2018-07-05

From Intellectual Mobility to Transnational Professional Space: Experiences of Internationally Educated Chinese Academic Returnees

Lei, Ling

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

From Intellectual Mobility to Transnational Professional Space: Experiences of Internationally

Educated Chinese Academic Returnees

by

Ling Lei

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

JULY, 2018

Abstract

Transnational migration brings to the fore the various connections migrants maintain with their home and sojourn countries. This study explores, within the transnational professional space, how internationally educated Chinese academic returnees maintain transnational professional ties and networks with their host countries of doctoral studies for their academic growth, and the impacts of such networks. This study employs the methodology of a qualitative case study of 12 internationally educated Chinese academics from the social sciences and humanities within three higher education institutions in Beijing, China. It confirms the significance of meso-level institutions, communities and networks in shaping returnee teachers' academic growth, highlighting issues of access to multiple transnational communities of practice, the quality of the institutional platform and the availability of occupational space. It concludes that Chinese academic returnees have formed a virtual transnational diaspora, and contributed to strengthening the inter-dependence of academics across borders in academic and research collaboration.

Keywords: transnational migration, transnationality, transnational professional space, diaspora, intellectual mobility, Chinese academic returnees, academic adaptation, lifelong learning, community of practice, transnational academic collaboration

Acknowledgements

Upon reflection of the past two years I spent at Werklund School of Education during the MA program in Adult Learning, I am grateful to the many people who have journeyed with me. Being an international student, a wife, a daughter, and a mother, I could not have made it to this point of my academic journey without the guidance, mentorship, support, and understanding for me from people who helped me lift up my eyes.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Shibao Guo, for nurturing the growth of an academic fledgling like me with your knowledge, experience, and guidance. You have always been a model for me to learn from, not just in terms of your expertise, but also in terms of your conscientious scholarly attitude and devotion to mentoring novel researchers. You have always been like a lighthouse beckoning me through the mist of doubts.

I would like to thank Professor Janet Groen, who taught my first specialization course in adult learning. Your professional facilitation of this course guided me not just to find the treasure house of adult learning theories, but also to find in myself many transformative learning experiences that had shaped my perceptions and my ways of knowing. Thank you, too, for always keeping your door open for communication and dialogue, and for your gracious encouragement for me to pursue further studies at the doctoral level.

I would also like to thank Professor Darren Lund, Professor Colleen Kawalilak, and Professor Sarah Eaton, all of whom taught me in my MA program. Your classes provided a valuable space for me to learn, share, and reflect. I kept gaining inspirations in every class I took. It really is a privilege for me to have such opportunities to learn from you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

Recently, a prominent scientist and professor from Tsinghua University in China, Ning Yan, made the headlines on social media because of her decision to leave China for a professorship at Princeton University, where she had earned her PhD degree (Feng, 2017). Indeed, Although Professor Yan should be congratulated for her personal career achievement of obtaining a tenure position at such a prestigious university, the public's attention was focused nevertheless on allusions made to the defects in China's institutional environment in terms of retaining internationally educated returnee talents. The hidden presumption was that a student's migration journey in pursuit of further education abroad should culminate in his or her return to the motherland. It could be inferred that re-migration after return indicates failure in re-adaptation to the home culture (Gaw, 2000; Hao, Wen, & Welch, 2016; Harrison, Shaffer, & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2004). Professor Yan herself, however, asserted that her decision to leave China had nothing to do with any research institutions in China and that her intention was to gain more inspiration through a change of environment in order to stimulate further research and foster her intellectual growth. The discrepancy between the pervasive public concern on talent outflow and the perspectives of returnees, such as Professor Yan's own anticipations about re-migration, has aroused my intense interest to examine transnational academic mobility, a form of transnationalism from below (Faist, Fauser, & Reisenauer, 2013; Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999), vis-à-vis China's internationally educated talent deployment policies regarding "brain-drain", "brain-gain", and "brain circulation".

Professor Yan's experience echoes research on the phenomenon of the transnational diaspora, where return migration does not suffice to explain the unending sojourn trajectories of hyper mobile transnational migrants (Guo, 2016; Ley & Kobayashi, 2005; Lie, 1995). Return

1

migration, therefore, represents a stopping point, rather than an endpoint. As an academic

migrant myself, I am motivated then to gain an understanding of how the migration trajectories

of Chinese academic migrants in particular were shaped by their previous study-abroad sojourns,

and how they mobilize resources across borders for professional development, while living in

simultaneity (Tsuda, 2012), or extraterritoriality (Ma Mung, 2004). With this in mind, I first

situate my research of the topic on transnational academic mobility within a broad demographic

and policy context.

Mapping the Chinese Academic Mobility

China has witnessed an exponential growth in the number of students studying abroad

since its initiation of its reform and opening-up policy in 1978. According to official statistics

from the Ministry of Education of China, the annual figure for students leaving for studies

abroad fluctuated between 2,000 to 5,000 during the 1980s, and rose to 6,540 in 1992. After that,

the study-abroad student population experienced a noticeable surge to around 20,000 in the latter

half of the 1990s, followed by a generally steady increase after the turn of the new millennium,

turning China into the world's largest source country for international students in 2011 (National

Institute of Education Sciences [NIES], 2016; Organization of Economic Co-operation and

Development [OECD], 2013). In 2015, this number hit a record high of over 500,000. The latest

available figure, for 2016, peaked at 544,500, a 13-fold increase from that in 2000, but there was

only a slight increase of 3.97% from the previous year, signaling a possible slow-down of the

growth rate of the outflow population. Up until 2016, there had been a total of 4.5 million

students leaving abroad for educational purposes, among whom 3.2 million students had already

received degrees from their receiving institutions. In terms of destinations for overseas studies,

over 90% of Chinese international students were attracted to as few as the 10 most popular

destination countries, with the United States ranked as the top receiving country in 2016 (Dong, 2017). Research on the U.S. side revealed that international students from China reached 328,547 in 2016, with China remaining the top origin country for international students in the United States for seven consecutive years (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). With regard to the level of studies, 70% of Chinese students went abroad for tertiary education, among whom 35.51% were to pursue master's and PhD degrees.

It is worthy of note that, regarding the form of sponsorship for overseas studies, the majority of Chinese international students have been self-funded, accounting for about 92% of the total study-abroad population since 2012. The rest of the population have been government-funded, reaching an accumulated total of 107,005 since 2012, including 41.9% of post-docs, visiting scholars, and advanced researchers, 34.6% of PhD candidates, and 23.5% of master's degree and bachelor's degree students (Dong, 2017). It is evident that government scholarships are predominantly in support of the high-end academic elites.

The number of students who returned after their sojourns abroad was unstable and strikingly insignificant in the 1978-1999 period, as compared to the post-2000 figure. The number of returnees has climbed steadily year by year since 2000, but there was a huge gap between the returnee and the outgoing population from 2000 to 2007, during which time the ratio of returnees to emigrants remained lower than 32% with an average percentage standing at 22.8%. This was due to a surge of students, some 125,179, going abroad in 2002, numbering over triple the size of the 38,989 students who went abroad in 2000. In 2009, the number of returnees reached 100,000 for the first time. The latest statistics showed that, in 2016, a total of 432,500 students returned to China and the gap between the outbound and inbound flows of

talents was narrowing; for the last four years, the ratio of returnees to emigrants has stayed at about 80%, which illustrates a relative quantitative balance of talent flow.
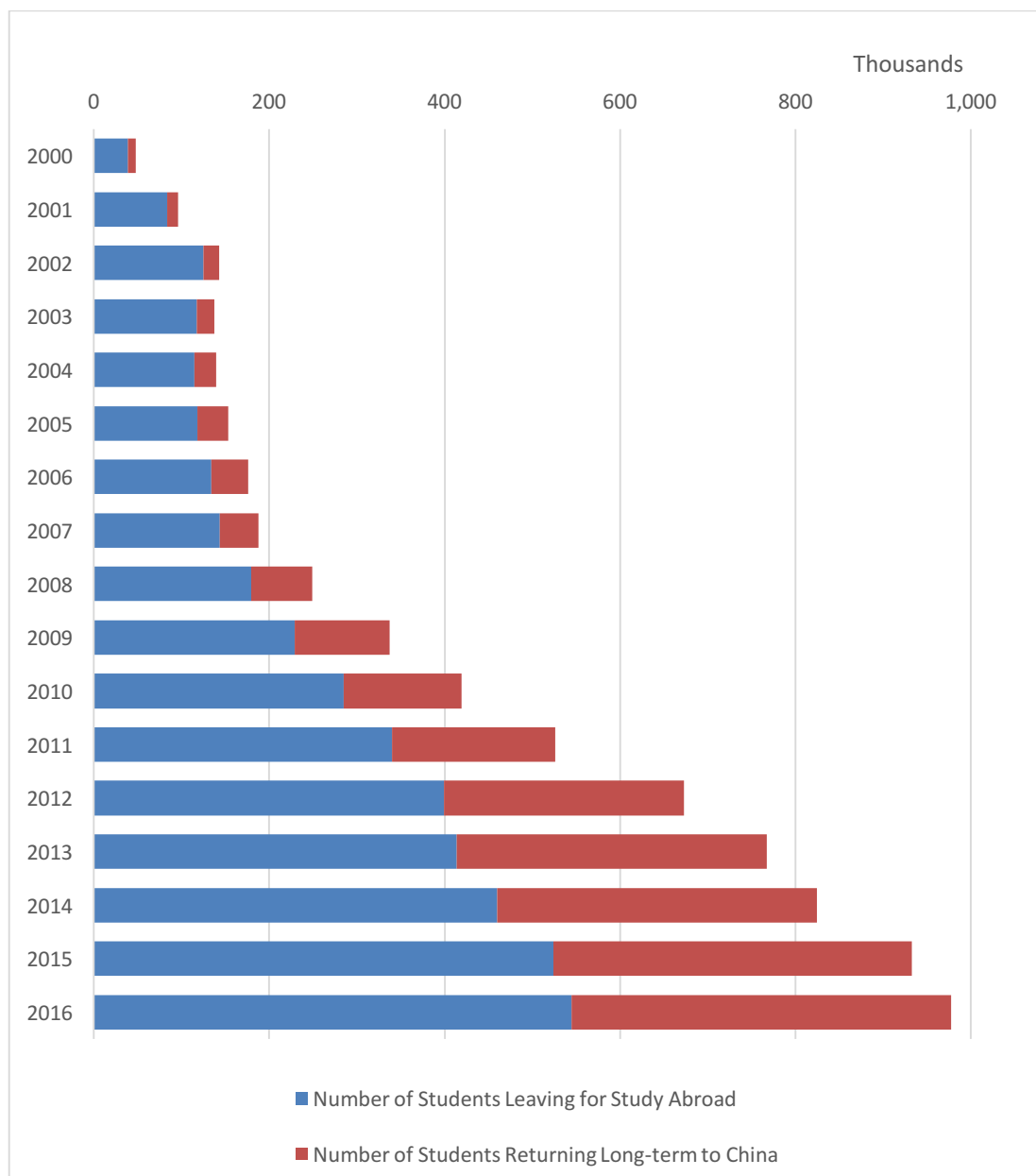
Figure 1. Chinese Students Leaving for and Returning after Study Abroad from 2000 to 2016. The blue bars on the left illustrate the number of students leaving China for studies abroad for the respective years. The red bars on the right illustrate the number of students returning to settle down back in China after completing their studies abroad for the respective years. All data in the figure are from National Bureau of Statistics of China website, by National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017, retrieved from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2017/indexch.htm

The annual bluebook report issued by the Ministry of Education of China on the occupations pursued by Chinese internationally educated student returnees provides a more detailed demographic picture of these homecoming talents. According to the latest report for 2016, the majority, or 81.45% of the returnees, obtained a master's degree, followed by 11.09% of PhD degree holders and 7.46% with undergraduate or college study experience. Compared to the data for 2015, there was an increase of PhD degree holders from 9.49% but a decrease of undergraduate and college students from 9.81%, which indicates a positive result for the government's efforts to attract more high-end elite scholars and researchers. The top 10 sojourn countries/regions for returning PhD degree holders were the United States (29.17%), Japan (12.94%), the United Kingdom (9.08%), Hong Kong (7.84%), Germany (7.14%), Korea (5.41%), France (5.35%), Singapore (5.11%), Australia (3.59%) and Canada (3.34%). The preferred employers for those PhD returnees were universities, colleges, and national government organizations. Geographically, 35.15% of returnees intended to work in the most economically prosperous cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, or Shenzhen. For PhD returnees who could secure a job in higher education in Beijing, the capital city and cultural centre with the most universities in China, most of them worked in the disciplines of science (11.94%), engineering (11.78%) and economics (5.58%) (Chen & Wu, 2017; Chinadaily, 2017; NIES, 2016).

In general, China has been successful in attracting its internationally educated nationals to return and has benefited from those talents in boosting the country's overall development. Official statistics demonstrated that, in total, 2,651,100 internationally educated students had returned before 2017, accounting for 82.23% of students who had already completed their studies abroad (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of

China [MOHRSS], 2017). Besides, over 70% of chancellors from top-tier Chinese universities, 80% of academicians and 90% of Chang Jiang Scholars program awardees had overseas study or work experience (Dong, 2017). From this perspective, China is primarily enjoying a "brain gain"; however, it remains a concern for the government to lose the potential human capital of the Chinese knowledge diaspora, whose members have settled abroad after completing their studies (Cai, 2012; Yang & Welch, 2010). Indeed, as of 2011, there were around 1.3 million internationally educated Chinese living in diaspora in developed countries (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2011). Research has already revealed that the very high-end elite scholars are most likely to remain in the countries where they have completed their PhD degrees (Cao, 2008, 2009). It has also been noted that incentive policies that are aimed to lure diasporic talents may bring about conflicting results. On the one hand, those policies may work to repatriate talents from abroad but, on the other hand, they may elicit re-emigration of talents already returned to the home country, being drawn by the promise of rewards for being diasporic (Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006). Government policies, therefore, are a vital contextual factor in shaping the flow of human capital. It is necessary then to review what key strategic policies have been in play behind the mobility statistics of China's internationally educated talents.

Repatriation Policies for China's Internationally Educated Talents

Historically, China has always been active in sending students abroad to developed countries to learn advanced technology and gain development experience (Pan, 2009). It has been tapping this important source of human capital to accelerate the industrialization and modernization of China, especially in technological and economic terms (Pan, 2016). It has been recognized that, under the current context of globalization and internationalization, China's internationally educated talents, including both the returnees and its overseas knowledge

6

diaspora, are becoming significant agents in connecting China to the knowledge-based world economy (Wang & Zweig, 2009). Accordingly, China has implemented incentive policies for engaging both talent groups, and encouraging both long-term and short-term return. The policies to entice internationally educated Chinese talents have been mainly financial incentives at the national, local, and institutional levels, supplemented with measures to promote communication opportunities and facilitate socio-cultural adaptation upon return.

Financial incentives. China has been adopting aggressive financial incentive schemes to attract talented returnees. There have been numerous programs since the late 1980s, such as the "Financial Support for Outstanding Young Professors Program" in 1987, "Seed Fund for Returned Overseas Scholars" in 1990, "Cross-century Outstanding Personnel Training Program" in 1991, and the "National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars" and the "One Hundred Talents Program" both in 1994 (Zweig, 2006). These early programs were the forerunners of the more famous and high-profile programs initiated since the latter half of the 1990s, the most current and highest-level national project being the "One Thousand Talents Scheme" in 2008, targeted at recruiting 1,000 elite talents, with full professorship or equivalent qualifications in developed countries in the next five to 10 years, to stimulate research and development in China's key disciplines and industries.

The two most prominent schemes directed toward recruiting overseas talents to work in China's top universities are the "Chang Jiang Scholars Program", co-funded by the Ministry of Education and Li Ka Shing Foundation, the founder of which is the Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka Shing, and the "111 Project" (Cai, 2012). They are both aimed at turning a number of top Chinese universities into world-class universities. Meanwhile, considering the practical constraints of engaging diasporas for long-term work commitment in China, the government has

introduced short-term return programs to mobilize its knowledge diaspora. For example, the

"Chunhui/Spring Light Program", provides salary and fully-covered accommodation and round-

trip flight tickets for Chinese overseas scholars to work in China for a period of six to 12 months

during their sabbatical leave (Welch & Hao, 2013). It is worth noting that the eligibility criteria

for selecting the incentive awardees have become more rigorous in the more recent policies, as

China has begun to attend to the quality, in addition to the quantity, of the returnees. For

instance, policies initiated in 1994 did not set professorship as a prerequisite for consideration,

but for the most recent "One Thousand Talents Scheme", applicants should have obtained full

professorships, and the 2006 "111 Project" required applicants to come from the world's top 100

universities. Another significant trend is the introduction of several short-term recruitment

programs in response to a change in the Chinese government's internationally educated talents

deployment principle, from "return to serve the motherland" (*huiguo fuwu*), to "serve the

motherland from abroad" (*weiguo fuwu*), reflecting China's official recognition and support of

transnationalism in talent mobility and deployment policies (Xiang, 2016).

Table 1

High-profile Financial Incentive Schemes to Repatriate Talents since 1994

Scheme Name	Year of Initiation	Prominent Program Features
100 Talents Program	1994	Includes sub programs of "Bring in Outstanding Talents from Abroad" for long term, "Overseas Celebrated Scholars Program" for short term, as well as a domestic "100 Talents Program" and "Introduction of the Winner of the National Outstanding Youth Foundation to the '100 Talents Program'"
National Outstanding Youth Foundation	1994	Targeted at young talents to return for both long-term and short-term stay in China
Chunhui/Spring Light Program	1996	Supports short-term return (6 to 12 months)
Chang Jiang Scholars Program	1998	Aims to cultivate academic leaders in universities and build a number of world-class Chinese universities
International Partnership Program for Creative Research Teams	2001	For short-term visits of associate or full professors in famous foreign universities (no less than 3 months a year)
"HOME" Program (Help Our Motherland through Elite Intellectual Resources from Overseas)	2004	Promotes short-term, part-time research cooperation and exchange
111 Project	2006	Targeted at talents from top 100 universities and research institutes
One Thousand Talents Scheme	2008	The highest-level repatriation project targeted at talents with full professorships in developed countries

Note. Adapted from "Returnees and Diaspora as Source of Innovation in Chinese Higher Education," by A.Welch, and J. Hao, 2013, *Frontiers of Education in China, 8*(2), pp. 223-230.

Return adaptation support. For internationally educated talents who intend to settle permanently in China, there are local centres, called Chinese Service Centres for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE), administered by the Ministry of Education, to facilitate returnees to find jobs. At the turn of the 1990s, the central government also encouraged the establishment of local schools for returnees' children out of concern for the children's inadequate Chinese language proficiency (Zweig, 2006). Up until 2016, there were 122 such schools called "international schools" providing foreign school programs catering specifically to children with foreign citizenship, as well as accommodating children of Chinese returnees with foreign citizenship (Centre for China and Globalization [CCG], 2016). Residency and visa requirements have also posed a cumbersome barrier for returnees with foreign citizenship (Guo, 2016; Zweig, 2006). Recently, the Chinese government has introduced a point-based system, similar to the one implemented by the Canadian government, to ease the process of acquiring Chinese permanent residency (Li, 2017; Zeng, 2017). Nevertheless, non-recognition of dual citizenship in China still persists and complicates returnees' transnational migration experience. At the institutional level, systematic initiatives are being launched to facilitate re-integration. The "National Situation Education Scheme for Internationally Educated Returnee Teachers" implemented by Renmin University represents a case in point. The purpose of this scheme was said to be to assist its newly recruited returnee teachers in better adapting to the current institutional and national situations in China. In order to achieve this objective, returnee teachers were required to participate in five activities during their first contract term, including one seminar on national situations, one visit to the site of patriotic education, one interim on-the-job training in another organization, one social issue investigation with a follow-up summary report (Renmin University of China, 2016). Such endeavours appeared to have perfectly responded to the call of the

government to expedite cultural re-integration of returnees so that they could settle down permanently, or literally "strike out roots" (*luodi shenggen*) in China (MOHRSS, 2017). However, with those extra tasks, which are unrelated to their routine teaching and research duties, to fulfill, it remains unclear if they are a necessary burden for re-integration.

Other policies to encourage return. Identification with Chinese culture and a sense of responsibility for the motherland's prosperity are prevalent among the Chinese diaspora (Cai, 2012; Yang & Welch, 2010). In light of this, the Chinese government has made great efforts to engage the overseas talents by setting up various platforms for information exchange. There are more than 2,000 Chinese student associations and over 300 exclusive, professional associations for Chinese scholars established by educational bureaus in Chinese embassies and consulates in countries with the most internationally educated Chinese. Several communication channels have been formed, such as the *China Scholars Abroad* magazine and its website, "China Diaspora Web", "China Overseas Talents" and other websites developed by the Chinese government (Xiang, 2016; Zweig, 2006). Besides, several notable conferences have been held to invite overseas Chinese entrepreneurs to network and seek investment opportunities with potential partners in China (Welch & Hao, 2013). Meanwhile, the central government and many local counterparts have been proactively sending recruitment delegations to career fairs abroad to recruit internationally educated Chinese graduates (Xiang, 2016; Zweig, 2006).

Identifying the Problem

The above overview of the historical and contemporary contexts of China's highly-skilled talent mobility and the evolution of the Chinese government's policies for deploying its internationally educated talents delineates a panoramic background to China's academic migration situation. On the one hand, with a shrinking gap between academic emigrants and

returnees, China has inverted a brain drain to an overall brain gain and a desirable tendency toward brain circulation (Cai, 2012; Saxenian, 2006; Simon & Cao, 2009; Zweig, Fung, & Han, 2008), although further efforts remain to be made to reverse the brain drain at the high end (Cao, 2008). On the other hand, China's state policies in this regard have already shifted to the diaspora option (Cai, 2012; Yang & Welch, 2010), channeling huge government funding to attract members of the overseas Chinese knowledge diaspora to return, as seems increasingly the case, on a temporary and short-term basis.

These policies seem impeccably in place against the current backdrop of China's academic migration to further mitigate the loss of emigrated human capital, but closer scrutiny reveals some potential problems. First of all, as Thorn and Holm-Nielsen (2008) have argued, unlike policies to improve the environment for research, individual-based repatriation incentives, which the Chinese government is currently applying, are short-term makeshifts with a series of drawbacks. Among others, they are too expensive with little added value when a majority of migrants feel obliged to return in one way or another to serve their motherland, which is especially the case among the Chinese knowledge diaspora (Cai, 2012; Yang & Welch, 2010). In addition, these policies run the side-effect risk of eliciting the re-migration of already settled scholars who have not been covered in the newest round of massive funding for returnees. Secondly, the present policies being controversial, Zweig (2006) has further pointed out that "policy alone rarely causes people to return" (p. 67). A review of China's talent repatriation policies reflects a predominantly economically-oriented incentive approach. However, as research has indicated that economic factors such as income differential between countries is not found to be a convincing predictor of return migration (Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2008), it will be unwise to predict return migration solely in light of the economic push-and-pull policies.

Nonetheless, the literature on migration studies is largely concentrated on such dimensions of migration. Hence, a gap exists in the pertinent literature examining non-policy-oriented aspects of transnational academic mobility, or transnationalism from below (Faist et al., 2013; Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999).

Last but not least, within studies on Chinese academic mobility, there are still very limited empirical studies on international research collaboration, despite the fact that the purpose of repatriating internationally educated Chinese academics is to promote the quality and competitiveness of research in China (Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008). The potential value of the Chinese knowledge diaspora abroad is commonly recognized but, as Yang and Welch's (2010) study on Chinese knowledge diaspora in Australia found, many overseas Chinese scholars mention a lack of intermediary and long-term institutional support for international research collaboration with China. Meanwhile, Jonkers and Tijssen (2008) have provided evidence that internationally educated academic returnees, particularly those who have completed their doctoral studies abroad, could serve as the bridge between China and their former host country of study for international research collaboration. With an ever-growing and already considerable pool of such returned talents, their potential contribution to the national effort of deploying the Chinese knowledge diaspora abroad cannot be neglected.

The most recent review of the literature on return migration of Chinese internationally educated talents shows that there are very few studies examining the impact of internationally educated Chinese academic returnees on international research collaboration (Hao, Yan, Guo, & Wang, 2017). The reasons for this gap in the literature may be twofold: Firstly, inadequate attention has been paid to the relational aspect of human capital, that is, the professional networks and social capital embedded in the returnees' human capital (Cai, 2012; Jonkers &

Tijssen, 2008). Secondly, a conceptually restrictive understanding of return migration as the end point of a migration circle has failed to explain the circulatory and unending migration trajectory of those hypermobile academic transmigrants (Guo, 2016). Consequently, there has been a failure to recognize the importance of mobilizing social networks and ties accumulated by the transmigrants during their study and work abroad, as well as similar ties in China, for their sustained professional development and socio-cultural integration in the long run.

In light of the above, I believe that there should be a shift of research focus in intellectual mobility literature. I propose that analyses of academic migrants' human capital should go beyond a nation-bound conceptual container, a shift of focus from either the macro-level or the micro-level to the meso-level, to investigations into how transnational knowledge networks formed out of transnational academic mobility can lead to new perspectives on human capital development and deployment.

Purpose Statement

In view of the identified research problem, the purpose of the current study was to explore how internationally educated Chinese academic returnees maintain their transnational knowledge networks for their academic growth, and the impacts of such networks. Specifically, the study aimed to pursue the following objectives:

1. To identify the interplay between transnational migration experience and transnational academic connectivity

2. To examine the agency of the participants in expanding their professional space in the transnational setting for sustained professional growth

3. To discover the role of academic returnees and their networks in mobilizing overseas Chinese knowledge diaspora for international academic collaboration.

14

The phenomenon of transnational professional space is defined as the social ties, networks, contents and positions formed across sovereign state borders as a result of transnational migration and other transnational practices for the purpose of professional academic and research development. This definition is based on the theoretical framework of transnational social space, conceptualized by Faist (2000) as "relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties … and their contents, positions in networks and organizations … found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places" (p. 197). Faist, Fauser, and Reisenauer (2013) further maintained that these social spaces can be formed in different functional spheres such as "the familial, socio-cultural, economic and political" (p. 54), and the basic unit of analysis of such spaces is social ties (Faist, 2004). The theoretical framework of transnational social space is employed to guide my exploration of transnational professional space for internationally educated Chinese academic returnees and will be further explicated in Chapter Two.

For the current study, I intend to examine specifically the social ties that academic returnees have maintained for academic and research purposes with their prior host country when studying abroad, and can be included within the socio-cultural functional sphere. My focus will be on their functions in individual professional development and cultural integration, rather than on macro-level social development or cultural diffusion. Nevertheless, such transnational connectivity will shed light on the role of Chinese academic returnees in connecting China to its overseas knowledge diaspora. Participants for the study will be internationally educated Chinese professors and researchers, working in China's higher education institutions, who have received their doctoral trainings abroad.

Research Questions

The central question of this study is: How is internationally educated Chinese academic returnees' academic growth shaped by their sustained connections with their host countries for doctoral studies? Specifically, the current study attempts to explore the following sub-questions:

1. How do they maintain connections with their prior host country for doctoral studies?

2. Why are they motivated to maintain such connections?

3. How do such transnational networks contribute to their sustained professional growth in terms of their teaching and research praxes?

4. What factors affect their ability to maintain and employ such transnational professional ties?

5. How do they engage their Chinese diaspora counterparts for transnational academic collaboration?

Significance of the Study

First of all, the study holds theoretical significance. Applying the conceptual framework of transnational social space to return migration studies signifies a paradigmatic shift to reconceptualize return as a stop point instead of an endpoint of the migration circle, and this reconceptualization can facilitate and enrich our understanding of the phenomenon of transnational diaspora (Faist et al., 2013; Guo, 2016). A transnational framework has been utilized to account for the connections and ties migrants have kept with their home countries, but it hardly has been extended to examine the continued links and ties migrants keep after they become relatively settled upon return (Tsuda, 2012). This conceptual framework serves as an analytical tool to understand transmigration, transnational engagement, and living in diaspora. It

also enables theoretical discussions on migration studies to go beyond methodological territorialism and essentialism (Faist et al., 2013). Within this approach, the focus of analysis shifted from the relationship of the Chinese knowledge diaspora with China, to how the knowledge network was formed.

In addition to that issue, the returnees' connections to both China, their initial homeland, and their sojourn country for studying abroad were examined to understand the so-called *haigui*, or returnees' cultural belonging and integration beyond the container of a single nation-state. Therefore, the current study attempted to contribute to the scholarship of and research on transnational migration. As the extant studies on the impact of returnees are limited, compared to other topics on this participant group (Hao et al., 2017), this study also attempted to enrich the empirical pool of studies in this field.

Secondly, the study is of practical value to government policy makers by providing policy advice based on discussion and interpretation of the study. It intended to arouse attention from government policy makers not only in China, but also in all other host countries in China's huge and ever-expanding pool of highly-skilled and highly-educated knowledge diaspora. The study provides empirical data and discussions of the role of Chinese academic returnees in forming and mobilizing the Chinese knowledge diaspora network, thus helping policy makers to review their existing talent incentive programs, and to consider alternative policies to more effectively assist and encourage the networking initiatives of transmigrants. It will also help them to re-examine policies for promoting brain circulation.

Last but not least, the study will be of interest to researchers in migration studies and to other internationally educated Chinese academic returnees sharing similar experiences with my research participants. The detailed and thick descriptions of the participants' migration and

transnational practices within the Chinese knowledge diaspora network provide references for

the readers to reflect and guide their own decisions for pursuing sustained professional growth in

this already highly-interconnected knowledge economy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical framework of transnational social space used for my research. I justify the suitability of this theoretical framework to my current study by first critically reviewing related concepts in the transnational approach in migration studies, followed by a detailed review of transnational social space. Then, I review adult learning theories pertinent to my current study on the socio-cultural learning experience of internationally educated Chinese academic returnees. After a review of the above theories, I situate my review of transnational social space in more specific contexts by exploring empirical studies on learning in various transnational settings as well as the Chinese context, in particular.

The Transnational Approach in Migration Studies

Since the 1990s, scholarship in the field of migration studies has undergone a "transnational turn" (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007), which has challenged the conceptualization of immigrant adaptation and ethnic relations within the theoretical framework of assimilationism (Kivisto, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). From the transnational perspective, it is recognized that some immigrants retain various forms and degrees of connections with their country of origin while they become settled in the host country (Basch, Blanc-Szanton, & Glick Schiller, 1994; Faist, 2000; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992a, 1992b; Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). The emergence of the transnational approach was in response to the limitations of assimilationism, undergirded by the traditional container model that viewed social relations and socialization as taking place within the boundaries of a single nation state, but the traditional model could no longer take hold against the backdrop of the increased intensity and extensiveness of migration, as well as the transformative effects of transboundary political, economic and social transboundary dynamics (Sassen, 2003; Vertovec,

2004). Such a trend was first identified in political science when the adjective *transnational* was adopted to refer to supra- and inter-governmental organizations and institutions becoming new players in the international sphere, and the concept of transnationalism was then applied in economics and organizational studies to describe companies that operated beyond the national territory as *multinational* (Mau, 2010). Concomitantly, the transnational approach gained currency in sociology in the study of the cross-border movements and social practices of various social groups in a diaspora (Cohen, 1997, 2008). In a word, the transnational approach arose because the boundaries of nation states seemed increasingly porous and permeable (Smith, 2001), and because this approach rendered the notion of the state as the sole driving force in international relations contestable. In the following discussion, I am going to present several frameworks from the transnational approach, which will guide me to conceptualize transnational professional space for Chinese academic returnees.

Transnationalism and diaspora. Initially, scholarship on the transnational approach was concerned with transnationalism, which was defined as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch et al., 1994, p. 6). The phenomenon as described by transnationalism itself is nothing new, but this concept provided an alternative optic, that is, a transnational lens, to international migration studies (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). There were debates concerning the scope of transnationalism. Portes (2001, 2003) adopted a relatively confined notion, which referred exclusively to formal and regular transnational activities. Others contended that there were more informal and occasional "broad" transnational engagements other than the more formal, regular and institutionalized "narrow" transnationalism (Itzigsohn, Cabral, Medina, & Vazquez, 1999). A similar delineation suggested by Guarnizo (1997) has been termed by him as

"core transnationalism" and "expanded transnationalism" with the former defined as integral and regular transnational activities, and the latter as occasional and usually involuntary migration. Moreover, with the increased popularity and availability of computers and the Internet, many transmigrants and non-migrants began to engage in virtual transnational practices that did not necessitate physical mobility (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Mamattah, 2006; Miller & Slater, 2000). From the temporal perspective, the intensity and regularity of transnational practices would also vary in different stages throughout the life course (Kobayashi & Preston, 2007; Levitt, 2002). Various typologies were made as well to differentiate the levels and dimensions of analysis on transnationalism. Among them, the most salient and an early categorization is the dichotomy between "transnationalism from above" and "transnationalism from below" as proposed by Smith and Guarnizo (1998). Scholars in the fields of international relations and political economy were ardent about the former aspect of transnationalism as it was oriented toward examining the macro and structural processes of globalization, manifested by the intensified political control of nation-states, international and supranational organizations, as well as multinational corporations (Mau, 2010). In contrast, transnationalism from below brought to the fore the role and agency of non-nation states actors, particularly individuals, or what Glick Schiller and her associates called "transmigrants" (Glick Schiller et al., 1992a, 1992b; Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999). This dimension attempted to understand global human mobility from the perspective of individual migrants, who, though still considered trivial players from the standpoint of transnationalism from above, nevertheless underscored how they made meaning and took actions in defiance of the overwhelming political and economic power of control oppressing their ownership of individual agency (Faist et al., 2013; Pries, 1999; Vertovec, 2004). Therefore, transnationalism from below can also be understood as "individual transnationalism"

21

(Mau, 2010, p. 24), or what Faist (2000) has classified as micro-level transnationalism, as opposed to the meso and macro levels. Faist has further argued that the classification of the three levels was only for the convenience of analysis, and that the complexity of the transnational phenomenon could not be fully captured on a single level. However, as the macro level discussion has been widely criticized as overemphasizing the role of institutions and organizations, while placing inadequate attention to human actors (Mau, 2010), transnational migration studies is starting to attend more to the micro- and meso-level inquiries with micro-level transnational activities as the focus (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Mau, 2010). This is why the term *transnationality* was considered more appropriate than *transnationalism* (Faist et al., 2013), as the latter connoted a particular ideology (Faist et al., 2013) for particular social groups, while the transnational approach was mainly concerned about non-state social actors' transnational practices. Meanwhile, it is worthy of note that "how these activities are linked to or are embedded in organizational and institutional structures remains central" (Mau, 2010, p. 25). Thus, the in-between meso level of analysis is gaining significance in advancing scholarship on transnational migration. Transnational social space (Faist, 2000, Faist et al., 2013) offered such a conceptual tool and arena for meso-level analysis, as will be specified in the next section. Before that, it is necessary to review another relevant concept, that is, diaspora, which facilitates coming to terms with the more subjective dimension of the transnational migration experience.

The term *diaspora* has originated from Greek to refer to those who were forced into exile in foreign countries but retained a collective memory, cultural and emotional attachments to the home land (Reis, 2004). A primordial version of this concept depicted the dispersed group as victims, with the displaced Jews as an archetype. Apart from nostalgic sentiments towards the homeland that the word connotes, it encompasses the fact of forced emigration and a desire to

return. As subsequent literature on diaspora widened to include more voluntary migrants in pursuit of work, trade, or colonial activities (Cohen, 2008; Shuval, 2000), and modern transportation and advanced communication technology have afforded migrants the opportunity to return, or to channel economic and social remittances to the home country (Lucas, 2001; Reis, 2004), the term diaspora is now, in many cases, used as a synonym to transnationalism.

Particularly, with the intensification of globalization, the victim connotation as historically evoked by the word diaspora has lost significance. Instead, the contemporary notion of diaspora is characterized by "hyper-mobility…flexible identities…as well as…transnational flows of capital" (Yang & Welch, 2010, p. 594). Kapur's (2001) definition of diaspora complements such descriptions as "a system of personal networks, shared culture and language, and an imaginary relationship to the homeland" (p. 5). Wong (2006) further emphasizes the diasporic transactions between the host country and the home country as being driven by economic reasons. Therefore, the prototypical representation for contemporary diaspora is the overseas Chinese, which is "by far the largest set of transnational networks in the world" (Faist, 2008, p. 29). It is not only the considerable size of the Chinese diaspora, but also, and more importantly, its tremendous potential contribution to economic development that has spurred global competition for the wealthiest and most highly-educated Chinese. As mentioned earlier, China, the motherland, has spared no effort to attract its overseas knowledge diaspora by strengthening the diaspora's shared culture with, and imaginary relationship to their original home country (Yang & Welch, 2010).

The case of the Chinese knowledge diaspora illustrates that the concept of diaspora and that of transnationalism have some differences despite their similarities (Satzewick & Liodakis, 2007), in that diaspora highlights the more subjective, or the cultural identity aspect of

transnationalism, while the latter is broader and more inclusive in scope (Guo, 2016).

Consequently, *transnational diaspora* should not be considered identical to *transmigrants*. Thus,

the concept of diaspora serves to provide a better understanding of Chinese academic returnees'

transnationality from the perspective of diaspora.

However, the diaspora concept was subjected to an essentializing of diaspora members'

cultural identity with their ethnicity (Anthias, 1998, 2001, 2012), insufficiently accounting for

the fluidity and multiplicity of the individual's cultural belongings that lead to unending,

multiple, and circular cross-border migration for today's hypermobile transnational diaspora

(Ley & Kobayashi, 2005; Lie, 1995). Based on his research on the Chinese Canadian

transmigrants in Beijing, Guo (2016) has theorized the notion of "double diaspora," revealing the

duality of those Chinese Canadians "being both Chinese and Canadian, living in Chinese and

Canadian diaspora, living simultaneously diasporas and returnees" (p. 315). Guo's research

corroborates Lie's (1995) argument on transnational diaspora, and demonstrates the significance

of extraterritorality (Ma Mung, 1998, 2004) in understanding the cultural belonging of

transnational diaspora. As their social lives were configured by their simultaneous presence and

concrete social links in multiple physical spaces across borders, their sense of unity transcended

the physical boundaries of nation-state territory and rested, instead, within a virtual diaspora

culture where "the boundaries between diaspora, territory and transnational migration are

blurred" so that diaspora can "make the spatial configuration an asset" (Guo, 2016, p. 315).

It is evident that literature on transnationalism and diaspora necessitates further

exploration of how individuals navigate between the micro and the macro, between nations and

territories to configure a space to accommodate and entertain their multiple attachments and

belongings under the context of transnational migration. As indicated earlier, the concept of transnational social space offers a more nuanced lens into such an experience.

From transnationalism to transnational social space. As Faist (2015) has explicated, transnationalism connotes a fixed ideology which "tends not only to produce gaps in logic, but also to unnecessarily stoke anti-transnational anxiety among researchers… and in public debates" (p. 8). Therefore, it is more appropriate to turn to the more dynamic processes of transnationalization and accompanying conditions of transnationality, and focus on the making and remaking of boundaries in relation to place and social space. Considering the conceptualization of transnationalism from above and from below as inadequate in unpacking power and social mechanisms intersecting between the two domains, Faist proposes a move into more nuanced discussions on transnational social space. Moreover, he and his associates view transnational practices as varying "along a continuum from low to high" rather than being grouped in a dichotomy, and thus it is necessary to turn to "more concatenated cross-border ties and practices" in transnational social space (Faist et al., 2013, p. 53). By definition, transnational social spaces are:

> relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the borders of sovereign states. Transnational social spaces consist of combinations of ties and their contents, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places. (Faist et al., 2013, p. 197)

Beck (2000) has further commented that transnational social space is "a medium-range theory" that defies the "'container theory' of nationally separate social worlds" to recognize individuals' self-willed actions in "transnationally integrated spaces" (p. 32). Highlighting the

role of migrants and migrant organizations as the main actors shaping transnational migration and transnational activities, transnational social space has a micro-sociological focus (Mau, 2010).

From the above definition and descriptions, it is evident that transnational social space, as compared with transnationalism, also adopted a transnational approach toward international migration. The concept of transnational social space shares with transnationalism an acknowledgement that migrants would sustain ties with their country of origin, but transnational social space moves further ahead of transnationalism by asserting "a third way" (Faist, et al., 2013, p. 1). The third way is based on an argument that knowing the ties migrants keep with both immigration and emigration countries does not suffice to explain why they keep those ties in the first place, and how such connections affect their lives in the two national contexts. Instead, transnational social space should be brought to the fore in response to those inquiries.

The concept of transnational social space takes cross-border social ties as the basic unit of analysis, but what distinguishes this concept from other related notions is the emphasis that is placed on the multi-sitedness and multi-strandedness of such social ties (Faist et al., 2013). The multiple affiliations and attachments across borders form a conceptual boundary of one's social life, irrelevant to the physical boundaries of nation states, and these affiliations and attachments constitute an integral part of the individual's social life. Multiple affiliations across borders can be represented by the most intense of forms, that is, simultaneity or dual engagement (Basch et al., 1994; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2008; Tsuda, 2012). Tsuda (2012) has asserted that simultaneity, or the simultaneous involvement and impacts on both origin and host countries, is what the transnational approach is all about, otherwise what is called the transnational can only be considered as transborder, and thus, without theoretical novelty in essence. The significance

26

of multi-sitedness and simultaneity speaks to the claim that a prerequisite of the emergence of transnational social space is the stability and durability of social ties (Faist, 2000). Besides, the boundary of the conceptual space is fluid and the social processes within are dynamic rather than static (Faist et al., 2013).

It has been noted that transnational social space entails not only the mobile, but also the relatively immobile non-migrants. Common utilization of the Internet and virtual communication technology permitted even greater connectivity between the two. However, it has been pointed out that while technology facilitates the formation of transnational social ties, it is the underlying economic, political and cultural dynamics that determine this process. Based on the economic, political and cultural resources individuals can mobilize, the extent to which they can embed themselves in the transnational social space also varies. Therefore, presumably, highly educated and highly skilled professionals are more prone to active engagement in the transnational space, such as in work-based conduits (Guarnizo, 2003; Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002; Levitt, 2007; Mau, 2010).

Transnational social spaces are often developed as a result of individual migration, but the focus nevertheless has been on its by-product, or the meso-level network structures that lead to sustained interconnections across borders (Basch et al., 1994; Faist, 2000; Portes et al., 1999; Vertovec, 2004). Speaking of the various social resources within transnational linkages, Faist (2000) has distinguished three ideal types of transnational social space, depending on migrants' most salient form of social resources. These are transnational kinship groups, transnational circuits and transnational communities. Transnational kinship groups have formed where close or extended family members support each other transnationally through various social and economic remittances; transnational circuits have emerged for the purpose of exchanging insider

advantages to a common and usually instrumental goal; and transnational communities have developed out of a sense of collective identity and solidarity. According to the characteristics of the three types of transnational social space, transnational academic network and cooperation, which the current study is interested to explore, can be seen to belong to transnational circuits, although the typical example identified and assumed by Faist was focused on the economic and business purposes for such circuits. Work-based networks formed for professional purposes did not receive much attention in transnational migration studies.

Although the significance of transnational networks and social ties was recognized and three general forms of transnational social spaces were identified, I would argue that such ties and connections were assumed to emerge naturally and limited discussion was raised around the obstacles in the formation of transnational social spaces. Mau (2010) has attempted to summarize three aspects that might facilitate or otherwise constrain individuals' endeavours to construct transnational social spaces. The first and most obvious aspect is access to affordable cross-border transportation and communication technology. Economic capital would therefore contribute to one's transnational capital. It can be inferred that people who are able to garner financial funding can also be compensated for a lack of capital to navigate the transnational space. Secondly, the ability to conduct transnational practices is also inevitably mediated by institutional regulations, such as immigration and residency-permit policies, educational and professional credentials recognition regime, etc. The third aspect underscores the professional competencies for transnational communication, such as language proficiency, intercultural communication skills and cultural adaptation ability. Another angle of analysis has explored how race, class, ethnicity and gender were in play in the transnational socialization process (Glick Schiller et al., 1992a, 1992b; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2008). Such discussions have implications

for my current study. Intellectuals like professors and researchers in universities are usually deemed as naturally willing and capable of mobilizing transnational networks. However, I would argue that despite its natural tendency towards international collaboration and exchange, the academic profession is not naturally transnational per se. Further research needs to be dedicated to probing into what factors affect intellectuals' motivation and capability for transnational engagement.

What also remains to be further explored is the subjective component of transnational social space. As the third aspect listed by Mau (2010) above indicates, individuals' receptivity to juggling complexities and uncertainties in new environments, between multiple locations and cultures, affects their ability to maintain a transnational lifestyle. In the same vein, their prior transnational migration experience also affects their *transnational habitus* (Guarnizo, 1997). As Hannerz (1996) has maintained, engaging in transnational practices is also a cultural-cognitive process. Navigating a transnational lifeworld precipitates new dispositions, cultural identities, competencies, and behaviours. In the long term, as expected by Mau (2010), "people will familiarize themselves with and habitualize transnational practices" (p. 27). With the proliferation of transnational activities, the transnational lifestyle will correspondingly become a norm. As Ong (1999) has stated, "flexibility, migration, and relocation, instead of being coerced or resisted, have become practices to strive for, instead of stability" (p. 19). Although there must be a strong correlation between an individual's cultural orientation and his or her behavior, a contradiction between the two may also exist, as the distinction between ways of being and ways of belonging have indicated (Glick Schiller, 2003, 2004; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2008). In the transnational setting, the result depends, to some extent, on how institutionalized one's social relations are to the prior and current countries of residence, respectively (Schiller, Calgar, &

Karagiannis, 2003). Levitt (2003) has noted that transmigrants' engagements in a certain country can be very selective rather than all-sided, and this selectivity can equally be the case for their adaptation process; as well, their sense of belonging to a physical place can be substituted by an imagined community, epitomized by the Chinese diaspora community.

In summary, transnational social space offers an analytical tool allowing me to examine how Chinese academic returnees are simultaneously engaged in both China and their prior host country of study abroad, as well as the impact of such transnational relations on their cultural adaptation. Meanwhile, as globalization and transnational migration have profoundly impacted lifelong learning (Guo, 2013), in the following discussion, I make connections between transnational social space and adult learning theories to help me understand how internationally educated Chinese academic returnees' transnational experiences are intertwined with their learning as adult learners.

Adult Learning and Transnational Social Space

Adult learners and lifelong learning. The current study concerns lifelong learning for internationally educated Chinese returnee academics as adult learners. Adult learners are characterized not only by maturity of body and their coming of age, but also, and more importantly, with respect to learning, by the volume and quality of accumulated experience (Knowles, 1989). Past life experience is the basis from which adult learners learn to react to and make meaning of their current and future experiences (Dewey, 1938). They reflect upon the past and make connections of the past to the current and the future (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Yet, when their taken-for-granted knowledge, values and dispositions of the past are not employable in the current situations, adult learners are confronted with a disjuncture (Jarvis, 1987, 2004), which necessitates relearning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). These theories on experiential learning are

supported by empirical studies on learning in adulthood, which have confirmed that learning took place not only in formal educational settings, but also through non-formal and informal means (Peters & Gorden, 1974; Tough, 1979). This poses particular implications for understanding internationally educated PhD graduates in the current study as adult learners. After gaining the highest credentials through formal education, these academics are more likely to engage in less formal forms of learning throughout their life span, or in lifelong learning. Jarvis (2007) has proposed that lifelong learning be defined as:

> the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. (p. 1)

This definition underscores several important characteristics of learning in adulthood. It points out that learning is holistic. It involves and also results in changes in not only cognitive knowledge, but also emotions and profound beliefs, among others; it points out the significance of the life-world (Jarvis, 2007) to learning because human beings learn in relationships with each other in various social contexts. As human learning occurs both within the individual and beyond the individual, through interactions with the wider society, an examination of the learning process must take into consideration the social spaces that precipitate learning, a point that will be discussed in detail in the next section. Moreover, the definition of lifelong learning highlights the human need for individual change and development. It directs attention to adult learners' motivations for lifelong learning.

Jarvis (2004) believed that adults continue to learn in adulthood because learning is "itself an existential phenomenon" (p. 82). Indeed, research has shown that there are many benefits to lifelong learning, including but not limited to vocational development, social network development, enjoyment and interest, and momentum for further learning or training (Beinart & Smith, 1998; Preston & Hammond, 2002). Like these studies, which were predominantly based on adults' participation in vocational courses, studies in the field of teacher education have examined K-12 teachers' lifelong learning with the same focus, as professionals, like teachers, are required to gain professional credits from training courses (Acar & Ucus, 2017; Dabija, Abrudan, & Postelnicu, 2016). There is little research on how teachers in the post-secondary sector engage in lifelong learning.

Another fundamental concept in the theory of lifelong learning is disjuncture (Jarvis, 2007). Jarvis (2007) has pointed out that an important aspect of learning in adulthood, as opposed to learning in childhood, is socialization into groups that are part of our life-world. If we fail to culturally integrate into the groups that we gain membership into as an employee, for instance, we will encounter disjuncture that hinders us from functioning based on internalized learning and experience from the past. As a result, disjuncture subjects people to initiating new learning. According to Jarvis, international migration is a kind of experience that can cause a sense of disjuncture, as migrants' life-world is constantly changing and thus, in discontinuity with their taken-for-granted learning and experience from the past and from elsewhere. The sense of disjuncture also varies along a continuum, requiring various degrees of new learning accordingly for reconciliation of disjuncture. For internationally educated returnee academics in my study, it needs to be examined whether they have experienced disjuncture in the return

migration process and how disjuncture through transnational migration was related to their

maintenance of connections with their host countries of study abroad.

Meanwhile, it needs to be noted that lifelong learning is not an uncontested notion.

Particularly in the age of globalization and transnational migration, many studies have argued

that immigration countries have derecognized migrants' prior learning, experience and values

and thus abused the lifelong learning framework (Andersson & Fejes, 2013; Guo, 2013).

Therefore, it is possible for migrants to face devaluation of their knowledge and experience

gained in the country of emigration when they migrate to new countries of settlement. This issue

will inevitably affect how migrants learn to adapt and function in new countries of settlement. In

light of de-recognition and de-valuation in the process of transnational migration, Guo (2013)

has proposed the notion of transnational lifelong learning, which seeks to "acknowledge and

affirm cultural difference and diversity as positive and desirable assets" (p. 142). The change

from lifelong learning to transnational lifelong learning has implications for the current study. It

suggests that internationally educated Chinese academic returnees may encounter adaptation

problems in recognition of their knowledge gained in host countries of doctoral studies. Besides,

it points out that returnee academics' lifelong learning after returning to China should be

informed by their volume and quality of accumulated knowledge and experience in multiple

localities in the transnational social space.

Life-wide learning and community of practice. Learning in adulthood is lifelong on the

one hand, and life-wide on the other, inferring that "learning has a social dimension" (Jarvis,

2007, p. 142). Adults learn through relationships with other people within various communities

in adults' life-worlds, be they formal, non-formal, or informal (Merriam, Caffarella, &

Baumgartner, 2007). Therefore, discussion of lifelong learning inevitably leads to specific

contexts about where adults learn. It is necessary, then, to review the concepts of community and community of practice.

The popularity of the notion of community conveys people's yearning for belonging and unity (Nisbet, 1953). There can be various forms of community that an individual can belong to, as categorized by a common interest, ethnicity, profession or geographical proximity. Subjectively, people can claim membership to a community because they feel an emotional, psychological attachment or allegiance to that community. One can also belong to multiple, sometimes even conflicting communities at the same time (Noddings, 1996). A "strong" community is characterized by independence, mutual responsibility, collective memory and resilience (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). In contrast, a "weak" community is relatively short-lived. It may form and dissolve out of an instrumental purpose. Noddings (1996) has maintained that people always long for a strong form of community where they "cannot be fired or laid off", are "treated as a person…not a case" and "share in a variety of activities that are not all instrumental" (p. 248). Noddings believed that the more institutionalized and instrumental a community is, the less affective attachment community members have to that community.

Compared to experiential learning, studies on learning in community have a more situative orientation. The theoretical concept of situated learning developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) is an alternative conceptualization of learning against the conventional paradigm which, at that time, deemed learning as merely an individual's cognitive process occurring within formal teaching-learning transactions in the classroom. Instead, situated learning takes into account the social and relational aspects of learning, suggesting that these aspects should be deemed to be an integral aspect of social practice. Lave and Wenger further clarified that situated learning does

not mean learning is situated within a particular independent practice. "Learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world" (p. 35). Therefore, according to situated learning theory, learning should be encompassing, multi-dimensional and socio-cultural.

From the socio-cultural perspective adopted by situated learning theory, the action of "participation in social (communities of) practice will inevitably involve learning" (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2005, p. 51). The concept of community of practice has been developed based on apprenticeship learning and has been extensively applied to studies on workplace learning (Fuller et al., 2005). Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) have defined community of practice as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (p. 1). They have pointed out that not every community is a community of practice and have further explicated that a community of practice should be comprised of three indispensable elements: (1) The domain, or shared competence; (2) the community, or relationships of interaction and learning together; (3) the practice or development of a shared repertoire of resources for a shared practice by practitioners (p. 2). A group of people can form a community on a broad and relaxed basis. In contrast, community of practice is restricted to refer to practitioners' joint efforts to improve their shared professional practice.

Members of communities of practice will share existing knowledge, but they can also generate new knowledge and develop new practices. Communities of practice may be harmonious spaces, but may also be places for the experience of disagreement and conflict, which may disrupt or contribute to learning. In addition, there are core and peripheral members within a community of practice. People's position of peripherality or centrality is subject to change in different communities of practice, and subject to change from the periphery to the

35

centre as they become full members of a community of practice. This is not to say, however, that novices will always be at the periphery while the more experienced will always possess the centre. Studies have shown that transferring experienced people to a new community of practice can also render them to a position of peripherality (Fuller et al., 2005).

A nutshell definition of community of practice as reviewed above seems over-simplified. Rather, an earlier version of the definition proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) provides more depth. They state that "a community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98). This definition underlies that a community of practice is "an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge", not simply a repertoire of technical knowledge and skills. It is a process for people to claim full membership to a community in the socio-cultural dimension. It acknowledges that learning is beyond technical practice and is also mediated within a broader institutional and socio-cultural environment.

A related concept that explicates learning in social practice is social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1998; Putnam, 1995). The philosophical stance of social capital theory coincides with situated learning in that it also holds a constructivist view of learning. According to this theory, knowledge is constructed as a result of human interaction within diverse communities (Field, 2005). The theory also regards learning as a broader concept than formal, institutional learning. More importantly, it points out the significance of social capital embedded within networks and communities as "funds of knowledge" (Hernandez-Leon & Zuniga, 2002, p. 6) that can influence people's capacity for learning throughout the lifespan (Field, 2005). Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) have indicated that the preconditions for interactions conducive to learning for social capital are reciprocity, trust, shared norms and values. Such characteristics define the

36

quality of a learning interaction. They have further noted that the quantity of interactions is also important for accumulating social capital. Both the quality and quantity of learning in communities and networks affect the process and outcome of learning.

According to Balatti and Falk (2002), social capital relationships cannot be achieved with individuals' funds of knowledge alone. Shared norms, mutual respect and collaboration within the group are all crucial for the sharing of social capital despite differences. The benefits of such relational socio-cultural learning can be both psychosocial and instrumental (Alfred, 2013). Therefore, while situated learning accounts for participation in community as a way of learning, social capital theory complements situated learning by explaining why people engage in community learning and how to contribute to such learning.

Life-wide learning and community of practice have significant relevance to the current study on the maintenance of transnational professional ties for internationally educated Chinese returnee academics, as they recognize the multiple spaces of learning for academics to learn from others, through interaction and practice. However, following Jarvis's (2007) criticism of the weaknesses of the theory on community of practice, when examining the multiple spaces for learning, we should not ignore the "conflict, change or individual meaning and motivation", or "the type of learning that leads some people not to join an organization or others to leave it" (p. 144). In other words, a sociological perspective on human learning should place its focus on the person and the power relations within the social context of community, in order to explain learning in practice.

In the following section, I present empirical studies on learning in the transnational social space, the three types of transnational social space, and narrow down my focus to epistemic space within the Chinese context.

Situating Transnational Social Space in Context

While there is an abundance of studies on transnationalism, empirical studies adopting explicitly the framework of transnational social space are very limited, although many have touched upon discussions on social ties and networks. There are an even fewer number of studies that discuss transnational professional space (Alenius, 2016). I first broadly review studies conducted worldwide and then narrow it down to the Chinese context.

Transnational social spaces have been examined around certain groups. Consistent with the three types of transnational social spaces, these studies have centered on kinship and friendship networks, business networks, epistemic and professional networks, political and social activist networks, as well as ethnic and religious networks. The consequences of these networks, however, have been usually multi-tiered. Bilecen, Çatir, and Orhon (2015) have situated their investigation of how migrants navigated social protection regimes in the Turkey-Germany transnational social space through families and friends, and concluded that informal socializing is a significant avenue to gain social capital in the kinship and friendship network to access social protection information and institutionalized resources.

Kobayashi and Preston's (2007) research has demonstrated the transnational family arrangement in the Canada-Hong Kong transnational space for Hong Kong transmigrants. In their case study, husbands and wives deliberately separated as a strategic decision to maintain family unity, and to advance the welfare of children by the husbands making their livelihood in Hong Kong and the wives taking care of children in Canada, in light of Canada's quality education available for the children.

Drawing on ethnographic data, Dreby's (2010) research on parenting in the transnational setting has pinpointed that gender roles and expectations in Mexico are durable in transnational

families. Brigham (2015) has revealed how undocumented Jamaican migrant women in Canada have negotiated their transnational life by working on the periphery of Canada's labour market and sending economic and emotional remittance to their families in Jamaica. Olwig (2007), in an ethnographic study of dispersed families of Caribbean origin, has highlighted how migration pathways of members from the extended family network were regulated by their kinship ties and how physical mobility was related to the need for upward social mobility. The lived experience of these transmigrant parents illuminates how transnational social space is imbued with power relations intersected with gender, ethnicity and social class, and how such space is an indispensable strategy for life and livelihood.

In terms of business and professional networks, it has been documented that the "new Argonaut" IT professionals were able to maintain entrepreneurial ties between Silicon Valley in the United States and high-tech zones in Taiwan to maximize utilization of resources in various locations (Saxenian, 2006; Saxenian, Motoyama, & Quan, 2002). Zhou (2004) has asserted that transnational entrepreneurial networks within ethnic minority groups in the United States benefited the individuals, not only in terms of better employment security and higher economic gains, but also with higher social recognition in their origin countries, although such individual gains did not necessarily change the social status of the ethnic community as a whole. Alenius (2016) has situated her research of transnational occupational space within the Estonia-Finland space. Their research has conceptualized transnational migration as a learning space for both migrant and non-migrant professionals in their respective multicultural work communities. It has also demonstrated that transmigrants served as knowledge brokers and engaged in boundary encounters that fostered the diffusion of conceptions and practices.

With regard to the active agents in transnational networks, Coe and Bunnell (2003) have stated that individuals, including migrants and non-migrants, associations and other civil organizations, as well as transnational corporations all contributed to the formation of the networks. However, maneuvering knowledge and skills in diverse contexts is not without obstacles, among which the most notable problem is deskilling and de-credentialing of professionals' prior educational and work experience (Guo, 2009, 2013; Ng & Shan, 2013; Shan, 2009). Even for a profession like social work, a transnational orientation and universally shared core work values do not naturally make it a transnational profession. Non-recognition of the social worker immigrants' overseas qualifications has hindered them from practicing their profession transnationally in New Zealand (Bartley, Beddoe, Fouché, and Harington, 2012). Shan, Pullman, and Zhao's (2016) study on Chinese women managing careers and lives in the Canada-China space has highlighted again the influences of gender, race and class in shaping transmigrants' life worlds. These power relations have posed challenges, but sometimes also provided opportunities requiring and enabling transmigrant Chinese women to mobilize transnational migration as a livelihood strategy along with various forms of capital.

Within the professional network, there are epistemic or knowledge networks where research and academic expertise are the key practices and deployable capital. In general, it has been observed that there is an imbalance in knowledge flow and intellectual mobility between developed and developing countries, and also between the centre and the periphery within developed countries (Faist, 2000, 2008; Moguérou, 2006). In light of the large size and its social significance, the Chinese knowledge diaspora has gained heightened attention from both researchers and policy stakeholders around the world. It has been recognized that Chinese internationally educated returnees and the overseas Chinese knowledge diaspora are two

important sources of innovation in China's higher education sector (Welch & Hao, 2013). On the one hand, academic returnees' contributions have been noted, yet recognition has been provided insufficiently and in a passing manner (Hao et al., 2017).

The research conducted by Jonkers and Tijssen (2008) on how internationally educated Chinese researchers' study and research experience in their host country prior to return has influenced their research collaboration and scientific productivity in China has provided insightful interpretations. In the research, it has been found that researchers' abilities and preferences for international collaboration have been heavily influenced by their previous study and research experience abroad, during which they have built trust and connections with colleagues for research collaboration. The researchers have distinguished between the concept of scientific social capital and human capital to accentuate the significance of the researchers' stock of professional ties with the quality and intensity of their transnational collaborative relations.

Meanwhile, it has been also noted that the recent cohorts of academic returnees have been confronted with greater challenges than the previous cohorts, since there have been more returnees and more postgraduates in China in general. Besides, compared to their locally educated counterparts, returnees have been generally disadvantaged in local social connections (*guanxi*) and have had to carefully navigate the bureaucratic research system in China's higher education, not to mention having to face confrontations from leadership and local peers (Chen, 2008; Chen, 2017; Chen & Koyama, 2013; Hao et al., 2016; Xu, 2009).

On the other hand, a burgeoning number of studies has been devoted to the potential contributions of the overseas diasporic Chinese scholars (Yang & Welch, 2010). To deploy the human capital of China's diasporic knowledge network, bridging connections must first be formed. Welch and Zhang (2005) have stressed numerous factors affecting diaspora scholars'

41

intentions to engage in academic collaboration with China, including collaborators' academic standing, gender, mutual research interest, and the leadership system in Chinese academe. Such findings have revealed that a financial incentive has not been a primary concern for diaspora scholars in affecting their intention for international collaboration. Instead, they have been more concerned about the more concrete factors affecting the quality of research collaboration itself. Despite a ubiquitously expressed willingness to engage in joint projects, there still needs to be approachable and reliable channels and intermediaries, whether they may be individuals or more institutionalized organizations. As well, there are not enough studies on how returned scholars may impose a positive influence in the networking process, in terms of building trust, a prerequisite for long-term, quality research collaboration, and building bridges (Chen & Koyama, 2013; Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008). Moreover, although it is evident that the epistemic network falls within the sphere of the professional network, often the "professional" or personal utility of such a network has been overlooked, as opposed to its social significance to the nation states, at the expense of discovering how epistemic networks have been employed by individuals' agency and how they shape individuals' professional development.

In summary, transnational social space provides a theoretical framework under which adults' learning in a transnational life-world may be examined. As adults' learning is both lifelong and life-wide, accordingly, migrants' transnational migration experiences and the transnational ties that engender sustained learning in a transnational life-world must be investigated. A review of the empirical studies on transnational social space in specific contexts, including different transnational networks and Chinese migrants' transnational migration experience in particular, reveals that more empirical studies are needed to further explore learning in the transnational professional space for Chinese migrants.

42

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I demonstrate my research design for a qualitative case study. I first justify the reasons for conducting a qualitative case study for the current research by identifying the philosophical underpinnings that my research will draw upon, and by reflecting on my academic training and research experiences that have shaped my predilection for this methodology. After an elaboration of the definitions, characteristics and types of case study to justify the applicability of an instrumental case study for my research, I present the details of my research design, including recruitment of research participants, academic profiles of my participants, data collection methods, data analysis and presentation, as well as considerations on credibility, dependability and generalizability of my research, followed by some final thoughts on research ethics and researcher's reflexivity.

The Qualitative Research Approach

This study employs qualitative case study as the research strategy to approach the phenomenon of transnational professional space for internationally educated Chinese academic returnees. Originated and developed primarily in the field of educational evaluation (MacDonald, 1971; Norris, 1993; Simons, 1987; Stake, 1967a, 1967b, 1972), case study has evolved as a response to a methodological shift to qualitative inquiry in education, and in the social sciences in general, over the last 50 years (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Simons, 2009). It is now a generally accepted research approach for examining educational and social phenomena (Merriam, 1988, 2001; Stake, 1995). As noted by a number of scholars (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2004), although case study shares many methods of inquiry with other qualitative research approaches, different disciplines vary in their definition of this concept. Case study may signify a teaching method commonly used in law and business studies, understood as casework in social work, or

even as a quantitative data collection method relying heavily on statistical measurements (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). Therefore, as reminded by Stake (1995), studies adopting case study as a research approach should acknowledge their respective disciplinary traditions upon which their philosophical, epistemological and methodological preferences are based. In the discussion that follows, I identify the underpinning philosophical traditions that my current study draws upon.

My study is guided by the constructivist and transformative worldviews. These two philosophical paradigms share a common belief that meanings lie in the subjective interpretation of the participants, and their understanding of lived experiences are socially and historically mediated (Creswell, 2014). The transformative worldview, built on this common ground, expresses more overtly its critical and political stance to such social issues as inequality, oppression and marginalization, calling for change in the institutional structure and upon the marginalized individuals to confront and remedy the practices that oppress them (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2010). Both worldviews reject the assumptions held by the positivist or postpositivist research tradition that meanings are objective, and can be known through numeric measurement of a small number or categories of variables in an objective manner. Instead, the constructivist and transformative orientations seek multiplicity and complexity of meanings and acknowledge that researchers' biases ineluctably shape their interpretation of the same. The differences between these philosophical frameworks are such that they lead to different research designs with the positivist and postpositivist worldviews contributing to a quantitative research design, and the constructivist and transformative worldviews informing a qualitative design. I believe that the latter is congruent with the intent of my study and I have thus adopted a qualitative research approach.

44

My academic training and research experience have influenced my predilection for conducting qualitative research on the current phenomenon. I have been trained in the specialization of Adult Learning at Werklund School of Education where theories on social justice, adult transformative and emancipatory learning, and lifelong learning have traditionally been the pillars of this research field (Freire, 2000; Jarvis, 2006; Mezirow, 1990). Through course readings and class discussions, I have realized that adult educators bear the responsibility to raise the voices of marginalized people in our society, to recognize adult learners' capabilities, and evoke their sense of empowerment against social and institutional practices that adversely affect them. For the current study, I intended to achieve such goals by raising the voices of the Chinese academic returnees. These voices have been largely suppressed by the dominant public discourse that has depicted them as passive puppets under policy control, readily exploitable, to be availed on for the national brain gain. Their intrinsic motivations, interests and initiatives for professional development, collaboration and community building in the transnational space have been downplayed. Therefore, constructivist and transformative paradigms served the intent of my study. I recognize the importance of such paradigms to my research and chose to follow the paradigms in the field of adult learning because they enabled me to examine the contexts that are implicated in the participants' transnational experiences, and to inquire into the phenomenon of transnational professional space from the participants' perspectives.

Apart from academic training in this qualitative mindset, I have also developed a preference for my research topic and research approach through previous research experience. I conducted a mixed-method study on return migration of Chinese students where I investigated the re-adaptation experience of the participants. The earlier research experience piqued my interest to further explore the phenomenon of transnational migration in order to understand what

the participants have learned about their prior cross-border experiences that could account for

their subsequent transnational practices, and possible change of perceived cultural identity, as

well as the influences of those experiences on the migrants' sustained development.

Methodologically, I have found from my mixed-method study that, although the quantitative

survey is an efficient way to collect data extensively in a relatively short period of time, it is too

structured and close-ended to allow for flexibility and depth. In comparison, the qualitative

interview gave participants more freedom to narrate, in a free-flowing manner, providing a

coherent and holistic subjective reality in the social construction process of an interview

(Simons, 2009). I used a qualitative research approach for my study for these reasons, and in

order to capture the subjective meanings participants give to their experiences.

The Case Study Research

In alignment with my worldviews and my research questions, the current study employed

the methodology of case study. I further illustrate the definitions, characteristics and types of

case study to justify the applicability of this methodology to my research. Due to variations in

understanding of the concept of case study, there is no universal definition of this research

strategy. A collage of the various definitions provides a general picture of what characterizes a

case study. According to Stake (1995), "case study is the study of the particularity and

complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances"

(p. xi). Merriam (2002) has pointed out that case study is an intensive, holistic description and

analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit. "Case studies are particularistic,

descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data

sources" (Merriam, 1988, p. 16). Compared to two other forms of naturalist qualitative research

methodologies, including ethnography and grounded theory, case study aims to provide a holistic

and intensive description and interpretation of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1985). Yin (1994) has further noted that case study examines "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" where "the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Baxter and Jack (2008) have defined case study as "an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources" (p. 544). These definitions highlight the characteristic of a multiplicity of data sources in case study research. Two more features of case study are worth noting. First, this research strategy is not defined by methods, so that multiple methods, both qualitative and quantitative, can be applied (Stake, 1995); second, the purpose of the case study is to gain an "in-depth understanding" of the case (Simons, 2009, p. 21).

The case study strategy is suitable for the current study in many ways, including in terms of philosophical assumptions, the research topic, purpose and questions. First of all, case study is underpinned by a constructivist paradigm (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). It agrees with the worldview of the current study that knowledge is socially constructed and meaning is subjectively created. The case study approach is useful when "you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). Secondly, this approach is appropriate for topics involving phenomena in their natural settings, "bounded by space and time" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 15). Again, the context was important in a case study. In my study, the context, or the phenomenon was delimited by the multiple and even simultaneous professional engagements of the participants between China and their prior host country of study abroad. Thirdly, the purpose of a case study is to "gain in-depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 11), which overlaps with the purpose of my study to understand transnational professional space

47

by providing a "thick description" (Stake, 1995) of the particular transnationality of each participant from the individual's own perspectives. Last but not least, the research questions of my study correspond with the application of the chosen strategy, which lent itself perfectly to a study focused on "how" and "why" questions (Yin, 2003). In summary, from the philosophical considerations to the specific questions to be explored, case study was a compatible approach to my current research.

Besides, there are numerous advantages of conducting case study research. By juxtaposing multiple perspectives via multiple sources of data, it provides readers with an in-depth and informative description of the phenomenon in order to understand its significance; it provides the researcher with flexibility in terms of time frame, methods and form of presentation; it provides research participants with power of control over participating and co-constructing knowledge in the research process, which is "both a political and epistemological point" (Simons, 2009, p. 23). However, case study research also has potential limitations such as the intrusion of the researcher into participants' lives, influence of researcher's subjectivity in interpretation, problems with generalizability and validity (Simons, 2009), all of which are discussed in later sections.

Similar to its definitions, there are also various typologies of case study. The distinction made by Stake (1995) is useful here to understand the methodological implications of this research approach to my research. According to Stake, a case study can be classified as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective. Intrinsic case study is where the research interest is in the case itself. In contrast, an instrumental case study is where the case is studied as the means for pursuing an interest in something else. Collective case study involves studying more than one case to reach a collective understanding of a research problem. As Stake has cautioned, the importance is not the

distinction itself, but its implications for different methods. Stake has mentioned that in the selection of cases, an intrinsic case study will have pre-selected cases, which are typical, while an instrumental case study may include both typical and non-typical cases. The principle for selecting cases for an instrumental case study is to "maximize what we can learn" (p. 4). He has explicated that "sometimes a 'typical' case works well but often an unusual case helps illustrate matters we overlook in typical cases" (p. 4). Therefore, as Stake has argued that case study is not sampling research, there is little point in trying to find a typical or representative case. After all, "each case is unique so no one *is* typical of another" (Simons, 2009, p. 30). What does matter is consideration of the limitations in terms of time and access to fieldwork. Thus, participants should be selected based on their approachability and availability for the research (Stake, 2009). Meanwhile, a collective case study should pay relatively more attention to its typicality, but in general, representation should not be a major concern for case study research (Stake, 2009). Adoption of this particular strategy informs the planning of my study in all aspects. In the following sections, I discuss in detail how case study informs my research design and methods of inquiry.

Research Design

      Recruitment of research participants. A case in case study is a single, bounded entity (Smith, 1978). It can be "an individual, program, community, or process", determined by "the purpose of the research and the interest of the researcher" (Merriam, 1985, pp. 207-208). As my research explores individuals' transnational experiences, each individual is a case or unit of analysis. Selection of participants depends on the particular type of the case study. According to the above distinction, my research is an instrumental case study. Each participant's transnational experiences are documented in detail, but the purpose here is not simply to present their unique

experiences, but rather to gain insights into the dynamics of transnational professional space by exploring themes, commonalities and differences from thick descriptions of cases.

My participants were recruited in Beijing, China. A number of studies have indicated that this capital city is the priority destination for Chinese returnees upon return (Chen, 2006; Guo, 2016; Wang, 2007). Being the political and cultural centre of China and an economically vibrant cosmopolitan city, Beijing has demonstrated its magnetic effect for internationally educated returnees from all walks of life. I anticipated finding a considerable pool of potential participants here. Besides, I have lived in Beijing for 10 years and maintain personal connections to alumni, professors and friends working in higher educational institutions in Beijing, and therefore I expected them to possibly refer me to their extended networks to recruit participants, so as to capitalize on a snowball sampling technique.

Participants for my study were incumbent professors and researchers in higher educational institutions. They had earned their doctoral degrees abroad and maintained certain professional connections with their prior host countries of study abroad. The reasons for delimiting participants to internationally educated PhD graduates and incumbent university professors or researchers were that this group of highly educated academics are most likely to be actively engaged in, and pursuing an international presence in research and teaching. As well, their extended study and research experience abroad were more likely to afford them with long-term professional connections, and more likely to precipitate changes in cultural identity, as compared to short-term sojourners.

I started finding potential participants by asking my network of known associates for recommendations. After learning the names and faculties of potential participants, I obtained their academic CVs and email addresses posted on their respective institutions' websites. I also

checked out the CVs of other professors in these institutions to find more potential participants to contact. As there is relatively little research on related topics on participants from the social sciences and humanities, as compared to participants from the natural sciences, I made efforts to find participants from the social sciences and humanities in an attempt to fill in a gap in the existent literature.

Initially, potential participants' academic CVs were checked to see if they obtained their doctoral degrees abroad. I also took note of their English publications, academic projects with foreign co-researchers, and affiliations with foreign academic associations and institutions, as international co-publications and affiliations indicate the likelihood of active involvement in transnational academic activity. I created a list of potential participants and contacted them via email to ask if they were interested to participate in my research.

Participants' academic profile. Eventually, a total of 12 participants were recruited for my study. Initially, I contacted three participants from three universities through my personal connections. After face-to-face interviews, I asked each of the three interviewees whether they could refer me to potential participants in their networks. Through this snowball sampling technique, three participants were recruited from two departments in university A, another three participants were recruited in university B, and another six were recruited from university C. As to their disciplinary background, six participants were conducting research in social sciences, three of them were working in fields of the humanities, while the other three were researching in areas related to economics. They came back to China, their country of original citizenship, from a total of nine destination countries or regions where they had pursued doctoral studies. Three participants received their PhD degrees from the United States, two from the United Kingdom, and one participant each from Belgium, Holland, France, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, and

Canada. This cohort consisted of mostly researchers in the early stages of their careers, with 10

of them having graduated and returned to China no more than six years prior to 2017. The other

two researchers had been back in China for eight years and 11 years, respectively. These

academics represented a group of intellectual elite in China as they had proven their academic

competence through the successful completion of rigorous doctoral training abroad. Most of

them also indicated that they had gained admission to their PhD programs through competitive

scholarships. In terms of their employment status, half of the 12 participants had been

successfully promoted to associate professors. The other six participants, based on their

academic titles, were still in the junior rank of their professions. It is worth noting that, among

the three most recent returnees, Clara and Liangna, from university C, both indicated that the

renewal of their six-year tenure-track employment contract was contingent on the successful

assessment of their research performance every three years during the contract period. In

contrast, Sophie, the most recent returnee researcher, had a more stable job at university B. It is

necessary to provide a description of the three institutions where my participants worked in order

to understand how the researchers' work experiences were influenced by their institutional

contexts. Table 2 below summarizes details about the participants.

Table 2

Participants' International Education and Current Employment Profile

Name	Employment Institution	Title	Field of Study	Country/Region of Study	Year of Return
Nick	A	Associate Professor	Education	Belgium	2011
Grace	A	Associate Professor	Education	UK	2012
Stella	A	Lecturer	Education	Australia	2012
Barbara	B	Assistant Professor	Journalism	UK	2014
GZ	B	Assistant Professor	Journalism	Holland	2013
Sophie	B	Assistant Professor	Journalism	Hong Kong	2017
Clara	C	Lecturer	Finance	US	2015
Tim	C	Associate Professor	Finance	US	2013
Rick	C	Associate Professor	Economics	US	2013
Liangna	C	Lecturer	French	France	2016
Jasmine	C	Associate Professor	English	Canada	2009
Andy	C	Associate Professor	English	Japan	2006

University A is a top-tier research-intensive university with its strength in liberal arts. It is one of the top 10 Chinese universities ranked among the top 300 world universities by Quacquarelli Symonds's QS rankings in 2018. In China's most recent national initiative of

building world-class universities and first-class disciplines, university A has been included within the list of 42 universities that China aims to develop into world-class universities (MOE, 2017). It also boasts of having a high ratio of internationally educated returnee teachers.

Meanwhile, university B is a government-funded public research institution serving as a think tank for the Chinese government. Therefore, a part of the researchers' work in university B is to conduct government requested research projects. It is one of the premier research institutions in China in the field of social sciences. It is also a university of social sciences with students only at the graduate level. Most of the teaching and student supervisory tasks are placed on senior researchers, but junior researchers also need to assume some teaching responsibilities. Within university B, the three researchers who participated in my study are the only people among the 38 researchers in their department to have obtained their PhD degrees from a foreign country or region.

In contrast, university C, another liberal arts university, is not a top-notch university in China, but it was recognized as one of the 100 or so key universities in China in the 1990s. In the newest round of China's university development scheme, university C has not been included in the list of universities that China aims to develop into world-class universities, but some of its leading disciplines have been identified as capable of becoming top-ranking disciplines. Therefore, university C still enjoys a relatively high reputation as one of the 95 universities with first-class disciplines (MOE, 2017). Its position in China's university hierarchy gives it a certain advantage in attracting talented returnee teachers on the one hand, but as the anticipation for its development is lower than that placed on potential world-class universities, the resources it can receive from the government to support its teaching and research praxes may also be limited, on the other hand. Among the 78 faculty members in the Finance department, only 19 are

internationally educated PhD holders with 12 of them titled as lecturers and five as associate

professors. There are only six internationally educated returnee teachers who have worked in this

department for over six years and have gained titles as associate professors or professors.

Meanwhile, among the 33 faculty members in the Economics department, only five teachers are

internationally trained PhD graduates, with two of them titled as lecturers and the other three as

associate professors. There are two internationally educated returnee teachers with over six years

of work experience in this department upon their return to China, with both of them associate

professors.

In summary, the profiles of my participants accord with my expectation that Beijing, as

the capital city and cultural centre, has attracted some of the best academics with overseas

doctoral training experience to work there. Based on data of the number and percentage of

internationally trained PhD returnee teachers, such academics make up only a marginal group in

their respective faculties and they are still a scarce human resource in their institutions. Teachers

in both universities A and C usually hold a greater teaching load than university B, and they are

also expected to excel in research as their universities depend on these internationally trained

talents to maintain a competitive edge. University B, in the meantime, may have provided

researchers with a laxer environment and they could focus more on research, but its government

sponsorship may affect what research they can conduct and how they conduct it. In the next

chapter, I report in detail the findings of my research through themes that emerged from analyses

of my data, including interview transcriptions, field observations, participants' academic CVs,

and data gathered from the three institutions' websites.

Data collection. After obtaining ethics approval from the University of Calgary, I

returned to China to start collecting data. The data collection period was from December 2017 to

February 2018. The choice of a qualitative case study approach requires a diversity of forms of data, mainly qualitative. Therefore, I mainly employed interview, observation and document analysis as means of data collection, together with an informal pre-interview survey aimed to confirm the accuracy and updates of my participants' academic biography.

Interview. Before the interview, each participant was asked to give formal consent to participation in the research by signing the consent form, as appended to this thesis. After that, I engaged in informal conversations with the participants to check the accuracy of information found on their academic CVs posted online, and to find out if they were engaged in other transnational academic activities that were not updated in the CVs, before formally initiating the interview. Individual interviews, instead of group interviews, were conducted so as to yield extensive information from each individual's own perspectives. Besides, I consider individual interviews to be more appropriate in terms of protecting participants' privacy and making them feel comfortable and safe to express themselves during the interview.

An interview protocol was developed, as appended to this thesis, including a number of questions to ask the participants, that could allow me to gain enough data to answer the research questions, but not too much to overwhelm the participants. Interviews were conducted as semi-structured guided conversations, allowing for a high level of flexibility in sequencing and wording of questions, while retaining control in collecting data in a relatively systematic manner. Topics were predetermined based on my research questions.

Interviews took place at mutually agreed, distraction-free locations to "increase the comfort of the interviewee and the likelihood of attaining high-quality information" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 40). The interviews were conducted in Chinese as it was the participants' preferred choice. Each participant took part in one interview, which lasted between 30 to 60

minutes. Before each interview, I sought the interviewee's consent to make an audio recording. Field notes about the interview itself were used sparingly to minimize interruption to the ongoing conversation. The audiotaped interview was transcribed verbatim immediately after each interview and the written transcript was given to the interviewee for member checking. Before interviewing the next interviewee, I would reflect on the last one to help improve subsequent interviews on a continued basis. After interviewing all the participants, a number of participants were approached for necessary clarification of their interview responses.

     Observation. Observations took place both informally and formally. Informal observation should be "present throughout the whole research process" (Simons, 2009, p. 55) to gain understanding of the site and unspoken power relations in the setting. Formal observation is useful to complement the interview in that it provides "more objective information related to the research topic" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 46). Observations of the site, artifacts and interactions could help me detect the culture of the organization or university institution, while observation during the interview would provide evidence for triangulated interpretation of interview data. Observation is a useful method of data collection especially when the interviewees are less articulate and it also manages to capture traces of unarticulated emotions (Simons, 2009).

     Before each interview, I also sought consent from the interviewee for observation during the interview. Apart from demographic information such as time, location and the participant, observation notes included both descriptive and reflective notes. Observation during the interview would take note of the participant's behavior, and could help the researcher understand his or her unspoken attitudes towards the experiences and opinions that the participant have articulated. Observation was also made of the participant's office to see if there were artifacts

57

that could tell the importance with which the participant values his or her past experience and connections with the host country of doctoral studies, and any artifacts that are evidence of the participant's mobilization of transnational connections to his or her current academic practice. During the interview observation, I gathered information as an observer rather than as a participant to listen to the participants' opinions and mitigate influences of my personal views. After the fieldwork, participants had the right to be debriefed about what had been observed and noted. Clearly, conducting research involves discrete ethical considerations more than just consent and debriefing. In the following section on ethics consideration I discuss these points further and illustrate issues that need to be addressed to maximize protection to the participants.

Document analysis. Document as data has been less employed in case study than interview and observation, but when attempting to enrich the description of the case with more contextual information regarding institutional culture and policies, and more evidence for analysis of the research problem, it can also be an important method of qualitative inquiry. For my research, formal documents obtained and analyzed included news on university websites and other public media about transnational research and academic collaboration between Chinese academics and their counterparts abroad, co-publications between the participants and their research partners from abroad and participants' academic resumes. Participants also provided me with lists of core journals, both international and Chinese, compiled by participants' respective institutions. Formal documents could facilitate my examining the institutional culture affecting participants' professional development and cultural adaptation, while more personal documents of academic CVs could help my understanding of how participants are simultaneously engaged professionally across countries, and how working in such simultaneity affects their academic growth.

In addition, I also examined news and reports released by professional associations and academic networks whose names are brought up by my interviewees in an effort to explore the role of meso-level organizations in facilitating participants' connectivity to their host country of doctoral studies. Therefore, I considered document analysis a necessary method to deploy for my research.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis in qualitative research comprises multiple levels of iterative and recursive processes. For my study, I collected and analyzed data simultaneously. I gleaned useful information for coding the data after each interview and refined my interview questions to guide follow-up interviews based on construction of preliminary codes. Ongoing summary and analysis of data also allowed me to consider if more information was required for answering a particular research question. Although there was a relatively small sample size, various sources of data created a mass of messy qualitative information, which may be difficult to process by manual coding. Thus, I applied the qualitative data analysis program NVivo to assist me in coding. The NVivo program is desirable not only because of its powerful capability for processing various forms of data, but also because it is able to analyze data in Chinese as well as in English. Eligibility for free access to its functions as a University of Calgary student provides another perk.

My research findings are presented in themes. These themes present findings from individual cases, while different cases are compared and contrasted, leading to analysis and presentation of thematic connections between different cases to understand the phenomenon of transnational professional space.

Credibility, Dependability, and Generalizability

An important issue for consideration is the credibility and dependability of my research. Credibility and dependability in qualitative research refers to the accuracy and validity of the data presented by the researcher from the viewpoint of the researcher, the participant and the reader (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Miller, 2000). For my research, I incorporated validity strategies of triangulation (Mason, 2002; Mathison, 1988; Richardson, 1997), member checking, thick description, clarifying researcher bias and presenting any discrepant information to strive for validity (Owens, 1982).

Meanwhile, the issue of generalizability of case study findings is of much debate as well (Merriam, 1985). I hold that generalization in qualitative studies is logically rather than statistically based as in scientific generalization (Edgar & Billingsley, 1974). Indeed, the value and the aim of qualitative research lies not in generalization of results, but in exposing particularity. As Stake (1995) has pointed out, it is also hard to defend the generalizability of qualitative research due to the small sample size. However, although not the intention of qualitative research, generalization is not impossible. It has been noted that generalization can be achieved exactly by particularity (MacDonald & Walker, 1975), "where studying the particular in depth can yield insights of universal significance" (Simons, 2009, p. 20). Yin (2009) has suggested that generalization in case study research can be achieved by replicating findings to additional cases. A prerequisite for such replication though is detailed documentation and descriptions of the research procedure. Therefore, the focus of generalization in qualitative research still underscores its core value of detailed description and particularity.

Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity

It is vital that every specific step taken toward the culmination of the study should entail critical reflections and ethical considerations. The literature review manifests the importance of this critical and ethical thinking in that it substantiates the necessity and significance of the chosen topic by critically reviewing what themes have already been identified and discussed. Besides, it is especially the case with data collection and interpretation. On the one hand, I have to ensure my research participants are ethically treated, and on the other hand, I have to critically reflect on my biases that might affect the way I collect and interpret data. Taking a qualitative approach is meant to listen to the participants' perspectives and avoid leading them to provide certain responses that I anticipate from them. I discuss below the measures I took to ensure my study has been conducted ethically and researcher biases have been properly managed.

Compliance with research ethics. Ethical consideration is exercised throughout the research process. I here present measures that I took to address the most significant ethical issues anticipated for my study.

First of all, I obtained ethics approval for my research with the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board of University of Calgary before I started to approach participants for data collection. All ethical guidelines and requirements were strictly observed.

Secondly, I obtained informed consent in writing from every participant and notified them of the purpose and questions for each interview beforehand. It was important for me to tell the participants before and throughout the research that they had the right to withdraw any time if they didn't feel comfortable to continue.

Thirdly, during data collection, it was paramount to build an equitable, trustworthy, and reciprocal relationship with participants. Participants were involved as collaborators in the

implementation of the study. They were debriefed about the transcriptions of their respective interviews and observations, and they were free to edit the transcription as they deemed appropriate for portrayal of their stories in my thesis and for future publication. The research findings will be shared with participants as intended by a transformative study to help participants "reap the rewards of the research and … raise their consciousness" (Creswell, 2014, p. 47). Participants were able to avail themselves of this opportunity to learn about themselves by reflecting, narrating, and reading their own life experiences. In other words, I made sure that participants had control over their own stories, and that I conveyed the message that participants should be engaged in my research as partners, not "subjects" whose experiences are to be exploited for my own good. The intent of the research is democratic and the process participatory.

Fourthly, confidentiality and anonymity for my research is of paramount importance. In a trustworthy research relationship, it is likely that participants will openly share information and opinions that are "sensitive, personal or problematic" (Simons, 2009, p. 106), which they may not wish to be reported. In this case, participants' requests to keep certain information in confidence were strictly followed. At the same time, pseudonyms for participants, their institutions and any other affiliations that may expose their identity are used in reporting.

Fifthly, a number of security provisions were applied for data storage and retention. There are two copies of electronic data with one copy stored on my personal computer and the other on a memory stick. This personal computer is password-protected and the folders containing the original audio recordings, transcriptions, notes as well as other electronic documents are encrypted using a different password. Each file is also encrypted. The same security measures were implemented for data stored on the memory stick. No electronic data

were kept in any cloud-based server. I made sure that this personal computer was taken care of by myself at all times, while the memory stick was securely stored in a locked drawer in my home. Paper documents with pseudonyms were kept in a locked drawer in my home and only I have sole access to the same. Master documents with participants' identifying information linking these pseudonyms were kept in a separate, locked drawer, which was accessed solely by myself.

Reflexivity. The research process is as much about others as it is about ourselves. Studying ourselves is necessary for us to mindfully tackle the influence of our subjectivity on the way we collect and interpret data and also for increasing the validity of the research (Creswell, 2014; Simons, 2009). Researcher reflexivity requires not only that I state my own values and judgement, as I did in elucidating my worldviews and philosophical stances, but also that I "demonstrate *when* and *how* different aspects of 'self' … may surface in research" (Simons, 2009, p. 81), because the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting and processing data whose research experience is inevitably entangled with his or her lifeworld. The research process then, is a social re/construction of ourselves through an interaction between our life experience and our research data (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Simons, 2009). Based on this premise, researchers need to actively seek out their subjectivity in order to better attend to its influences, both enabling and disabling, a process called by Peshkin (1988) as "subjectivity audit". He has pointed out that rationality and emotions are both helpful in this process.

Simons (2009) has proposed a list of practical suggestions for exploring researcher subjectivity. The key point is to document the researcher's thoughts and feelings for reflection. It is therefore, necessary to take field notes on personal reflections during fieldwork. Before that, I

would like to follow Simons' guide to reflect and anticipate the influence of my subjectivity on my research.

My personal experience as a transmigrant between Canada and China has stimulated my interest in exploring the phenomenon of transnational migration and its influences on individuals' lifelong learning. The academic training I have received and the knowledge I have accumulated in this field stand me in good stead in conceptualizing this phenomenon. My close affinity with academics navigating their professional lives transnationally serves as an insider advantage for me to understand the problems that may be entailed. I consider these as enabling aspects of my subjectivity.

Meanwhile, as participants in my research are professors and university researchers, who are considered to be elites, and some of them may also hold managerial positions, there was a perceived power imbalance that I needed to handle in our relationships in the research, particularly in the initial contacts. Due to their seniority in their social position and their exclusive knowledge of their institutional cultures, I was worried about my being treated as an outsider, which would elicit a sense of distrust. There was certainly subtle negotiation of power relations with my participants. To counter any negative subjective influence out of this, I actively pursued rapport building with my participants. Meanwhile, as I shared experiences of studying abroad and returning to China with my participants, in some situations they took me as an insider, assuming that I have the same level of familiarity with their institutional cultures and that I naturally understand their taken-for-granted presumptions. In order to seek in-depth understanding of their presumptions and feelings, I sought to ask more follow up questions to allow them to reflect and provide more information, while seeking multiple sources of data for triangulation. Another potential subjective influence I anticipated was my presumption of the

positive correlation between transnational ties and an academic's professional development. Such subjectivity was managed by avoiding asking leading questions during the interview and by truthfully reporting multiple perspectives and any contrary findings. Last but not least, as I tended to believe in a monolithic group of privileged academic elites, I may have ignored the differences in participants' capabilities for maintaining transnational ties. Such subjectivity was monitored especially in data analysis by juxtaposing different cases and by attending to the factors that may have contributed to differences within a seemingly homogenized social group.

In summary, the employment of qualitative case study for my research accords with my constructivist and transformative worldviews. It can also facilitate me to explore transnational professional space in-depth. Data collection methods include semi-structured individual interview, observation, and document analysis. A number of validity and ethical issues that I consider vital for my study are discussed. Triangulation, member checking, thick description, clarifying researcher biases, as well as presenting discrepant findings are incorporated in the study to strive for credibility and dependability. In terms of generalizability, I believe that it is not the aim of a qualitative study, but still, it can be achieved in a logical sense through thick description. Following this qualitative research design, I recruited 12 participants from three universities in Beijing, China. In the next chapter, I will endeavour to provide a thick description of my research findings through a number of key themes.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I present detailed descriptions of my research findings categorized into six major themes. In the first section, I note the primary reasons for internationally educated Chinese academics to return to China, and how they selected their respective institutions for work. The second section focuses on participants' return experiences, serving to provide the contextual basis for the following four sections on participants' transnational connectivity experiences. Their return experiences are demonstrated within the sub-themes of education-to-work transition, and a shift to the Chinese academic system. In the third section, I illustrate how participants endeavoured to legitimize their prior learning, including knowledge and lived experience, through transnational academic connectivity. In the fourth section, I demonstrate, under the theme of community of practice, how participants sought mentorship, engaged in various forms of learning communities, and acquired collective support through transnational academic connections, and how these factors contributed to their sustained academic growth. In the fifth section, I unfold my findings regarding the interplay between transnational migration and participants' lifelong learning. Finally, I present how internationally educated returnee academics engaged with diasporic Chinese academics in research collaboration.

Motivations for Return

Participants in my study reflected on their experience in returning and finding jobs in China. Four people, or one third of my participants, indicated that the primary reason for them to return to China was to fulfil the obligation stipulated in the sponsorship contract with the Chinese government as a condition for the participants to be eligible for government funding for their doctoral studies abroad. These four people were all female academics. Among them, one participant considered this reason as the only one that resulted in her return to China. The other

three female academics explicated that their decision to return was also a choice made out of consideration for family reunion.

Another three participants, including two female and one male participant, referred to family reasons as their top consideration when deciding whether to return to China. They returned either to be able to stay with a husband or fiancé, or to take care of their parents.

Interestingly, three out of the four male participants in my study indicated that their return was primarily for career-related purposes. Andy indicated that it was almost impossible for a foreigner like him to find a job in a Japanese university as an academic faculty member. He recalled that he would have at best obtained a job as an administrator in a university, which would turn him away from his aspired career as a professor. In the same vein, Tim believed that his career prospects in the United States were unfavourable. After gaining both his master's and PhD degrees in the United States, he aimed to secure a job as a university teacher or researcher that would match his academic qualifications and experience, so he returned to China to pursue his career goal. GZ indicated that returning to China was for the convenience of his research on Chinese affairs. According to GZ, distance would always be a hindrance to his research if he worked in other countries. That being said, he mentioned that he also received a job offer in Holland, which he declined because the contract conditions were not quite satisfactory to him. Meanwhile, two female participants indicated that their primary reason for return was to find a job. Nick intended to return and work in higher education. Jasmine came back to China together with her husband, both looking for jobs. In general, therefore, except for those who were obliged to return, participants in my study returned mainly for either work or family reasons. All of these various reasons are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Primary Reasons for Return to China

Participant	Reasons
Nick	To return and work in higher education
Grace	Family
Stella	Contract obligation
Barbara	Contract obligation; Family
GZ	Research needs
Sophie	Family
Clara	Contract obligation; Family
Tim	Work in higher education
Rick	Family
Liangna	Contract obligation; Family
Jasmine	Work; Family
Andy	Work in higher education

Note: Based on author's findings.

Before their return, they had spent most of their time abroad during a four-year or so period of studies in the PhD program. About half of them also completed a two-year master's program or a one-year exchange program abroad before they continued with their academic sojourns at the doctoral level. One participant, Nick, studied in her second Master of Arts program while pursuing her first overseas PhD degree in Belgium, after having completed both a master's and a doctoral degree in China. Another participant, Andy, actually received all his postsecondary education in Japan. Thus, all of my participants had in-depth experience in a

foreign academic culture and academic system. As Tim put it, "I have had enough taste of the U.S.".

A number of participants expressed the same feeling toward the host countries where they pursued doctoral studies, and explained that these feelings partly supported their decision to return to China after graduation. Compared to the reasons to return to China, participants seemed to have more leeway in choosing the institutions where they would like to work. They mentioned their preference for Beijing because of its strategic advantages in terms of geographical location, and favourable incentive policies at Beijing's universities to hire internationally educated returnee graduates. Half of them intended to return to their alma maters in Beijing, and four of them, that is, Nick, Grace, Stella, and Clara, actually did return to their respective former educational institutions. Barbara's initial employment plan was to secure a position in her alma mater, but she had to change her plan because a new recruitment policy in her alma mater prohibited the employment of existing faculty's dependents. Sophie's plan was also to target the university where she had completed her master's degree, but it did not work out, as her alma mater did not have a suitable job vacancy that year. Other participants indicated that Beijing was their priority destination for work, and that they went for the first job offer they received.

In addition, a key theme emerged as regard to returnee academics' choice of their potential employer. Seven out of the 12 participants articulated that they valued the "platform" their employers could offer. According to participants' explanations, platform referred to the university or the faculty's academic strengths in terms of its standing and reputation, as well as the opportunity for academic communication, recognition, growth and career advancement. Grace gave an example of how university A's platform has enabled her to maintain academic connections with her host country of doctoral studies:

69

The platform university A offered is an important factor. If I went to work in a whatever small university in Shandong Province, I don't think they would have any interest in collaborating with me. You can't deny it.

The platform also meant the endowment of reputation and social standing due to affiliation with the institution, as Sophie pointed out:

It feels good to have your professional affiliation. You have your own professional title and an institution you belong to. It makes academic networking more convenient for me. University B offers a quite high platform. It helps when I introduce myself to others. It marks a transformation of my social role and makes me feel somewhat more on an equal footing with my supervisor and former colleagues.

A platform can be supportive and conducive to academic growth. Conversely, a defective platform can contribute to returnee academics' inadaptation. Rick, for example, did not think highly of his current platform in China:

Some universities place much emphasis on disciplinary development and make effective efforts to this end, yet others may not care much about disciplinary development, and such a platform will make academics feel uncomfortable working there. My current university, unfortunately, doesn't offer a desirable platform for me.

From their comments, it can be seen that participants' perceptions of their institutional platforms can be about the institution's existing academic standing, as well as the support it can offer for the faculty's further development. In the following section, I illustrate, through participants' experiences of academic adaptation, how they developed their perceptions of their academic platforms.

70

Academic Adaptation

All of the 12 participants in my study indicated that they experienced various problems in transitioning and adapting to a different academic culture when they returned to work in China after graduation. Going back to work in their country of origin, even for those who returned to their alma maters, did not turn out to be a smooth experience. Some of the salient themes in terms of academic adaptation are discussed below.

Education-to-work transition. The process of adapting, or, to be more exact, re-adapting to China's academic environment was complicated by the concurrent process of identity transition from a student to a knowledge worker. Although most participants gained some experience as teaching assistants or research assistants when they were PhD students, it was the first time for all of them to hold full-time positions to teach and research. Since teaching and research was part of the job, accordingly, they were expected to teach and produce research in order to retain their jobs and gain promotion. As more internationally educated PhD graduates choose to return to work in China, recent returnees have had to accept harsher conditions for their tenure-track contracts than their predecessors, in order to retain their employment.

Both Clara and Liangna from university C mentioned that they were bound by a six-year "promotion or leave" (*feisheng jizou*) tenure-track contract, which meant that if they failed to get promoted to associate professorship within six years of their employment, they would be dismissed. Their work performances would be assessed predominantly by scholarly publications, in terms of both quantity and quality, every three years during this six-year trial period. However, most of my participants did not have a single journal article publication before they started their current work. They explained that, during their doctoral studies, their research was focused on writing their own dissertations, and many of them considered their PhD programs to be still a

71

period for systematic training in theories and methodologies. As Sophie reflected on her study abroad experience in Hong Kong:

> I took a lot of courses during my PhD program. Students were required to take these courses on theories and on methodologies. They taught you both qualitative and quantitative research approaches so that now I can conduct both qualitative and quantitative research. I think it is very important to take courses during the PhD program. The professor would give you very detailed instructions on how to conduct a research study from the beginning to the end.

Jasmine also provided some comments on her learning experience in the PhD program, especially in relation to scholarly publishing while pursuing doctoral studies abroad:

> I didn't publish while studying abroad [in Canada], not during that period. Basically it was because I went abroad to study in my PhD program directly after graduation from my master's program. At that time, and because it was quite some time ago, there was no pressure to publish…. The program didn't say that it is mandatory to publish during the PhD program…. At that time, I changed my focus of study from English Language and Literature to Education so I took a lot of courses. I was still learning during my PhD program…. At that stage, you were still a student so the priority was on learning or knowledge accumulation…. That was a stage when you just learned how to conduct a complete study.

Despite the fact that most participants in my study did not have publication experience during their PhD programs, they were immediately required to publish upon employment. They suddenly realized the importance of publications to their academic career. In the case of Tim, the utmost priority for his career development was getting published, as he explained:

72

A university teacher's work is divided into three parts, that is, teaching, research, and social service. From my understanding, the most important part for a university teacher should be research because it affects your promotion and it determines whether you can stay in this university or not.

Meanwhile, teaching was commonly considered as a basic requirement that did not hold much importance. Clara noted that:

If you teach good lessons, others might at best say something like "oh you taught well", but nobody really cares if you teach well or not.

However, this did not mean that the participants preferred research to teaching. As Liangna, a lecturer in French explicated:

Presently, I am groping my way along and I have too much teaching load so my time for research is very, very limited, but I like teaching, I really do. It's just that research is the stepping stone. If you can't perform well in research, you can't even have the right to teach.

Liangna was required to teach for 12 hours a week during the term when she was interviewed, but she still admitted that she loved to teach. Like her, Barbara, who was in her second year as an assistant professor in university B, also felt the pressure of publication. Her comments nicely capture how the early-career researchers' adaptation process is intensely affected by the pressure to publish upon employment:

I feel that the academic culture in China is a bit more utilitarian. It's probably because I didn't have work experience in China before I studied abroad and I didn't have the pressure to publish for the entire period of my PhD program in the UK. They only required that you complete a good dissertation. And then after I returned and started to

73

work here, I immediately had to face the reality that your colleagues would tell you that there are requirements for getting professional titles. Besides, some of my peers and those who are only a little older than me have already had more publications than me. When they are doing research, they would give more consideration to where to publish or whether the article could be published, but when I was doing my PhD, I was more concerned about what topics or questions I was interested in. I think this is a significant aspect of adaptation.

Anxiety due to the demanding pressure to publish was prevalent among my participants, although all of them confronted the negative feelings on a positive note. Participants from university C were most concerned about their research productivity as their desired jobs as university teachers were at stake. As Liangna remarked, the publication requirement for her was rigid and demanding:

For an academic in Foreign Literature, it is not like Economics, Commerce, or any other related disciplines. It is relatively easy for them to publish, but it is very hard for us as we have a very limited number of journals for publication…. Publishing in CSSCI level journals is quite a demanding requirement, so it makes academics anxious. Sometimes haste makes waste…. For international journals, there are probably only two or three in my field where, if I publish, my papers would be deemed by my university to be recognized publications, but those are the top-level international journals. Publishing in those journals is a hard nut to crack, even for my supervisor.

In order to survive her six-year tenure-track contract, Liangna tried to target Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI) journals, the Chinese counterpart of SSCI journals, as well as the select international journals recognized by university C. However, her attempts to

publish in Chinese journals were in vain. Her manuscripts were turned down without any feedback or comment, a rejection that she believed to have aggravated her feelings of anxiety. She had no idea whether she was refused because her manuscripts needed improvement, or because those journals did not need manuscripts at the time.

In addition to work pressures to publish, some of the newly employed academics also mentioned that they had to adapt to a workplace culture that was different from what they had experienced as PhD students in their respective countries of study abroad. When studying in Hong Kong, Sophie felt that she was embraced by a group of 20 to 30 like-minded PhD students. They called each other colleagues rather than students. Sophie's relationships with her supervisor and colleagues were quite equal, as in her own word, she was working *with* them. They shared an open workspace where they had frequent communication with each other. However, becoming an entrant in her current employment in Beijing, she was more aware of the hierarchical relationship in her workplace:

> Although China is becoming internationalized, we [overseas returnees] fared awfully. We are pressed to the bottom…. In terms of academic capacity or anything, I don't believe that we are actually inferior. We don't really suck. It's just that the whole system [in China] doesn't actually encourage people like you, overseas returnees, to return. In the eyes of the bosses, or in their circle of discourse, where they take the lead, they would feel "well, you can publish in English, but so what?" They would say "wow, good for you!" And then they would not care to read a single word of your article because they don't understand what you wrote at all…. I find that many overseas returnees are marginalized. We actually become the marginalized population in Chinese academia, you know? This is pathetic.

Many interviewees pointed out that they used to have plenty of opportunities for exchange and learning from other academics when they were doing their PhD programs, including various seminars, workshops, invited lectures, conferences as well as meetings with their supervisors. The academic atmosphere was vibrant and free. Whereas, many of them admitted that the academic atmosphere in their current workplaces was less intense. For Rick, this meant fewer academic activities. In Jasmine's case, her faculty would also host invited lectures at times, but as professors in her faculty have quite different research foci and diverse research interests, she felt that such lectures had limited relevance to improving her own research. For Grace, the underlying reason behind this gap in the academic atmosphere lay in an emphasis of power distance in Chinese academic culture.

> We have hierarchical power relations. This sometimes exerts pressure on people. You can't openly criticize or discuss an issue. It is rather difficult to do so, especially with the seniors, so communication or cooperation is not that straightforward. You are subject to a parenting-style administration. Another issue is that Chinese universities are more bureaucratic. Sometimes, it makes people exhausted. Everyone is extremely busy, but doesn't seem to realize any substantive achievement in the end. They are just busy filling out various kinds of forms.

Grace admitted that because she did not have the time, energy, or the ability to handle all the administrative work, which she was expected to do all by herself, she was unwilling to invite foreign experts to her department for academic communication. Recalling the experience of an invited lecture, she commented that as hosts in China, the Chinese were concerned more about "face work" than real work, a situation that made her really sad. In view of this, she was afraid to invite her PhD supervisor from the United Kingdom to her department just to see his beloved

student occupied with non-academic trivia every day. She concluded that what made her reluctant to adapt to life in China was the stark contrast between a clamorous process of internationalization, and a lack of self-reflection on what was really gained in this process.

Similarly, Rick from university C also held that the academic culture in Chinese universities is weak, a circumstance to which he felt unaccustomed. He pointed to three issues. Firstly, academics spend most of their time on trivial administrative matters and office politics, which distracted them from their own research. Secondly, teaching and research are mismanaged. According to Rick, both teaching and research were managed by non-academics who did not really know teaching or research, leading to a conflicting relationship between the two. Thirdly, funding support was very limited despite a high expectation of research productivity. On the one hand, the department could not provide adequate funding to encourage students to attend academic conferences and engage in other academic activities. On the other hand, professors were not as well paid as their counterparts in the United States. Thus, they could not focus on their research because they had to resort to other means to provide for the family.

Shift to the Chinese academic system. In addition to adaptation issues that are more related to the transition from education to the workplace, there were also issues brought about by a different academic evaluation system in China.   Many academics in my study believed that the Chinese academic system values highly the efficiency of researchers' research output, pushing them to find ways to publish with speed. Teachers from university C, for instance, are required to have at least one publication each year. Rick regarded this practice as pursuing short-term benefits without long-term vision. He pointed out:

The university would like to see a large number of publications in a very short period.

However, every publication needs to go through a certain cycle. In China, they don't take

this lead time into consideration because a lot of professors still consider publication in China, which is faster than publishing internationally. Whereas, publishing in international journals requires anonymous peer review of one round, two rounds, and possibly three rounds. In this case, the time for publication will be much longer…. In the US, they have publication requirements for a certain time frame, but not for each year like that in China.

Andy, associate professor in English, further explained the implications of such a push for quick publication. During his PhD program in Japan, he was rigorously trained in a particular field in English language studies. The field is not applied research and demands enduring dedication from the researcher. He had great passion for his research, but after working in China, he had to research something else which was more practical in order to fulfil the annual publication requirement:

> The gap between a developed country like Japan and a developing country like China is evident when you see that Japan dares to keep a group of researchers to conduct research which has no practical use and which is neither gaudy nor fast. Besides, such research is actually rather difficult to conduct. In China, no one dares to conduct such research because we have to publish one article each year. For research that takes a long time, you can write a simple survey report, or something more seriously like a thesis, both of which count as one publication. However, the two types of publications are not of the same level [of difficulty], but in China, there is just a single solution for all. Nowadays, no one in China conducts research that is hard, time-consuming, with no practical interests. You can't blame people for seeking quick success and instant benefits. It is the academic environment in China that forces people to make this choice.

78

Further examination of Andy's experience reveals another issue in regard to the necessity to cater to a different academic evaluation system in China. In order to meet the annual publication requirement, Andy had to change his focus of research to more acceptable fields in English language education in China. He indicated that for the first three years upon his return to China, he had been conducting research in the area that he had pursued in Japan as a PhD student, but none of his papers was recognized in China. In contrast, before return, he had already built his reputation as an academic in his field in Japan, and received recognition in terms of publication. Andy admitted that he learned to be "smart" in China because he could no longer hold his job if he held on to his previous research:

> [English language education in China] doesn't even open this door for you. Actually, it's because our English education system is not complete and we don't have [the conditions] to complete it. Sometimes, our system is even against completing it…. Under this circumstance, I changed my research direction to something interdisciplinary to apply my expertise in other disciplines, to do something more practical. In fact, the level of difficulty dropped for me this way, but, ironically, I gained my space.

Although Andy gained space in the Chinese academic system, he admitted that he had been falling behind his Japanese peers because they have been making sustained progress in what they have always been doing.

According to Andy, there were no more than 10 academics in his particular research field in China, which is also evidence of his claim that his research can hardly gain recognition in China. In comparison, Nick from university A made an even greater change of research direction from Maths education to Chinese education. This was mainly because she was employed by the department of Chinese Studies. Nick received training in Educational Measurement and Statistics

from a top 150 university in Belgium. She was used to applying those methods that she had learned to research about students who have difficulty in learning Maths. But instead, she was expected to contribute to a research gap in Chinese education with the research methods she had mastered:

> This is a huge shift for me…. It took me a long time [to adjust] because of this shift. I was recognized through publications on Maths education in international journals, but after returning to China, I have to research about Chinese education, thus I can only publish papers about Chinese education. It took me a long time to manage such a change.

> This is a case where the individual academic's learning trajectory had been affected by the needs of her collective. An examination of Nick's academic resume reveals that she was gradually shifting the focus of her research from Maths education to Chinese education, with the most recent Chinese publications dedicated to research on Chinese literacy. As she noted, she could not put Chinese education aside and simply concentrate on publishing her own research on Maths education because her students depended on her to teach about Chinese education.

Although not everyone deemed this shift of research focus as a significant issue, as Grace and GZ, for instance, only gave a passing mention of it, it was found that such a shift inevitably belittled the importance of the academic achievements and resources gained by academics in their host countries of study abroad. As a result, many of them demonstrated that they had to re-establish themselves and seek to develop new academic connections.

For some participants, adaptation to the academic evaluation system in China also necessitated reframing research topics in project funding applications, and accommodating to student needs in teaching. Jasmine's statement provides a good illustration:

I felt that Chinese academia has a different research orientation or perspective from that abroad. When I just returned to China, I introduced my PhD research to my Chinese colleagues, who believed that my research topic was very micro. It did sound micro…, but this topic had theoretical value…. That was why my paper was published in a prestigious journal. However, my colleagues in China could not understand why I bothered to research such a small topic. Sometime after my return, when I was writing proposals to apply for government-funded projects, I still framed my topics to be small at first, but then I was given advice that the adjudication committees would deem it worthless to conduct research on such small topics in long-term projects.

Barbara also mentioned how the Chinese academic evaluation system affected her choice of research topics:

In China, you'd better not touch upon sensitive topics. I would say there are restrictions on particular research topics. In terms of research orientation, the West attaches greater importance to cultural studies. Especially in the UK, there are many researchers who are interested and are committed to cultural studies, whereas in China, there is a predilection for practical studies. When I just returned, many people believed that I must have had difficulty applying for projects in China because I told them I was doing cultural studies. In China, people are more concerned about topics like national image building. For the sake of one's academic growth, I think I may have to cater my research topics to the trend in China, but in the UK, there's no problem at all if I basically follow my own academic interests…. I didn't give up completely on what interested me more. On the one hand, for practical purposes, I also applied for projects on national image building…. On the other hand, I still explore topics that would interest me personally, topics of more vitality.

As to the situation with regard to teaching in China, Tim believed in the importance of

the Chinese context:

My previous teaching experience in the United States is instrumental to my current

teaching practice in China. Even now, I would use some slide decks that I used before,

although you definitely need to incorporate relevant Chinese contents to update those

slide decks…. As to the course textbooks, of course you are certainly using foreign

textbooks…but oftentimes, you need to be aware that you can't only talk about things

abroad, as for undergraduate students, they are more familiar with what is happening

around them. Therefore, it is better to make some connections with the Chinese reality. In

the first place, there are remarkable differences between China and the United States….

You have to be aware of particular situations in China when teaching students.

For GZ, who returned from Holland, doing academic studies back in China was not

simply a matter of adaptation or minor adjustment. Instead, it was a process of re-learning a

whole academic system. He believed the differences in academic life between China and Holland

were fundamental:

The differences in academic practices originate from a divide in schools of thought. The

theoretical emphases, research paradigms and research foci in Holland are completely

different from those in China…. When you change your theory, all that follows will

change, too…. Another important distinction is about contextualization. Taking

Chinese studies for example, you don't need to do much about contextualization if you

write for the Chinese readers. Yet, for readers in English-speaking countries, you will

have to inform them why this circumstance has become an issue in China. Even if you

apply the Western theories to conduct research about Chinese issues and publish one

82

hundred percent in English, your writing will be totally different in many details…. Thus, you will feel it difficult to adapt upon return, especially if you have stayed abroad for a long time…. For people in Social Sciences and Humanities, you will take a considerable period of time to adapt…. No matter whether you can adapt or not, you certainly need to re-learn a whole set of new practices in this new academic environment…. Frankly speaking, I didn't adapt well.

One accompanying manifestation of their efforts to regain academic recognition in China was publishing in Chinese. This issue was particularly noticeable among participants from university B. Sophie placed a language shift as the foremost issue she encountered while adjusting to the academic evaluation system in China, but she was proactive in addressing this issue:

I have started to write in Chinese. I write in both [Chinese and English], actually. One Chinese paper, one English paper, another Chinese paper, and another English paper. Just like that…. In China, if you want to be known in academia, you have to write papers in Chinese. You must publish quickly so people know oh you wrote this…. You can't find the right route to articulate your ideas about the development of China's social sciences with your English mentality. It's completely different from the Western education that we received.

Barbara also noticed that the Chinese academic evaluation system is designed in favour of Chinese publications, but unlike Sophie, she seemed to be inclined to accommodate herself more to the evaluation system in China:

Our institution doesn't actually include publications in English for work evaluation. So for me, my native language is Chinese. The time cost for me to write an English paper is

way over that for writing a Chinese paper. Actually, many of my colleagues are good at academic writing in English, but in view of the evaluation criterion that English papers don't count for promotion, I will choose to publish more papers in Chinese if I aim to have more publications. Writing in Chinese is certainly more efficient to accomplish work requirements.

Compared to university B, the situation in the other two universities involved in my study seems different. Stella, who had been working in university A since return in 2012, shared her experience of how she continued to write in English:

I put English writing on hold for the first couple of years after return. For one thing, I was involved in many research projects; for another, there is an annual publication requirement here in China, but English publication takes quite a long time. Then, it was from the year before last year that I started to pick up my English writing…. Our department encourages teachers to publish in SSCI journals. One SSCI paper can possibly equate to several Chinese papers. Meanwhile, Chinese papers are becoming harder to publish than before, actually, because competition has become fierce. There are only a few journals and normally papers should be submitted to CSSCI journals. You have to spend so much time and energy even in writing Chinese papers. I'd rather make more efforts to write a good English paper and submit it to an SSCI journal so as to add more value to my paper. This is mainly due to work requirements. Besides, this is also my own pursuit for academic advancement. I do aspire to publish papers of higher quality and at higher levels.

Clara, who has been working in university C since 2015, admitted that the university formulated specific requirements for English publication for internationally educated returnee teachers:

> We are required to publish in international journals. The university issued a list of journals categorized as A-level or B-level. Usually I would target high at first, to A-level journals, but my paper could be rejected, so the publication cycle is relatively long. Currently, I don't have any English publication yet. Chinese publications should normally be targeted to CSSCI journals, but a Chinese publication isn't quite helpful for fulfilling my work requirements, so we are not quite enthusiastic about publishing Chinese papers.

Clara's statement found an echo in Rick's experience. According to Rick's academic CV and his clarifications in the interview, all of his papers published upon return to China were written in English with co-authors who were his PhD colleagues in the United States. He did not publish in Chinese at all and neither did he seek to do so, as he admitted.

Among the 12 participants in my study, seven of them mentioned the SSCI at least once. It seemed that publishing in SSCI journals was an important driving factor and work target for my participants. Clara provided me with a handbook of selected international journals recognized by university C. This list could also be retrieved from university C's official website. Here there were a total of 712 international journals categorized by discipline and ranked by level of importance from type A, A-, to type B. In addition, the list stated that other international journals included by SSCI, SCI, and A&HCI databases, that were not listed in this handbook, are considered type C. According to its title, this handbook was used as the criteria for research

rewards. Clara mentioned that in order to have her papers recognized, she basically followed this institutional handbook to target potential journals that were highly recognized internationally.

Similarly, there was a handbook of selected Chinese core journals, which Liangna followed to target potential journals for publication. The journals included in this handbook were also ranked by importance from type A, B+, B, to type C. Liangna pointed out that she could refer to journals in the category of foreign literature, where there are a total of six journals with one type A journal and five type C journals. The small number of recognized journals in her discipline is in stark contrast to the number of journals in Economics, ranking top in the handbook with a total number of 74. This finding supports Liangna's view that it was hard for her to publish because of the small number of journals recognized by the university. With regard to international publications, there are around five journals in French that she could target, all of which are A&HCI journals, the counterpart of SSCI in the disciplines of Arts and Humanities. Therefore, publication in such highly recognized international journals is by no means easy for Liangna. As she also noted that one international publication equals two publications in Chinese core journals, or CSSCI, it can be presumed that such a reward policy would motivate Liangna to strive for publication in international journals.

The chase for publications in SSCI journals seems to be the same across different campuses. Stella from university A acknowledged that she would not consider publication in non-SSCI journals because a paper published in a non-SSCI journal equals a Chinese publication in the process of evaluation. In light of this, she believed that it was a waste of time and energy to publish in non-SSCI journals. This is a particular situation for researchers in China, namely, to target only SSCI journals in English publications, given that, as Stella noted, foreign scholars can

and do publish in non-SSCI journals. Stella believed this poses a relatively higher publication requirement on Chinese scholars.

According to Stella, apart from an institutional orientation toward SSCI publication, what also affected the way Chinese researchers cooperate with their counterparts abroad, was the requirement on authorship. In order for a Chinese researcher's English publication to be recognized, he or she has to be the first author of the paper, a condition that could possibly limit Chinese researchers' opportunities for international collaboration and presence in international academia through publications as non-first authors. Nonetheless, Stella believed that it was unlikely for scholars from other countries to proactively make a request for collaboration with Chinese scholars, as foreign scholars already have a multitude of potential research partners right around them who are more competitive than Chinese scholars in terms of English proficiency and disposable academic resources.

In general, due to a different academic evaluation system in China, many returnee academics found themselves entrapped between an international academic system in which they were trained, and the Chinese academic system in which they were presently placed. The different statuses of academic adaptation can be epitomized by the interview statements by Sophie, GZ, and Andy. As a recent returnee researcher, Sophie commented:

> You have to make a choice of whether you will play the game in China or not….
>
> Currently, I find myself trapped in between. I don't know what to do.

With more experience after returning to China, GZ seemed to be clear about his way out of this dilemma:

> I think it is important to figure out the respective expectations from each related party, and then you can keep a balance in the middle like riding a horse. After understanding the

disparities in expectations, you can make some adjustments and choices in terms of what

you have to do, what you can choose to do, and what you are relatively free to do…. I

know this adaptation process is certainly going to last. Despite all that, if you want to

settle in China and dedicate yourself to research, you will have to take this process into

consideration, strike a balance and conciliate possible conflicts.

If examined from the aspect of the time he has spent in China since his return, GZ's

perception of trying out strategies, and believing that he could strike a balance can be seen as a

reflection of his experience at a specific stage of this experience. Andy, however, with eleven

years of work experience after returning to China, illustrates a case where a balance was kept but

at a personal, academic cost:

Right now, I can manage to keep up with what my old-time colleagues in Japan are

researching, but if you let me conduct that research, [I can do equally well], but, well,

right now I can't turn back to my previous studies. This is a contradiction.

Legitimization of Prior Learning

Legitimization of knowledge. Many participants admitted during their interview that

their connections with their host countries where they undertook their doctoral studies were

maintained naturally rather than deliberately, because such academic connections represent the

academic traditions in which they were trained. In the words of Liangna, they were her *shicheng*,

which means inheritance from the teacher. Many academics in my study believed that

connections with their supervisors, course teachers, oral defence committee members, as well as

peers in the PhD studies, are important people who have influenced how they would conduct

research. The academic traditions they received through their PhD studies have determined the

academic routes they are to follow. As Andy illustrated:

88

I didn't think about how to deliberately utilize my transnational academic connections.

Since I grew up, in the academic sense, in that academic environment, my perceptions

and my knowledge structure were learned and established there. Therefore, if I have any

inquiries, it is normal for me to turn to my teachers and colleagues [in Japan] for help.

On this issue of the academic traditions they received through their PhD studies, Sophie

shared her understanding with that expressed by Andy:

Why would you not keep these connections? On top of it all, your academic route is

already like this. It is probably all set and you are rooted to this route. For example, your

research interests and research directions are probably all set and you just need to move

forward along this line.

Rick's experience serves as a perfect demonstration of this proposition. He admitted that

he was basically following the same route as he was in the United States. His academic CV

showed that he had been collaborating only with former colleagues in the United States since

returning to China, and this strategy seemed to serve him well as he had been successful in

publishing in a number of English journal articles and had been promoted as an associate

professor.

However, it is important to note that the prerequisite for one to continue on his or her line

of academic tradition, as indicated by GZ in the interview, is that one's research after return to

China still has relevance to a certain degree to his or her previous training. In Nick's case,

because she diverged from her previous training and research area while in Belgium, she realized

that her connections with her host country for doctoral studies, particularly with her supervisors,

had limited influence on what she was doing then in China.

It was found that connections with host countries for doctoral studies also provided an avenue for returnee academics to continue with research, which was recognized only, or better, outside of China. Sophie indicated that her research was not recognized in China because there was no such research direction in China, and very few people were able to discuss this topic with her. According to her academic CV, Sophie had had three publications since returning to China in 2017, including a book and two journal articles, which were all written in English and published outside of China. Her co-worker, Barbara, also provided evidence during her interview that backed up Sophie's statement. According to Barbara, Sophie continued to publish in Hong Kong because doing so was considered to be in recognition of her academic capability by her peers, although English publications would not be considered in an institutional evaluation for a career promotion. Like Sophie, GZ also continued to publish with foreign publishers after returning to China, as he believed that some topics are only suitable or publishable outside of China. Barbara was also open to English publications outside of China. She maintained that she would take the suitability of her research topic to the publication scope of potential journals as a major consideration, regardless of language or location for publication.

Legitimization of knowledge was also achieved through maintenance of memberships with academic institutions in their host countries for doctoral studies. Both GZ and Andy indicated that they were adjunct researchers affiliated with their alma maters, and many others still held memberships with academic associations in their host countries for doctoral studies.

Legitimization of lived experience. Liangna indicated that her connections with France, her host country for doctoral studies, provided her with a possible backup plan for her academic life. She spent a total of six years in France, including one year of exchange in her second year of a master's program and five years in the PhD program. Both her master's thesis and PhD

dissertation were written in France. She taught part-time as a Chinese teacher for three years while pursuing her PhD degree. Therefore, she had built professional connections not only with academics in her major in French literature, but also with faculty teaching Chinese in France. Before returning to China, she also obtained local qualifications to teach in universities in France. Despite the fact that she had successfully published during her PhD study in France, she didn't have any papers accepted for publication after returning to China. Liangna plotted out her plan thus:

> It's been one and a half years [after return]. Yet, I have published nothing. This is my situation. I will continue to work for three more years and then it will be almost four and a half years. At that time, I will consider if I will stay or leave. If you give me three more years and my effort still turns out to have been in vain, it will not be my issue. Because my research was recognized in France, I won't consider it my problem in China. At last, I will consider changing a platform, changing my academic direction or a career plan.

Maintaining connections with the host countries where they went for doctoral studies was also a way of legitimizing returnee academics' social capital. Sophie pointed out that her connections in Hong Kong helped her feel that she was able to contribute to her institution's internationalization agenda:

> China's academic evaluation system encourages you to publish in English, because English publications are regarded as the institution's achievement. The institution wants to become more international so it encourages scholars to publish internationally, although the leaders won't read those English articles. In this case, my transnational academic community is able to help me serve the institution's purpose. In addition, many academics in China, especially those who have no study-abroad experience, are actually

91

eager to make connections with overseas counterparts like my colleagues in Hong Kong and become affiliated with overseas academic institutions. With my connections, therefore, I can serve as a bridge and build a network for scholars in mainland China and Hong Kong…. It makes me feel that I'm not a stranger here and that at least I'm not without any good.

Similarly, many returnee academics in my study tried to legitimize the value of their academic connections gained abroad by creating opportunities for communication between Chinese and international academics. Apart from establishing various means of informal introduction as intermediaries, some returnee academics made more formal initiatives, the most common form of which was an invited lecture by their PhD supervisors or colleagues. Sometimes, as in Liangna's case, such transnational social capital was incorporated into routine teaching practice: Liangna collaborated with her former co-workers, in the Chinese department of the university where she used to teach as a part-time Chinese teacher, to find language learning partners for her current Chinese students majoring in French in university C. Others sought to establish even more formal partnerships at the institutional level. GZ, for example, admitted that he had been asked to accompany leaders in his department to visit a number of universities, including his alma mater, in Holland a couple of times, with the purpose of establishing formal institutional partnerships. However, such initiatives were easier said than done. According to GZ, although both parties shared the intention to cooperate and engaged in discussions, there were too many details that could not be worked out at once, and institutional partnership had not yet been achieved.

Returnee academics did not always seek legitimization of their prior knowledge and lived experience on the part of their current institutions. For some academics, it was rather out of a

personal recognition of their own beliefs. For instance, Grace, Liangna, Jasmine, Barbara and Sophie mentioned that one reason for them to maintain connections with their PhD supervisors was their respect for their supervisors, their erudition, personality and earnest scholarly attitude. As Grace explained, it was out of the Chinese cultural belief of reverence for one's master. Meanwhile, Jasmine noted that because she was grateful for her supervisor's profound influence on her research, she always sought for ways to repay her supervisor by inviting her to China for lecture and communication. Likewise, Nick also mentioned that she would strive to provide something good for her supervisor when she fared well:

> I would try my best to win over a good opportunity for him, such as a keynote speaker invitation. Yet, my resources are limited, so it has taken me a long time to have such an opportunity.

Community of Practice

Mentorship. Participants in my study unanimously confirmed their need for sustained mentorship. Many participants continued to seek advice on research and ask for comments to improve their English manuscripts from their PhD supervisors. Particularly for recent returnee academics, it seemed fairly natural for them to consult with their supervisors because they were still revising their dissertations for publication. Both Tim and Clara mentioned that as the publication period was relatively long in the United States, their dissertations were still under peer review when they returned to work in China. Jasmine indicated that mentorship is especially necessary for an early-career researcher. For the first couple of years after her PhD graduation, she continued to send her manuscripts to her supervisor and discussed with her supervisor her current research projects and recent research plans when her supervisor came to China. Furthermore, many returnee academics admitted that they needed to communicate with their

93

PhD supervisors and former colleagues abroad for a number of reasons. If they came up with new research ideas, they would like to explore them with experts. For information about research development in international academia, they would have to keep abreast of influential researchers' recent publications. For some returnees in my study, their PhD supervisors were among the most important researchers in their respective fields. Therefore, following the research updates of their supervisors was indispensable. They would also need to share information about conferences, publication and funding opportunities. Besides, they could acquire assistance in publication by keeping in touch. For returnee academics whose PhD supervisors were editors for SSCI journals or have wide academic connections, these connections could provide easier access to international publications.

However, as opposed to mentorship from their PhD supervisors, participants mentioned more about how the lack of it in China induced them to turn to their community of mentorship from their host countries of doctoral studies. Jasmine lamented her lack of mentorship in China:

I don't have a community for mentorship in China. I did my master's program in China, but my learning and resources were limited at that time, compared to my [domestically educated] colleagues, who probably have many senior fellows. Together with their supervisors, they have formed a steady academic community, but for us returned from abroad, we don't have it.

Liangna seemed to feel alone in China's academia even more intensely:

I tried to submit a couple of manuscripts for publication in China, but I think it is very difficult.… It should be the same, either in China or in other countries, that if you don't have the connections with the editors, it will be very difficult. I don't know if it's because of the quality of my paper.… There's no one to guide me.… In France, however, my

supervisor will help me. He has research projects in France. He thought of me and recommended me into his team. I have two supervisors, actually. The other supervisor is writing a book and he would like me to be responsible for the part related to China and so I did. It's relatively easy in France…. In China, I didn't do my master's program in Beijing and I should be the second graduate with a PhD degree from my alma mater in China. Therefore, I don't have a community from the same supervisor or university to rely on, I don't. I think mine should be a very exceptional case. If I did [have a community in China], my return experience should have been easier because I could invite others to my research team and others would tell me how to conduct projects and things like that.

It turned out that Liangna's case was not exceptional at all. In contrast, Barbara was luckier than Liangna and Jasmine as she acknowledged that her senior co-workers offered guidance to her and acted in a role akin to a mentor. She mentioned that her department head gave her a lot of suggestions on work and life when she just started working in her current institution, but she also admitted that peers who had just a few more years of work experience than her provided her with even more direct help, such as guidance on the conferences to attend as well as the journals to consider for publication, but it seemed that such connections were not strong enough for her to regard her relationship with those co-workers and leaders as that of a community.

Learning communities. Although it seemed that returnee academics were excluded from academic communities by domestically educated academics, some returnee academics indicated that they still managed to form their own communities. Such communities could be comprised mostly of returnee academics. For instance, Sophie mentioned that she had a community that

consisted of a small number of co-workers who obtained their PhD degrees abroad. She acknowledged that because the community members shared experiences as internationally educated PhD graduates, they had a lot to communicate with each other, which made her feel relieved. Sophie also pointed out another community of returnee academics in China, which is a WeChat group where they would share various kinds of information such as job vacancies, academic writing techniques, and scholarships, etc. Like Sophie, Clara also believed that in China, her academic community was basically formed by returnee academics, and that their shared study-abroad experience facilitated communication between community members.

Participants in my study also recognized the importance of their communities being formed based on their respective research fields, which, for these returnee academics, were transnational. Sophie noted that she has a community of just round 20 people, including her PhD supervisor and colleagues. She would take the lead to organize conference panels, calling on her community members to share papers so that community members could go to the conference together. She also pointed out that she would regularly attend weekly reading clubs and other monthly study sessions online that was organized by her PhD supervisor and attended by the supervisor's current and former students. Andy mentioned that he had an academic community in his research field in Japan that primarily comprised his supervisor and former colleagues in Japan. He would constantly keep contact with them for discussion and communication. Meanwhile, he had a very small group of a community in China with the community members conducting research in the same field as his Japanese counterparts. Yet, as Andy pointed out, these communities were rather personal. They were very loosely formed out of shared research interests and personal connections.

Apart from relatively small and personal learning communities, most participants acknowledged that they belonged to large, institutionalized communities as well. Such institutions were referred to as academic associations where they held memberships. Some returnee academics indicated that they still went to conferences organized by their academic associations as a way to maintain connections with their host countries for doctoral studies. However, there were a number of issues related to these kinds of institutionalized learning communities.

One issue, as mentioned by Sophie, was that the Chinese academic association was quite isolated from associations in the international academia. There was not much connection or communication between the two. Given this situation, some participants believed that the opportunities for them to be known internationally could only be gained by proactively getting into contact with academics abroad.

Another issue, identified by Andy, was that there was not even an institutionalized association in his field in China. As a result, Chinese academics in his field had no organization to tie members together and promote the advancement of their research. In contrast, there was a considerably large association in Japan through which academics could pass on disciplinary knowledge through generations. This difference also disrupted communication between the Japanese and Chinese academics, as Andy realized, because although he made efforts to build a bridge for communication by inviting his Japanese counterparts to China and introducing them to the Chinese academics, the Japanese seemed to hold the Chinese academics in contempt.

A third issue was pertinent to the academic conference as a learning community. It was noted that although a conference provides a good opportunity to learn about the advances in your field, it is not necessarily an effective space for establishing connections for research

collaboration, particularly with regard to large conferences. Based on her experience, Barbara believed that networking in conference is quite skin-deep, whereas research collaboration requires more in-depth understanding, friendship and trust than making a simple acquaintance. Echoing Barbara, Jasmine noted that further communication following the conference is needed if cooperation is desired, because an initial contact at a conference does not leave any deep impression with a large conference attendance. Therefore, according to Jasmine, a conference is just a starting point toward academic cooperation. Furthermore, Nick believed that communication in conference is also affected by each other's academic standing:

> If you are not on an equal footing with the scholars you meet in the conference, they don't have to bother communicating with you. Before you become academically strong yourself, they don't need to build connections with you…. If you don't have a paper in the other scholar's field at all, I don't think the scholar will show much interest in you.

Other issues related to an international conference as a learning community was generally concerned about funding. It was noted that membership for some international academic associations is prohibitively high, affecting returnee academics' intention and ability to access those learning communities and maintain transnational academic connections. What has aggravated the situation for them is a lack of institutional funding for attending international conferences. Therefore, more often than not, they have to rely on other means to keep connectivity with the international academia, including following overseas academics in virtual communities such as Academia.edu and Research Gate, and subscribing to important international journals. Grace and Jasmine, who had both returned to China for over five years and were promoted to associate professorship, were able to access even more learning communities for them to maintain connectivity with international academia. Grace was editor for

an SSCI journal in the United Kingdom and editor for another non-SSCI journal in Hong Kong. Jasmine was an anonymous reviewer for several international journals in which she published her own papers.

Collective support. Nick's statement demonstrated that publication is a sign of academic power and that power relations affect returnee academics' academic growth. My study reveals that collective support is one of the reasons that returnee academics maintain connections with their host countries of study abroad. Sophie compared her transnational academic community and the community in her workplace in China:

> Our [transnational] academic community has developed a supportive mechanism. Yet, in China, it is an oppressive mechanism. Under this mechanism, if I hold the authority, I will monopolize the resources, and others will have to follow my orders and work under me. This is not good because we are not on an equal footing. If there is a supportive mechanism, more opportunities will be released on this platform, and because we are tied together, we will have academic cooperation, research projects, and a lot more possibilities to grow together. This tragic situation in China brings about difficulties for us newcomer young professors to maintain an academic community. Even if we do manage to maintain a community, we will face a hard time because we don't have the resources.

Reflecting on her past learning and current work experience, Sophie concluded that it is important to establish an academic community. It is not only because through the community you can unfold possible cooperation, but also that you will have the power to resist injustice and augment your voice.

For Andy, the transnational academic community provided support for him to sustain his research:

My supervisor encouraged me to be positive. He said that I could not give up. He suggested that I could continue to follow research in the Japanese academic system and that he would offer me some opportunities. He said that although this research takes time, I have to believe in my ability to do it. At the same time, I could extend my research a little bit to cover something that was so-called comprehensive, which I would also have as my edge. This pathway was inspired by my supervisor. It was good suggestion.

In this way, Andy gained opportunities to conduct research on what he was keen on, and most importantly, he picked up confidence and momentum to grow academically. He acknowledged that in the long run, the collective support he received would be a positive push for his academic growth.

Meanwhile, Clara pointed out that collective support was necessary to help her accomplish her work target and develop her academic career:

In terms of teaching, they would share teaching resources for my reference. This is useful because a lot of textbooks I use are imported from the US. It helps to make my teaching more internationalized. In terms of research, they are better informed of the latest developments as they are right in the U.S. academic system and they have many academic conferences. Therefore, they have more information and more connections than us…. Publication is a mandatory work target. For newcomer returnee teachers, we certainly hope to publish in international journals. Overseas scholars definitely have a better reputation than us. They have built a reputation and they have more experience. Therefore, if we can cooperate with them, we can certainly benefit a lot and it

will be easier for us to publish…. The academic circle is not very large. If you are still cooperating with your supervisor, he will naturally introduce you to his extended connections in your field. Gradually, you will be able to establish and maintain connections for academic communication no matter where you are, because people already know you.

In summary, transnational academic connections enabled returnee academics to maintain access to mentorship and learning communities, providing strong collective support for their academic praxes and career development. Such support is indispensable to uplift a collective voice, promote dialogue, increase researchers' visibility in international academia and build up confidence to carry on with their intellectual interests.

Migration and Lifelong Learning

Further migration and lifelong learning. Whether desirable or not, higher education institutions in China offered a platform for returnee academics to officially start their academic career. However, it was noted that for sustained academic development, returnee academics also had to gain a platform for themselves. They had to build and persistently elevate their platform from which they could dialogue equally with other academics. Participants in my study remarked that publications contributed to the most basic prerequisite for gaining such a platform for academic communication and collaboration. In order to stand on an equal platform with more experienced experts for further academic development, they also had to publish high-level papers with good quality. Therefore, academic development and platform elevation are mutually interdependent. In order to sustain and improve one's academic competence, many returnee academics in my study indicated that they had or intended to further migrate, despite it being on a short-term basis, to other countries for research and training.

Working abroad on a short-term basis as a visiting scholar was commonly mentioned as a way for returnee academics in my study to engage in lifelong learning. In fact, Rick was right on his visiting sojourn abroad at the time the interview was conducted. He perceived that scholarly visits abroad allowed him to concentrate on his research. Many others admitted to have plans to go on a scholarly visit abroad. Interestingly, despite connections with their host countries of doctoral studies, most participants expressed that their preferred country for a scholarly visit was the United States. Grace explained that she hoped to attend conferences in the United States because funding policies in her institution were directed in favour of academics' visits there. Stella would like to pay a scholarly visit to the United States because the mainstream methodology of quantitative research there matched her current research needs. She used to conduct qualitative research in Australia but had changed to quantitative research after working in China. Therefore, she would not consider the British Commonwealth nations as priority destinations for her visit as she believed these countries possibly all had a methodological preference for qualitative research. Barbara deemed her most ideal plan would be her PhD supervisor taking her to the United States for a one-year scholarly visit. Among my twelve participants, GZ was the only one who actually had the opportunity to work for higher education in the United States. Although it did not work out due to the issue of time difference between China and the United States, he was invited to teach an online course in an American university. Jasmine explicated that her priority destination for international conferences would be the United States rather than Canada, her host country of doctoral studies:

> I did not consider going back to Canada to attend conferences because Canada is too
>
> close to the US. Besides, the US is too strong in the field of English language studies.
>
> The best academics and the best conferences are probably all in the US. Therefore, since

the opportunity for us to visit abroad is very limited, say once or twice per year, I would definitely choose the most influential conference to reach out to the most academics…. However, there will be a writing workshop in UBC this year, which I am considering to attend. It is a very specialized workshop and it happens to be in Canada. Actually, I would like to go back to Canada if opportunity permits because I have a Canada complex. Although academics in Canada are not as prolific as those in the US, they work conscientiously with pace. Therefore, I'm willing to go back to visit Canada and maintain connections with academics there.

Like Jasmine, many returnee academics took their host countries of doctoral studies as a starting point from which they would explore other parts of the world with the United States ranked as a commonly desired destination. Yet, there were also some exceptions. Liangna, for example, mentioned that for short-term scholarly visits, she would consider either France or Canada since they are the major host countries of native French cultures.

Lifelong learning for returnee academics in my study took many forms. A conference was a commonly mentioned space for learning, but was not considered of significant importance compared to other forms of learning, including a visiting scholar's program, an intensive learning program, and a scholarship program.

Jasmine admitted that she benefited a great deal from her visiting scholar's program to New Zealand, where she accomplished two co-authored manuscripts, each with a professor there. She considered her collaboration with her two supervisors in New Zealand as being very successful with the three of them contributing to the manuscripts with their respective expertise. The two supervisors also provided a lot of help in the revision process. Besides, one of the supervisors, who is a Chinese immigrant, introduced Jasmine to a WeChat group where she

could get in touch with other well-known academics in China and other countries, and many journal editors as well. She considered it as a most valuable resource space, which she would not have known otherwise.

Meanwhile, GZ engaged in lifelong learning through attending an intensive course for half a month back in Holland. He noted that since his alma mater in Holland boasts a very competitive international standing in his field of research, he would naturally return to this university to learn about the most recent research trends. Other forms of intensive training, including workshops and exchange programs, were considered by Barbara to be more effective than large conferences for international academic communication. After returning to China, Barbara had been to Macau for a three-day roundtable workshop of 20 academics and to Taiwan for an exchange program of eight academics for around half a month. Common to the two forms of training, Barbara illustrated that having the opportunity to develop trust and friendship is essential for establishing a relational basis for long-term collaboration.

Sophie had the opportunity to join a scholarship program which provided funding and academic training for her to further advance her academic career:

Early this year, I was granted a scholarship funded by a university in the US…. You know I have very low salary working here. I don't have money to do research. At first, I didn't even have the money to pay for the incentives for people who participated in my interview. Luckily, a senior colleague kindly offered to help me with funding, but then I felt I could not always rely on colleagues for funding, right? With this scholarship, I felt much easier financially. On the one hand, I can continue to write my papers. I can revise my PhD dissertation and have it published. I can also initiate new projects with this scholarship. On the other hand, this program doesn't just provide money. It offers a

104

training program for the scholarship recipients, including training on research theories, methods and skills. Through joining in an academic community in this program, I can build up my confidence and gain momentum to move forward. This is awesome.

Lifelong influence of migration experiences. Returnee academics' lifelong learning experiences bring the significance of human connections to the fore. In the examples illustrated above, most academics gained opportunities for lifelong learning with help from their PhD supervisors, who either provided information about the training programs, wrote reference letters for application, or joined the training program together with the research participants for communication. It can be seen that the human connections established in their host countries of doctoral programs is an important asset gained through cross-border migration, and such connections have a lifelong impact on returnee academics' learning trajectory, along with the knowledge and credentials acquired.

From a utilitarian point of view, returnee academics' supervisors and colleagues continue to collaborate with them on research. Both Grace and Liangna, for example, indicated that as they and their supervisors mutually appreciated each other, their supervisors continued to approach them when they have good opportunities for research and publication. Supervisors also served as an intermediary between returnee academics, particularly early-career academics, and more experienced researchers. Liangna explicated that she would make new connections with established researchers through her supervisor and she believed that if those well-known researchers are interested in collaborating with her, they would get in touch through her supervisor as well. Yet, many returnee academics deemed that the relationship with their supervisors is more humane than utilitarian. They commonly expressed the view that their academic pursuits were inspired by their supervisors' zest and scholarly spirit toward research.

Some of the returnee academics also shared interests with their supervisors in art and music, leading to solid friendship beyond academic needs. Besides, as Sophie pointed out, the way her supervisor cared about students would to a large extent influence how she would supervise her own students:

> The giving, care, and generosity my supervisor gave students posed a huge impact on me. She is an upright and kind person and she always thinks much of students. She is very supportive…. I have heartfelt admiration for her. Such admiration will influence my attitude toward my students.

Barbara also explicated how the lifelong influence of her migration experience to the United Kingdom is more than just utilitarian:

> I have reaped academic achievements during the past few years in UK, but more importantly, I have gained a literary or artistic connection with my supervisors. I think it was with humanistic feelings that I came back to China. However, after my return to China, it felt like abruptly jumping into a realistic environment from a quite romantic and artistic environment. To some extent, my connections with the UK have an adverse effect on my adaptation to China. Yet, I still believe in the power that my life in the UK gave me. With deep understanding of art and literature, you'd feel that you are not afraid of facing any kind of life. You would feel that you are strong inside, or that your world is intact…. Compared to my co-workers who already have remarkable academic achievements, I would prefer my own life, because I can sensitively capture many more in society other than the academic. The years in UK have made my mind more elastic, so my ability to deal with the outside world has become stronger than before.

Transnational migration between returnee academics' host countries of doctoral studies and China, as well as further migration to other countries and regions for research and training have also benefited returnee academics in that they could learn to combine resources both inside and outside of China to satisfy different academic needs. For example, both Tim and Sophie mentioned that they were excited to be able to mobilize such a huge data field as China and theorize the data with foreign theories and analytical frameworks, and this kind of work they believed would generate interesting results; they would tend to seek opportunities for funding, learning, collaboration and publication both inside and outside of China; they would refer to their knowledge and understanding of the academic systems in China and their host countries of doctoral studies to guide further migration, career choice and way of living. In a word, returnee academics are able to take advantage of their comparative advantages in different spaces to achieve academic as well as personal growth. The connections returnee academics maintained in their host countries of doctoral studies would possibly become, as GZ pointed out, an organic constituent of their own academic network.

Chinese Academic Diaspora Cooperation

Among the 12 participants in my study, 11 returnee academics had some form of academic connections with overseas Chinese academics. Andy was the only one who did not encounter any overseas scholars of Chinese origin. He explicated that most Chinese he knew in Japan and the United Kingdom, where he went as a visiting scholar after return to China, were studying either business related or science related majors. Very few people would choose to study the English language, particularly a niche research area in this field. For others who had connections with the Chinese academic diaspora, three returnee academics had only occasional and loose connections. Such connections were almost all made through conference encounters.

107

In this instance, returnee academics' communication with their Chinese diaspora counterparts was limited to occasional consultation and invitation for an invited lecture in China at best. Liangna indicated that she would like to invite overseas Chinese academics to join her project team, but she was not able to do so because those academics had exceeded the age limit for projects under the young scholar stream to which she was eligible to apply. This stream of projects requires that team members are under the age of 35 or 40.

Meanwhile, eight returnee academics in my study had engaged in more formal and active collaborations with members of the Chinese academic diaspora. Six out of the seven returnee academics collaborated with their supervisors and colleagues in their host countries of study abroad, while one returnee academic had collaborated with her supervisor for her visiting scholar program in a third country. Returnee academics acknowledged that the most in-depth form of collaboration was co-publication. This information is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Participants' Connections with Chinese Academic Diaspora

Participant	Chinese Diaspora Connections	Relationship	Type of Connection
Nick	Yes	Friend known through conference	Invited lecture to China
Grace	Yes	PhD colleague; Well-known professor	Project cooperation with colleague; Consultation with professor
Stella	Yes	PhD colleague	Co-publication
Barbara	Yes	Friends, acquaintances	Non-academic communication
GZ	Yes	PhD colleague	Journal co-editing
Sophie	Yes	PhD supervisor	Various forms of cooperation
Clara	Yes	Friend known through conference; Professor for PhD research assistantship	Co-publication
Tim	Yes	Former colleague	Co-publication
Rick	Yes	PhD supervisor	Co-publication
Liangna	Yes	Friends known through conference	Not much further connection
Jasmine	Yes	Supervisor for visiting scholar program	Co-publication
Andy	No		

Participants all indicated that they had enjoyed collaboration with overseas researchers of Chinese origin. Benefits for collaboration with Chinese academic diaspora can be summarized to include language flexibility, cultural proximity, tacit understanding, and East-West connectivity. Although returnee academics had been trained in English communication and writing, they still believed that sometimes they may not be able to express themselves accurately in English, or may not be able to understand others completely in English communication. Therefore, they appreciated the fact that they could communicate with overseas Chinese academics in both

English and Chinese to minimize confusion that language may incur. In the meantime, their shared cultural background helped to build a harmonious interpersonal relationship. In addition, overseas Chinese academics usually had a good knowledge of the Chinese context, so they would understand the issues that are particular to China. Furthermore, members of the Chinese academic diaspora were more like an intermediary for returnee academics to maintain connectivity in international academia. On the one hand, they knew about China. On the other hand, they knew about the academic system in their countries of settlement. Therefore, they were considered by returnee academics as valuable connections to help them with international publication. For these reasons, Stella concluded that she felt very comfortable collaborating with Chinese academic diaspora and she intended to get in touch with her former colleague, an immigrant Chinese teaching in the United States, if she decided to go abroad as a visiting scholar. It was also noted that returnee academics perceived their collaboration with Chinese supervisors and Chinese colleagues as a bit different. Due to a distance in terms of power between them and their supervisors, some returnee academics felt more in control when they collaborated with colleagues. Collaboration with supervisors was more of a consultative nature, while collaboration with colleagues required more initiatives from collaborators to push their work forward.

Based on collaboration experiences of returnee academics in my study, the advantage of collaboration with members of the Chinese academic diaspora was more on the convenience of communication, but the findings also revealed that shared language and cultural identity tended to promote academic communication and collaboration among Chinese academics. It is worthy of note that no one in my study mentioned that their overseas Chinese counterpart collaborated with them out of any incentive programs directed at Chinese academic diaspora implemented by

the Chinese government. Like collaboration with academics of any other cultural background, collaboration with members of the Chinese academic diaspora also required time to build friendship, trust, and mutual recognition of the collaborator's academic competence. Meanwhile, Tim pointed out that overseas Chinese academics usually had an established transnational network of their own, which meant that usually they would not seek to collaborate with researchers outside of their network, unless the researcher was introduced through the overseas Chinese academics' known associates. Besides, Tim perceived that overseas Chinese academics would tend to believe they already know about Chinese issues themselves. Tim believed that these were the reasons why there were no overseas Chinese academics reaching out to him for collaboration. Instead, he believed that foreign academics may be more interested than overseas Chinese to collaborate with academics in China, because they were curious about what was happening in China. This posed opportunities for Tim to open up potential international collaboration.

In summary, my study reveals six major themes in the data. Firstly, except for those obliged to return to China after completing their PhD studies abroad as specified in the sponsorship contracts they signed with the Chinese government, participants in my study returned for either family or career-related reasons. By contrast, they had more leeway in choosing their preferred institutions of employment according to their perceptions of the career platform their potential employers could offer. Secondly, participants in my study experienced a series of adaptation problems upon return to China. Their experiences were complicated by the concurrent processes of education-to-work transition and adaptation to a different academic evaluation system in Chinese academia. Thirdly, my participants maintained academic connections with their host countries of doctoral studies because their knowledge and research

were only, or were better recognized outside of China. They also sought to legitimize their lived experiences and social capital gained in their host countries of doctoral studies. Fourthly, participants in my study were engaged in diverse communities of practice in the transnational setting for sustained academic growth, but the formality and intensity of their engagement in those learning communities varied widely. Fifthly, transnational academic connections enabled participants to further migrate abroad for teaching, research, and training. Such lifelong learning experiences promoted their academic as well as personal growth. Last but not least, most participants engaged in research collaboration with diasporic Chinese academics. Due to language flexibility, cultural proximity, shared tacit understanding, and diasporic Chinese academics' East-West connectivity, participants in my study enjoyed the ease of communication when collaborating with research partners of Chinese origin.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Reflections

In this chapter, I first delve into discussions of my research findings with respect to my specific research questions, followed by further discussions on the transnational professional space for internationally educated Chinese academic returnees. In the section that follows, I draw my conclusions in relation to this study, where I summarize the significant aspects of concern in the transnational professional space, including aspects at the meso level, at the individual level, and from the subjective dimension. Finally, I draw my thesis to a close with reflections on the limitations of my study as well as the policy and research implications of my study.

Discussions

Maintenance and expansion of transnational professional ties. After their return to China, Chinese academic returnees in my study maintained professional ties with scholars and academic institutions in their host countries of doctoral studies through transnational learning communities, both physical and virtual. As these academics were quite occupied in their daily work of teaching and research, and there were multiple obstacles for traveling outside of China, they were only able to travel back occasionally to their host countries of study abroad. Such return travels were usually for attending an influential international conference in their respective areas of research. An international conference was commonly deemed to be a learning community, particularly useful for strengthening former professional connections, and broadening returnee academics' professional network. However, significant connections leading to substantive international research cooperation were more likely developed through intensive networking where academics could build a higher degree of trust and more lasting friendships, an indicator of more enduring, cooperative relationships. For maintenance of connections with former supervisors and colleagues, as profound trust and friendship had been established through

113

years of learning and collaboration in the PhD program, returnee academics could simply depend on communication through email, telephone, or other virtual means of communication, such as Skype or WeChat. It is apparent that modern information technology and digital communication applications have greatly facilitated Chinese academics returnees in maintaining connections with host countries of doctoral studies, and virtual connectivity has held higher ponderance than physical propinquity for returnee academics to engage in transnational communities of practice.

In terms of physical migration as a means to maintain professional connections, not only did returnee academics travel outbound for conferences, but also they invited inbound travels for academics to deliver lectures and keynote speeches in China. Such occasions, however, were rather sporadic and one-off. They were employed, in most cases, out of reciprocity for the invited academic and with goodwill to enhance international academic communication within the returnee academics' workplace. These occasions do not appear to be significantly related to returnee academics' sustained academic growth. Nevertheless, physical movement and face-to-face interactions were still quite necessary for maintaining returnee academics' presence in international academia. On the one hand, other academics got acquainted with returnee academics when they continued to regularly attend the same conferences. On the other hand, casual, small talk that seemed to be only a by-product of international conferences, intensive programs, lectures and so on were actually key to incidental learning, and to promote new ideas for research and possibilities for collaboration. As illustrated by many returnee academics in my study, when academics did not intentionally talk about any particular research in face-to-face small talk, new research ideas would usually strike them by surprise.

In contrast, when engaged in virtual learning, be it self-directed learning in learning communities such as following researchers' publications on Academia.edu and ResearchGate, or

collective community of practice such as an online reading club, communication tended to focus on the academics' intended learning objectives. Thus, incidental learning brought about by face-to-face small talk did not seem to be compensated for by the convenience of maintaining transnational connections through virtual communities. This may account for returnee academics' common yearning for, or practice of further migration, albeit short-term, to other countries as visiting scholars.

In addition, it was noted that durability of returnee academics' transnational academic connections is affected by the purpose of connection and by the intimacy of personal relationships. Connections formed for merely instrumental purposes tended to dissolve easily when the desired purposes were satisfied. Invited conference lectures were usually an instrumental type of connection. Another example, illustrated by Barbara, was when she was contacted by a student who was currently working with Barbara's supervisor. The student was looking for submissions to a journal and the two became acquainted with each other through their supervisor, but did not have other shared connections or experiences. There was not much follow-up between the two after this cooperation was completed, as the cooperation was merely for an instrumental purpose, the lack of continuation being characteristic of a transnational circuit (Faist, 2000; Faist et al., 2013).

In contrast, connections with more intimate personal relationships were more durable and lasting. Such connections could be considered as returnee academics' significant ties. Returnee academics' connections with their PhD supervisors and fellow colleagues for their PhD programs were the epitome of such connections, which were characteristic of a transnational community (Faist, 2000; Faist et al., 2013). In this situation, community members shared research interests, practices, norms and values. They would regularly communicate with each other, but frequency

115

of communication did not necessarily affect the sense of community for returnee academic members. As some returnee academics did not continue to maintain active or frequent connections with their supervisors or former PhD colleagues, but still affirmed such connections as most important transnational academic connections for their academic growth, it can be assumed that returnee academics held imagined affiliation and emotional ties with their host countries of doctoral studies, and such imagined ties sustained their efforts to follow academic advancements and research updates in their host countries of doctoral studies. Other transnational learning communities may be formed based on shared interests, experience, or identity, such as the "Survive the PhD" WeChat group. Members of such communities were supposed to maintain fairly active transnational academic ties, as they depended on each other for information and other research related resources.

In summary, maintenance and expansion of transnational academic connections revealed the various physical and virtual channels through which Chinese returnee academics maintained their presence in international academia. The density of their transnational academic connections ranged along a continuum, from loose sporadic and one-off connections in transnational circuits, to more durable and lasting transnational learning communities.

Motivations for transnational academic engagement. Individual motivations for engaging in transnational academic praxes were undergirded by a sense of disjuncture (Jarvis, 2007), but were more strongly regulated by the need for personal and institutional recognition. Many returnee academics encountered a sense of disjuncture after returning to work in China. Due to a concurrent transition from education to work, and from a foreign academic system to the Chinese academic system, returnee academics realized that they had to come up with strategies to deal with the new situation. It was revealed that returnee academics gained a lot of

116

new learning through comparing the academic cultures and academic systems between China and their host countries of doctoral studies. For those who seemed to have experienced an obvious sense of disjuncture, such as Andy, Rick, and Sophie, their connections with their host countries of doctoral studies appeared to be more close-knit and bore more profound significance to the returnee academics. For those who seemed to have experienced less significant disjuncture, such as Clara and Tim, their connections with host countries of study abroad appeared to be more instrumental, that is, these connections were for the purpose of publication. For academics who experienced disjuncture due to a change of research field, such as Nick and Andy, the displacement from their established fields of study caused them to discontinue on their path to an expert. In the sense of academic recognition within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), their career path from their host countries of doctoral studies to China was representative of a trajectory from the centre to the periphery. While groping in their new research fields, their efforts to maintain academic connections with host countries of study abroad could be deemed as an endeavour to move away from a stark periphery to a more relative periphery, where, at least, they could be recognized for their past knowledge and achievement.

Meanwhile, the need for personal and institutional recognition appeared to be a strong driving force for returnee academics' transnational academic engagements. Some returnee academics were more motivated by the pressure exerted on them from their work institutions. As each institution stipulated its measures for evaluating annual reward and promotion, as well as for evaluating tenure-track contract renewal, such as the "six-year promote or leave" tenure-track contract implemented in university C, returnee academics had to attain these mandatory goals to keep their jobs or remain at the same rate of remuneration. As pointed out by the participants,

collaboration with academics in their host countries of doctoral studies could help them accomplish their work tasks. Stella, for instance, acknowledged that she did not continue to write English papers when she had just returned to China. However, after a few years, she realized the pressure from her institution to publish internationally, so she resumed connections with her PhD supervisor and colleagues. A comparison of her academic profile with the other two returnee academics in her university revealed that she was the only one still at the lecturer level, despite the fact that all of the three participants in university A had returned to China for about the same period of time. The other two returnee academics had published internationally in SSCI journals and had been promoted to associate professors. For returnee academics like Stella, transnational academic engagements provided a platform of resources and support to nurture less experienced researchers in terms of international publications to a more experienced and more established researcher. This was particularly true for newly graduated and newly returned early-career academics such as Clara and Liangna, who could be considered as newcomers in their academic practice. Transnational academic engagements provided the platform for them to obtain the necessary mentorship to grow from newcomer to expert, an advancement which was critical for their academic growth and, consistent with the community of practice model's recognition of the importance of identity formation as integral to practice and learning, identification as a scholar.

Besides, the need for personal recognition motivates returnee academics to participate in transnational academic engagements not only in the form of publication in international journals, but also in various forms of lifelong learning within transnational learning communities. Thus, academics had different expectations from transnational academic engagements. For those who had a relatively short-term goal, the focus of their transnational academic engagements would incline toward international publication. Whereas, for those who had a relatively long-term

orientation toward their life and career plan, there tended to be more transnational engagement options that could nurture friendship and broaden their horizon. Therefore, for returnee academics in my study, the motivations for participating in transnational academic engagements were not all for publication, or totally for academic growth in quantitative terms. This is possibly characteristic of researchers in social science studies, who have a relatively high concern for common values, orientations and human relationships.

In summary, through transnational academic engagements, returnee academics were able to gain transnational social capital, which could allow them to transnationally mobilize their local assets in their host countries of doctoral studies, including various cultural and social capital, to their academic work in China. Transnational migration and transnational academic engagements were a means for returnee academics to increase the transferability of their otherwise immobile human capital (Faist, 2000). They were also a means for returnee academics to configure a transnational social and professional life based on their human connections at various localities.

Influencing factors for maintaining transnational connectivity. A number of issues were identified as having affected returnee academics' maintenance of transnational professional ties. Some were related to the difficulty incurred by a time difference and long-distance travel. Others were related to obstacles to sharing common practices for research and academic collaboration. For instance, Gmail, Google Drive, Google Scholar, Dropbox and other online applications used to be the shared means between returnee academics and their colleagues for maintaining a repertoire of knowledge and resources, as well as for research collaboration when they were in their PhD programs in their host countries of study abroad. However, due to firewall blockage and internet access restrictions, sometimes Gmail messages would be blocked and

returnee academics had to buy and configure internet proxy service applications on their computers in order to be able to use the above listed online applications. Returnee academics also indicated that they had limited time to maintain academic connections because they were occupied by too many trivial work requirements in their daily routine. However, these issues were not significant influencing factors that affected returnee academics' ability to maintain transnational connectivity as they were either unmanageable, easily addressable or did not need much discretion. Instead, the study found that a platform was so profound a factor in this regard that returnee academics had to properly negotiate for a platform to maintain a transnational professional space.

According to the findings of this study, returnee academics had either articulated or indicated the importance of a platform to their academic growth. Almost everyone mentioned the platform of the university they currently worked for. A perceived advantageous platform was what returnee academics sought for when they looked for jobs upon their return to China. After working in their current universities for some time, their perceptions of the platform of their respective universities diverged. In general, returnee academics' considerations about the university platform involved the reputation, status, institutional and faculty policies for academic development, funding, academic culture and academic opportunities. The platforms of returnee academics' university of PhD studies were also mentioned, particularly when the universities or faculties were top-notch, world-class universities and faculties. In the same vein, returnee academics also spoke highly of their PhD supervisors when the supervisors were also world-renowned experts in their respective fields of study. Therefore, the reputation of the supervisors was also considered to be an integral part of the platform of returnee academics' alma mater universities for PhD studies.

A platform for returnee academics does not only include what is indirectly transferred to them by the platform of their universities, but also what are directly associated with or gained by returnee academics themselves. Such a direct platform would include one's professional titles, memberships, affiliations and academic publications. Returnee academics pointed out that they had to earn a platform for themselves in order to be on an equal platform with international academics for communication and collaboration.

Perhaps the direct and indirect platforms together could affect returnee academics' ability to offer, employ, or create a platform for maintaining transnational academic connectivity. For instance, participants in my study mentioned that they had to offer a good platform such as a keynote speaker position in order to attract international academics to come to their universities to facilitate communication. Therefore, a platform that is comparable to the international academics' reputations is necessary for the maintenance of returnee academics' transnational connectivity.

The compatibility of returnee academics expectations for sustained academic growth, and the capability of their respective universities to offer such a platform would affect returnee academics' intentions to change a platform. In terms of changing a platform, returnee academics in my study had cross-border migration on their mind. There were possibilities of recurrent migration to their host countries of doctoral studies, and of sojourning to other countries for research. An undesirable platform, therefore, could become a pushing factor for returnee academics' further migration.

Examined across the three institutions in my study, it was found that in general, university A and university B provided a higher institutional platform than university C as most returnee academics from the first two institutions acknowledged that they recognized the prestige

121

of the platforms their institutions offered. In university C, however, most participants made little mention of the prestige of their institutional platform, and there were participants thinking about migration abroad or they had already gone abroad as visiting scholars because of their discontent with their current platform. In universities A and B, participants were generally more concerned about earning their platform directly, particularly through international publications. None of the six participants in universities A and B had been abroad for an extended period of time as a visiting scholar after their return to China. Yet, the three participants in university B had been engaged in various short-term visits or learning programs abroad. The six participants in universities A and B had quite varied avenues to maintain transnational connectivity and they were able to access these opportunities in their institutions in China. In addition, apart from more personal academic connections, many participants in these two universities sought to establish transnational academic connections at the institutional level, that is, through institutional partnerships. It appeared that in general, participants from universities A and B had a stronger ability to manoeuvre their platforms to maintain transnational connectivity. However, it is worth noting that two female participants from university A had pregnancy plans, and two female participants from university B had returned to China quite recently, both of which may have affected their intentions to travel abroad for academic purposes. Between the two institutions, university B seemed to have the most relaxed academic environment, as the three participants had little or no required teaching tasks. They had more time to devote to their research. Although newcomer returnee academics in university B had no institutional funding support, and received little recognition from senior colleagues for their previous publications in English, the institution exerted relatively less pressure and fewer requirements on publication. Therefore, participants from university B had more discretion as to research and other academic activities. In university

A, there were more requirements on publication and more of a teaching load, and communication within faculties seemed to be lacking and obstructed. The influence of the institution seemed to be quite significant in affecting returnee academics' ability, intention and practice of transnational academic connection.

In contrast, more participants from university C resorted, or intended to resort to migration to maintain transnational academic connectivity and improve their direct platform. Three participants had already been abroad as visiting scholars after returning to China. Among them, Andy, with the longest stay in his current faculty in China, gave himself a five-year period to make efforts to migrate to his host country of doctoral studies. Similarly, Liangna gave herself a time limit of three years to consider whether to re-migrate to her host country of doctoral studies. Besides, avenues for transnational academic activities tended to be more on a personal level with almost no mention of efforts to build institutional partnerships. It seemed that participants from university C were more dependent on their personal or direct platform to maintain transnational academic connectivity and to compensate for the inadequacy of their institutional platform with the reputation of their graduating university, help from their PhD supervisor, and previous international publication, in order to increase their opportunities to earn or change their platforms.

Moreover, when considering a change of platform, it seemed that the possibility to change to another institutional platform abroad was delimited by the existence of space for immigrant academics in relevant countries of destination. Liangna, for example, based her three-year migration plan on the premise that she could obtain a teaching job in France. She had identified a niche career for herself in France as a Chinese teacher. Since she is a native Chinese speaker, had taught Chinese part-time in both China and France for several years, and acquired

teaching qualifications in France, she seemed to be well prepared and well positioned to shift to a new platform in France. However, it seemed quite unlikely for returnee academics to re-migrate to work in the United States, as one of the reasons for academics to return from the United States was the lack of space for immigrant academics to teach there. Yet, it was interesting to note that the United States was the most mentioned destination country for short-term scholarly visits among participants in my study. It seems that this country provided more space for short-term learning of more experienced academics than for fresh graduates' long-term employment. Moreover, the recognition of the United States as the centre of global knowledge creation and dissemination seemed unparalleled by other countries. The recognition was also further supported by Chinese higher educational institutions, as funding policies were formulated to encourage Chinese academics' scholarly visits to the United States. When there was little space for changing platforms in the academics' host countries of doctoral studies, academics tended to hold on to their current platforms in China, a move that would enable them to transnationally access research and possibly teaching opportunities as well in host countries of doctoral studies or other countries such as the United States.

In summary, a platform, including a direct personal platform and an indirect institutional platform, was a significant influencing factor for the maintenance of transnational connectivity. At the same time, the way in which returnee academics mobilize their respective platforms could be heavily affected by the institutional culture and regulation. The ability to change platforms transnationally is affected not only by one's cultural and social capital, but also delimited by the existence of occupational space in the destination country.

Impacts of transnational academic ties and networks. On an individual level, transnational academic ties and networks could provide agency for returnee academics to

maintain their momentum and competence for scholarship. They could mobilize such ties and networks to find inspiration for new research ideas, receive consultation opinions from peers and senior academics, participate in lifelong learning programs, and garner research funding. Therefore, such transnational ties and networks expanded the space for returnee academics to grow academically. Nevertheless, the degree of impact could vary from person to person. For those with limited transnational ties and networks, the impact on individual agency was also limited. For those with a broader scope of transnational connections, the transnational ties and networks were becoming an organic part of their academic life, providing a high degree of flexibility. In addition, the impact of transnational ties and networks was delimited not only by the breadth of transnational connections, but also by their depth. As the study found that relationships with PhD supervisors and colleagues, usually leading to co-publication partnerships, were the most profound and significant type of transnational academic connection, it often affected where and what resources returnee academics could access. For academics during their early stage of research career, such as Sophie and Liangna, their supervisors' reputation and extended connections facilitated them to reach out to other experienced researchers and resources. For academics with relatively limited domestic connections in China, such as Andy and Rick, their research lives were even more related to their transnational academic ties with supervisors and colleagues. For academics thinking about long-term career and life plans, such as Liangna and Barbara, transnational academic connections had deeper meaning for their lives beyond academia and sustained their visions of alternative ways of life.

On the academic community level, transnational networks, be they personal or institutionalized, increased solidarity among community members. By gathering together through the medium of conference, or through virtual means such as WeChat groups, returnee

academics found the platforms to be places where their voices could be heard with others of similar interests and experiences, adding meaning to their academic work. In this way, transnational networks were like chains, linking returnee academics with overseas academics tightly together. In the meantime, transnational networks had impact not only on returnee academics, but also on domestically trained Chinese academics. Through returnee academics as intermediaries, domestically trained Chinese academics could also reach out to overseas academics more conveniently. In this way, transnational networks served like bridges, linking the relatively immobile Chinese academics with overseas counterparts.

Moreover, transnational academics ties and networks promoted transferability of knowledge across borders, impacting both returnee academics and their overseas partners. Some participants in my study, such as Clara, Tim, Sophie and GZ, indicated that working in China allowed them to take advantage of this huge data field and to obtain first-hand data. They could then consolidate the theoretical knowledge and methodological skills with the Chinese data, a process that helped to legitimize the research training they received in host countries of doctoral studies through publication in international journals. Tim pointed out that international readers are increasingly interested in Chinese issues, but it was quite difficult for researchers outside of China to obtain Chinese data. It could be presumed that returnee academics could take the advantage of being in China to have better chances of publication in international journals, maintaining and establishing new connections for research collaboration with overseas researchers. Examining Chinese issues through Western theoretical lenses also ignited new research possibilities. Correspondingly, overseas researchers interested in Chinese issues were able to reach the most updated Chinese data and gain a better understanding of Chinese issues through explication from Chinese returnee academics.

In addition, transnational academics' ties and networks helped to strengthen transnational connections with diasporic Chinese academics, and could affect the migration flow of academics of Chinese origin. Except for Andy who did not encounter any diasporic Chinese academics in his field of research, all participants in my study had established informal or formal connections with overseas Chinese academics, and most of them had been engaged in research collaboration, showing that academics of Chinese origin tended to establish connections with each other due to tacit cultural understanding, language flexibility and cultural proximity. It was also revealed that academic connections with supervisors and colleagues of Chinese origin tended to be quite enduring as returnee academics also shared common research interests with these diasporic Chinese academics. Besides, diasporic Chinese supervisors were highly reputed for their thorough understanding of both the East and the West, for their extensive connections across borders, as well as their personal virtue and rigorous attitude toward research. Through collaboration with diasporic Chinese academics, returnee academics were able to gain recognition from their diasporic counterparts and to be introduced to diasporic Chinese academics' extended trusted connections.

In the meantime, diasporic Chinese academics also gained recognition from returnee academics, leading returnee academics to consider academics of Chinese origin as a priority choice when seeking future research partners and future cross-border migration opportunities. Stella's statement about her visiting scholar plan to the United States was a case in point. It is worth noting that the transnational connections between Chinese returnee academics and diasporic Chinese academics conform to the description of transnational community by Faist (2000), in terms of demonstrating close emotional and cultural attachments to each other. However, enduring transnational ties for academics could not be achieved without common

professional pursuits and academic needs. Therefore, the Chinese transnational academic community possesses the characteristics of both transnational circuit and transnational community proposed by Faist.

In summary, transnational academic ties and networks provided agency for returnee academics not only to sustain their research, but also to come up with new research and collaboration possibilities with an avenue to transfer their knowledge transnationally. They also allowed academics in China and overseas to engage in more inter-dependent academic praxes and helped to strengthen and expand the transnational Chinese academic community.

Transnational professional space. Transnational professional space between the host countries of doctoral studies and current country of settlement is a space where internationally educated Chinese academics negotiate meaning about life and their academic work. Although transnational migration and transnational academic connections are a prerequisite and also the manifestation of transnational professional space, this space is not naturally formed through them. Instead, it is a process where Chinese academic migrants endeavour to navigate between different academic recognition systems, and pursue personal and academic growth. It is a reality that internationally educated Chinese academics leading transnational lives have developed a "dual frame of spatial reference" (Faist, 2000, p. 206), which is a strategy of betterment. On the one hand, internationally educated Chinese returnee academics are a privileged group of social elites as their accumulated cultural and social capital has afforded them with possibilities to be eclectic in leading a transnational academic life; on the other hand, as their institutional platforms in China may not have lived up to their expectations, resorting to dual or even multiple platforms transnationally seemed reasonable for returnee academics as a way to avoid being peripheral or remaining junior. Being simultaneously engaged with various transnational

128

connections through platforms and learning communities in their transnational spaces, internationally educated Chinese returnee academics were constantly configuring their individualized academic communities, which are indeed "communities without propinquity" (Faist, 2000, p. 207). Transnational connections, facilitated by modern communication technology and affordable cross-border travel, blurred the distances between physical places. Yet, the gaps between Chinese and Western academic systems were still clear-cut. Internationally educated Chinese academics, therefore, had to juggle different academic recognition regimes to maintain their competence and voice in their transnational professional space. Connections with host countries of doctoral studies could offer them with practical support in this regard.

Meanwhile, practical support toward merely instrumental goals was just one type of transnational ties internationally educated Chinese academics possessed. Such "instrumental reciprocity" (Faist, 2000, p. 206) that is characteristic of transnational circuits, helped to maintain and establish rather short-term transnational academic connections with very limited long-term significance to internationally educated Chinese academics' academic growth. Often, instrumental reciprocity existed alongside more profound human connections such as common interests, friendship, trust and mutual appreciation in types of more close-knit transnational connections like a transnational community, and that could leave a lasting influence on their academic growth. In this regard, academic growth did not restrictively refer to returnee academics' quantity of publications in the short term, but also included the motivation and ability to sustain an active status in their academic pursuits, and the ability to secure and mobilize academic resources.

The fact that internationally educated Chinese returnee academics still maintained academic connections with host countries of doctoral studies, engaged or reserved the intention

129

to engage in recurrent migration both in the short run and in the long run, indicates that return migration to one's country of origin is revocable and reversible (Faist, 2000, p. 200), and that it may be just a stopping point, rather than an end point to academic migrants' migration trajectory (Guo, 2016). The time spent on their PhD programs in host countries for study abroad was a significant life stage for academics in my study, as their scholarly profile, academic tradition and the most important lifelong academic connections with supervisors and colleagues were formed there, let alone an extended period of time getting socialized in the host countries' academic and social cultures. Thus, many returnee academics had developed emotional attachments or engraved memories for the host country of doctoral studies. Some maintained connectivity in name as fellow researchers, others maintained substantive ties such as local teaching qualifications. Therefore, returning to host countries for short-term visits is very likely. Meanwhile, continued migration to other countries, particularly to the United States, is also possible. Yet, compared to short-term migration, long-term settlement to other countries required more consideration and planning than mere intention and prediction, but what is certain is that sustained connectivity to other countries is key to academic migrants' future career and life plan. Transnational connectivity affects academic migrants' intention and ability to re-migrate. The current study reveals, among other factors, that internationally educated Chinese returnee academics' transnational connectivity is informed by their significant academic ties, by institutional policy orientation, as well as direct and indirect platforms and availability of occupational space in their transnational professional space. The intensity of academic migrants' transnational academic ties varies along a continuum from transnational circuit to transnational community, depending on frequency of interaction and the degree of perceived solidarity and cohesion among members. Significant academic ties usually involve internationally educated

Chinese returnee academics' supervisors and colleagues in the PhD program, but could also include new supervisors and other research partners in close-knit transnational communities. Such significant ties, together with other illustrated factors, could affect the resources that returnee academics are able to reach, thus impacting the possibility and direction of future migration. As these factors vary from person to person, returnee academics' abilities to maintain transnational connectivity and engage in further migration also vary.

Last but not least, the study reveals that Chinese academic diaspora is an important part of many Chinese returnee academics' transnational network of academic connections. Diasporic Chinese academics usually became returnee academics' significant transnational ties and such ties are very likely to lead returnee academics into transnational communities, particularly when the diasporic Chinese academics are returnee academics' supervisors or former colleagues in the PhD program. Diasporic Chinese academics and returnee academics are likely to form significant academic ties with each other with common study-abroad experience, tacit cultural understanding, language flexibility, cultural proximity, as well as transcultural connectivity on the diaspora academics' side. When the two sides shared common interests, significant ties would naturally grow. When such significant ties grow into Chinese transnational communities, they are very likely to influence the possibility and direction of returnee academics' future migration. Returnee academics, through collaboration with diasporic Chinese academics, may have helped to strengthen and expand the transnational Chinese academic community, and to serve as a bridge between domestically trained Chinese academics and diasporic Chinese academics. However, there was no strong indication that connection with diasporic Chinese academics is more helpful to returnee academics' academic growth than that with academics of other origins simply because of the single factor of country of origin, but common language, and

shared cultural and study-abroad experience are likely to provide ease of communication during collaboration with academics of Chinese origin, thereby enhancing efficiency of collaboration.

Conclusions

The current study on the transnational experiences of internationally educated Chinese academic returnees confirms the importance of examining meso-level social ties in transnational studies as upheld by transnational social space (Faist, 2000; Faist et al., 2013). Significant social ties, particularly with supervisors and former colleagues in host countries of doctoral studies are positively related to Chinese returnee academics' intention and ability to maintain transnational academic connectivity. This finding complements a gap in research literature on transnational research collaboration in the social sciences as previous studies have focused more on transnational collaboration in science and technology for researchers of Chinese origin, and suggested that their stock of transnational professional ties is an important factor to Chinese returnee researchers' research quality and quantity. The current study has found that in the social sciences and humanities, the significance, or closeness of transnational professional ties, rather than its quantity, is more relevant for researchers' academic growth. Meanwhile, more formal transnational ties in the form of memberships with academic institutions and publishers in host countries of doctoral studies and other countries, as well as memberships with international academic associations provided means for Chinese returnee academics to access transnational learning communities.

Moreover, it is revealed that institutions where returnee academics work significantly affect the capability and extent to which they can mobilize cultural and social capital transnationally. On the one hand, institutional policies regarding reward and promotion, and funding for research and academic travel abroad have profound and direct impact on returnee

academics' academic life; on the other hand, the institutional platform, including the academic culture and the institution's academic standing and strengths, inevitably shapes returnee academics' personalized direct platform, the basis for their sustained academic growth. This meso or institutional level factor seems to have posed an even greater influence than national incentive policies on individuals' transnational academic and research engagement. Besides, it is found that returnee academics' perceived quality of institutional platform varies even when they are from the same university. Therefore, other factors including faculty and field of discipline should be taken into account in meso-level analyses. In general, it seems that returnee researchers in Economics and Finance related fields of study hold a more favourable platform than their counterparts in other fields of study in the social sciences and humanities, as they are supported with a wider range of publication choices and a clearer orientation in favour of English publication. Other fields of study, however, face more complicated situations. Nevertheless, even within the same or similar field of study, returnee academics' perceived platform still varies depending on the academic environment of their respective faculty.

From the individual level analyses, the current study also confirms a significant relevance between migrant integration and transnationality, and that transnationality can positively contribute to Chinese academic migrants' wellbeing and academic growth. Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002) classified the relationship between the two into three types, namely, linear transnationalism, resource dependent transnationalism, and reactive transnationalism. The first type of relationship refers to an integration scenario akin to assimilation theories that social ties with the country of emigration will weaken while social ties with the country of settlement strengthen over time; the second type of relationship contends that the more resources migrants acquire in the country of settlement, the more likely it is that they will maintain social ties with

133

the country of emigration, as the resources they garner enable them to do so; the third type of relationship recognizes that maintenance of social ties with the country of emigration is a result of failed integration in the country of settlement. In this case, migrants are forced to engage in transnationality against marginalization and discrimination in the country of settlement. In the current case of internationally educated Chinese academic returnees, involvement in transnationality does not seem to weaken over time as the more senior returnees also actively engaged in transnational activities. Besides, it seems likely that internationally educated Chinese academic returnees will become even more active in transnational engagement with more resources to mobilize in China as the discussions on the topic of the platform indicated. The resources will enable returnee academics to connect with other academics in international academia. Moreover, although participants in my study did acknowledge to have experienced a certain degree and aspect of inadaptation in China, they did not resort to transnationality as an alternative to integration in China. Many of them, in fact, were positively learning to fare in the new academic environment because they valued the opportunity to teach and research in higher education. Even for Rick, who only collaborated with academics abroad, it was more an autonomous choice than a forced option for him to engage in transnationality. The current case of internationally educated Chinese academic returnees connotes that the transnationalism perspective has limitations in explaining the post-return transnational experience for academics. It still considers integration and transnationality as two separate aspects. However, the experiences of Chinese academic returnees speak to the fact that transnationality is itself a process of integration. It is a two-way process whereby transnationality helps to promote integration in China and in return, better integration in China promotes transnationality. The focus of concern is not on integration to either country of settlement or country of emigration.

134

Instead, the concern is about integration within their own transnational professional space, connecting together significant professional ties, organizations, institutions and resources located in diverse physical boundaries. Therefore, as migrants' individualized transnational professional space varies, they will "follow different paths in the combination of transnationalization and integration, with different degrees of success" (Faist et al., 2013, p. 102) in the countries involved in their migratory trajectory.

In addition, as to the relationship between Chinese academic returnees' demographic profile and their migration decisions, the current study did not find significant implications of any single demographic factor to their return or further migration. It did not confirm gender, race or class as significant influences for Chinese academic returnees' transnational migration (Shan, Pullman, & Zhao, 2016). In the making of transnational professional space for internationally educated Chinese academic returnees, it is likely that the respective point in their life-course, which may be a combination of their career stage, gender and family situation, affects their decision to migrate in the transnational setting. The contextual factor of availability of occupational space in related countries may also have shaped Chinese academic returnees' migration trajectory.

Furthermore, the current study confirms the importance of community of practice and lifelong learning for internationally educated Chinese academic returnees as adult learners. It corroborates Lave and Wenger's (1991) assertion that community of practice is "an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge" (p. 98). Through transnational communities of practice, internationally educated Chinese academic returnees are able to legitimize the academic knowledge, life experience, as well as social capital they earned in their host countries of doctoral studies, which are otherwise belittled in China's academic evaluation system. Not only

135

do they find communities of like-minded academics for communication and support, but also gain recognition as experts in their respective fields of study through English publications in international journals. The findings of the current research also confirm, in regard to community of practice theories, that access to multiple learning communities is likely to contribute to academic development. In the current study, internationally educated academic returnees received mentorship to learn to become experienced researchers and they also developed a profound belief in being teachers and researchers through their interactions with supervisors. Meanwhile, the current study underscores the existence of power relations within the transnational professional space for Chinese academic returnees. It echoes the research literature, which states that even for professions that have a transnational orientation, juggling resources and activities transnationally is not without obstacles. In immigrants' socio-cultural adaptation studies, the most alarming issue is non-recognition of immigrants' foreign credentials (Guo, 2009, 2013; Ng & Shan, 2013; Shan, 2009). However, for internationally educated Chinese academic returnees, it is not their academic credentials earned in foreign universities that are denied recognition. In fact, they obtained employment in higher education in China just because of the competitive edge of their foreign credentials. Rather, it is the knowledge and thoughts themselves that are hard to be negotiated across borders. Therefore, it is easier for internationally educated Chinese academic returnees to conduct knowledge bridging between domestically trained academics in China and academics overseas, than knowledge brokering, which entails introducing foreign theories, thoughts, perspectives and academic practices for acceptance in China (Alenius, 2016; Levitt, 2001).

Finally, from a more subjective frame of perspective, internationally educated Chinese academic returnees seem to have formed a virtual transnational diaspora (Satzewick & Liodakis,

136

2007). They belong to a diaspora because they generally share emotional belonging to certain subcultures whose existences are irrelevant of physical boundaries or nation-state territories, or extraterritorality (Ma Mung, 1998, 2004). Internationally educated Chinese academic returnees could identify themselves with the academic returnee community in China (*Haigui*). At the same time, they could identify with the overseas Chinese knowledge network based on common ethnic origin. They could also identify with their personal networks of academics within their particular fields of study. Therefore, the virtual diaspora of internationally educated Chinese academic returnees acknowledges the fluidity, multiplicity and flexibility of their cultural belongings (Anthias, 1998, 2001; Ley & Kobayashi, 2005; Lie, 1995; Yang & Welch, 2010). Besides, this transnational diaspora is virtual because in the digital age, returnee academics' transnational experiences are more characterized by remittances and exchange of knowledge through virtual means and platforms, than physical cross-border migration. Their simultaneous presence in at least two countries is more often achieved through virtual knowledge engagements. Transnationality for them in the transnational professional space is their way of life and a spatial asset (Guo, 2016), and in effect, helps to strengthen inter-dependence of academics across borders in academic and research collaboration. Because of strong relational and emotional connections between members in the virtual diaspora, the durability of virtual diaspora is relatively strong, and fluctuation and variance in frequency or density of transnationality are less relevant in regard to the possible dissolving of the diaspora community. Therefore, academic growth for internationally educated Chinese academics is not just an individual pursuit. It is also a collective learning experience implicated in their virtual transnational diaspora in the transnational professional space.

Reflections

        Limitations of the current study. Due to time constraints, the current study had a relatively small sample size. Some potential participants I approached expressed their willingness to participate, yet they had to reject my invitation because they were paying scholarly visits in other countries when I was in China for data collection and they did not wish to conduct the interview via the phone. I understood that both participants and I would need to have some face-to-face conversations with each other to establish a trustworthy and harmonious researcher-participant relationship, before I could commence to record an interview and request other data. Besides, although I did strive to recruit potential participants who are full professors, the current study did not receive any response of interest from them. Actually when looking for potential participants as full professors through their academic CVs posted on universities' websites, I found there were not many full professors who were internationally educated PhD graduates. This was possibly because studying abroad and return migration of internationally educated PhD graduates was not a common phenomenon in China when they received their doctoral training. The current study, therefore, did not make an analysis about the impact of transnational academic ties to career promotion. As many participants for my study were recent returnees and early-career researchers, their perceptions about the impact of transnational academic ties to their academic development were sometimes based on assumptions about their future rather than on past experiences. I believe that with more experiences, full professors would provide more evidence to explicate the impact of transnational academic ties to academic growth. Yet, I would consider that subjective assumptions are also participants' constructed truths, which would guide their initiatives toward their perceived academic growth. Besides, due to the limited size of my participant sample, the ways of maintaining transnational academic ties

138

and simultaneous affiliations across borders identified in the current study were also limited. It is possible that a larger sample, particularly a sample with more senior returnee academics, would generate more findings in this regard.

Moreover, due to limited time and resources, the current study included only a small number of disciplines in the Social Sciences and Humanities, and the number of participants within each discipline was unbalanced. This led to a challenge with regard to generalization of the current study. For the disciplines of Economics and French, for example, there was only one participant respectively and this one participant could hardly represent the circumstances for all other returnee academics in the same field of study. The limited number of participants within a single discipline made it hard to compare and contrast between participants. Yet, as an instrumental case study, each case was studied not for the sake of the single case. Rather, it was studied to lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon of transnational professional space. Therefore, I examined each case in depth and every case was indispensable for concluding my understanding about transnational academic ties and academic growth in the transnational professional space. In addition, although the findings were based on each individual's unique experiences and perceptions, and the small sample of experiences and perceptions was hard to be generalized to other or a much larger population in quantitative terms, it indeed can serve as a reference for other studies on return migration of internationally educated Chinese academics. In other words, with detailed descriptions about each individual case and its respective institutional background, the study can be generalized in qualitative terms.

Another limitation of the current study is translation. As all of my participants preferred to conduct the interviews in Chinese, the transcriptions of the interviews were in Chinese. I analyzed the Chinese texts of transcriptions when looking for themes for the study. Translation

from Chinese to English was only made in the report of the findings in order to minimize the loss or change of meanings in translation. However, as some Chinese expressions were quite culturally-laden or were to be understood within the particular Chinese cultural context, I could not convey the participants' meanings across through a literal translation. In such cases, when I tried to present paraphrased translations in English, I inevitably co-constructed the meaning of the Chinese text with my subjectivity. I understand that researcher bias, therefore, is unavoidable in translation. Nevertheless, I have placed certain original Chinese expressions beside my English translations so that my readers could try to interpret the meaning of Chinese expressions with their own knowledge and understanding.

Implications of the current study. Based on the findings and discussions of the current study on transnational migration and transnational academic connections for internationally educated Chinese returnee academics, the study has policy implications for higher education institutions, government immigration agencies, governmental as well as non-governmental organizations promoting international academic communication and collaboration, both in China and in host countries of international PhD students of Chinese origin.

Policy implications. Firstly, as academics' sustained competence is essential for attracting international academic collaboration, higher educational institutions in China should provide institutional platforms conducive to academics' sustained academic growth. Not only should there be welcoming policies for return, but also conditions favorable to returnee academics' transnational lifelong learning. To achieve this, higher education institutions should consider promoting a freer environment for the pursuit of research, and a more relaxed regime for work evaluation. Faculties should create more opportunities for communication between faculty members to foster workplace academic communities. Besides, funding is essential for expanding

140

academics' ability to achieve academic success. Newcomer early-career researchers should at least have equal opportunity to apply and compete for research funding. A funding hierarchy based on age is unjust for less experienced new researchers. The high pressure and demand placed on newly employed early-career academics to produce knowledge work was mismatched with the funding and other support from the institution.

Secondly, initiatives can be made to form more institutionalized transnational academic communities. Although China is trying to become more internationalized, dialogue between international and Chinese domestic academic associations was quite lacking. As a result, internationalization has become more focused on the quantity of international publications, with less focus on cultivating an academic environment to grow scholars to the international standard, let alone incorporating international perspectives to Chinese academia. The result leads to a peripheral position of academics, particularly in the Social Sciences and Humanities, with theoretical orientations that are not mainstream in Chinese academia. Institutionalized transnational academic communities could be formed to promote dialogue between different academic systems.

Thirdly, as none of the participants in the current study had collaborated with diasporic Chinese funded by any high-profile financial incentive schemes for repatriating overseas academics of Chinese origin, or expressed preference for connecting with such overseas Chinese academics, the study did not find any significance of such governmental funding on individual overseas Chinese academics to returnee academics' motivation to collaborate with overseas Chinese counterparts. However, returnee academics would naturally engage overseas Chinese academics for academic collaboration when they had developed significant ties with each other. Therefore, I would suggest that initiatives to attract overseas Chinese academics to serve for

China could shift from the model of funding on the individual, to a model of funding on transnational community of practice. Creating a supportive platform in China and providing adequate funding for transnational collaboration, could motivate returnee academics to engage overseas Chinese academics in their trusted community in academic collaboration, which may lead to more substantial and effective collaboration results.

Fourthly, as many internationally educated Chinese academics had developed emotional attachments for their host countries of doctoral studies, and some had the intention to re-migrate either for short-term or long-term, and had been engaged in research collaboration or other academic activities in host countries of doctoral studies, the study revealed that internationally educated Chinese talents were also existing and potential contributors to host countries of Chinese PhD graduates. The value of internationally educated Chinese academics, no matter where they settle for the present, concerns all countries involved. Accordingly, the sustained academic growth of these talents should concern all countries involved too. Access to occupational spaces and platforms for internationally educated Chinese academics in host countries of doctoral studies will provide a congenial condition for these academics to freely develop academic competence and achieve their academic pursuits, which will in turn benefit every country involved in their transnational academic communities. The study thus calls for re-examination of host countries' immigration policies for internationally educated academics of foreign origin, particularly in terms of the academics' access to work that is commensurate with the academics' educational attainment and experience.

Implications for future research. The current study has a number of implications for future research on internationally educated Chinese academic migrants. Firstly, as the current study was conducted within a relatively short period of time, the researcher could not obtain

142

more extensive data about the institutional culture of participants' workplaces or data about participants' recurrent migration trajectories, as these could only be collected through a much longer time of interacting, observing and recording participants' transnational academic lives. An ethnographic research may serve the need to collect more data about the institutional culture in China, to examine its impact on participants' transnational migration and other transnational activities. It could also be helpful in recording and examining participants' recurrent migration after several years of working in China.

Secondly, future studies could consider investigating transnational professional space for Chinese academics with samples controlled on particular conditions such as gender, age, career stage, field of study, host country of study abroad, immigration status in host country of study abroad, or current employment institution. As the current research reveals, these factors may be significant factors affecting Chinese returnee academics' transnational experience. Therefore, it will be necessary to have a controlled sample group of participants for case studies, conducting comparison and contrast between participants, and discovering how these factors function to affect transnational migration and transnational academic community of practice. Particularly, future research can try to recruit members of a double diaspora between China and another country where academics have obtained permanent residency, in order to explore the relationship between adaptation in these respective countries and academics' transnational experiences.

Thirdly, transnational migration could be studied not just from the perspective of migrants, but also from the perspective of the relatively immobile people involved in trans-migrants' lives. I believe that if future studies could include voices from academics settled overseas who are engaged in transnational academic connections with internationally educated Chinese returnee academics, and the voices of domestically trained academics in China who

work with returnee academics in the same faculties, the phenomenon of transnational

professional space could be explored with even more depth and triangulated rigor.

References

Acar, I. H., & Ucus, S. (2017). The characteristics of elementary school teachers' lifelong-learning competencies: A convergent mixed-methods study. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 17*, 1833-1852. doi:10.12738/estp.2017.6.0082

Alenius, P. (2016). Exploring the role of migrants in transnational occupational learning processes in Estonia-Finland space. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *35*(3), 270–285. doi:10.1080/02601370.2016.1165748

Alfred, M. V. (2013). Transnational migration, social capital, and lifelong learning in the USA. In S. Guo (Ed.), *Transnational migration and lifelong learning* (pp. 72-88). New York, NY: Routledge.

Anthias, F. (1998). Evaluating "diaspora": Beyond ethnicity? *Sociology, 32*(3), 557-580.

Anthias, F. (2001). New hybridities, old concepts: The limits of "culture". *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 24*(4), 619-641.

Anthias, F. (2012). Transnational mobilities, migration research and intersectionality. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research, 2*, 102-110.

Balatti, J., & Falk, I. (2002). Socioeconomic contributions of adult learning to community: A social capital perspective. *Adult Education Quarterly, 52*(4), 281-298.

Bartley, A., Beddoe, L., Fouché, C., & Harington, P. (2012). Transnational social workers: Making the profession a transnational professional space. *International Journal of Population Research*, *2012*, 1–11. doi:10.1155/2012/527510

Basch, L., Blanc-Szanton, C., & Glick Schiller, N. (1994). *Nations unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments and deterritorialized nation-states*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and

implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, *13*(4), 544–559.

Retrieved from

http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.152.9570&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Beck, U. (2000). *What is globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beinart, S., & Smith, P. (1998). *The national learning survey, 1997*. London: Department for

Education and Science.

Bellah, R. W., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1985). *Habits of the

heart*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bentz, V. M., & Shapiro, J. J. (1998). *Mindful inquiry in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage.

Bilecen, B., Çatir, G., & Orhon, A. (2015). Turkish-German transnational social space: Stitching

across borders. *Population, Space and Place, 21*, 244-256. doi:10.1002/psp.1896

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *The handbook of theory and

research for sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York, NY: Greenwood.

Brigham, S. (2015). Mothering has no borders: The transnational kinship networks of

undocumented Jamaican domestic workers in Canada. In G. C. Man & R. Cohen (Eds.),

Engendering transnational voices: Studies in family, work, and identity (pp. 135-153).

Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press.

Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2009). *Digital diasporas: Identity and transnational engagement*. New York,

NY: Cambridge University Press.

Cai, H. (2012). Deploying the Chinese knowledge diaspora: a case study of Peking University.

Asia Pacific Journal of Education, *32*(3), 367–379. doi:10.1080/02188791.2012.711242

Cao, C. (2008). China's brain drain at the high end. *Asian Population Studies, 4*(3), 331-345. doi:10.1080/17441730802496532

Cao, C. (2009). Will China's thousand talents plan work? Retrieved from http://www.upiasia.com/Society_Culture/2009/08/11/will_chinas_thousand_talents_plan_work/5393/

Centre for China and Globalization. (2016). *Blue book of China international schools*. Retrieved from Centre of China and Globalization website: http://www.ccg.org.cn/dianzizazhi/wangfu2016.pdf

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chen, Q. (2017). *Globalization and transnational academic mobility: The experiences of Chinese academic returnees*. Singapore: Springer.

Chen, Q., & Koyama, J. P. (2013). Reconceptualising diasporic intellectual networks: Mobile scholars in transnational space. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 11*(1), 23-38. doi:10.1080/14767724.2012.690305

Chen, S., & Wu, D. (2017, March 1). 2015 nian jin 15000 ming liuxue huiguo renyuan luohu Beijing [Almost 15,000 internationally educated returnees obtained residency in Beijing in 2015]. *Caixin.* Retrieved from http://china.caixin.com/2017-03-01/101060922.html

Chen, Y. (2006, August 17). Beijing: Still a hot city for haigui. *People's Daily Overseas Edition*, p. D6.

Chen, Y. C. (2008). The limits of brain circulation: Chinese returnees and technological development in Beijing. *Pacific Affairs, 81*(2), 195-215.

Chinadaily. (2017, March 6). Jiaoyubu: Bacheng liuxue huiguo jiuye renyuan wei shuoshi yanjiusheng [The ministry of education: eighty percent of internationally educated

returnee employees are master's degree holders]. *Chinadaily.* Retrieved from

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/micro-reading/2017-03/06/content_28449402.htm

Coe, N. M., & Bunnell, T. G. (2003). "Spatializing" knowledge communities: Towards a

conceptualization of transnational innovation networks. *Global Networks, 3*, 437-456.

doi:10.1111/1471-0374.00071

Cohen, R. (1997). *Global diasporas: An introduction*. London: UCL Press.

Cohen, R. (2008). *Global diasporas: An introduction* (2nd ed.). London: UCL Press.

Coleman, J. S. (1998). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods

approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into

Practice, 39*(3), 124–130.

Dabijia, D., Abrudan, I., & Postelnicu, C. (2016). Teachers' motivations and expectations

regarding lifelong learning. *Studia UBB Oeconomica, 61*(3), 32-42. doi:10.1515/subboec-

2016-0003

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *Sociological methods*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. London: Collier Macmillan.

Dong, L. (2017, March 1). Yu bacheng liuxue renyuan xuechenghou xuanze huiguo fazhan: 2016

nian chuguo liuxue renyuan zongshu chao 54 wan ren [Over eighty percent of

internationally educated students chose to return for personal development: The number

of students studying abroad has exceeded 540,000 in 2016]. *China Education Newspaper*.

Retrieved from http://www.moe.edu.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5147/201703/t20170302_297870.html

Dreby, J. (2010). *Divided by borders: Mexican migrants and their children*. Berkeley, CA:

University of California Press.

Edgar, E., & Billingsley, F. (1974). Believability when n=1. *The Psychological Records, 24*, 147-

160.

Faist, T. (2000). *The volume and dynamics of international migration and transnational social*

spaces. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Faist, T. (2004). The border-crossing expansion of social space: concepts, questions and topics.

In T. Faist & E. Özveren (Eds.), *Transnational social spaces: Agents, networks and*

institutions (pp: 1-36). Aldershot: Ashgate.

Faist, T. (2008). Migrants as transnational development agents: An inquiry into the newest round

of the migration-development nexus. *Population, Space and Place, 14*, 21-42.

doi:10.1002/psp.471

Faist, T. (2015). *Making and remaking the transnational: Of boundaries, social spaces and*

social mechanisms (COMCAD Working Papers 132). Retrieved from Social Science

Open Access Repository website:

https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/50817/ssoar-2015-faist-

Making_and_Remaking_the_Transnational.pdf?sequence=1

Faist, T., Fauser, M., & Reisenauer, E. (2013). *Transnational migration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Falk, I., & Kilpatrick, S. (2000). What is social capital? A study of rural communities. *Sociologia*

Ruralis, 40(1), 87-110.

Feng, J. (2017, May 9). Tsinghua loses star molecular biologist to Princeton-China society and

    culture news from May 9, 2017. Retrieved from

    http://supchina.com/2017/05/09/tsinghua-loses-star-molecular-biologist-princeton-china-

    society-culture-news-may-9-2017/

Field, J. (2005). *Social capital and lifelong learning*. Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Continuum.

Fuller, A., Hodkinson, H., Hodkinson, P., & Unwin, L. (2005). Learning as peripheral

    participation in communities of practice: A reassessment of key concepts in workplace

    learning. *British Educational Research Journal*, *31*(1), 49–68.

    doi:10.1080/0141192052000310029

Gaw, K. F. (2000). Reverse culture shock in students returning from overseas. *International

    Journal of Intercultural Relations, 24*, 83-104.

Glick Schiller, N. (2003). The centrality of ethnography in the study of transnational migration.

    In N. Foner (Ed.), *American arrivals: Anthropology engages the new immigration* (pp.

    99-128). Santa Fe, NM: Sch. Am. Res. Press.

Glick Schiller, N. (2004). Transnationality. In D. Nugent & J. Vincent (Eds.), *A companion to the

    anthropology of politics* (pp. 448-467). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992a). Towards a definition of

    transnationalism: Introductory remarks and research questions. In N. Glick Schiller, L.

    Basch, & C. Blanc-Szanton (Eds.), *Towards a transnational perspective on migration:

    Race, class, ethnicity, and nationalism reconsidered* (pp. ix–xiv). New York, NY: New

    York Academy of Sciences.

Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992b). Transnationalism: A new analytical

    framework for understanding migration. In N. Glick Schiller, L. Basch, & C. Blanc-

    Szanton (Eds.), *Towards a transnational perspective on migration: Race, class, ethnicity,*

    and nationalism reconsidered (pp. 1–24). New York, NY: New York Academy of

    Sciences.

Glick Schiller, N., Calgar, A., & Karagiannis, E. (2003, July). *Simultaneous incorporation of*

    migrants. Paper presented at the meeting of Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology,

    Halle, Germany.

Glick Schiller, N., & Fouron, G. (1999). Terrains of blood and nation: Haitian transnational

    social fields. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 22*(2), 340-366.

Gomm, R., Hammersley, M., & Foster, P. (Eds.). (2004). *Case study method: Key issues, key*

    texts. London: Sage.

Guo, S. (2009). Difference, deficiency, and devaluation: Tracing the roots of non-recognition of

    foreign credentials for immigrant professionals in Canada. *The Canadian Journal for the*

    Study of Adult Education, 22(1), 37-52.

Guo, S. (2013). Economic integration of recent Chinese immigrants in Canada's second-tier

    cities: The triple glass effect and immigrants' downward social mobility. *Canadian Ethnic*

    Studies, 45(3), 95-115.

Guo, S. (2016). Living in a double diaspora: Transnational talent mobility between China and

    Canada. In S. Guo & Y. Guo (Eds.), *Spotlight on China: Chinese education in the*

    globalized world (pp. 301–318). Rotterdam, NL: Sense.

Guarnizo, L. E. (1997). The emergence of a transnational social formation and the mirage of

    return among Dominican transmigrants. *Identities, 4*(2), 281-322.

Guarnizo, L. E. (2003). The economics of transnational living. *International Migration Review, 37*(3), 666-699.

Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2006). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. New York, NY: Teachers' College Press.

Hannerz, U. (1996). *Transnational connections: Culture, people, places*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hao, J., Wen, W., & Welch, A. (2016). When sojourners return: Employment opportunities and challenges facing high-skilled Chinese returnees. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 25*(1), 22–40. http://doi.org/10.1177/0117196815621806

Hao, X., Yan, K., Guo, S., & Wang, M. (2017). Chinese returnees' motivation, post-return status and impact of return: A systematic review. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 26*(1), 143-157. doi:10.1177/0117196817690294

Harrison, D., Shaffer, M., & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P. (2004). Going places: Roads more and less traveled in research on expatriate experiences. In R. Buckley, J. Halbesleben, & A. Wheeler (Eds.), *Research in personnel and human resources management, vol. 23* (pp. 199-247). Bingsley, UK: Emerald.

Hernandez-Leon, R., & Zuniga, V. (2002). *Mexican immigrant communities in the south and social capital: The case of Dalton, Georgia* (Working Paper No. 64). Retrieved from the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies website: https://ccis.ucsd.edu/_files/wp64.pdf

Institute of International Education. (2017). *Open doors fact sheet: China*. Retrieved from https://p.widencdn.net/ymtzur/Open-Doors-2017-Country-Sheets-China

Itzigsohn, J., Cabral, C. D., Medina, E. H., & Vázquez, O. (1999). Mapping Dominican transnationalism: Narrow and broad transnational practices. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 22*(2), 316–339. doi:10.1080/014198799329503

Itzigsohn, J. & Saucedo, S. G. (2002). Immigrant incorporation and sociocultural transnationalism. *International Migration Review, 36*(3), 766-798.

Jarvis, P. (1987). *Adult learning in the social context*. London: Croom Helm.

Jarvis, P. (2004). *Adult education and lifelong learning: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Jarvis, P. (2006). *Towards a comprehensive theory of human learning: Lifelong learning and the learning society* (Vol. 1). London: Routledge.

Jarvis, P. (2007). *Globalisation, lifelong learning and the learning society: Sociological perspectives: Lifelong learning and the learning society* (Vol. 2). London: Routledge.

Jonkers, K., & Tussen, R. (2008). Chinese researchers returning home: Impacts of international mobility on research collaboration and scientific productivity. *Scientometrics, 77*(2), 309-333. doi:10.1007/s11192-007-1971-x

Kapur, D. (2001). Diasporas and technology transfer. *Journal of Human Development, 2*, 265-286.

Kivisto, P. (2005). The revival of assimilation in historical perspective. In P. Kivisto (Ed.), *Incorporating diversity: Rethinking assimilation in a multicultural age* (pp. 3-29). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Knowles, M. S. (1989). *The making of an adult educator*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Kobayashi, A., & Preston, V. (2007). Transnationalism through the life course: Hong Kong

    immigrants in Canada. Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 48(2), 151–167. doi:10.1111/j.1467-

    8373.2007.00338.x

Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning styles and learning spaces: Enhancing experiential

    learning in higher education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 4*(2),

    193-212.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levitt, P. (2001). *The transnational villagers*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Levitt, P. (2002). The ties that change: Relations to the ancestral home over the life cycle. In P.

    Levitt & M. C. Waters (Eds.), *The changing face of home: The transnational lives of the*

    second generation (pp. 123–144). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Levitt, P. (2003). Keeping feet in both worlds: Transnational practices and immigrant

    incorporation in the United States. In C. Joppke & E. Morawska (Eds.), *Toward*

    assimilation and citizenship: Immigrants in liberal nation-states (pp. 177-194). New

    York, NY: Palgrave.

Levitt, P. (2007). *God needs no passport: Immigrants and the changing American religious*

    landscape. New York, NY: New Press.

Levitt, P., & Glick Schiller, N. (2008). Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field

    perspective on society. In S. Khagram & P. Levitt (Eds.), *The transnational studies*

    reader: Intersections and innovations (pp. 284-294). New York, NY: Routledge.

Levitt, P., & Jaworsky, B. N. (2007). Transnational migration studies: Past developments and

    future trends. *Annual Review of Sociology, 33*, 129-156.

Ley, D., & Kobayashi, A. (2005). Back to Hong Kong: Return migration or transnational

    sojourn? *Global Networks*, *5*(2), 111–127. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-

    0374.2005.00110.x

Li, R. (2017, March 3). Shanghai "shuangchuang" jidi banchu shouzhang "zhongguo yongjiu

    juliuquan shenqing waiji rencai renzhenghan [Shanghai Innovation and Entrepreneurship

    Base issued the first foreign talents recognition letter for application of Chinese

    permanent residency]. *Xinhuanet*. Retrieved from http://www.xinhuanet.com/local/2017-

    03/03/c_1120562082.htm

Lie, J. (1995). From international migration to transnational diaspora. *Contemporary Sociology,*

    24(4), 303-306.

Lucas, R. (2001). *Diaspora and development: Highly skilled migrants from East Asia*. Retrieved

    from http://www.bu.edu/econ/files/2012/11/dp120.pdf

MacDonald, B. (1971). The evaluation of the humanities curriculum project: A holistic approach.

    Theory into Practice, 10(3), 163-167.

MacDonald, B., & Walker, R. (1975). Case-study and the social philosophy of educational

    research. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 5*(1), 2-11.

Mamattah, S. (2006). Migration and transnationalism: The complete picture? A case study of

    Russians living in Scotland. Esharp *Postgraduate Journal, 6*(2), 1-22. Retrieved from

    https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_41186_en.pdf

Ma Mung, E. (1998). Groundlessness and utopia: The Chinese diaspora and territory. In E. Sinn

    (Ed.), *The last half century of overseas Chinese* (pp. 35-47). Hong Kong: Hong Kong

    University Press.

Ma Mung, E. (2004). Dispersal as a resource. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies,*
     13(2-3), 211-225.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher, 17*(2), 13-17.

Mau, S. (2010). *Social transnationalism*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Merriam, S. B. (1985). The case study in educational research: A review of selected literature.
     The Journal of Educational Thought, 19 (3), 204-217.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco,
     CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San
     Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*.
     San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Cafarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A*
     comprehensive guide (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating*
     diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:
     Sage.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. In J. Mezirow &
     Associates (Eds.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative*
     and emancipatory learning (pp. 1-20). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, D., & Slater, D. (2000). *The internet: An ethnographic approach*. Oxford: Berg.

Ministry of Education (2011). *Statistics of the Study Abroad in 2010. Retrieved from*

    http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_1485/201103/115528.html

Ministry of Education (2017, September 20). Guanyu gongbu shijie yiliu daxue he yiliu xueke

    jianshe gaoxiao ji jianshe xueke mingdan de tongzhi [Announcement of the list of

    universities for building world-class universities and the list of universities for building

    world-class disciplines]. Retrieved from

    http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A22/moe_843/201709/t20170921_314942.html

Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China. (2017,

    April 11). Buji lianxi huiyi yanjiu bushu pojie liuxue renyuan huiguo chuangye

    chuangxin "liunan" gongzuo [Joint inter-ministerial meeting discusses plans to tackle six

    difficult problems facing internationally educated returnees in starting up businesses and

    undertaking innovation in China]. Retrieved from

    http://www.mohrss.gov.cn/SYrlzyhshbzb/dongtaixinwen/buneiyaowen/201704/t2017041

    1_269335.html

Moguérou, P. (2006). *The brain drain of PhDs from Europe to the United States: What we know

    and what we would like to know* (EUI Working Paper RSCAS No. 2006/11). Retrieved

    from http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/4286/RSCAS+2006.11.pdf?sequence=1

National Institute of Education Sciences. (2016, April 21). Nuli fazhan juyou zhongguo tese

    shijie shuiping de xiandai jiaoyu (Striving to develop world-class modern education with

    Chinese characteristics). *China Education Newspaper*. Retrieved from

    http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5147/201604/t20160421_239406.html

Ng, R., & Shan, H. (2013). Lifelong learning as ideological practice: An analysis from the
perspective of immigrant women in Canada. In S. Guo (Ed.), *Transnational migration
and lifelong learning: Global issues and perspectives* (pp. 22-37). London: Routledge.

Nisbet, R. A. (1953). *The quest for community*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Noddings, N. (1996). On community. *Educational Theory, 46*(3), 245-267.

Norris, N. (1993). *Understanding evaluation*. London: Kogan Page.

Olwig, K. F. (2007). *Caribbean journeys: An ethnography of migration and home in three family
networks*.

Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham: Duke
University Press.

Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development. (2013). *Education indicators in
focus: How is international student mobility shaping up?* Retrieved from
https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/how-is-international-student-mobility-shaping-
up_5k43k8r4k821-en#page1

Owens, R. G. (1982). Methodological rigor in naturalistic inquiry: Some issues and answers.
Education Administration Quarterly, 18(2), 1-21.

Pan, S. (2009). *University autonomy, the state, and social change in China*. Hong Kong: Hong
Kong University Press.

Pan, S. (2016). Competing for global talents. In S. Guo & Y. Guo (Eds.), Spotlight on China:
Chinese education in the globalized world (pp. 341-358). Rotterdam, NL: Sense.

Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity-one's own. *Educational Researcher, 17*(7), 17-22.

Peters, J. M., & Gordon, S. (1974). *Adult learning projects: A study of adult learning in urban
and rural Tennessee*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee.

Portes, A. (2001). Introduction: The debates and significance of immigrant transnationalism. *Global Networks, 1*(3), 181-193.

Portes, A. (2003). Conclusion: Theoretical convergencies and empirical evidence in the study of immigrant transnationalism. *International Migration Review, 37*(3), 874-892.

Portes, A., Guarnizo, L. E., & Landolt, P. (1999). The study of transnationalism: Pitfalls and promise of an emergent research field. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *22*(2), 217–237. doi:10.1080/014198799329468

Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Preston, J., & Hammond, C. (2002). *The wider benefits of further education: Practitioner views*. London: Institute of Education, Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning.

Pries, L. (1999). New migration in transnational spaces. In L. Pries (Ed.), *Migration and transnational social spaces* (pp. 1-35). Aldershot: Ashgate.

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy, 6*(1), 65-78.

Reis, M. (2004). Theorising diaspora: Perspectives on "classical" and "contemporary" diaspora. *International Migration, 42*(2), 41-60.

Renmin University of China. (2016, November 30). Zhongguo renmin daxue qidong haiwai liuxue guiguo jiaoshi guoqing jiaoyu jihua: Wuxiaoqiu fuxiaozhang zuo shouchang xueshu jiangzuo [Renmin University of China initiates internationally educated Chinese returnee teachers China affairs education scheme: Vice president Xiaoqiu Wu presents the first lecture]. *News of RUC*. Retrieved from http://news.ruc.edu.cn/archives/154465

Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Sassen, S. (2003). Globalization or denationalization? *Review of International Political Economy, 10*(1), 1-22. doi:10.1080/0969229032000048853

Satzewick, V., & Liodakis, N. (2007). *Race and ethnicity in Canada: A critical introduction*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Saxenian, A. (2006). *The new Argonauts: Regional advantage in a global economy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Saxenian, A., Motoyama, Y., & Quan, X. (2002). *Local and global networks of immigrant professionals in Silicon Valley*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.

Shan, H. (2013). Skill as a relational construct: The hiring practices in the engineering profession in Canada. *Work, Employment and Society, 27*, 915-931.

Shan, H., Pullman, A., & Zhao, Q. (2016). The making of transnational social space: Chinese women managing careers and lives between China and Canada. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, *25*(2), 105–129. doi:10.1177/0117196816639056

Shuval, J. (2000). Diaspora migration: Definitional ambiguities and a theoretical paradigm. *International Migration, 38*(5), 41-57.

Simon, D. F., & Cao, C. (2009). *China's emerging technological edge: Assessing the role of high-end talent*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Simons, H. (1987). *Getting to know schools in a democracy: The politics and process of evaluation*. Lewes: The Falmer Press.

Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice*. London: Sage.

Smith, L. M. (1978). An evolving logic of participant observation, educational ethnography and other case studies. *Review of Research in Education, 6*(1), 316-377. doi:10.3102/0091732X006001316

Smith, M. P. (2001). *Transnational urbanism: Locating globalization*. Maiden, MA: Blackwell

Smith, M. P., & Guarnizo, L. E. (Eds.). (1998). *Transnationalism from below*. New Brunswick: Transaction.

Stake, R. E. (1967a). Toward a technology for the evaluation of educational programs. In R. W. Tyler, R. M. Gagne, & M. Scriven (Eds.), *AERA monograph series on curriculum evaluation: Perspectives of curriculum evaluation* (pp. 1-12). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.

Stake, R. E. (1967b). The countenance of educational evaluation. *Teachers College Record, 68*(7), 523-540.

Stake, R. E. (1972, April). *An approach to the evaluation of instructional programs*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED064350.pdf

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (2009). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Thorn, K., & Holm-Nielsen, L. B. (2006). *International mobility of researchers and scientists: Policy options for turning a drain into a gain* (Research Report No. 2006/83). Retrieved from United Nations University website: https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/international-mobility-researchers-and-scientists

Tough, A. (1979). *The adult's learning projects* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Tsuda, T. (2012). Whatever happened to simultaneity? Transnational migration theory and dual

    engagement in sending and receiving countries. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*,

    38(4), 631–649. http://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.659126

Vertovec, S. (2004). Migrant Transnationalism and modes of transformation. *International*

    Migration Review, *38*(3), 970–1001. doi:10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00226.x

Wang, H. Y. (2007). *Zhongguo dangdai haigui* [Contemporary Chinese returnees]. Beijing:

    Chinese Development.

Wang, H., & Zweig, D. (2009, February). *China's diaspora and returnees: Impact on China's*

    globalization process. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 50th Annual

    Convention, New York, NY. Retrieved from

    https://convention2.allacademic.com/one/isa/isa09/index.php?click_key=2#search_top

Welch, A. R., & Hao, J. (2013). Returnees and diaspora as source of innovation in Chinese

    higher education. *Frontiers of Education in China*, *8*(2), 214–238.

Welch, A. R., & Zhang, Z. (2005, October). *The Chinese knowledge diaspora: Communication*

    networks among overseas Chinese intellectuals in the globalization era. Paper presented

    at the International Congress on Overseas Chinese, Hong Kong, China.

Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015, April 15). Communities of practice: A brief

    introduction. Retrieved from http://wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/07-

    Brief-introduction-to-communities-of-practice.pdf

Wong, B. P. (2006). *The Chinese in Silicon Valley*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Xiang, B. (2016). Emigration trends and policies in China: Movement of the wealthy and highly

    skilled. In S. Guo & Y. Guo (Eds.), Spotlight on China: Chinese education in the

    globalized world (pp. 247-268). Rotterdam, NL: Sense.

Xu, D. (2009). Opportunities and challenges for academic returnees in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 26*, 27-35. doi:10.1007/s10490-007-9075-y

Yang, R., & Welch, A. R. (2010). Globalisation and Chinese knowledge diaspora: An Australian case study. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *37*(3), 19–37. doi:10.1007/BF03216928

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zeng, N. (2017, January 15). Guanfang xiangjie "waiji rencai zaihua yongjiu juliu jifenzhi" xique qianyan keji zhuanjia [Officials explain in detail "points system for foreign talents to obtain permanent residency in China" and the scarcity of experts on cutting-edge science and technology]. *Chinanews*. Retrieved from http://www.chinanews.com/kong/2017/01-15/8125006.shtml

Zhou, M. (2004). Revisiting ethnic entrepreneurship: Convergencies, controversies, and conceptual advancements. *International Migration Review, 38*(3), 1040-1074.

Zweig, D. (2006). Competing for talents: China's strategies to reverse the brain drain. *International Labour Review, 145*(1-2), 65-90.

Zweig, D., Fung, C. S., & Han, D. (2008). Redefining the brain drain: China's "diaspora option". *Sceince, Technology & Society, 13*(1), 1-33.

Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Form

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

From Intellectual Mobility to Transnational Professional Space: Experiences of Internationally Educated Chinese Academic Returnees
Participant Recruitment Form

Hello,

My name is Ling Lei. I am a graduate student from Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, Canada. I am conducting research for my master's thesis on how internationally educated Chinese academic returnees maintain professional connections with the host countries where they completed their doctoral studies and to explore the impacts of such connections on the individuals' academic growth as well as the impacts on deployment of China's overseas knowledge diaspora. I am currently recruiting participants for my research, who meet the following criteria:

1. Chinese academics currently working as professors or researchers in universities or research institutions in China;
2. Earned their doctoral degrees abroad;
3. Maintained certain professional connections with their prior host country of study abroad.

I am contacting you because I learned through your academic profile on your institution's website/reference by (name of referee) that you meet the above criteria. I am sending you this participant recruitment form together with a two-page description of my research to invite you to participate in my research.

Participation in this study involves normally one 1.5-hour in-person interview with possibly one or two follow-up brief interviews. Besides, there will be observations of you during the interview and an observation of your office for no more than fifteen minutes. If you are to attend an international conference held in China during the period of participation, an observation will be made during this conference of how you maintain connections with counterparts from your host country of doctoral studies and establish connections with overseas Chinese academics for research and academic collaboration. Time and place for interviews and observations will be mutually agreed upon in advance and you will only be contacted for data collection within a two-month period since the date of your written consent. Other types of data to be collected from you include your academic CV and co-publications with overseas academics. You may also provide your responses in email correspondence with academics abroad that can illustrate how you maintain connections with them, particularly overseas Chinese academics and academics working in your host country of doctoral studies to help me understand the phenomenon of transnational academic connectivity, but this document is not required.

This research doesn't receive funding from any institutions, but in order to thank you for actively participating in my study to help me complete my thesis, I will offer you a gift card worth 100 RMB at the end of the study.

I would like to assure you that the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study. Participation in my study is totally voluntary and all information collected from you will be kept confidential.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at (email address removed) or (phone number removed). I would be happy to discuss in more detail about my study and provide you with further information on participation in my study.

Looking forward to hearing from you.
Sincerely,
Ling Lei

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Ling Lei, Werklund School of Education, (email and phone number removed)

Supervisor:
Dr. Shibao Guo, Werklund School of Education, (email and phone number removed)

Title of Project:
From Intellectual Mobility to Transnational Professional Space: Experience of Internationally Educated Chinese Academic Returnees

Sponsor:
Unfunded

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study
the purpose of the study is to explore how internationally educated Chinese academic returnees maintain their transnational knowledge networks for their academic growth and the impacts of such networks. The central research question of my study is: How are internationally educated Chinese academic returnees' academic growths informed by their sustained connections with their host countries for doctoral studies. A copy of a more detailed description of my study is also given to you for your information. I will also verbally explain the project to you. Please feel free to ask me any questions regarding this project and your participation.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?
There will be normally one 1.5-hour in-person interview for each participant with possibly one to two follow-up brief interviews. Besides, there will be observations of you during the interview and an observation of your office for no more than fifteen minutes. If you are to attend an international conference held in China during the period of participation, an observation will be made during this conference of how you maintain connections with counterparts from your host

country of doctoral studies and establish connections with overseas Chinese academics for research and academic collaboration. Time and place for interviews and observations will be mutually agreed upon in advance and you will only be contacted for data collection within a two-month period since the date of your written consent. Other types of data to be collected from you include your academic CV and co-publications with overseas academics. You may also provide your responses in email correspondence with Chinese academics abroad that can illustrate how you maintain connections with academics abroad, particularly overseas Chinese academics and academics working in your host country of doctoral studies, but this is not required.

Interviews will be audiotaped for transcription. Transcriptions will also be provided to you for editing or correction within one week upon your receipt of the transcription.

Participation in my study is completely voluntary. You can discontinue participating at any time during the study. You may provide the researcher with reasons for withdrawal but this is not required. There will be no penalty for your withdrawal from the study. Data collected from you up to the point of your withdrawal may be retained and used by the researcher, unless otherwise indicated by the participant in writing.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?
Identifying information including your name, phone number and email address will be collected through your academic CV publicly available online. Such information will be checked with you for accuracy. Confidentiality and anonymity of data will be completely guaranteed. Participants' identifying information will not be included in any data documents including field notes and audio recordings. Each participant will decide on a pseudonym. A Word document linking these pseudonyms to participants' identifying information will be kept securely in a separate locker. Once your academic CV is downloaded to the researcher's personal computer, those identifying information such as name, email address and phone number will be removed and marked instead with your corresponding pseudonym.

When presenting data in the report, you will be referred to by your pseudonym only. The names of institutions where you work, which may expose your identity, will be referred to by English alphabetic letters.

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?
There is no risk for participation, but if you feel that your work community is sensitive to individual's participation in a research study where not everyone of your department is recruited, you may carefully consider your decision to participation. Other than that, you may feel tired for talking in a 1.5-hour long interview.

You will be given a gift card valued at 100 RMB (around 20 CAD) at the end of the two-month period for your participation. If you wish to withdraw after this period, you are still entitled to this reward.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?
Raw data will be accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor and will not be shared with anyone else. Electronic data will be kept on the researcher's personal computer with a copy of backup on a memory stick. Electronic data will not be stored in any publicly accessible cloud-based server. Hardcopies as well as the memory stick will be kept in locked drawers at the researcher's home.

Data collected for the current study may be presented in various publications on this study in addition to my master's thesis and may be used in future projects related to this study.

Signatures
Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.
In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.
Participant's Name: (please print) _____
I would like to use the following pseudonym instead of my real name for all written reports on this study: _____.
Participant's Signature: _____Date: _____
Researcher's Name: (please print) _____
Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns
If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:
Ms. Ling Lei
Werkund School of Education, University of Calgary
(email and phone number removed)
and Dr. Shibao Guo, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, (email and phone number removed)

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-6289/220-4283; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix C: Interview Guide in English

From Intellectual Mobility to Transnational Professional Space: Experience of Internationally Educated Chinese Academic Returnees
Interview Guide

Participant Name:
Location:
Date:

A. Opening
Interviewer read to the participant:
Thank you for participating in this interview. This interview will take approximately 1.5 hours. I will ask you a series of questions and audio-record the interview for transcription. I will email you my transcriptions for your review and you can edit them as you consider appropriate within one week. I would also like to reassure you, as stated in your signed consent form, all the information that you give in the interview will be kept confidential. Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin?

B. Start interview
Interviewer turns on the recorder and begin interview. Interviewer takes notes during the interview.

C. Interview topics and questions
Ice-breaker questions to understand the interviewee's current work and doctoral study experience abroad
1. Could you describe the work that you do in your current capacity as (job title)?
2. Could you tell me about your study abroad experience as a doctoral student and how did you start your current job as (job title) back here in China?

Questions on how they maintained connections with host countries of study abroad
1. How did you maintain such transnational academic ties?
2. What intermediaries/organizations/activities/networks/affiliations/memberships helped you maintain such academic ties?

Question on motivation
1. Why do you want to keep such academic ties?

Questions on impact
1. How is your work related to the academic connections you keep with the country where you completed your doctoral studies? Could you give me some examples?
2. How would you describe the importance of your academic connections in (name of country) to you and your work?
3. How did such academic connections affect your academic growth?
4. How did such academic connections affect your teaching and research?

Questions on their ability to maintain transnational academic connections
1. Why are you able to keep such academic ties?
2. What barriers did you face to keeping such academic ties?
3. What helped you maintain such academic connections?

Questions on Chinese knowledge diaspora engagement and collaboration
1. Could you give me some examples of how you build and maintain connections with Chinese academics in (name of country) for academic collaboration?
2. How did you engage Chinese academic partners abroad in your teaching and research?

D. End interview
Interviewer turns off the recorder and thank the interviewee by reading:
Thank you very much. Your participation is very important to my study.

E. Archiving
Interviewer record in a log about this interview, including this guide, field notes, and any files or artifacts collected from the interviewee.

Appendix D: Interview Guide in Chinese

从学者流动到跨国职业空间：中国海归学者的经历
访谈大纲

被访者(笔名):
地点:
日期时间:

开场:
1. 签同意书
2. 非常感谢您参与我的学术访谈。本次访谈将持续约半个小时。我会问您一系列问题并对其进行录音。访谈后我会对录音内容进行转写，并把转写的录音稿发给您审阅。您有一个星期的时间按照自己的意愿对转写的录音稿进行修改。与此同时，我向您保证，正如您所签订的同意书中所述，您在访谈中所提供的所有个人信息我都会严格保密。您还有什么问题吗？那么我们可以开始了吗？

开始访谈:
打开录音笔开始录音。在访谈时做记录。

访谈话题与问题:
破冰问题，了解被访者回国、目前工作的情况以及读博的经历
1. 介绍一下您目前所从事的日常教学和/或科研工作的内容？
2. 您为什么会选择（1）回国（2）到（）工作呢？
3. 您为什么会选择（1）出国（2）到（）国攻读博士学位呢？为什么选择（）大学呢？
4. 在留学期间参加过哪些教学、科研等学术活动？通过这些活动建立了哪些学术上的联系？
5. 您认为您在留学国最重要的学术关系有哪些？为什么？
6. 回国后您在哪些方面感到不适应吗？具体到学术科研工作上，有哪些方面觉得与在留学国时不一样，感到不适应吗？
7. 您是怎样让自己适应国内的学术生活、学术环境的？您认为哪些方面帮助您适应吗？

如何与读博留学国保持的跨国联系:
1. 您现在与（）国、与（）大学还保持着学术联系吗？为什么（不）？
2. 您是通过什么方式/媒介/渠道保持与留学国的跨国学术联系的？
3. 目前在（）国是否有学术机构任职？协会会员身份？参加（）国的学术会议？在（）国期刊发表文章？导师、校友、师门合作？其他在（）国的学术活动？

171

保持跨国联系的动因:
1. 您为什么想要保持与留学国的学术联系？

跨国联系的影响:
1. 您是如何运用这些学术关系的？
2. 您认为您与留学国的学术联系对您适应国内学术生活、学术环境有什么作用吗？
3. 这些与留学国的跨国学术联系对您目前的教学、科研工作有帮助吗/有什么样的影响？
4. 对您的学术和职业发展有帮助吗/有什么样的影响？
5. 总的来说，您认为您出国读博的经历给您的学术和职业发展带来了优势吗？

保持跨国学术联系的能力:
1. 您认为有哪些因素帮助您维持与留学国的跨国学术联系/您认为您为什么能够保持与留学国的跨国学术联系？/哪些因素影响了您保持跨国学术联系的能力？
2. 您是否希望保持或开拓跨国的学术联系？为什么？
3. 有哪些因素阻碍您保持跨国的学术联系吗？具体举例说明？
4. 还有考虑去（）国读书、工作、访学吗？
5. 跨国学术联系对您未来的职业规划和发展有帮助吗？

与海外华人华侨学者的联系与合作:
1. 您与海外华人华侨学者有学术合作吗？具体说明举例？
2. 如果有，您是通过什么渠道结识海外的华人华侨学者的？您又是通过什么方式维持与他们的合作关系的？
3. 是否有联系华人华侨学者参与您的教学、科研？
4. 您能谈谈您与华人华侨学者合作的感受和认识吗？
5. 您认为您为什么能够与海外华人华侨学者维持/形成合作关系？如何从联系到形成实质的合作？
6. 您回国后在科研工作中，尤其是与海外学者的合作过程中，有什么新的认识和感受？
7. 您认为您有自己的学术圈/共同体吗？跨国的？国内的？
8. 关于跨国学术联系对您个人学术发展的影响和联系海外华人华侨学者的作用这个主题，您还有别的想要补充说明的信息和想法吗？

结束访谈:
停止录音，感谢被访者。您的参与对我的研究非常重要。

存档:
将本访谈大纲，访谈笔记，录音，其他从被访者收集到的资料和文件存档。