

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores how international Chinese graduate students, especially those contemplating immigrating and who therefore fall into a fuzzy international student /immigrant category, (re)construct their identities through their social experiences at a Canadian university. Theoretically, discourses on migration, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and diaspora and on Chineseness are employed. Students who are diasporic orientated tend to feel more patriotic than they are back home and have a strong identification with being citizens of the Peoples Republic of China. Cosmopolitan oriented students on the other hand are decentered and don't have a strong attachment to any particular identity, so they feel neither Chinese nor Canadian. Finally, transnational orientated students identify strongly as both Chinese and Canadian. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative case study, with semi-structured in-depth interviews as the main data collection tool and social media postings as documents used in triangulating strategy. Five Chinese graduate students, each being a case, from diverse backgrounds studying in Canada on study permits constitute the collective case study. My findings suggest that all participants inhabit in transnational social field by maintaining transnational ties and relations with home country via social media. However, students with a clear immigration agenda are more likely to have an extended social circle to facilitate the transition from students to permanent residents, whereas those who are undecided about their future location tend to have a smaller social circle that revolves around life in university and within academia. Chinese students develop complex and hybridized identities in Canada, from diasporic-oriented, to both diasporic and cosmopolitan oriented, to extremely transnational and cosmopolitan oriented. Where exactly their identities locate in the continuum largely depends on participants' upbringing, disposition and life experiences: the more participants mingle with a mixed group of people and expose themselves to a diversity of cultures, the more they become transnational and cosmopolitan oriented, tolerant and appreciative of differences and less attached to singular, clearly bounded identities.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**

Academic Studies: MA, University of Alberta, 2010  
BE, Dongbei University of Finance and Economics, 2006

Current Position: Graduate student

## **GRADUATE STUDIES**

Field of Study: Educational Studies

## **AWARDS**

## **SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE**

Supervisor: Dr. Handel Wright, Professor, EDST, UBC  
Committee: Dr. Pierre Walter, Professor, EDST, UBC  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

**PROGRAMME**

The Final Oral Examination  
For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Ran Xiang

MA, UBC, 2014

June 14, 3: 30 pm  
Multipurpose Room  
Ponderosa Commons

**Crossing Borders, Constructing Identities: A Collective Case Study  
of Chinese International Graduate Students at a Canadian University**

**EXAMINING COMMITTEE**

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Handel Wright, Professor, EDST, UBC  
Dr. Pierre Walter, Professor, EDST, UBC  
Dr. Chris Lee, Associate Professor, English, UBC

External Examiner:

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