Figure 9 features a male Chinese student smiling while hugging a sled dog in the snow beside the caption “Capture Canada” and the promise of the opportunity for international students to “expand [their] horizons.” Figure 10 features five male Chinese international students in the boarding house living areas. Two of these students are reading the newspaper while a third gazes out the window. Two more students are shown talking while sitting in leather seats. Two non-Chinese students chat to each other in the background of this scene. These two images are accompanied by a list of student activities that promote “cultural sharing” in boarding school. Taken together, these images offer ideas about Chinese international students as imaged as part of a global community as well as an asset to it. How this imaging of the Chinese international students as symbols of internationalization shapes the practices of Oakland College (such as Beijing Week, Chinese New Year, Chinese food and Chinese classes) is explored further in the next chapter.

Theme 2: Academics and The Whole Student

The five private schools used for this analysis all emphasize that they are focused on “academic excellence” but also espouse a focus on educating the “whole child” through an “integrated and diverse curriculum,” along with extracurricular programs and community engagement. This emphasis contributes to constituting the symbol of the “Chinese student” as read in terms of academic excellence and positioned in the context of “whole child” education.

The notion of whole child education has gained prominence in the Canadian pedagogical imagination during the last decade and structures much of the curricula, built environments and school life at the private schools in this study. The “whole child” approach emphasizes the extracurricular activities and community engagement as equally important in a child’s education as their academic day. Oakland College, for instance, promotes academic excellence as the first of five “core values.”¹⁰⁵ In the school’s mission statement, they promise to promote critical thinking and a culture of innovation. Similarly, Basswood School promotes their school as a space where “girls strive for academic excellence.” They argue that their “globally recognized academically rigorous curriculum” will prepare students for the global stage and changing world, tying this discourse firmly to a global community discourse with a focus on futurity. Triad College promises academic excellence through its “broad and rigorous curriculum encouraging both critical and creative thinking.” Riverland College promotes its academic curriculum as focused on “collaborative problem solving to instill a passion for lifelong learning.” In a message from the president, Joy Academy presents its students as “successful...because they push

¹⁰⁵ The five core values are Academic Excellence, Community, Character Development, Personal Growth and International Engagement.

themselves academically in an environment that enables them to have the confidence to take risks.”

While it is hardly surprising that the schools would promote themselves as centres of academic excellence, critical pedagogy scholar Henry Giroux has argued that by positioning their rigorous programming as a key driver in the future success of its students, private schools tap into neoliberal narratives regarding achievement through hard work and creativity.¹⁰⁶ To this end, Chinese international students are most visible in the sections of the viewbooks and news magazines dedicated to awards and recognition that are presumably the outcomes of hard work particularly in the areas focused on STEM subjects. Figures 12 through 16, for example, feature images of both male and female Chinese students receiving awards for mathematics and science and technology. These images may seem mundane given that any student who wins the award would be pictured here. However, given the lack representation of Chinese international students in other areas of the viewbook, this predominance of images of Chinese students in this section of the viewbook is telling. Furthermore, the segregation of Chinese international students to this section of the viewbooks aligns with Stephanie Cheung’s view that Chinese students in Canada are often read by their peers through a racial lens that groups together a variety of different cultural groups as “Asian” and projects particular stereotypes on that group.¹⁰⁷ The imaging of Chinese students as the epitome of academic excellence was one of the stereotypes that was noted by the young people themselves as relevant in the lives of the students involved in this project and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁶ Giroux, *Pedagogy and The Politics of Hope*, 10.

¹⁰⁷ Stephanie Cheung, “Deconstructing ‘Too Asian’: An Analysis of Chinese Educational Migration, Internationalization and The North American University.” Theses and Dissertation, McMaster University (2012), 15.

Apart from academic excellence, science and technology figures in particular ways in the images of Chinese international students in the private school materials. In figures 17 through 20, Chinese students are imaged with cutting edge technology such as Smart Boards, Macintosh laptops, and laboratory equipment. Cheung notes that Chinese students in STEM subjects are often stereotyped as “more Asian” than Chinese students in the arts.¹⁰⁸ She examines how both Chinese students and non-Chinese students participate in the construction of this imaging of the “ideal Asian” and that it feeds from, and feeds into, the model minority myth.¹⁰⁹ Finally, figures 21 to 23 feature Chinese students teaching non-Chinese students. Cheung also notes that “Asian” students are not only seen as more present in the STEM areas but also as exceptional noting that any Chinese student who did not perform exceptionally in these subject was not seen as a “real Asian.”¹¹⁰ This reading of Chinese students as exceptional portrays them as academically better than their peers, a narrative that is reflected in the constant imaging of these students as math or science tutors in the viewbooks and brochures.

The desire of the private schools to create academically capable students is paired with the aim to produce well-rounded individuals through the whole student education they offer to students. In the case of Oakland College, one example is a desire to develop “intellectually curious, compassionate and responsible citizens.” Riverland College espouses that it “believes in the education of the whole student through the concurrent development of intellectual, social, emotional and physical qualities needed to lead a fulfilling life.” Basswood School promises that its students will receive a well-rounded education that will prepare them for life and work beyond the classroom.” They contend that this focus on the “whole girl will open up a whole

¹⁰⁸ Cheung, “Deconstructing ‘Too Asian’”, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Cheung, “Deconstructing ‘Too Asian’”, 16.

¹¹⁰ Cheung, “Deconstructing ‘Too Asian’”, 31.

new world [for the students].” Triad College’s mission statement aims at “developing habits of the heart and mind for a life of purpose and service.” This focus on the whole child is often individualized. Joy Academy, for instance, promises to offer “truly personalized education” and to create a space where students “can explore themselves and their world in depth.”

This focus on the whole child is often used to link the focus on academic development, service and co-curriculars such as sports, arts and clubs. However, even as many Chinese students are sparingly imaged participating in a range of school wide activities, they are visibly missing in areas of sports in the private school materials. This lack of representation of “Asian” students in sports was a notable omission for many of the Chinese students who participated in the current study. How sports and clubs feature in the experiences of Chinese international students at Oakland College will be explored in Chapter 4.

Theme 3: Schooling as an investment in students’ futures

Child and youth scholars have examined the lack of the presence of youth amid adults in society and the prominent focus on developing youth’s “future potential” to become successful social and economic actors. The viewbooks of the private schools used in this analysis pair the current achievement of the youth presented in the previous section with images of their potential futures. They mostly do this through advertising the success of former students. This includes ratios of students in top universities to images of past students who are happily married or having children while maintaining high profile careers. Through this imaging of alumni life, the schools are able to market their educational services as an investment in a happy, economically prosperous future.

In their viewbook, Oakland College boasts that all of its students get into the top university of their choice. Basswood School boasts the distinctive motto that “girls who want to change the world will become women who do.” Both Oakland College and Basswood School produce news magazines that are uploaded onto their websites and available at school fairs. These magazines end with a section on alumni news. This news ranges from reporting engagements, marriages and births of alumni children to career success and community involvement. Similarly, Triad College and Joy Academy both present alumni pages on their websites that focus mostly on the career success and community projects of their former students. Alongside all of these news items are images of the previous alumni.

These images of youth and alumni play into a general focus on the futurity of youth within schools. Children and youth are not understudied but rather studied only as “potential adults” due to the focus on psychological development and socialization in educational discourses.¹¹¹ The growing global imaginary promoted by the global education industry (GEI) that “good” schooling is a commodity that consumers vie over in order to secure the future success of these students¹¹² adds to this vision of students as “becoming” adults rather than highlighting how students “are” in the present.¹¹³ Chinese international students are represented here in similar ways to their international and domestic peers when it comes to attending “top universities.” In figure 24, a young Chinese woman is pictured with her arm around her friend beside a description of their journey at Oxford. In figure 25, a slightly older woman is imaged with an arm around a school representative. This image is situated among her outstanding accomplishments as an engineer and the volunteer work she has done at Oakland College. The

¹¹¹ Giroux, *Pedagogy and The Politics of Hope*, 10

¹¹² Verger et al, *The Global Education Industry*, 8.

¹¹³ Allison James, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout, *Theorizing Childhood*, (Cambridge: Polity Press: 1998), 59-60.

final image appears in a viewbook from Oakland College. It lists universities that the international students from Oakland College attended after graduation below an image of a young Chinese international graduate holding a poster board with her university. As explored in Chapter 5, the students in this study are aware of pressure of futurity and negotiate the school's visions of them as "becoming" with their current self-understandings.

Conclusion: Youth Agency and Discursive Spaces

As Rebecca Raby, Xiaobei Chen and Shawna Pomerantz highlight, one of the current tasks of scholars of youth and childhood studies is to understand youth agency or "the capacity to act in a given context in order to respond to and shape the world around them."¹¹⁴ Within this framework, understanding how youth are not only imaged in discourse and how they respond to, disrupt, and negotiate their identities through these discursive spaces helps to "re-vision" youth from the perspective of the youth themselves.¹¹⁵ In service of this task, this chapter analyzed the images and texts found in the brochures and websites from private schools around Ontario used to attract students to their respective institutions as well as scholarly literature to explore the discursive space through which Chinese students navigate. After an examination of the methods and setting for the present study in the next chapter, the remainder of the thesis attends to understanding how Chinese international students act within this discursive space through their own lived experiences.

¹¹⁴ Rebecca Raby et al. *The Sociology of Childhood and Youth in Canada*, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2017), 20.

¹¹⁵ Kirk, *Sight Unseen*, 2.

Chapter III – The Setting and Methodological Considerations

Oakland College is a mid-sized private school located in a large urban Canadian city. Founded in the late nineteenth century, it was an exclusively boys high school offering both boarding and day student options. However, in the early 1980's, the school expanded to include girls and a junior school. The sprawling 12-acre campus is located 20 minutes away by car or bus from the city centre in a middle to upper class residential area. Nestled between the neo-colonial style buildings that serve as the main school and the various dormitories are large athletics facilities such as a football field and various gymnasiums. Inside the main school building, the winding hallways lead to various classrooms (most with smartboards), an open study hall, a library with a technical support center, and an impressively large theatre with seating for 500 people. The basement of the school features the cafeteria that is large enough to hold assemblies as well as various well-equipped club rooms.

This chapter will describe some aspects of Oakland College that played a large part in the data gathered for this study. This includes a discussion of the school's focus on growing international student enrolment and a commitment to internationalization; which made this school a preferred site of study for this type of research. It will highlight the school's focus on sports, clubs and volunteering which played a large part in the school life of the youth in this study. It will also bring attention to the school's participation in the International Baccalaureate program. Finally, it will explore how the promise that every student will go to university plays a large part in structuring school life at Oakland College. My interactions with the students and staff during my time at the school as well as the methods employed to gather data comprise the second section of this chapter.

This chapter will also explore some of the complex issues that arise in the researcher/participant dynamic emerging from the context and methodological approach of this study. It will also draw attention to some of the limitations of this study. The following chapters will explore how Chinese international students navigate this space and context.

Life at Oakland College

Oakland College currently has 170 students in the junior school and 515 students enrolled in the senior school, 100 of whom are boarding students. Tuition for senior day students (regardless of citizenship status) is approximately \$26,000 per year. Tuition for senior boarding students is approximately \$64,000 per year. The school does offer merit awards and bursaries for families in financial need however, these are offered to less than 5% of the student population. Most of the Chinese international students in this study come from middle to upper class households with parents who paid their tuition and boarding/housing costs. To enroll in the school, students must submit an online application, a personal profile, school reports, and a reference letter; they must also complete a student interview and take an entrance exam. Chinese students hoping to attend Oakland must also attain an exit visa in China, however, as many of the students in this study noted that this process was facilitated by international school offices in China and did not present a barrier to leaving the country.

Five years ago, the school modified its policies so that this entrance exam may be done at a distance to encourage international student enrollment. Oakland College has a current goal of growing their international population until they have 80% international students and 20% domestic students in their senior school. Currently, Oakland College has 11.4% Chinese

international students. Of these students, 14.9% are Chinese international students in boarding. Chinese international students who are not in boarding at Oakland College live with either one or both parents or participate in a homestay program that is partnered with the school. At the time of data collection, Oakland College had been participating in private education fairs in six cities in China for two years. Prior to their participation in these fairs, the school had not actively recruited in China.

Students at Oakland College have a program choice between the main academic stream and the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma. The second path requires students to successfully complete a second language diploma. For students of English as a second language, there is an option to complete higher-level courses in their mother tongue as a replacement for this requirement. To this end, Oakland recently added a new Mandarin-Chinese teacher to teach courses such as “Chinese literature” in Mandarin. Furthermore, this teacher provides “Introduction to Mandarin courses” for non-Chinese speakers and “English as a second language” courses for Chinese parents.

In addition to academics, Oakland College also puts a strong emphasis on co-curricular activities. All students must participate in at least one co-curricular activity in every term of the year, not including athletics teams. The students are encouraged, but not required, to choose multiple offerings with different foci such as an art focused club and physical activity.

Beyond these activities, the Oakland Community Service Program (required for graduation) requires students to complete 60 hours of community service. Each activity contributes towards these hours and must be uploaded online to a public student profile with a reflection paper. Beyond this requirement, students are encouraged to participate in the Duke of

Edinburgh Awards Program¹¹⁶ that rewards students who are outstanding in service, skill development, physical recreation, and who demonstrate an adventurous spirit. Students are also highly encouraged to participate in the Round Square program¹¹⁷ aimed at international and community service projects as well as student exchanges. In 2017, Oakland College announced that it would be hosting its annual five-day International Round Square Conference.

Oakland College has a ‘life skills’ support system offered to all students. The life skills support staff is composed of the wellness team and student services. The wellness team includes the chapel/life skills coordinator (in charge of meeting with parents and students about mental health issues), the school nurse, a learning strategist (in charge of meeting with parents and students about learning strategies in the classrooms), director of student services (who deals with issues of attendance, parent-teacher engagement, course changes). The wellness team focuses on “creat[ing] events and activities focused on the promotion of social norms and self-management as well as developing refusal skill while maintaining positive social interactions.” They focus on “handling peer pressure, anger and stress management, conflict resolution, time management and parent-teen conflict.” For international students who are boarders, the dormitory staff is in charge of dealing with homesickness. The student support services department is comprised of five academic advisors, one for each year, and an extra advisor for students enrolled in the IB program.

The policies and practices of Oakland College make up the context in which the Chinese international students in this study make decisions and construct their identities. Although unique in many ways, these policies and practices reflect many of the themes espoused by multiple

¹¹⁶ <https://www.dukeofed.org/>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.roundsquare.org/>

private schools across Ontario. Themes such as a desire for internationalization and multiculturalism, a commitment to whole child education and a consistent focus on the futurity of youth in school.

Methodological Considerations

The fieldwork for this project was conducted from November 15 to February 27th of 2018. Aside from a few weeks for the holidays in late December, I visited the school two to three times a week for twelve weeks, attending various club activities, ESL classes and assemblies alongside the youth. Participant observation, formal and informal interviews (most of which were audio recorded), focus groups, as well as a content analysis of recruitment materials comprise the main methods for this study. These methods were selected to address issues of power and contextualization outlined by anthropologists and child and youth scholars. How these issues pertain to this project as well as how I attempted to address them will be discussed below.

Content analysis was selected as a method to examine how these youth are positioned in an Ontario private school context. As Jackie Kirk argues, examining the positioning of the youth within the discursive materials that surround their everyday lives, researchers can better understand how youth respond to, disrupt, embody or alter these experiences.¹¹⁸ After attending a private school fair, similar to the fairs that the youth in this study attended, I selected five schools that had international boarding options and combed through their viewbooks for images of Chinese youth. After marking the place of these images, I drew on Kirk's call to look at the objects and location in which the youth are imaged as well as the direction of their gaze and their

¹¹⁸ Kirk, *Sight Unseen*, 5.

position to other youth.¹¹⁹ I then looked through the viewbooks again to spot the places that these youth were not imaged. I then selected images I thought reflected themes that had emerged during my discussions with the youth during focus groups and interviews.

The second primary method used for this study was focus groups. Research with young people suggests that focus groups are a more appropriate method for doing research with children and youth than interviews; given that interviews often exert pressure to answer questions immediately or answer even when uncomfortable.¹²⁰ Focus groups also open spaces for youth to respond to each other's experiences and discuss what pieces of experiences are shared and what is not shared.¹²¹ While these are positive aspects of using a focus group method with young people, there can be drawbacks to the method. For instance, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a focus group which might be a barrier for youth participation due to the way youth may feel the need to censure the information they offer. In order to offer a confidential space for these youth to share their experiences, interviews were selected as an additional method of data collection.

What is key to either focus groups or interviews methods when working with young people is understanding what they have to say in the contexts in which they find themselves. Allison James argues this point when she states that the voices of youth should not be disembodied from their context.¹²² In order to ensure that youth experiences could be understood in context, participant observation was selected as an additional method for this project in order

¹¹⁹ Kirk, *Sight Unseen*, 6-7.

¹²⁰ Alison Clark, "The Mosaic Approach" in *The Reality of Research with Children and Young People*, ed. Lewis et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 142.

¹²¹ Samantha Punch, "Negotiating Autonomy: Children's Use of Time and Space in Bolivia" in *The Reality of Research with Children and Young People*, ed. Lewis et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 94.

¹²² James and James, *Key Concepts in Childhood Studies*, 10.

to contextualize the experiences of these youth. Furthermore, another key feature of the participant-observation technique is to create a sense of trust between fieldworker and consultant.¹²³ Part of this process is to address the power imbalance in this relationship; especially as it applies to adults and youth in this case. Deborah Allen and Rachel Rosen note that youth, like adults, may bring to the interviews and focus groups a particular understanding of the relationship between themselves and the researcher that might mimic the adult-youth dynamic in an educational setting.¹²⁴ Sheila Greene notes that youth in school settings are often taught to develop performative relationships with adults that may lead to answers “that stem from a desire to please rather than a desire to be truthful.”¹²⁵ Drawing on the insights of Samantha Punch, I attempted throughout the data gathering process to be “constantly reflexive”¹²⁶ in assessing my interactions with the young people in this institutional context by taking special note of the possible impact the school context may have on the data collected.

More specifically, considerations of power invested in school officials and how this might be construed in my role as an adult fieldworker were part of this reflexive and ongoing process. For instance, when asked to be introduced by school officials to the Chinese international students, I resisted and opted instead to work organically by developing relationships on my own. This approach resulted in a meeting with a student who I will call James, who had expressed interest in the email I had sent out explaining the project. Our first meeting took place in the cafeteria after school hours. Prior to this meeting, I carefully planned what I would wear so

¹²³ Barrie Thorne, “Gender Play” in *The Reality of Research with Children and Young People*, ed. Lewis et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 254.

¹²⁴ Deborah Albon and Rachel Rosen, *Negotiating Adult Child Relationships in Childhood Research*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 63.

¹²⁵ Sheila Greene, “Introduction” in *Key Thinkers in Childhood Studies*, ed. Sheila Greene (Chicago: Policy Press, 2014), 5.

¹²⁶ Punch, *Negotiating Autonomy*, 97.

as not to be perceived as a school official.¹²⁷ I dressed casually but quickly realized that since the students were dressed in very formal uniforms, casual dress simply seemed out of place. In order to maintain this distance from school officials but fit into the educational setting, I wore either a pair of black jeans or green pencil skirt with a plain white or green long sleeve shirt and a pair of grey flat shoes. This matched the color scheme of the students' uniforms without it being a school uniform. Importantly, my attire was distinct from the suits, dress shirts, and dress shoes worn by teachers and school officials.

Choice of attire was one of the details important to the overall methodological approach used in this study with the aim to disrupt power embedded in an adult/youth dichotomy. This follows recommendations made by scholars who have considered how best to conduct research with young people. In addition to attire and language, they also suggest that adopting an approach of “not-knowing”¹²⁸ or approaching youth as a learner¹²⁹ may offer a way to address the power imbalance in the researcher-youth dynamic. In my early conversations with James (and later with the other students), I refrained from asking too many questions and gave him an opportunity to ask me questions about my family, place of origin and purpose for being at his school. He asked me about the project as well and I was able to highlight my interest in international school experience at private schools and share my own experience as a previous international student at a private school.

¹²⁷ Barrie Thorne notes the importance of dress in the perception of the researcher, noting that formal dress can image the researcher as authority. However, Liz Jones et al. (2005) explores how school uniforms are often part of the imaging of youth as “successful future adults.” This set of outfits were selected in order to be careful to not be perceived as an authority figure and not appear underdressed next to the school uniforms.

¹²⁸ Heidbrink, *Migrant Youth*, 16.

¹²⁹ Punch, *Negotiating Autonomy*, 94.

Apart from addressing power imbalances in the research process, scholars have highlighted the importance and difficulties of seeking consent from participants in community-based research.¹³⁰ Gaining consent before entering youth-centered spaces that may serve as refuges from an adult-centered world is particularly complex.¹³¹ For this reason, I sought verbal consent from my initial contact, James, to attend the clubs he belonged to before attending them myself. Once I had James' consent to attend with him, I was also able to seek verbal consent from the other students I met during my first visit to each club. With their verbal consent, I was comfortable attending the Robotics and Debate Clubs that met weekly.

When I attended the clubs for the first time, if the group was made up of all Chinese students, I would introduce myself in Chinese. This often prompted some giggles at my poor pronunciation and some interest in why I had learned Chinese. This gave me an opportunity to frame myself as a 'learner.' While attending the clubs, I would ask some students to help me practice my Chinese by speaking with me every once in a while. This placed me in the position of functioning in a second language and allowed them to speak in the language in which they were more comfortable.

In order to avoid being perceived as an authority figure, Lauren Heidbrink emphasizes the importance of framing the researcher as "one who helps."¹³² I had learned during my early conversations with the youth that many of them missed the abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables from their home cooking as they lacked access to a grocery store that stocked other snacks they would eat back home. My access to a car allowed me to visit T & T and I was able to

¹³⁰ Vicky Lewis, "Introduction" in *The Reality of Research with Children and Young People*, ed. Lewis et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 2.

¹³¹ See William Corsaro and Luisa Molinari in James and Christenson (2017), Anderson and Morrow (2011), and Pia Christenson (2004).

¹³² Heidbrink, *Migrant Youth*, 18-19.

ask the students what kind of snacks they would like me to pick up; the most popular snacks were BinBin crackers, White rabbit candies, pineapple cakes and various types of unsweetened tea. I was able to bring each of the students who participated in the interviews a drink of chilled unsweetened tea and a box of freshly chopped fruit and Bin Bin crackers. For the focus groups I was able to bring the other items on the list. These missed food items also made up a significant part of communal identity for these Chinese international students which is explored later in this thesis.

Apart from my language interactions with the students, I also spent considerable time observing and noting patterns of interactions as a participant-observer. Pia Christensen expresses the point that in order to conduct research with children or youth (rather than research of or on children or youth), participant-observation offers youth an opportunity to understand the researcher and their intentions with the research.¹³³ In this project, during the club meetings, the students also introduced themselves to me and communicated their reasons for choosing the clubs they were in and why the clubs were an important part of their lives at school. They often asked questions about the intent of the project and I attempted to express my interest in highlighting their experiences of educational travel and what they felt was important in their lives as they navigated the new context in which they found themselves.

Thus, throughout my interactions with the students, I constantly reflected on my relationship as a researcher, especially how to keep the focus on the young people as driving the study in a project that demands that I set the parameters, methods and its aims. Importantly, I followed the recommendation of child and youth scholars who argue for the importance of

¹³³ Pia Christensen, "Interview with Pia Christensen" in *Key Thinkers in Childhood Studies*, ed Sheila Greene (Chicago: Policy Press, 2014), 49.

placing youth in a position to shape research that is about their lives.¹³⁴ Observing their interactions with each other and listening to their conversations, I began to get an idea of what was important to them. The questions and kinds of topics I raised in our daily conversations as well as the interviews and focus groups emerged from these observations. I also discussed with the students that they could choose the methods used for the project; that is, that they could change the focus groups to interviews or participate in both. During these conversations, most of the youth espoused a desire to have both as an option although they seemed to favour interviews. Although the youth did not suggest any other options outside of these two methods, they understood that the choice to participate, or not, was theirs to determine. Scholars such as Albon and Rosen have examined the importance of youth choice throughout the research process. They have also written about the role relationships between peers can play in consenting to participate in research.¹³⁵ Following this argument, I resisted asking students if they wished to participate in the interviews during the club periods where they might have felt pressure from peers to consent or not consent to participate in the project. Instead, I distributed an email via the school server to all of the Chinese international students containing the details of the project and asking for voluntary participation in the interviews and focus groups.

For the most part, the discussions with youth arising after the interviews followed from their comments and answers to the three main topics used to structure the interviews: (1) discourses about young people studying abroad and the institutions that shaped their decision (made either by them or their parents) to study abroad at Oakland College, (2) comparing their experiences of schooling in China and Canada and exploring their perceptions of the challenges

¹³⁴ Harriot Beazley, Sharon Bessell, Judith Ennew and Roxana Waterson. "The right to be properly researched: research with children in a messy, real world." *Children's Geographies* 7, no 4 (2009), 365-367.

¹³⁵ Albon and Rosen, *Negotiating Adult Child Relationships*, 65.

and benefits of international schooling, and (3) exploring whether and how they understood gender and race as part of their experiences of schooling in a Canadian context. Many of the students responded enthusiastically to the first two topics however, they were generally much less open to discussing the third topic during the interviews and focus groups. For this reason, less time was spent on the third topic in the interviews although as a participant-observer, I was able to note my observations of gender and race in the interactions in the field.

To begin, gender played a role in the researcher-participant dynamic from the outset of this research project. As Barrie Thorne observes, female adult researchers may feel “closer to the girls [than the boys], not only to a memory of their own past, but also because they may know more about their gender-typed interaction.”¹³⁶ In a similar argument, Judith Butler proposed that these gender-typed interactions stem from and exist within a gendered matrix of social ideas about the performance of gender and sexuality.¹³⁷ Having existed within a matrix of idealized femininity since my childhood may have made it easier for me to connect with the girls in this study as evidenced by the fact that there were many more female than male participants in the study. Many of the girls who agreed to participate in the study had met and chatted with me during the club meetings. Although I met many male Chinese international students during the club meetings, I was unable to build a similar rapport with them. In total, twelve youth chose to participate in the interviews, two boys and ten girls.

I conducted twelve interviews and two focus groups with the youth which took place between January 1st and February 27th. Half of these students were day students and the other half were boarders. The youth were given the option to participate in an interview, a focus group

¹³⁶ Thorne, “Gender Play”, 256.

¹³⁷ Judith Butler and Bronwyn Davies, *Judith Butler in Conversation: Analyzing the Text and Talk of Everyday Life*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 14.

or both. All but one who chose to participate opted to join in the interviews while only six girls and two boys wanted to participate in both. One male student chose to participate in the focus group without an interview.

To address this gender imbalance in the group of students who had opted to be interviewed and participate in a focus group, and because I understood from my interactions with the students that some might not be comfortable talking about their experiences in a mixed gendered group, I asked the students if they wanted to divide the focus groups by gender. Since they were enthusiastic about this idea, I conducted two focus groups. The girls group took place on February 10th and the boys group was conducted on February 27th. The boys group, consisting of three boys, two of which had not participated in the interviews, gave me an opportunity to address some gendered aspects of these students experiences.

In addition to choosing focus group participation, interview or both, youth participants also chose the location and time for interviews. They decided that the interviews and focus groups had to be scheduled during their lunch break as most students did not have any other time of the day free due to participation in clubs, completing homework, and activities after school. The duration of the interviews varied from half an hour to an hour. The interviews had to be held on school grounds due to the time constraint presented by the students' schedules so the setting of the school itself may have impacted on the answers given by the students to my questions.

My effort to enable students to choose what type of method, location and time for the focus groups and interviews follows Barrie Thorne's argument. She notes that sometimes researchers have to negotiate with 'gatekeepers' the right for youth to choose in educational

settings such as with school officials, teachers and parents.¹³⁸ I obtained initial permission to conduct research on school grounds by contacting Brian, the Head of Teaching and Learning at Oakland College, explaining the intent of the project to him. He originally offered the office of the Head of Teaching and Learning as a location for the interviews. I resisted this location in favour of asking the students to choose a location with which they were most comfortable. However, due to constraints set by the school and the Ethics Council, I was unable to negotiate this choice for the students as the school only permitted us to be in a quiet spot in the back of the library. In the end, I was able to ask the students whether they felt the proposed location was appropriate and received a positive response.

My concern and care to choose a proper location in which the students felt ‘safe’ follows from the notion that students are usually in classrooms that are adult-directed spaces.¹³⁹ The space where the interviews were held was not entirely chosen by the students, yet it was not a classroom but rather a study space where students frequently studied on their own and with which students noted they were familiar. The students would meet me at the front door and often had to lead me to the library (as I got lost on school grounds often). These walks provided an opportunity for pre-interview discussions and served as warm-up time where we were able to chat casually about our week before sitting down to start the interview. They also filled me in on some more mundane, yet equally important, details of their daily routines during these walks.

All field notes and audio-recordings (taken exclusively during the interviews and focus groups) were transferred into a single transcript. When transcribing the recordings of the interviews and focus groups, I attempted not to “clean up the responses too much” as scholarship

¹³⁸ Thorne, “Gender Play”, 257.

¹³⁹ Albon and Rosen, *Negotiating Adult-Child Relationships*, 66.

has noted that pauses and incomplete thoughts in comparison to quick, clear responses can demonstrate when a topic is difficult to speak about or generally assumed knowledge.¹⁴⁰

However, I would change verb tenses in order to increase readability and allow the reader to focus on the point the youth were trying to communicate.

To analyze the data from focus groups and interviews, I used WordFinder to break down commonly used wording in the transcripts. After reviewing these commonly used words and reading through the transcripts to contextualize their use, I noted common themes across all interviews and focus groups. These themes became the focus of this study. In selecting these themes, I gave precedence to those that youth either brought up themselves, expressed unusual enthusiasm for, or were ones that they indicated were key components of their experience. In this way, my study sought to address the critical issues raised by youth themselves rather than beginning with pre-formulated research questions that might skew my findings away from the experiences of the students.

Apart from participating in clubs and formal interviews and focus groups, throughout my time at the school I was able to participate in and observe the students at events that punctuated the school year. These experiences provided me with opportunities to help the students in this study with projects with which they were involved, talk with them informally, and listen to how they negotiated their time at the school in an informal way. I helped to set up for assemblies, participated in a welcoming event for a new Chinese teacher, and Chinese New Year celebrations. In a meeting with the new Chinese teacher, I learned about some of the programming that Oakland College was planning to implement in support of its growing Chinese

¹⁴⁰ Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan, *Researching Children's Experience: Methods and Approaches*, (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 159-160.

student population. I helped volunteer alongside some of the youth in this study at the Chinese New Year celebration by teaching Chinese calligraphy to students at the Chinese calligraphy booth. By attending a couple of weekly assemblies and spending time at the school during lunch hour, this enabled me to show my genuine interest in the experiences of the youth and observe their daily interactions at the school.

Limitations of this study

Oakland College was selected as a site for the present study after researching private schools in Ontario with increasing rates of Chinese international student migration and reaching out to them via telephone. A number of schools were contacted and Oakland College was the only school to consent to the project. This outcome limited the geographic and the class spectrum of this project. However, focusing on a single school allowed me to explore the context of the experiences more deeply and to spend more time developing individual relationships with participants. Furthermore, this project does not provide an extensive look at Chinese international student experience in comparison to other international student experiences. The choice to work exclusively with Chinese international students stemmed from a desire to understand the unique elements of migration experience of this particular group (the largest international student group in Ontario) within the timespan and length of a master's thesis. This project also did not inquire into the human rights issues and political elements involved in the migration process which might further contextualize the ideas in this thesis but was outside its scope. It would also have benefitted from a second round of focus groups and interviews conducted months or years later to study how these experiences and identity change over time

but was constrained by the researcher's period of study. This thesis would also have benefitted from a deeper analysis of how sexism, racism and classism impacts Chinese international students identity and community belonging but this was beyond the scope of this thesis. I would incorporate these elements if given a future opportunity to expand this research.

Conclusion

This chapter gave an account of the environment and school life of Oakland College. It analyzed the interactions between the youth and the research. It also explored how methodological considerations of working with youth in school were addressed in this study and brought attention to the limitations of this study. This descriptive account of the environment, these interactions and methodological concerns serve to further situate the experiences of youth in their context.

Chapter IV– **China to Canada: Comparative experiences of schooling**

As explored in the previous chapter, the youth in this study negotiate what they bring with them from China in a new social and cultural context in Canada. By treating their experiences as non-linear and recognizing that they occur in social contexts that are nested inside one another,¹⁴¹ this chapter will highlight that the students use capabilities formed in one social context to read, navigate and change their new social context. It will discuss how Chinese international students negotiate their self-understanding by considering the expectations and roles of youth in China and the expectations and roles of youth in Canada, alongside the images and ideas about Chinese international students found in materials used by the global education industry. It will explore how students talk about “finding their individuality”¹⁴², “their thing”¹⁴³ or “their passion”.¹⁴⁴ This ‘talk’ takes place while the young people participate in clubs, sports, in their classrooms and in volunteer work.

School life in China

In order to contextualize the experiences of Chinese international students studying in Canada, it is useful to explore their understanding of and previous experience with the Chinese school system. In attempting to convey their experiences of schooling in China, the students explored the expectations and roles of children and youth embedded within it. In her 2017

¹⁴¹ Kate Tilleczek, *Approaching Youth Studies: Being, Becoming and Belonging*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

¹⁴² Personal Communication from Evelyn, female Grade 11 Chinese international student, obtained during an interview in early January.

¹⁴³ Personal Communication from Grace, female Grade 10 Chinese international student, obtained during an interview in late January.

¹⁴⁴ Personal Communication from James, male Grade 12, Chinese international student, obtained during an interview in late January.

investigation of schooling in Hong Kong, Lenora Chu, observes that within the Confucian hierarchical system of authority in which children are expected to defer to adults and adults are expected to enforce this deference when necessary, the behaviour and academic achievement of a child is considered not only a reflection of the child's character but also that of their parents.¹⁴⁵ She argues that this vision of a child's role within the family paired with a constant worry about the child's future job security has led to the intensification of the lives of the children and teens in her study.¹⁴⁶ She frames students' lives as controlled by participation in schools with long hours and authoritarian teachers, private tutoring companies and, only rarely, a specialized extracurricular activity.¹⁴⁷ More than anything, she highlights that the teaching style experienced by students in her study, and widely used in China, is centered around testing and argues that this is unlikely to change without the abolition of the Gaokao, the Chinese student university entrance exam.¹⁴⁸

When talking about their experiences in their previous schools in China, most of the students in the study at Oakland College articulated that the focus on grades and testing was “a lot” or “intense.” Most students attributed this to the number of students in China. A grade 10 student, Isabella, reasoned that her school in Hong Kong was so intense because “there were a lot of students—over a thousand students in my grade and they are all hard working because it is very competitive to go to a good university.” She also noted that, unlike in North America, there are only two universities in China that are considered really “good universities.” A male grade 11

¹⁴⁵ Chu, Lenora. *Little Soldiers: Chinese Schooling and the Global Race to Achieve*. (New York: Harper Press, 2017.) 20.

¹⁴⁶ For more information on how Chinese schooling is affected by the rise of the middle class in China please see David Goodman (2014), Cheng Li (2010), Yudan Chen Wang (2014), and Mary Crabb (2010).

¹⁴⁷ Lenora Chu, *Little Soldiers*, 38.

¹⁴⁸ Lenora Chu, *Little Soldiers*, 72.

student, James, attributed the “rigour” of Chinese schools to a difference in pedagogical philosophies,

There was a thing that people used to say in China... In China our study is like this: draws two long parallel lines close together, starts narrow and goes deep and this is very, very hard. But here the study is like this: draws two short parallel lines far apart. So here we learn a lot of things, it is more broad and you have more choices and it is not so hard.

Amelia, a grade 10 student, echoes this opinion,

It is really just how two countries have different systems of teaching. Because you have elementary school from 1-8. But in China elementary is Grade 1 – 5. So I think Grade 9 and Grade 10 (in Canada) is the time for students to adjust themselves to the high school. So they make the academics a bit easier. But also here you learn about a broad variety in Math—how do I say it?—A lot of different ideas about geometry and functions and such. In China, you might dig deep in a particular area but not very broad.

Ava, a grade 12 student, further explained this concept in her interview,

Ava: Although, I don’t like the system in China, I found the teaching was more...ummm how to say... concrete?

Me: Clear?

Ava: Yeah... Clear. And robust. It’s like you really know what you are learning. Like, I am not insulting the teaching here. But...let’s take an example. Like Newton’s Law, in China we spend like three months to think about the formulas and apply them and understand them. Here the teacher just gives you the general idea. So some of my classmates here don’t have a very profound understanding of these topics. So here my science and math grades are good because I learned them before.

Other students spoke about their experience of the workload in China in terms of their schedule. One grade 9 student, Mia, recounted her daily schedule in China,

So I did school from K to Grade 8 in China and then I came here. During those years in China, I feel like were really stressful. We started classes at 7:30 am and ended at 5:15. Such a long day and then I went to tutoring until 12am! This is my life everyday. Even on weekends, I didn’t have a weekend. I had tutoring or studying for tests. And I didn’t have any real friends – they were all so competitive. They would be really upset if you got a better score than them on a test. Here it is different, so, so different.

A grade 11 student, Abigail, similarly remarked on the busyness of her schedule in China,

In China, my school is really academic. Like you start your day, like go to school at 6:30am and finish at...umm... like 6 pm – that is our supper time – and then we have tutoring until like 10pm. Then like you have to do homework. And we have school even Saturday and Sunday so like the whole week I only get a half a day off.

Isabella, a grade 10 student, also noted that most of her daily schedule was centered around exams,

We have an exam everyday and then we have one big exam in each class weekly. So it was a lot, all of my life was just focused on the next test. We have a lot of pressure and we study a lot. It is a different from Western countries. But because we have a lot of tests, say you do bad on one the mark won't be all that important and you just have to study really hard for the next one.

These discussions often lead to further conversations about the stress of this workload and the lack of autonomy for students in the Chinese school system. Isabella expressed her frustration with the pressure placed on students in China,

It is actually not a very good memory. There is so much pressure and so much work. As I said, because school there was too intense and I had decided to go to university abroad so I had to spend extra time on English language skill over the weekend which left me without much time to do school work and studying. It pulled down my science and math grades. So my grades were super bad and I kinda lost all of my confidence and I was so afraid that my GPA would affect my application to university. So at one point I thought that I couldn't proceed anymore. I just called my friend and cried.

Ava felt that the intensity of the workload in China did not leave her much space or time to the explore her own identity,

[I came abroad] Because if I didn't have to study, study, study everyday then maybe I could have more time to develop an interest. Because I didn't have time to find something to devote myself too, something that was "my" thing.

In a hyperbolic tone, Olivia echoed this complaint, "In China, we don't have such a thing as creativity. We just study, study, study. Like little robots. Again and again day by day." Many of these students noted that the amount of stress they experienced in their schools in China was influenced by the ranking of the school itself. They often drew the distinction between a "good

school” which was rigorous and a “bad school” which was less so. In her interview, Isabella expressed conflicted feelings about her “good” school in China,

I mean, I am not showing off, but my school in China is kinda like...the best? It is rated the number one school in China at least in Beijing and there are soooo many students but all of them were like the best student in their middle school so they are all SUPER competitive. And, I was kinda lucky, I went to the best division class in the school but I guess maybe not lucky because it was even more competitive.

Similarly, Evelyn, a grade 12 student, explained that her heavy workload in China represented the rank of her school,

It’s quite busy and there are lots of subjects. Like we have eight classes a day. Like the school time is longer in China and I attended a private school that was a bit better than public school – it was considered a pretty good school. If you went to a less competitive school it would be less busy I think.

James felt that focus on competition and rigorous testing stemmed from the state testing system but examines how the roles of children in China are beginning to change for younger students.

Also that is only middle school and high school, elementary school in China was hard but that was when you had to pass a test to get into a good middle school but the government just cancelled that like a couple years ago. So we only have two now instead of three. So elementary students now are having a better life then we did because we always had everyone telling us if we didn’t work hard we wouldn’t be able to get into middle school. So these students can now have some hobbies and after school activities and stuff. There is a very big difference between like a student who is coming into grade 9 here and like me who is in grade 12 you can see lots of difference between us. Those students who are new – they might not even had to prepare for the high school exam and they didn’t have to worry about the middle school exam so their life is sooo different. They come here with more sports, more hobbies. I am more academically inclined but I regret so much that I didn’t have more time to do sports in China. But now that is changing and that is a good thing.

Overall, the students involved in these conversations framed Chinese student life as rigorous, yet also involved deeper academic programming. As explored in Chapter three, private schools in Ontario often market themselves as being academically rigorous and this focus on

academic rigor is often linked to discourses of ‘futurity’ which image an academic environment as key in the creation of economically-successful future adults. However, as mentioned by the students in this study, this focus on academic rigour in Ontario is also matched with a focus on sports and recreation.

Moving and Youthhood in a Canadian Private School: Visions of Leisure, Recreation and Personal Transformation

When asked to give advice to future Chinese international students coming to Ontario, three of the students in this study responded, “try to be like a fake Canadian.” When asked to expand on what it means to be like a Canadian, they often referred to participating in clubs and sports as well as taking advantage of leisure time,

James: “Hmmm... Like being a fake Canadian. Like having brunch on the weekend. Like you guys do not just watch your iPad all day, but like you relax, you sleep in till 9:30, go out and meet friends for brunch and ask someone to go Byward market—maybe look at the little shops or eat poutine or stuff like that. That would be my advice to new Chinese students. Like try to be a Canadian because you are never going to get a chance to live this same lifestyle again.”

Evelyn: “I think I would say to enjoy it (schooling in Ontario). Join all sorts of clubs and try many sports—like hockey and swimming and snowboarding and soccer and robotics and debate. These are really things that like Canadians enjoy and I think it is the best part of life here.”

Ava: “Try to like be like Canadian kids. Like I joined skiing here. I had never done that before, but it is so fun. So yeah just like join sports and stuff and try new things.”

In our discussions, the youth often compared Canadian and Chinese school life in terms of the integration of sports and recreation into the school day. In her interview Ava observed,

“In China the lab that we do is all the Classical labs where you are trying to prove this theory. Our study has nothing to do with our lives but here, life, study, hobby, they are all connected. I think that is the difference.”

One issue that emerged from the interviews was the difference in approaches to the curriculum. Private schools in Ontario often engage in a focus on “whole child education” hoping to produce “well-rounded” girls and boys.¹⁴⁹ Wardenman et al. examine how texts produced by private schools in Canada give the impression that success in all areas—academic, creative, sporting, moral or social—is expected of students.¹⁵⁰ This focus on the “well-rounded” student stands in stark contrast to the focus on pure academic achievement that students reported of their experiences in China. Furthermore, the students explored how existing stereotypes in Canada which tie Chinese students to exclusively to STEM subjects and technology positioned them outside of this “well-rounded” discourse but highlighted how they read their participation in sports and clubs as integral to their own changing identities abroad. In discussing their involvement in sports teams and clubs (examined below), these youth noted that they participated in a vision of Canadian student life as full of leisure and recreational activities. Their responses also highlighted how they negotiate between the belonging to this vision of “well-rounded” student and working towards future academic and economic goals.

One of the aspects of whole child education is to offer students opportunities to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities. Oakland College offered a large number of extra-curricular activities during the academic year 2017-2018.¹⁵¹ As mentioned above, many of the Chinese international students joined the Robotics Club, the Debate Club, and Science Club. At the time this study was conducted there were nine students regularly participating in Girls Robotics Club and eight of them were Chinese international students. Fourteen students regularly

¹⁴⁹ Natasha Wardman et al. “Starry Eyes and Subservient Selves: Portraits of ‘Well-Rounded’ Girlhood in the Prospectuses of All Girl Elite Private Schools.” *Australian Journal of Education* 54, no. 3 (2010): 250.

¹⁵⁰ Wardman et al., “Starry Eyes”, 253.

¹⁵¹ See Appendix 1 for full list of offerings.

participated in Boys Robotics Club, five of whom were Chinese international students.

Attendance among the Debate Club member fluctuated between twelve and eighteen students (In total, I met ten girls and eight boys), with eight Chinese international students (four boys and four girls) attending and two Canadian born Chinese students (both girls). I was unable to obtain information on the Science research club as it was held at the same time as Robotics Club but four of the Chinese international students I was in contact with also mentioned being involved in the Science research club. Some of the students I spoke with also participated in the Art Club, Model UN, the Camera club and Music. In addition to clubs, Oakland College also offers year-round opportunities to participate in sports, both recreationally and at a competitive level.¹⁵²

In many ways the Chinese international students I spoke with did conform to the image of Chinese students excelling at science and robotics. However, they also highlighted that sports and other recreational activities were a major part of their lives in Ontario. This stands in stark contrast to the lack of imaging of Chinese international student doing sports in the viewbooks and the general stereotypes of ‘Asian’ youth in schools. By participating in and understanding their identity in relationship to sports, these youth resist the discourses that position them in static, singular ways. The young people in this study belonged to the volleyball, skiing, snowboarding, swimming, badminton, baseball, ultimate frisbee and the softball teams. They also participated in the fitness club which is listed as a club rather than a team. However, almost half of the students in this study joined the fitness club which met at 7:00 am three mornings a week to do a variety of fitness activities such as jogging, yoga, strength training and the cardio training. Most students in the study noted that the focus on sports teams and physical education

¹⁵² See Appendix 2 for full list of offerings.

was a marked difference from their experience in China. Emma, a student in grade 10, examined potential reasons for this difference,

The difference here is like mostly the focus on gym...like sports. They have a lot of sports here that we don't have back home—maybe due to the weather or equipment. Maybe because there are too many people to get equipment for. Maybe because it is not as valuable in China to be sporty. Anyway—yeah sports are a big difference.

Emma's understanding of the emphasis placed on sports and recreational activities as part of education in Canada (and the lack of it in China) was rooted in an understanding that the value of the school activities in China was tied to future economic success; participating in sports seemed to be interpreted as drawing students away from 'more valuable' academic pursuits. Ava, a grade 11 student, tied this focus on 'futuraity' in the Chinese educational context to the narrative of honour and high performance discussed above to her lack of participation in sports in China. She noted that at Oakland College, sports participation is encouraged at all levels.

The biggest difference? Sports. Like going to see different games and getting to play as much as I can well I have the time. It wasn't really encouraged as much in China unless you were really good.

Amelia, another grade 11 student, noted that this focus on sports replaces time that would have been spent on academics in China.

Sports! Like snowboarding and Frisbee. That's what I learned about in Toronto. It's not a sport in China. Other than that something different from China...hmmm...there is not really anything? Because like academics and English the Chinese schools also taught these. Just a different level. Like the sports are more a thing here. Where academics were kinda the thing back there.

For many of the students, this aspect of life in Canada was part of the reason for choosing to study abroad. As Olivia, a student in grade 10, recalled,

I went to an international summer camp in America. It was like an activity camp? We did all sorts of sports and American activities. When I came back I really wanted to go abroad.

Grade 10 student Sophia recalled that this focus on sports also drew her to Oakland College,

“I told my parents I wanted to go abroad and so we went to an agent at an international center. We wanted Canada because my aunt lives in Toronto. She gave us some schools in Toronto but I liked Oakland because it had so so many options like sports and clubs.”

Oakland College promotes this participation in sports and clubs as part of its vision of ‘well rounded’ student life and as an opportunity for self-exploration. However, Chinese international student bodies are not pictured playing sports or (not often pictured) doing recreational activities. The authors of these viewbooks perhaps assume that Chinese international families are seeking similarly academically rigorous educational experience to ensure their children's future success. However, the above quotes demonstrate that, when youth involved in choosing their school abroad, opportunities for sports and recreation are key drivers in school choice. As noted earlier in this thesis, travel is discursively produced as an opportunity for self-exploration. Throughout our discussions, youth in this study often spoke about studying abroad as an opportunity to for self-exploration, noting that sports and recreation played a large part in this.

The school itself actively promotes this focus on self-exploration through sports, recreation and club life. Oakland College’s life skills support team works with the students to ensure that they maintain this balance of a “intellectual life, healthy relationships, individual exploration and on the path to an excellent career.” Many of students in this study mentioned having used this life skills team as a resource when planning courses, setting career goals and balancing club activities with school work. When they discussed their individual exploration, it tended to be discussed in terms of finding “a passion” or having more “tries.”

Yuki: Yeah I feel like it benefits me a lot to be here because there are a lot of first times. A lot of new tries. I get out push myself out there. Not hiding anything of myself.
Me: Yeah, so here you get lots of opportunities to try new parts of yourself?
Yuki: Yeah.

Ava: I think it is a good thing because you see more things in the world and have more chances—like ummmm—more chances.
Me: So like more chances in the future or now?
Ava: Like more chances for the future because you have chance to develop your personal skills.
Me: What kind of personal skills have you developed here in Canada?
Ava: Like, Art. Like lots of students in China only think that art is for people who can't do math and science but here I feel like a lot more people accept art and I have gained confidence in this.
Me: Cool! So you are an artist?
Ava: Yeah.
Me: And did you do art in China or did you start when you came to Canada?
Ava: Not really in China. More like, less start here and more like I find my passion for it here.

In discussing finding their passion or “their thing” students focused on their participation in clubs,

Sophia: [I came abroad] Because if I didn't have to study, study, study everyday then maybe I could have more time to develop an interest. Because I didn't have time to find something to devote myself too, something that was “my” thing. Now I am in so many clubs and I love Robotics club and programming. I want to go into Computer Science at Carleton.

Some of the students expressed that they came to Canada wanting to explore new experiences in hopes of finding a passion and trying new activities abroad,

Emma: Here they accept me as a learner, but in China it is preferable, highly preferable, that you be experience in order to participate in a club or team. So when I came to Canada I wanted to try all sorts of things, and here I have tried snowboarding and I do programming in Robotics, I have all sorts of new tries here.

James: I do have more time and the school here offers a lot of opportunities for extracurriculars and leadership opportunities. I am not saying that my old school didn't have these but there wasn't really enough time. Even more there wasn't really enough space. Like you had to be really the best if you wanted a leadership position and everyone was really good and everyone was competitive. Here, they let you try because there are less people so it is more ok to be a learner.

Mia: Yeah I feel like it benefits me a lot to be here because there are a lot of first times. A lot of new tries. I get out push myself out there. Not hiding anything from myself.

Many students noted that this focus on individual exploration and the amount of resources dedicated to this task was a marked difference from their experience in China. Evelyn explained this difference by noting that it might arise out of necessity in China due to the larger population of students.

Like I understand why the [Chinese] system has to be the way it is. There are so many people, it is impossible for teachers to look at each student as an individual really. Like they couldn't have it be the same as the way things are here where you have your own time table and you can have a very long talk with your teacher. So they make everything to standardized testing—even like physical education they will assess you by some standards but here, like my friends in China just finished their mid-year evaluations and all they do is testing, but I just finished my mid-year evaluations and one of them was an essay, another was writing a historical commentary between two people we learned about and another one was a presentation and another one was a lab experiment so it is different. I go to clubs and they go to tutoring—I get to be an individual and I think that is better than studying for tests. I really do feel like there is a big difference between here and there.”

In addition to participation in clubs, opportunities to participate in volunteering was a marked difference from some of the students' experiences in China. Although they were not imaged as often in these narratives in the viewbooks examined in Chapter II, some students also engaged in the narrative of personal transformation from a commitment to service in Canada and in other countries.

Evelyn: Other than clubs, I am in some other extracurricular outside of the school and volunteering.

Me: Oh, that's neat what do you do for volunteering?

Evelyn: I help with the school events. Like help to plan and set them up.

Mia: I am in photography club and I volunteer with the little kids.

Me: Like in the Junior School?

Mia: No, the school bus actually picks us up after school and takes us to a boys and girls club to help the kids with their homework or read to them that is really nice.

Aidan, a grade 11 student, explored how he felt personally transformed by the experience of taking a service trip over spring break a year ago.

Aidan: I went down to Dominican Republic on a service trip. I felt like it really transformed me. Like I became more confident in myself and I made a bunch of friends on the trip.

Me: What about the trip made it possible for you to feel more confident?

Aidan: I don't know maybe it was that everyone was kind of. How to say this. We were all away from home so we were all in it together. Whereas, here I was the one away from home and they, the Canadian kids, were at home. I think this trip is why I have some more Canadian friends than other Chinese kids.

Nine of the students I interviewed noted that they had not gone on many international service trips, opting instead to take the time they had off from school to visit their families and friends in China or abroad. However, when asked about what they would like to do while at Oakland College, a few students mentioned getting more involved in service work. In this desire to participate in service trips for personal transformation, these youth embody Amit's argument that international service travel is now part of a Canadian vision of youth as part of internationalization.¹⁵³ This contradicts narratives espoused in the viewbooks that tied these youth to a limited geographic space and purely envisioned them as part of global communities within Canada's borders. Through this desire to participate in this aspect of student life at Oakland College, the Chinese international students demonstrate a desire to embody a vision of a Canadian youthhood and embody a new position in the narrative of internationalization.

Youth reflections on race and gender in their school experiences in Canada and China

As noted in the introduction, power, in so far as it shapes the discursive space, underscores this project. The Chinese international students in this study discussed gendered and

¹⁵³ Vered Amit. "Circumscribed cosmopolitanism: travel aspirations and experiences" *Identities* 22, no. 5 (2015): 551-568.

racialized aspects of their experiences of schooling in Canada and China. They noted how these aspects shaped and continue to shape how they navigate their everyday school life. Evelyn, for example, discussed gendered aspects of schooling practices in China,

Evelyn: I think it (international schooling) is a good thing because, not so much academically but outside of school, in China, as a girl, there were many things I was not able to do but here I get to try many sports – like hockey and swimming and snowboarding and soccer.”

Me: Can you tell me more about that?

Evelyn: Like at my school there were just like less girls teams but it wasn't like discriminating of something. Just like more... there was no need for them because it wasn't as popular. There wasn't really like time, maybe?

Abigail noted that a focus on sports in Canada exists within a social matrix which is both gendered and racialized,

I feel like there are more stereotypes for girls. Like in dating Canadian guys think Chinese girls are quiet and like not good at sports. Like maybe this is sometimes true but not like all Chinese girls.

James and Aidan also echoed this concern about the imaging of Chinese girls as well as expressing concerns about the imaging of Chinese boys,

James: Yeah, I feel like most Canadian guys see Chinese girls as like quiet and not outgoing. But like many of the girls who are here are like sporty and stuff. Some of them are quiet but not like all of them.

Me: Do you feel like this vision of Chinese girls affects their lives? Your lives?

Aidan: Well, it probably effects their lives like some guys have weird expectations if they are dating like a Chinese girl. But I mean in terms of sports the girls who are outgoing will just like join sports teams you know.

James: It doesn't really affect our lives but like there are other stereotypes about Chinese guys. Like, I feel like we are generally seen as like math focused and not like soccer focused.

Evelyn confided that these gendered and racialized narratives may have influenced some teachers' attitudes towards the Chinese international students at Oakland College.

There is a girl's residence teacher who doesn't really like Chinese girls. Like they won't say “Oh, I don't like you” but it is just how she treats you. She never smiles at us and she smiles at everyone else. Like, she will come to the door for bed check and just turn to the

non-Chinese girl and say goodnight and ignore the Chinese girl. She also teaches PE and she always says we are too lazy or too chatty even when we work really hard. Like my friend, worked really hard in gym this year and didn't talk but the teacher gave her a bad grade anyway. Her parents were really upset about it but it really wasn't her fault.

In my observations of the Robotics Club, race appeared to be a feature of the ways the students interacted with one another. For instance, the language of "Asian" was heard in discussions of grades ("a B minus is an Asian F"), academic subjects ("Asian's are good at Math and Science") and dating ("Asians mostly date other Asians"). In my interviews with some of the students, they argued that Asian-ness had to do with "lifestyle." This Asian lifestyle was described by the students at the clubs as more serious, busy and academic than what they called a "Western" lifestyle. In a conversation with a group of Chinese girls in the Girl's Robotics club, the girls delineated the between the two group in the club by naming the other group "Real Asians" while referring to themselves as "Honorary Asians" or "Fake Asians." When asked what makes a "real Asian," the students responded by citing getting good grades and being serious about clubs. These two aspects of school life played a large part in being perceived as a "real Asian." For example, a Chinese girl in the Robotics Club, who did not choose to participate in this project, noted that "the other group [the one termed "Real Asians"] could probably finish [or make more progress on their robot] in one month what we [the group termed "Fake Asians"] could finish in three months." She argued that this progress was due to their serious attitude towards school and clubs. When asked if language plays a part in distinguishing this category of "Real Asian," the students noted that it was more about an approach to life, meaning that that "Fake Asians" were more laid back.

Race also factored into the interactions among students, Chinese and non-Chinese alike, during my fieldwork. Students would often make remarks identifying themselves and their

behaviours as racially or culturally motivated. For example, while observing the Boys Robotics Club, I noted that the two leading teams both had leaders named Adam, one who was a Chinese international student and the other who was Canadian. Both the Chinese international students and non-Chinese students in the club often joked that “it was Asian Adam vs. White Adam.” Jeffery, a non-Chinese student in the Boy’s Robotics club noted that Asian Adam was slated to win simply because “the Asian students always win [at Robotics competitions].” A third team was comprised of three boys of Spanish descent. They decided not to compete in the upcoming competition. They joked that they were too “gangsta” to compete and that this was just for fun. They added that they “couldn’t compete with the Asian students anyway.”

Even though the language of Asian was used by some of the students in this study to describe shared interests and habits, most of students in this study often remarked in their interviews that stereotypes tying Asian students lives exclusively to academic achievement in STEM subjects made them angry or uncomfortable. A few noted that these stereotypes were the reason they chose to participate in clubs with other Chinese students. In sharp contrast to these stereotypes and the imaging of Chinese youth as not interested in participating in sports and clubs, the youth in this study all spoke of how important sports and clubs were to their identities abroad. They demonstrated that through involvement in sports and clubs they negotiated individual identities in their school context as well as images of “Chinese students” by others around them.

Participation and the Games of Power

As Rebecca Raby notes current emphasis on youth participation in various aspect of school life is “naturalised as universally good when it really reflects, normalises and prioritises an individualistic, neo-liberal, largely Western and middle-class approach to understanding personhood, childhood [and youthhood] and participation.”¹⁵⁴ The above exploration of the meaning of clubs, sports and volunteering in the lives of Chinese international students at an Ontario private high school revealed that these youth encounter and often take up this vision of youthhood. However, she argues that youth participation, in itself, is not inherently subjugating, neo-liberal, middle class or western since youth themselves are able to read these narratives and engage Foucault’s care of the self to allow them to “play the games of power.”¹⁵⁵

Raby, following from Foucault, argues that people, including youth, navigate through discourses, resist domination and attempt to become self-determining agents. Therefore, she argues that this is not simply about seeing people as constituted “for their own regulation”, but as constituted as “free to understand the ‘rules of the game’” and thus to able to attempt to control each other through governmental strategies.¹⁵⁶ This practice of reading ‘the rules of the game’ and engaging with them in strategic way, she argues, also demonstrates an agentic capacity.¹⁵⁷ Put simply, the youth in this study read the rules of youthhood in both contexts and engage with those narratives, positioning themselves within them. In this way they demonstrate their agentic capacities through playing the games of power, inserting themselves into new roles and navigating the discursive space around them.

¹⁵⁴ Rebecca Raby. “Children’s Participation as Neoliberal Governance” Discourse 35, no. 1 (2014): 83.

¹⁵⁵ Raby, “Children’s Participation”, 79.

¹⁵⁶ Raby, “Children’s Participation”, 84.

¹⁵⁷ Raby, “Children’s Participation”, 89.

Conclusion

To conclude, in an attempt to recruit these young people and their families, the adults and institutions in the global education industry make these young people appear in particular ways in their promotional materials. They picture them in ways that tie their school practices, such as academically rigorous programming, to a better economic future for these youth. However, this chapter demonstrates that their lived experiences are far more complicated. In particular, this chapter has explored how power figures into the ways that these young people understand and deploy their self-identities in these contexts. While they are not always in control of the discursive-material educational context in which they live their lives, they are aware of the discourses that surround them and find ways to position themselves within those discourses in new ways. Thus, while on one hand, they fit in with the neoliberal push to individualization, rise of the middle class, global focus on education and the global education industry, the youth shape these processes and in turn, are shaped by them. In reading and navigating between their experience in China and their new context, they “play the games of power” and negotiate new lives abroad.

Chapter V -
Language, Humour, and WEChat: Constructing Community and Identity among Chinese international students

The neoliberal push towards individualism appears to be steadily rising in schools in Ontario.¹⁵⁸ Within the private school viewbooks, Chinese international youth were often imaged as passive, quiet learners whose lives are continually tied to discourses of ‘futurity.’ As explored in the introduction, youth who move are frequently imaged as vulnerable and lonely. Throughout this study, the Chinese international youth at Oakland College accommodated, resisted, and challenged this imaging. In particular, these students resist neoliberal narratives in their attempt to create a collective community identity to overcome the challenges presented by their new educational context. This chapter will explore how Chinese students who participated in this study create and express a sense of community and identity at Oakland College. It begins by exploring the ways these students experience and navigate the movement that has brought them to study in Canada. It highlights the similarities and differences in their experiences that may have a bearing on how they experience life at Oakland College. The discussion that follows centers on how the Chinese language and Chinese humour is maintained abroad and creates a sense of community identity among Chinese students at Oakland College. However, it will also highlight how this desire to maintain a unique community identity is balanced with a desire to belong to the broader student community at Oakland College.

This chapter will explore the notion of identity as fluid. As noted in the introduction, much has currently been written on the hybrid nature of identity. This hybridity has been

¹⁵⁸ Virginia Caputo, “She’s from a Good Family: Performing Motherhood and Childhood in Canadian School Setting,” *Childhood* 14, no. 2 (2007), 173.

critiqued for continuing to emphasize identity as a stable whole¹⁵⁹ rather than in flux where strands of identity are negotiated, highlighted in some points, or discarded altogether in particular moments.¹⁶⁰ Homi Bhabha suggests that a concept of identity as fluid is most productive as it enables research to examine “the flexible, overlapping, and at times conflicting identities participants hold and signals movement rather than boundedness of insider/outsider dichotomies.”¹⁶¹ For the current study, Bhabha’s concept of identity is used to explore the moving identities of Chinese international students at Oakland College.

Student Identities and the Global Education Industry

Apart from the temporally fluctuating nature of identity, movement is also integral to how identity is constructed. For the Chinese international students with whom I worked, they had much to say about both similarities and differences in their journeys from China to Canada. What is particularly interesting to note about their experiences in China is their encounter with the global education industry and how this industry projects contributes to constructing the category of “international student.” Of the students interviewed, most students had lived in large cities in China such as Hong Kong and Beijing. Three came from smaller cities—Shenzhen, Yancheng and LinGao. One student came from Taipei in Taiwan. Despite these different places of origin, many students shared similar experiences of schooling and family life in China. Our conversations about their experiences of school in China often centered around conversations

¹⁵⁹ Silvia Schultermandl and Sebnem Toplu, *A Fluid Sense of Self: The Politics of Transnational Identity*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 13-14.

¹⁶⁰ Schultermandl and Toplu, *A Fluid Sense of Self*, 14.

¹⁶¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 58.

regarding close friendships and relationships with family members. A female Grade 10 student, Emma, expressed her school life in China as follows:

a really special thing to me. You are supposed to attend the same school for 9 years. I only got to attend for eight years but it was still the place that I grew up from grade 1 to grade 8. Those friends you see everyday, all the time, not like here, you have all your classes together so you are kind of close just because you are there.

A Grade 10 student, Amelia, similarly expressed a longing for the closeness she had with her classmates back in China,

When I was back home I was happy because I had so many friends. The schools are not like here. You go to school early morning and come back late, for like nine hours each day, but you have the same classmates in every class so you get really close.

Another female student in Grade 11, Olivia, echoed this closeness with classmates as an important feature of her experience at home.

We have a lot more students in China. Like, in my grade there are four hundred students or more that is not actually a lot compared to other big schools. We also are separated into different classes and you go to the same classroom every day with the same 40 classmates for three years. So it is more like... the class brings you together with the other students, like you get to know them really well. But like here you go to different classes. I feel like they both have their own advantages. But I kinda like China's version better because the classes do all the big activities together and go through big life things together and so it is kinda like a big family.

During the focus group, another female grade 10 student, Ava, brought up how this closeness also extended to her family.

I was really close with my parents in China. Like they were kind of the people who I would tell everything to at the end of the day.

A Grade 11 student, Sophia, noted that some of what made friendship and family so special was that,

they are the people who have known me from the time I was little 'til now. They know who I am at my core.

In addition to the close relationships formed in schools in China, a few students noted that locality had an effect on whether or not people would travel for education. James, who is from a smaller city, recalls that when he travelled to Canada for schooling three years ago, he knew very few people who went abroad from his city; he noted that this situation has been changing more recently.

Before I actually decided to go to a different country to study, the people that I know that went to different countries to study were people going to university to study, not high school or middle school. So when I actually thought about I was thinking about university but when I was researching areas to go to I realized “Oh people are going for middle school, for high school.” More and more and more are coming to other countries for these grades. Like five years ago in China, a returnee was something special and a city like mine would not have many returnees. But now, it is becoming like... if you are not coming back from a famous university...then you are just a normal returnee. Now there is a “normal” returnee and these normal returnees are not considered any better than Chinese students.

The students who originated from larger cities emphasized that many of their friends and family went abroad for schooling. Sophia, from Beijing, recalled that “a bunch of kids in my classes over the years went abroad—starting in about grade 5.” Charlotte recollects,

A lot of young people go abroad to study really young. I had a lot of classmates go abroad, Grade 4, Grade 6, to study in Great Britain, America or Canada. A lot of my family friends went to America. So I always knew it was an option.

Other students highlighted how the decision to move abroad for schooling was affected by the financial standing of their family. James noted that his decision to board was affected by his parent’s financial standing.

Before I come here, I also always think about it being rich people who go abroad. Like most young people would like to come with their parent or their aunt or their cousin or someone else might be there. There are not a lot of young people who want to come alone – I mean like when they are young before grade 10. But persons like me, my family can only afford to send me.

Olivia echoed this observation.

Like for some people, if their families are rich their mom or everyone but the dad will go with you, but not every family has this situation. So most situations, it is only you that will go out. So you have to have to be a little bit more independent and you have to know that you have to face a lot of challenges.

In terms of who made the decision to study abroad, many of the students in this study emphasized that the decision to go abroad was their own even if their parents were supportive of it. Emma explained that her parents had planned to send her abroad when she was in Grade 6, but she did not want to go so they did not force her. However, she recounted that after she and her good friend went to an international camp in America, she returned to China and told her parents she was ready to move abroad. She explained that her family wanted her to choose a school in Canada because she had an aunt in Toronto. She was able to choose the school and, after looking at many of the websites for private schools in Ontario, she chose Oakland College.

James recounted that he made most of the decisions about which country he would study in and which school he would study at by drawing on knowledge from other family members who went abroad for university,

The reason I chose to go to Canada was that it has a good education system that I like which is going to benefit me, and second of all a country that is safe. Like my cousin who lives in Arizona, the girl who lives next door to her got shot! So when I decided to go somewhere else to study she just texted me like everyday—don't go to the States, it's dangerous, it's dangerous. And I feel like, because I was going abroad so young and I was going to be alone so I should try and find somewhere safe. And the country that fits both of these is only Canada. Australia and America—there is a lot of discrimination against Chinese people. It's crazy. Ontario is a pretty easy decision—it's just the best province in Canada. Like it has Toronto and Ottawa and Montreal is around here as well. These were the only cities that I knew before I came here. I never thought of going to Vancouver because that is only for super, super rich people. Like I was applying in March which is considered very late and most of the schools were closed for the year. I actually only applied to Oakland because it keeps its applications open. Yeah... and this is a joke... but I did not know about the weather. If I did I probably would not be here (laughs).

Similarly, Mia recounted that in the summer between grade 7 and 8 she went to an international camp in Oxford, England. After she returned home, she asked her parents if she could study abroad. Originally, she went to a public school in Toronto but recounts how she chose to switch to Oakland College in grade 10,

First I decided to go to school in Toronto but after a while I felt that it didn't suit me well. That school they have a lot of Chinese kids. So we kind of heard about it. Other people said it was a school with strong academic skills so your daughter can be proud of that. But then I decided to change to the private school like Oakland because it will be really good for my future because I can try lots of new things like frisbee and snowboarding. Those are not things that the public school in Toronto would provide. So I had family friends, my father's work friend's children that were in this school and so...yeah. Then I came here.

Two students in the girls focus group noted that their decision to go abroad was planned by their parents but emphasized that they participated in the decisions during the process. Ava recounted how her family made the decision about where she would go to study with the help of an international school center however, her parents waited for her to consent.

My aunt graduated from Oakland in 1994 and then she studied at Carleton University. She knew it was really good so she said "Ava just apply." I applied to Oakland and I got in so I just came here. Then my sister and cousin is in Halifax. I have a twin sister. They have a Center in Taiwan if you want to study abroad that has a book of all these different schools abroad – like in Australia, UK, America and Canada – and those schools pay these centers money to advertise their schools. So yeah, then the Center will say "Oh you are good at this thing – go to this school." So that is how my parents picked my sister's and cousin's schools. The centers - they do the visa and stuff too so it is easier and mostly the international schools pay them to advertise so the fee from you is not too much. It gives my parents comfort because they can talk with people who know the cities and such. My cousin went abroad first because she is older and then my mom came to me and was like "Do you want to study abroad" and I was like "Yes!" So it was my decision but it was my mom who gave me the chance.

Many of the students I interviewed recalled using one of these international centers to decide on a school with their parents. Amelia recalled how she chose Oakland College together with her parents at one of these centers.

My parents were searching for schools in Ontario because they didn't want me to go to Vancouver because they were thinking that there are too many Chinese people there. So they were looking at schools in Toronto first then they find Oakland's website online and they showed it to me and we picked it together. We picked it because it focuses on different countries and we thought that would be fun.

Almost all students emphasized their role in making decisions during this process of selecting countries and schools. There were exceptions however. One grade 11 boarding student, Charlotte, expressed during the focus group that she had had no say in the decision or process and had resigned herself to "not having any say" until she finished university and made her own money.

Charlotte: Yeah so it wasn't really worth me thinking about things because my parents have already kinda chose it for me. Like, one day when I was in grade 4 my mom told me that we were going to go to move to Canada because they said I would have a "better future" in Canada but I don't really understand why that is. But yeah, it's whatever. And so my sister in like 2014 went to New York City for the university so it kinda pushed my mom and my dad to send me to Canada. I have never really decided anything.

Emma: [looking at Charlotte] yeah but it was more like there was a road designed for you. Like you didn't really have much choice in the matter compared to the rest of us.

Yet she also emphasized in the interview that by living abroad, she has more freedom in her daily life since her parents are back in China.

I knew that we were going to be practicing English and have different set up before I came. I did a lot of research. I picked the clubs I was going to join and all the places I was going to go downtown. It is a lot different than home, you have more time to explore.

Another student, Aidan emphasized in the focus group that his parents had decided to send him, his sister, and his mother to Ontario a couple years earlier and that his choice of school was made by his mother. However, he attributed this lack of consultation to his young age.

As mentioned earlier, some of the students in this study went into boarding while others came with one parent or stayed with a homestay family. Most students noted that this decision

was mainly influenced by the financial standing of their family. Students whose families could afford it would send one parent with their child. Other families could only afford to send their child but could afford to put them in the more expensive boarding option. Homestay students often noted that their families either could not afford boarding or that they hoped that by staying with a family that they might learn English quickly. Of the students interviewed, most were in boarding with only two in homestay and three living with their mother.

Negotiating community and identity at Oakland College

This section will explore common experiences at Oakland College with an emphasis on how Chinese students navigate the changes this new setting brings. It will highlight how they synthesize information and knowledge to read the social context than what they maintain, what they change and how this shapes the social context at this school. Specifically, this section will examine how students negotiate between creating and participating in a Chinese student community and attempting to belong to the broader student community at Oakland College.

In order to present an analysis of community identity, it is important to examine the concept of community itself. Benedict Anderson's imagined communities is a notable trend in the anthropological inquiry into the nature of community. However, as Vered Amit argues,

If we hold that the effort to construct communities is fundamentally an effort, whether successful, partial or failed, to mobilize social relations, then as Fredrik Barth has noted, communities cannot be created simply through the "mere act of imagining" (1994:13) or, one could add, the act of attributing.¹⁶²

Amit argues the many common uses of the word community and the lack of precise definition make community "good to think with" because its vagueness should prompt scholars

¹⁶² Vered Amit. *Thinking through Sociality*. (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 107.

to draw together the context, social ramifications, and “uncertainties arising in the intersection between the idea and the actualization of sociation.”¹⁶³ This study will take up her focus on community as a creative effort to draw people together through community markers and her reminder to situate this effort in a changing locations and relationships with shifting power dynamics. It will also draw on Amit’s argument to approach community identity as distributive affect-belonging; that sense of belongingness is uneven and unequally distributed throughout the group and within one member that shifts based on location, interaction and emotion. Community identity is no longer then a static set of the concepts and ideas attributed to a group but rather a dynamic analysis of the community member continual realization of and relationship to the community. For example, instead of simply attributing a particular language to a group, Amit argues that anthropologists should examine the efforts of community members in creating a shared sense of how to talk. Each member of the community then makes choices based on location and interaction about when, where and how much to utilize this marker of community identity.

In my interview with Abigail, a grade 11 student, I asked her what she thought were some of the challenges Chinese international students might face in coming to study in Canada. Her answer was simply “language, of course.” Her answer offers insight into the centrality of language and prompts further questioning including how navigating an English-centric social context is more than speaking in your second language. It is not only a function of translating between English and Chinese but also of observing social cues from an entirely new context. These cues influence when the students consider speech to be appropriate and direct and what

¹⁶³ Amit, *Thinking through Sociality*, 110.

form of speech or interaction is appropriate. In this process, they not only change the shape of the social context at Oakland College, but navigate between creating and participating in a Chinese international student community and the broader student community.

Most of the students I spoke with expressed the view that navigating a social context centered on your second language presented one of the biggest challenges even though English has long been a part of their lives. As Amelia, a grade 10 student, expressed, “The biggest challenge? That would be language, even though we learn English ever since kindergarten.” Some students focused on how language was specifically challenging in the classroom.

Isabella: Maybe that language is a challenge. It is harder because we are learning the same thing as our classmates, but our English level is different. So that’s hard.

Amelia: But it is because English is not my first language. And school work is also harder because of that because in China I was pretty good at math but when I first got here my math marks dropped because I couldn’t understand the math words—like the questions. But it is going back up because I am getting better now.

Apart from language challenges in their studies, the students also discussed how language influenced the ways they formed friendships with other Chinese international students instead of making “foreign friends.” This phrase is a translation of the Chinese term *waiguo pengyou* which can be more directly translated as “outside country friend.” As evident in the following passage, the students generally reflected that making “foreign friends” was challenging because of language barriers.

Sophia: I think it is because my English is not as good as many of the Chinese people. This is my thought – because my English is not good, I don’t want to make a friend have to guess what I am saying every time I am speaking because that is really hard. Like if a student from Indonesia came to Taiwan to learn Chinese, I would try to talk with her but I probably wouldn’t be her best friend because it is so hard to talk with her. Yeah. So it is too hard to communicate. Without good English, you kinda lose the connection to everyone else.

James concurred with the sentiment expressed by Sophia above noting that maintaining Chinese language abroad leads to a stricter division of Chinese students from foreigners (Canadian students and other international students). The following passage is from an interview conducted with James to ask about the role of language in building community and identity.

James: I think these make the big difference. So first of all you all know Chinese students we hang out with other Chinese students. But you know that happens to Mexicans, Ukrainians, Russians...but this situation is more serious to us because most of those nationalities have great English ability. But us, our language is less strong than them so this makes us stick more with our own group.

James: Because there are a couple people who have lots of foreign friends and do lots of clubs and stuff like that but not many. And you know, it makes sense, because like even me because of language I do not have many foreign friends. Because people are like "Ok maybe James is funny but he doesn't even understand me, he doesn't understand what I am talking about. I have to say the same thing 3 times to him."

Me: Well and it must be hard for you too because you have to translate everything in your head.

James: Yeah. And everything I say. Like even to you, it is Chinese first, then I translate it into English. It doesn't come straight to my mind. That's why the more I am speaking the more mistakes I am making because my brain gets tired.

Despite the difficulty that language sometimes presented in forming friendships at the school, most of the students I interviewed expressed the view that having foreign friendships was an important goal for them. Ava, a grade 10 student, noted that there is a common notion held by people in China that by having more foreign friends, your English will improve and the better your experience will be.

Ava: There are a lot of Chinese articles out there that you can read about things to do, ways to have a good experience. But they are kinda repetitive. They say "Make foreign friends. Do local things." So you kinda have to just do it. If you can't do it then it might not be a good experience.

Emma, another grade 10 student, also reflected on the challenge that the language barrier presents in reaching this goal of making foreign friends.

Hmmm... language. Because it can be hard to make friends if you don't have the language skills. Like you can make friends with mostly Chinese kids but then your English won't improve and your perspective won't really change. So kind of like, why come here then?

In addition to the language barrier, Olivia and Evelyn, grade 11 students, noted that when combined with different cultural interests, this hindered their ability to make friendships with foreign friends.

Olivia: Yeah. I feel like Chinese girls have harder times making foreign friends. Because the Canadian girls are like gossipy here. Like we want to have foreign friends, but they are gossipy, like who broke up with who and who drinks and stuff, and Chinese girls—it's not polite in China to gossip—so we don't really want to join that type of behaviour. We want to enjoy life here and we don't want to get caught up in drama. So it is a challenge. But I mean we have each other to be friends with so it is not so bad!

Evelyn: I remember thinking I would have to use my English all the time but I still use Mandarin a lot because I have a lot of Chinese friends. I guess I have less foreign friends than I expected cause it is hard because you have totally different background and language. I do have foreign friends but they are not my best friends. My best friends are Chinese because we have things to talk about, we understand each others jokes... it would be really hard to change this I think.

As Evelyn expresses above, the Chinese international students in this study often discussed how a sense of Chinese humour was one of the things they maintained abroad. On one hand, this type of humour is either very witty and full of word trickery and is reliant on an intimate understanding of the Chinese language. On the other hand, students noted that much of the time, this humour centers around teasing those who are close to you. They explained that humour and teasing were an important part of forming close relationships in China. Some stressed that their Canadian friends and host families often did not seem to value teasing as a method of bonding in the same way. As Olivia noted,

Hmmm... I stayed with one [homestay] family when I was at [another high school] and then when I came here I switched to another family. This family for me is better than the old one. They like teasing me and makes us feel really close. This is odd, like good odd, because most of the time I feel like Canadians feel like our teasing is mean—or like they don't know what to do with it. But it is really common in China to like make fun of someone when they say something ridiculous because it means you are close—like not being distant.

Generally speaking, however, the students agreed that without a mastery of the Chinese language and a thorough understanding of Chinese history and culture, understanding Chinese humour would be difficult. Ava noted that this may be a reason Chinese international students are a more insular group than other international student communities.

All international students might encounter challenges but different challenges. Like French international students, like from France, won't actually have a language barrier because this city is bilingual. They can even take the bilingual diploma. But Chinese language is really complicated and really like based on our history and so we have our own language order and humour. So it may be different, like difficult, to apply to a whole new environment.

This maintenance of humour delineates cultural borders of “Chinese-ness” at the school and strongly ties this bond of “Chinese-ness” to a mastery of the Chinese language. In my time spent with the Girls Robotics Club, for example, we had multiple discussions about how and why Chinese students tended to group together. This club was made up of two Canadian-born Chinese students, one non-Chinese student and six Chinese international students. I was able to observe how this type of humour played a role in friendships among Chinese international students in contrast to their Canadian-born peers.

A unique feature that I noted about the Girls Robotics Club was the division of the club into two groups, each working on their own robot. One of these groups was made up of two Canadian-born Chinese students, one Chinese international student, and one Canadian student. They spoke primarily in English with the occasional Chinese word thrown in which was always

promptly translated by another member for the sake of their sole non-Chinese speaking group member. The second group was a Chinese speaking group made up entirely of Chinese international students. The room was always filled with laughter from both groups. However, the humour used by the English-speaking group differed from that used by the Chinese speaking group. Here is an exchange I recorded involving two of the members of the second group during my second time at the club:

Ava: [Starts robot for test run. robot goes backward rather than forward]

Kara: [the robots programmer] Noooooo. Wei shen me? [Why?]

Ava: [laughs] Ni chuangjian laoren xiang hou zou! [You created an old man walking backwards]

Kara: [laughs] Bu, Ta pan ni! [No. He is a rebel!]

This exchange would be impossible to understand without the knowledge that ancient Chinese medicine prescribes that walking backwards is good for your health and is practiced mostly by elderly people to keep their bodies strong.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, Kara's response is a play on words since the character ni can also be translated as backwards. Another exchange I recorded happened between two Chinese international students in the Boys Robotics Club.

[Oliver doing a funny imitation of teacher, stops just as teacher enters the room]

Ethan: [Whispers at Oliver and laughs] Sha dan. [stupid egg]

Oliver: [smiles sneakily and pulls a fake punch] ni pi zi yang. [your skin looks itchy]

Similar to the previous exchange, this humorous exchange relies on a certain level of familiarity with the Chinese language. "Stupid egg" is a common, hilarious insult for when a friend does something dumb. "Your skin looks itchy" expresses a joking or real desire to beat someone up and is considered a good retort to an insult. This exchange also demonstrates the type of adversarial teasing humour that the students said connotes familiarity in China. In fact,

¹⁶⁴ See Jing Zhang et al. "See Foot Pressure and gait features during fitness walking backwards of Chinese elders" The Chinese Journal of Rehabilitation and Medicine 5, no. 1 (2010).

youmo, the word for humour in Mandarin, connotes a sense of lightness, shared culture and familiarity.¹⁶⁵ The character “you” (幽) denotes certain cultured taste while “mo” (默) suggests silent but heart-felt understanding.¹⁶⁶

In the focus groups and interviews, we explored what was considered funny to the students:

Aidan: It’s funny to me when you make sentences to be ambiguous, like there is one meaning but the other person doesn’t see the other meaning and the other meaning is like teasing—insulting—and they just don’t know. That is funny to me.

Emma: It is funny to me when there are a lot of inside jokes and like the kind where you tell them and only native speakers really understand. There is not a lot that I like about jokes that are like racism or politics. I just like jokes between friends. I feel that is more Chinese humour.

Charlotte: So because we have a lot of different accents so an important part of Chinese humour is because the accent is different so the way to pronounce words would be different. Some words might sound different in a different area and when you say it in a new place, some very normal in one place might become very dirty words in Mandarin. So this kind of thing is funny.

Mia highlighted how these types of humour would be difficult for English speakers to engage in because of the language barrier.

The difficulty is that if you say something and the other person doesn’t get it or you were actually wrong, it is really embarrassing so you have to be really good at it. Which will take like half of your life to learn to do, I think. Especially if it [Mandarin Chinese] is not your first language.

The students highlighted how they individually navigate this desire to participate in this important socio-cultural aspect of their language while striving to improve their English in order to better navigate their new English-centric social context. Some students noted that, as one of the largest international student groups at the school, they were in a unique position to be able to maintain this aspect of their language and culture. In the interview excerpt below, Abigail

¹⁶⁵ Chen SuoQiao, “Translating “Humor” into Chinese Culture”, *Humor* 20, no. 3 (2007), 279.

¹⁶⁶ SuoQiao, “Translating “Humor”, 278.

explained how she struggles to understand Canadian humour and how she values her group of Chinese friends.

Abigail: I feel like if you didn't get to that social circle at first it is harder to break into them. Like, if you were not there when they were formed then you are really on the outside coming in. They are already set. Also I am afraid that I might say something wrong because of the language. Like, when everyone else is laughing I don't get the joke and I just feel lost.

Erin: Yeah. Then it is really hard to feel confident right? That is me in Chinese class all the time. So many puns in Chinese "what is going on?" and someone else has to explain that he changed the tone so it is hilarious.

Abigail: [laughs] Yeah, Chinese humour is pretty different from here. I guess I feel lucky to have Chinese friends I can joke with even if my English is only so-so. Other international students might not have that I guess.

As Olivia notes below, the knowledge that there was a large group of people who spoke her mother tongue at Oakland College was comforting to her when she contemplated moving to Canada to attend the school.

I feel like all international students all have similar problems like the language and friends. But you know, the Chinese students are a big part of the international student community so like we don't need to worry that we won't make friends who speak our mother tongue. So I can only really find advantages.

This sentiment was about the comfort of forming friendships with Chinese students abroad was widely held among the other Chinese international students I interviewed but they also highlighted that cultivating friendships with foreign friends was also an important goal. For James who echoed Abigail's distaste for Canadian humour, his advice for future Chinese students was to try and form foreign friendships anyway.

Chinese humour is very different. Like maybe because I don't know their perspective but I feel like we are the only ones not to get their humour at all. Like at all, at all. Like I do not only stick with Chinese, sometimes at soccer or assembly or lunch I hang out with other international students and like the other day they were telling me a joke, "What do you call a fish without an eye?" "A fssshhhh" and I was like what? This is supposed to be funny?

Speak less Mandarin. I know someone who is speaking Mandarin all the time, like 24/7 and that person is not going to be able to make friends with people who don't speak Chinese. Also don't sit with Chinese in class so that when you do group work you have to work in English. Also try to be more accepting. Accept their culture, laugh at their jokes even if you don't think they are funny.

For the most part, this cultivation of foreign friendships depended on an individual's personality and courage.

Isabella: Like some Chinese students just make Chinese friends. It is really easy to make friends with Chinese kids because you have the same interests and the same language, which is important to some people without strong English skills, but I think that it really depends on your courage.

The passage above demonstrates the complex balance in creating community and identity at Oakland College that Chinese students navigate by maintaining their language and humour while reaching a higher level of fluency in English. In navigating this balance, they shape their social worlds at Oakland College. Some students note that this drive to learn English and make foreign friends are the reasons they join particular sports or clubs, sit in particular spaces in the classroom and go to particular places in their free time. Others note that the areas where they hang out and the clubs they join are part of a desire to stay with their (mostly Chinese) friends. In making these decisions, it appears that Chinese international students bring with them socio-cultural language practices and find ways to maintain and balance them with their desire to learn English and live in an English-centric social world.

WeChat: Using social media for constructing identity and community

In addition to language and humour, Chinese students use technology that they previously used in China to create and sustain a community abroad. As mentioned in the previous section,

many students emphasized that close friendships with classmates were an important part of their lives in China. However, students also expressed the view that these previous friendships were hard to maintain abroad. Abigail noted in her interview that she felt the difference in their lives would make it hard for her to remain close to her friends in China.

Yeah. I guess, I feel like I am getting away from my friends in China because we don't have the same topics to discuss anymore, we don't have the same lives or life routines. I don't really think it is a problem for me because I have new friends here so it is not a big deal. But yeah that has changed.

Charlotte echoed this difficulty maintaining friendships from China while studying in Canada during the focus group session.

Yeah. So when I went back to China there was only a handful of friends I could talk to. But even when these good friends brought their new friends along I found it really awkward and odd.

This seemed to be a common sentiment as many students expressed that they did not use technology to talk with their friends from home. Many emphasized that technology aids in organizing the Chinese international student community at Oakland College. Almost all of the Chinese students at Oakland College are part of a WeChat group they formed themselves. WeChat is a popular social media platform in China since other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have been blocked by the Chinese government. Amelia noted that this unique platform has been a helpful tool in creating a Chinese community at Oakland College.

So because China blocked Facebook and Instagram, which is really annoying. We use WeChat for all the Chinese students and so I think we should compile like some advice from former students and like add it to the group in September or something! Because like WeChat is really like a convenient thing for all the Chinese students to be part of a community.

The WeChat group is only populated by the Chinese international students at Oakland College and exclusively uses the Chinese language. Many of the students mentioned it during our

interviews as a space in which they could speak with each other using the Chinese language and also plan events as a group. Amelia further explained that this platform is used mostly to plan events exclusively for Chinese students.

Like the Spring Festival is coming up, so I wanted to organize a group dinner. So I posted like lets go out to this restaurant and eat together to celebrate and that way we all get to celebrate our festivals and stuff not feel so lonely. Also if someone has found good opportunities for like volunteer or trips or movies or something they will share. So it is a great thing to have this group chat I think.

Through the WeChat group, students found creative ways to bring pieces of their previous food culture with them or to create new ones abroad. Olivia notes that “when we go back home everyone brings two big suitcases of food and we go to T & T a lot.” The group helped the students to plan trips to T&T (a grocery store which stocks food from China) and to organize food requests of a student who is visiting from China. Many of the students use this technology to organize school events such as Beijing Week and the Lunar New Year celebration. However, as with language, some of the students noted that celebrating festivals and creating social events exclusively on this platform set the Chinese student community apart from the broader student community thereby hindering the chances of making foreign friends. James expressed this concern during an interview.

And our culture is very different from Western cultures, like all those cultures celebrate Christmas—we are not and when we are hosting the lunar new year everyone is like “Oh the school is holding this for the Chinese students, how nice” and they are not like participating in this holiday, only Chinese kids are celebrating it so we feel apart. I really wish others wouldn’t think like “Oh this holiday is Chinese” but think more like “Oh this is a holiday.

As noted in Chapter II, visions of multiculturalism are embedded in Canadian private schools. One example is the ways that Chinese students are centered within a global communities discourse. In the focus on global communities, they are imaged as assets in building

a global community at the school and “broadening students’ vision of the world.” James reads and reacts to this vision expressing his concern of feeling “othered” by multicultural events at the school. However, he notes that events such as Beijing Week are important to him and the other Chinese students noting that he hopes the school will offer more of them in the future. Thus, while he is concerned that the events set the Chinese international students apart from the rest of the school population, they are important for his efforts to build community and identity in a Canadian context.

With regard to the WeChat group, the technology offers students an important social space to create a sense of Chinese international student community identity within the context of Oakland College. In her study of online communication and cultural adaptation, Chen Wei Wu examines how online communities are a largely used young people in China to organize social events.¹⁶⁷ This demonstrates that the method for forming robust online communities does not emerge abroad but is brought with the students. However, as the students in this study noted, this use of technology appears to become intensified after moving far away from friends and family. The online community for the Chinese international students at Oakland College appears to mitigate between a desire to belong to the broader student community at the school and maintaining parts of their lives from China through the use of this technology. The parts of their lives they do maintain provide a basis for a sense of Chinese international student community identity.

¹⁶⁷ Chen Wei Wu, “Chinese international students cross-cultural adaptation and online communication”, Theses and Dissertations, Beijing City University, (2009), 4.

Conclusion

To return to Vered Amit's point about the concept of community as not bounded and homogenous, it appears in this study as a creation with multiple creators and with different levels of investment depending on the location and interaction. By maintaining their language and cultural sense of humour abroad in particular settings, the Chinese international students in this study create a sense of Chinese community identity at Oakland College while attempting to balance this with a desire to belong to the broader student community. The concept of movement is also useful in understanding these students' efforts to create a sense of community abroad. Through their use of WeChat, the students attempt to move pieces of their lives from China to Ontario. This attempt is mediated by what can move with them, what is difficult to move, and what is hard to attain abroad. What is able to move with them and how they choose to reconfigure aspects of their lives, such as food from China and Chinese festivals, serve as community markers. By exploring Chinese international students' efforts to create a sense of community abroad, this chapter has explored the ways these students navigate, negotiate and are impacted by mobility processes including the reconstitution of their identities and lives through the discourses that serve to position them in new contexts.

Chapter VI – **Conclusion**

As evidenced by the growth of the global education industry and the internationalization of campuses across the country, the number of students seeking international educational experiences in Canada will likely continue to rise in the coming years. One example of this rise is the increasing number of Chinese international students enrolling in schools in Ontario in the last decade. This movement of students from China, primarily from upper and upper middle class families, has attracted the attention of policy makers, researchers and educators among others, with vested interests in understanding the potential and impact of this cohort of students. For this thesis, my interest has been to examine this movement of students from the view of young people themselves, a perspective that has been largely absent in the literature that focuses primarily on adult-centric concerns. The idea of ‘mobility’ and ‘movement’ anchors the analysis in this study and informs the original contribution that this thesis makes; that is, the discourse of ‘moving’ as a vehicle for self-transformation is promoted by the global education industry in a particularly narrow way yet is complicated with attention paid to the lived experiences of young people. Thus while the global education industry promotes the view of educational travel as a method for bringing about utopian visions of a globalized futurity, the experiences of youth themselves demonstrate the complexity of this movement as it is intertwined with identity, belonging, culture, futurity and experience in a powerful context shaped by gender, race, class, age, and other social lines of difference. By calling attention to some of the discursive, material and institutional factors through which the global education industry operates in the case of a select group of Chinese international students moving to Canada and the ways that this has a

stake in organizing the spaces in which these students navigate their lives, this thesis offers a glimpse of the process of moving from young people's perspectives.

What I have understood from the students in this project is that much is at stake in this process of moving. This is especially so when students are positioned as assets to building a global community, as a quiet academically inclined STEM focused minority, and as economic actors looking to build better economic futures as is the case with the promotional materials used by the particular school in this study. What is precisely at stake for students is embedded in envisioning people's lives in a narrow way that may restrict their abilities to live their lives fully and preclude an understanding that young people live fully amid, rather than apart from, the world of adults. What I have learned from the students in this study is that they navigate complex socio-cultural contexts that challenge the aforementioned imaging of them. The ethnographic data presented herein illuminates this complexity in the ways these youth navigate their mobility experiences and change the shape of their new social context through the vehicles of language, humour and social media.

The broader insight that I have understood by examining these three access points is that Chinese international students at Oakland College are participants in their own social lives and that this participation impacts not only their own circumstances but the global education industry more broadly. The industry, and the institutions involved with it, promote a particular image of the "Chinese international student." However, as young people encounter this educational experiences as active social actors rather than merely passively moving through the process as seen in this study, they enable change to happen. For example, while the global education industry strongly emphasizes travel as a vehicle for individual exploration, promotional materials

used by select institutions that participate in the global education industry often image Chinese international students outside of this narrative. They ‘appear’ as assets to building “global communities” at Canadian private schools, teaching peers and working with science and technology. The danger in this imaging is it may promote stereotypes including “Asian” youth as a model student minority exclusively interested in science and technology. The actions and perspectives of the students in this study, however, counter this narrow imaging of their lives as heard in the ethnographic vignettes noted in this thesis. Another example of the disconnect between the imaging used by the global education industry and lived experiences is the way that promotional materials position Chinese international students as award winners and tie this local achievement into a signal for guaranteed future economic and academic success. The point is not that future success is irrelevant for these students and their families; rather, an emphasis on futurity overshadows the presence of these young people, focuses on economic gain as the end goal of educational travel rather than the experience itself, and, in turn, diminishes the positive aspects of educational travel for these young people as it relates to their present capacities and participation. As evidenced by their own accounts of their educational lives in China and Canada, the students in this study actively shape their self-identities through travel and movement that goes beyond future economic success. These youth move between a Chinese educational context that focuses exclusively on academic rigour and futurity to a Canadian private school context shaped by the discourses of whole child education which places new emphasis on clubs, sport, recreation and individual exploration through travel. Thus despite the narrow imaging of Chinese international students in the discourses of the global education industry that represent them, the students in this study challenge this view by participating in

sports and using travel as a vehicle for personal transformation. They highlight how their time in Canada serves as a space for them to explore new dimensions of themselves and assists them in navigating the power dynamics rooted in gendered and racialized dimensions of their experience of moving. The analysis in this study conveys the complexity of ‘moving’ and how different elements of young people’s lives are able to move with them and what aspects are suspended or left behind. Technology facilitates this process by assisting these students in organizing and maintaining aspects of their lives abroad and at a distance from home.

In addition to technology, language and humour are used to assist the young people in this study with navigating their lives through this movement to transform the social, cultural and economic facets of their lives and the lives of those with whom they interact. For instance, by maintaining their language and cultural sense of humour abroad, the Chinese international students at Oakland College form a sense of collective Chinese community identity. They attempt to balance this shared sense of Chinese identity with a desire to belong to the broader community at Oakland College in a Canadian context. Not only does this process of community building affect the Chinese international students, it, in turn, impacts the ways the school attends to the participation of these youth and school life generally: from the expansion of higher level Mandarin classes to hosting cultural festivals to changing demographics amongst different club groups. It is this interrelationship between individual self-identity making and collective community building that this thesis highlights as an ever-changing and dynamic process within which the international Chinese students are actively involved. The analysis presented here highlights the changing, unequal, and political nature of the concepts of identity and community.

It challenges static representations of these young people's lives by institutions in the global education industry.

My primary conclusion is that the movement of Chinese international students encompasses a discourse of study abroad in which futurity, globalization and neoliberal ideas about travel and individual transformation play a key role. The schools in this study envision these students as assets to building 'global communities' in an attempt to reach a vision of a globalized future. Some students indicated that their families viewed their schooling in Ontario as a method for improving their chances at an economically prosperous future. Meanwhile, many of the Chinese international students saw their educational travel primarily as a method for self-exploration. What became evident from students is that the discourse of study abroad shapes the educational environment in which they live their daily lives that sometimes masks the challenging obstacles they face. These challenges include difficulty integrating into the broader student community and navigating school in a second language. At other times, a desire to create 'global communities' within schools leads to static representations of culture which serve to perpetuate essentializing narratives about China. This thesis suggests that the expectations of students, families and schools shaped by this discourse of study abroad are not always attainable simply through 'just going' abroad for schooling. Rather, it explores how Chinese international students must navigate challenges abroad, the obstacles they face, and the successes and complications they encounter.

Throughout this project, I have drawn on the methodological considerations of child and youth scholars in order to reflect on my position and relationships within an educational context. In doing so, I attempted to diminish power imbalances between the researcher and the youth. I

also reflected on the moments that power, as it is read in relation to context, may have affected the actions and responses of the youth in this study. This is one aspect of this study that could be expanded upon in future research design. Another limitation of the present study is the short period of study and the scale of the present project. Future research in investigating the global education industry from the view of young people would benefit from conducting ethnographic research at a larger number of private schools across Ontario in order to explore how different educational contexts, student demographics and cities shape student experiences. Furthermore, increasing the length of time spent in schools would offer further insights into the preliminary conclusions of the present research. Spending more time with students throughout the year would assist in further exploring identity and community dynamics as students spend more time in a Canadian context. Finally, this study focused on a set of marketing materials used by a select group of private schools to entice prospective students and their families. Future research design would benefit from expanding this pool of materials to include a wider range of institutions including smaller or larger private schools, English tutoring services and other institutions involved with the global education industry. A more comprehensive analysis of promotional materials would add evidence and further insight to support the preliminary findings presented here. Finally, conducting ethnographic research in China would facilitate a deeper understanding of the motivations and expectations of those people seeking international educational experiences from the views of families and students, as well as how the global education industry promotes and represents their schools in China to this potential cohort of students. This would add another dimension to the work completed in this thesis to demonstrate how the lived experiences of these youth complicate any framing of them by the global education industry.

Indeed, this expanded ethnographic context would add to what is evident within the limitations of this study: that these young people are actively engaged in the process of ‘moving’ and this adds a unique perspective to the existing literature exploring learning outcomes and methods of acculturation in the practices of teachers and schools. By attending to the participation of Chinese international students themselves in this moving educational experience, this thesis has offered a nuanced view of this experience that highlights young people’s constant negotiation of the interplay between mobility, identity, belonging, and culture.

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List of Images

Service Learning and International Travel

Figure 1.

**ASIA
OCTOBER - DECEMBER***

Photo: Andrew Lee / iStockphoto

Explore the bustling city of Beijing, be awed by sacred temples in Cambodia and Thailand, trek through spectacular mountain scenery, and take a riverboat cruise from Laos to Thailand. During Term Two of Global High School, you'll experience fascinating cultures, ancient ceremonies, astounding architecture and modern city life.

The journey begins in China's capital city of Beijing, both a modern and ancient place to explore. From the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square to the Great Wall of China, everything tells an incredible story. Beijing is an ever-evolving megacity of over 21 million that is home to seven separate UNESCO World Heritage sites, 91 universities, a variety of palaces, temples, parks, gardens, and tombs; a thriving cultural and arts scene; and much, much more. It is impossible to be bored in this buzzing metropolis - every turn brings new adventures, sights, and sounds.

Step out of the city and into the lush jungles of Cambodia. The centrally-located Siem Reap will be your home base, as you travel to the vast temple complex of Angkor Wat, and surrounding monuments - from Ta Prohm, a temple enveloped in huge tree roots, to Bayon, decorated with

huge carved smiling faces. Before you leave the country, take time to visit the Landmine Museum and learn about the horrifying history of the Khmer Rouge.

Dive back into the ancient world in Laos, and the town of Luang Prabang. Tour the most spectacular of over 30 Buddhist temples, see shrines decorated in gold, covered in intricate carvings and inhabited by orange-clad monks, and get your thrills on a zipline through the jungle and a hike to stunning waterfalls.

Leave the roads behind and take the scenic route to Thailand on a boat cruise along the Mekong River. Start from the top in Chiang Rai Province, where we'll trek into the surrounding hills to see tribal villages. Further south, you'll discover the island of Ko Lanta. Spectacular white sand beaches stretch along the west sunset coast. Students will spend the days having class on the sand and snorkeling in the clear blue waters before heading back inland to the breathtaking Ayutthaya, where the ruins of the old city form an archaeological site that contains palaces, Buddhist temples, monasteries and statues, the perfect place to bid farewell to an awesome term two in Asia.

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

Hiking, Walking tours, The Forbidden City, The Great Wall, Angkor Wat, Mekong River cruise, Zip lining, And more!

GRADE ELEVEN	PREREQUISITES
English (ENGL3)	English, Grade 10 Academic (ENGL2)
Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology (IAPSY3)	English, Grade 10 Academic (ENGL2) or Canadian History Since 1600, Grade 10 Academic (CH220)
GRADE TWELVE	PREREQUISITES
English (ENGL4)	English, Grade 11 University Preparation (ENGL3)
International Business Fundamentals (IBSF4)	None
World Cultures (WSC4)	Any university college or university college preparation course in social sciences and humanities, English or Canadian and world studies
Equity and Social Justice: From Theory to Practice (ESJ4)	Any university college or university college preparation course in social sciences and humanities, English or Canadian and world studies
Change and Change in Society (CS4)	Any university or university college preparation course in social sciences and humanities, English or Canadian and world studies
Carious and Vectors (CV4)	Advanced Functions, Grade 12 University Preparation (M4F4) (Co-requisite)
Mathematics of Data Management (MDM4)	Functions, Grade 11 University Preparation (M1B3) or Functions and Applications, Grade 11 University College Preparation (M1C3)

TO REGISTER, OR FOR MORE INFORMATION: 1-866-960-3352 / 17

Figure 2.

GLOBAL LEARNING

Global Learning Trips

Figure 3.

GLOBAL LEARNING

Global Learning Trips

Figure 4.

Service Trips

A life of purpose and Service

Find your passion and sign up to be a steward

Academic • Academic Support • Admissions MasterKey • Archives/History • Art Studios
Athletic Therapy Clinic • Athletics • Debating • Drama Studios • Guidance • Health & Phys. Ed.
I.T. Help Desk • Library • Math Peer Tutoring • Music Studios • Quarters • Science
Service Learning • Speech Day

Service Options (Monday/Thursday)

- 89.7 Truly Local Radio
- Local School Daycare
- Empire Crossings
- Seniors Home
- Farm, Field and Forest
- Jack Burger Sports Complex
- Northumberland Syrian Lifeline
- Oak Knoll Stables
- Palisade Gardens Retirement Village
- Rebound Tutoring
- Ruth Clarke Senior Activity Centre
- Ten Thousand Villages
- YMCA Cobourg

DECEMBER

Week Without Walls

NOTES

Over 60 locations in Ontario, Ecuador and International

Thousands of hours of service

490+ students

75 faculty

Connect with your community

See -ile to Wt (Ecuador)

2000+ - thousands of service hours

Are ... Ecuador? stay in Ecuador?

Develop new habits of the heart and find your true purpose through our comprehensive service learning program.

Global Communities

Figure 5.

Figure 6.

Figure 7.

International Students

Figure 8.

Figure 9.

Figure 10.

Figure 11.

Awards

Figure 12.

Figure 13.

Figure 14.

Figure 15.

Figure 16.

Technology

Figure 17.

Figure 18.

Figure 19.

Figure 20

Teaching

Figure 21.

Figure 22.

Grade 12 students created math games based on the rules of probability and our Grade 4s and 7s played them. Math is fun!

Figure 23.

Alumni

Figure 24.

Figure 25.

Figure 26.

INTERNATIONAL

University of Oxford
University of St Andrews
University of Edinburgh
King's College London
Royal College of Surgeons in
Ireland

Appendix I

Clubs at Oakland College

01 - Blazer Magazine (Full Year)	18 - Science Club (Full Year)
02 - Debate and Speech (Full Year)	19 - Yoga (Full Year)
03 - Drama Club (Full Year)	20 - Guitar (Terms 1 and 2)
04 - Camera Club (Full Year)	21 - Driver's Ed (Terms 1 and 3)
05 - Model United Nations (MUN) (Full Year)	22 - Rec. Badminton (Terms 1 and 3)
06 - Music (Full Year)	23 - Cangeineers (Term 1)
07 - Musical Theatre + Set Design (Terms 1 and 2)	24 - Art Portfolio Club (Terms 1 and 2)
08 - Rec. Tennis (Terms 1 and 3)	25 - Friday Night Skiing (Term 2)
10 - Fitness and Conditioning (Full Year)	26 - Rec. Indoor Co-Ed Soccer (Term 2)
11 - World Affairs Club (Full Year)	27 - Rec. Outdoor Ice Hockey (Term 2)
12 - Yearbook (Full Year)	28 - Rec. Indoor Lacrosse (Term 2)
13 - Choir (Full Year)	29 - Development Dome Touch Rugby Boys (Term 2)
14 - Spanish Club (Terms 1 and 2)	30 - Development Dome Touch Rugby Girls (Term 2)
15 - Dance Club (Term 1)	31 - Art Club (Term 2)
16 - Envirothon (Terms 1 and 3)	32 - Girls Fitness (Terms 1 and 2)
17 - Duke of Ed. (Full Year)	33 - Girl's Robotics and Boy's Robotics (Full Year)
	34 - Triathlon Club (Term 3)

Appendix II

Fall Term

- 01 - Junior Boys' Soccer
- 02 - Senior Boys' Soccer
- 03 - Junior Football
- 04 - Senior Football
- 05 - Varsity Girls' Field Hockey
- 06 - Varsity Girls' Basketball
- 07 - Senior Boys' Volleyball
- 08 - Varsity Cross Country Running
- 09 - Varsity A and B Tennis
- 10 - Varsity Golf

Winter Term

- 01 - Junior Boys' Basketball
- 02 - Senior Boys' Basketball
- 03 - Senior Girls' Volleyball
- 04 - Varsity Contact Ice Hockey
- 05 - Varsity Swimming
- 06 - Varsity Alpine Skiing
- 07 - Varsity Nordic Skiing
- 08 - Varsity Snowboarding
- 09 - Varsity Curling

Mid-Winter Term

- 01 - Junior Girls' Volleyball
- 02 - Junior Boys' Volleyball
- 03 - Junior Badminton
- 04 - Senior Badminton

Spring Term

- 01 - Junior Boys' Rugby
- 02 - Senior Boys' Rugby
- 03 - Varsity Girls' Rugby
- 04 - Varsity Girls' Touch Football
- 05 - Varsity Girls' Soccer
- 06 - Varsity Baseball
- 07 - Varsity Rowing
- 08 - Varsity Track and Field
- 09 - Varsity Girls' Softball
- 10 - Varsity Co-Ed Ultimate