

University of Windsor

Scholarship at UWindor

Major Papers

Theses, Dissertations, and Major Papers

December 2023

Navigating Identity Shifts: A Review of International Students' (Re)construction of Self-Identities

Shuo Liu

University of Windsor, liu2e1@uwindsor.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/major-papers>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Liu, Shuo, "Navigating Identity Shifts: A Review of International Students' (Re)construction of Self-Identities" (2023). *Major Papers*. 282.

<https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/major-papers/282>

This Major Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, and Major Papers at Scholarship at UWindor. It has been accepted for inclusion in Major Papers by an authorized administrator of Scholarship at UWindor. For more information, please contact scholarship@uwindsor.ca.

**Navigating Identity Shifts: A Review of International Students' (Re)construction of
Self-Identities**

By

Shuo Liu

A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Education
at the University of Windsor
Windsor, Ontario, Canada
2023

© 2023 Shuo Liu

**Navigating Identity Shifts: A Review of International Students' (Re)construction of
Self-Identities**

by

Shuo Liu

APPROVED BY:

C. Smith

Faculty of Education

J. Oloo, Advisor

Faculty of Education

December 13, 2023

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices. Furthermore, to the extent that I have included copyrighted material that surpasses the bounds of fair dealing within the meaning of the Canada Copyright Act, I certify that I have obtained a written permission from the copyright owner(s) to include such material(s) in my thesis and have included copies of such copyright clearances to my appendix.

I declare that this is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my thesis committee and the Graduate Studies office, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

ABSTRACT

Studying abroad is increasingly becoming a popular choice for many students and their families. Pursuing a degree in a foreign country not only signifies academic achievements, but it also contributes significantly to their personal growth and life accomplishments. International students face the challenge of adapting to a new environment, managing life's difficulties, and establishing connections within the host society.

Adjusting to this new environment, rebuilding their lives in an unfamiliar place, and successfully earning a degree in a foreign country all require a strong and mature personality. When international students accomplish these tasks, they undergo a process of self-renewal and self-identification. The pursuit of a degree abroad necessitates that international students undertake the challenge of “mastering a new language, adapting to a different culture, and adjusting to an unfamiliar academic environment” (Zhang, 2016, p 7). These challenges often lead to significant personal growth, fostering heightened focus on understanding cultural differences, increased tolerance for diversity, and the cultivation of greater individual responsibility (Zhang, 2016). This transformative journey makes them more resilient, boosts their self-efficacy, and ultimately shapes them into stronger and more mature individuals, paving the way for a successful life. This paper conducts an in-depth analysis of a wide range of research studies related to international students in order to examine the fundamental factors and processes influencing the self-identity of these students.

Keywords: international student, self-identity, ethnic identity

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY.....	III
ABSTRACT.....	IV
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background Information.....	1
Outline of Paper.....	3
Rationale for the Study.....	4
Researcher Positionality.....	5
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
Research Method.....	7
Bibliometric.....	7
Content Analysis.....	8
International Student Self-Identity.....	9
The Development of Self-identity.....	12
Intercultural Interaction and Communication.....	14
Diverse Constraints Abroad Due to Temporary Status.....	17
Educational Background and Personal Experience.....	18

Language.....	21
International Student's Ethnic Identity.....	24
CHAPTER III: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	34
Research Gaps.....	34
Implications for International Students.....	35
Implications for Educational Institutions - Academic.....	36
Implications for Educational Institutions - Non-Academic.....	37
REFERENCES.....	40
VITA AUCTORIS.....	54

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background Information

As the global economy continues to develop and the world becomes increasingly interconnected, studying abroad has become a common and widespread phenomenon. In 2020, for example, 6.4 million students across the world were enrolled in educational institutions outside their home countries (Campus France, 2023). As reported, Asian students constitute 53% of the foreign students enrolled worldwide, while the highest numbers of foreign students are from China, India and South Korea (Campus France, 2023). Because of their advanced economies, strong social systems and reputable academic institutions, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries attract a large number of international students to higher education, receiving more students than they send abroad (OECD, 2014). Approximately three times as many foreign students are enrolled in tertiary education in OECD countries as OECD citizens studying abroad. About 82% of foreign students study in G20 countries, which comprise major global economies, and 75% of foreign students study in OECD countries. These proportions remained stable over the past decade (OECD, 2014).

Research focusing on international student experience in Canada and elsewhere has gained significant prominence as a result (Chao et al., 2017; Jiang, 2021; Marom, 2022). While academic achievement remains a primary objective for those studying abroad, the experience of learning in a foreign country presents unique challenges and opportunities for international students. During their educational journeys abroad, international students must adapt to different educational systems, often in a language

that is not their own, and navigate the complexities of daily life in a foreign environment. These challenges can be both demanding and enriching. For example, international students often have the opportunity to learn about communities other than their own thereby enhancing their prospects building sociocultural and economic networks and opportunities.

Furthermore, countries that host international students and immigrants can gain significant advantages from the diversity and dynamism they bring to their economies and cultures. Canada, for instance, as a culturally diverse nation, has witnessed a notable increase in its international student population over the years (Statistics Canada, 2023). According to a Statistics Canada report (Crossman et al., 2022), the number of international students in Canada increased from 200,000 in 2009 to 621,600 in 2021. As many as three out of every 10 international students choose to remain in the country after completing their studies, actively contributing to its development (Crossman et al., 2022).

It is widely accepted that international students have agency, and that they generally have a choice regarding where to pursue their studies. Often, such a destination aligns with their personal and career goals and allows them to maximize their potential (Sharp, 2023). Therefore, it is meaningful to understand international students' feelings and mindset changes to help them achieve a successful societal adjustment. As Sharp (2023) claimed, the decision to migrate also brings duties to the destination country to create a more welcoming environment for newcomers. This not only includes external assistance but also requires emotional support, which involves understanding the feelings and expectations of newcomers, in this case, international students, and providing suitable assistance.

Outline of Paper

The purpose of this systematic review is to provide an overview of current research findings and emerging trends concerning the self-identity of international students and its implications in their new environments, which enhances our understanding of international student self-identity. The insights derived from this paper can serve as valuable resources for educational institutions and local organizations seeking more effective strategies to bolster the self-resilience and self-efficacy of international students. Additionally, this research aims to identify gaps in current knowledge, paving the way for further exploration and investigation in this field.

This study is categorized into several parts based on the literature. To commence, it establishes the understanding of self-identity, highlighting its significance in the context of studying abroad, and offers an overview of prevailing theories on the formation of self-identity. Following this, the research delves into an examination of the positive outcomes associated with the successful development of self-identity during international education experiences. Secondly, the paper addresses the diverse array of factors that exert influence on an individual's self-identity, categorizing them into two: internal factors, encompassing personality traits and individual characteristics, and external factors, comprising socio-economic circumstances and cultural and social influences. Furthermore, the study explores the intricate relationship between ethnic identity and self-identity, shedding light on how ethnic identity can shape and mold the formation of one's self-concept. In the final section, this paper extends its focus to offer practical implications for both international students and educational institutions in the host countries. It outlines recommendations for cultivating a healthy self-identity,

provides strategies to facilitate effective adjustment into the host country, and underscores the pivotal role that educational institutions can play in supporting the development of international students' self-identity.

Rationale for the Study

Nowadays, studying abroad has become increasingly prevalent. The experience of studying abroad not only fosters academic achievements but also facilitates personal growth. On the other side, international students not only make considerable contributions to the local economy by directly spending money but also enhance the educational experiences of domestic students. Further, many international students choose to stay in the community where they received their education, bringing a global perspective to existing businesses and, in many instances, launching new entrepreneurial endeavours (Owens et al., 2011). Therefore, governments worldwide are actively engaged in a competitive pursuit of talent, often referred to as the “great brain race”, as they strive to attract and retain well-educated students (Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018). Furthermore, upon completing their degrees in another country, many international students opt to remain in the city or country where they completed their studies. This decision necessitates a profound process of self-reinvention and self-identity to adapt to their new circumstances and accomplishments.

In the context of adapting to a new society and building a life far from one's home country and establishing social connections, international students face significant challenges. The process of resettling in a foreign land, forging new relationships, and constructing a sense of self-identity and ethnic identity assumes a pivotal role. It acts as a

buffer, aiding them in navigating the hurdles of their new environment, enhancing their self-resilience and self-efficacy, and ultimately contributing to their success. Being distanced from their families, international students must independently confront fresh challenges and acclimate to unfamiliar surroundings. This solitary journey offers them the opportunity for introspection and self-discovery (Castiello-Gutiérrez, 2022). Concurrently, it shapes their growth, making them more mature and resilient in the face of the challenges and obstacles that lie ahead.

Admittedly, delving into the self-identity of international students and its various influences is a multifaceted and enduring endeavour. Self-identity is highly personal, challenging to quantify, and susceptible to external factors, making it subject to variation in different contexts (Hsieh, 2006). Furthermore, the ethnic and developmental backgrounds of international students can further shape their self-identities (Crane et al., 2004).

Researcher Positionality

As a Chinese student pursuing a Master of Education program in Canada, my educational journey abroad has been enriching. Upon arriving in Canada, I found myself immersed in a dynamic academic environment that required not only subject knowledge but also a nuanced understanding of the local educational culture, and I had to adapt to new teaching methods, different assessment methods, and diverse classroom settings. During this time, I encountered everyday challenges, such as adjusting to a new society and managing occasional negative emotions. Over time, I observed a transformation in my thoughts and self-identity as I navigated the experience of living independently in a

foreign country. This personal growth has bolstered my confidence and resilience, equipping me with a greater capacity to face life's challenges.

These changes and developments are not unique to me. I have witnessed similar transformations in my fellow international student peers. This observation has sparked a deep interest in me and compelled me to delve into this topic further. I am driven to explore the factors that influence international student's self-identity and gain valuable insights into how best to support them, promote their self-resilience and self-efficacy, and enable them to grow into more resilient and empowered individuals. I bring this background with me as I enter this study.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Method

This study focuses on international students' self-identity and ethnic identity in a new environment. In this study, the bibliometric approach (Donthu et al., 2012; Wallin, 2005) and content analysis methods (Krippendorff, 2018) are employed. First, I used bibliometric to select relevant research about international students' self-identity and ethnic identity between 2013 to 2023. After the initial search, additional articles are selected from the reference lists. Second, I analysed the content of selected papers for further filtering and categorization based on common themes across the selected articles.

Bibliometric

Bibliometric analysis of peer-reviewed literature is a method commonly used in research to examine a vast quantity of research outputs and data. The advantage and advancement of bibliometric analysis benefited from its strength in managing substantial amounts of scientific data and generating significant research influence. It allows researchers to analyse scholarly work within a particular field and explore subcategories or specific topics within that area. Moreover, available bibliometric software makes bibliometric analysis an effective method for summarizing and categorizing literature (Donthu et al., 2021).

In this stage, the University of Windsor Leddy Library's electronic database was the primary resource for searching out articles. Specifically, the following databases were accessed: Google Scholar, ProQuest Social Sciences, Gale Cengage Academic OneFile, and Taylor & Francis Journals Complete.

The keywords used for article search were international student self-identity, international student ethnic identity, study abroad, self-resilience, and self-efficacy. These keywords ensured a comprehensive search for relevant peer-reviewed publications. A total of 50 articles published between 2013 and 2023 were identified. Of these, 37 were the most relevant to the purpose of this study and therefore were analyzed as source of data using content analysis approach (Krippendorff, 2018).

Content Analysis

Through searching out the relevant research papers, I identified two angles to look into international students' self-identity. One is about the matureness of their personalities and the other is their ethnic identity. The maturity of international students' personality focuses on individual growth, which is how international students become stronger and more adaptable to challenges and changing environments, while racial identity focuses on the impact of their home culture and racial community on the development of international students' self-identity. Both personal growth in a new environment and a sense of belongingness to their home culture will impact international students' their feelings and the maturation and redefinition of their personalities, which will further impact their achievements in their abroad journey. Furthermore, subcategories under these two main angles were identified through analysing the content of selected papers.

International Student Self-Identity

According to Rise et al. (2010), self-identity refers to prominent and lasting aspects of individual's self-perception. It can also be considered as a way that people use to form themselves (Marginson, 2014). Self-identity is not like a fixed label that always shows or describes one individual in the same way; rather, self-identity changes with the new conditions arising in internal and external circumstances. For international students, a transformation of self-identity and perspective is crucial in their overseas experience. As they live and study in a new cross-cultural environment, they need to, and inevitably do, ask profound questions about their own identity in the new environment (Liu & Rathbone, 2021). Living in a foreign country, international students may encounter challenges in communicating and interacting appropriately with the host culture, and poor communication and interaction will cause identity gaps for international students. Identity gaps are associated with negative impacts on international students, such as depression (Jung et al., 2007).

Studying across borders leads to profound changes in students and could impact international students' self-formation (Marginson, 2014). International students are not only pursuing educational credentials in foreign countries and under various educational systems but (for many of them) they are also immersed in different language environments and distinct cultural contexts. Marginson (2014) contended that during this phase of their lives, international students frequently experience a newfound sense of freedom. The freedom mentioned here "was understood less as negative freedom, freedom from constraint, and more as positive freedom to do and to be." (p.2)

What is more, self-identity is the view that individuals see themselves when they adopt the viewpoint of particular individuals or groups, which means that they integrate the significance and anticipations linked to a pertinent categorization into their own self-perception, individuals' self-identities may vary to their distinct roles, for example, one may show different identities when they as a teacher/student or a parent/child. Self-identity may also be impacted by culture and social circumstances. Waite-Jones and Rodriguez (2022) stated that "An individual's self-concept and level of self-esteem are influenced by their biology and culturally specific experiences" (p.79). Culture shapes people's self-concepts and self-definitions, the way people see themselves is impacted by the external environment and the interactions in different cultural practices and everyday lives (Holmes, 2020).

International students from diverse countries and cultural backgrounds often face challenges and discomfort when they arrive in their host countries. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that amidst these challenges, they also encounter opportunities for personal growth (Oloo, 2022). To better adapt to the host society, previous research suggests that international students undergo changes in their self-identity in response to evolving circumstances. Anandavalli et al. (2021), for example, write that international students reported experiencing self-discovery while studying abroad, with their experiences leading to increased self-reliance and boosted self-confidence. Teng et al. (2023) asserted that changes in identity represent a fundamental adaptive strategy employed by learners to establish contexts for mutual identity verification. A qualitative study conducted by Onosu (2021) confirmed that engaging in a cultural immersion experience supports the construction, conceptualization, and growth of one's self-identity.

Cultural experiences enabled international students to recognize commonalities shared by people, even in the presence of cultural distinctions. Consequently, this newfound understanding served as a source of empowerment and motivation for many participants. Accordingly, the newfound understanding will initiate a shift in their perspectives, transitioning from a narrow cultural viewpoint to a more global one. While this experience might have felt unusual and jarring for many participants, it compelled them to re-evaluate their perceptions of both themselves and others. According to Onosu (2021), when individuals encounter unfamiliar situations, it prompts them to change from their usual thought patterns. This experience can lead to the formation of new viewpoints. Mezirow (2009) proposed that individuals develop these viewpoints through a lifelong process of interaction and socialization. These perspectives serve as the framework that shapes their beliefs, values, ideas, and perspectives. When individuals encounter disruptive events, it initiates a transformative learning process and establishes a new reference point (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). This, in turn, prompts them to contemplate their beliefs, norms, values, ideas, and expectations. Through this process of reflection, individuals can develop fresh perspectives, which become central to how they relate to themselves, others, and society. Conversely, if individuals do not encounter or undergo experiences that challenge their perspectives, their viewpoints will remain unaltered.

What is more, international students living in a foreign country often undergo transformative experiences that lead to the development of new perspectives, which nurture new identities, and can occasionally result in identity conflict (Sung, 2022). For example, Van De Mierop & Schnurr (2017) found that “simultaneous enactment of different identities may not always be in harmony but can often lead to potential conflict,

especially when the expectations associated with the different identities clash” (p. 9). Sung (2022) also pointed out that identity conflicts can emerge not only from experiences in diverse social contexts but also when others neglect to recognize or respect the identities that individuals hold dear. Consequently, reconciling these different identity conflicts becomes a significant individual task.

Identity conflict can be seen as a particular task for international students, who experience different cultural and educational backgrounds and often need to adapt to the normative values and beliefs of the host country. It is important to note that identity conflict is not always negative. In fact, individuals may explore new potentials as a result of the conflicts they encounter. Yuan et al. (2019) conducted an analysis of identity conflicts observed in Chinese higher education students, and their research revealed that these conflicts foster interactions among students, thereby offering new opportunities and directions for their identity development. In other words, resolving identity conflicts is also a process of personal growth (Sung, 2022).

The Development of Self-identity

The changing self-identities not only give individuals new angles to see themselves but also show them new potential when facing challenges. Studying abroad will make an individual’s self-identity change considerably because the huge changes in lives at each angle shape people’s thinking patterns. International students who study cross the border commonly experience extensive changes emerging in their lives, consequently, these changes from all aspects of their lives change their identities, such as their perspectives, expectations, and assumptions of self and others.

Studying and living abroad shape one's identity, values, and beliefs. Marginson (2014) defined international education as 'a process of self-formation' in which students manage their lives reflexively. They do so by reflecting on their experiences and making deliberate choices that shape their identities. According to Marginson (2014), the self-formation process is complex and cannot be simplified because it involves multiple factors such as education, finances, career, family, culture, social interactions, language, and more. It cannot be distilled into a single measurement on a universal scale. This indicates that it is essential to integrate and synthesize these various components to comprehend the self-formation process and, the result of the process, the self-identity of an individual international student.

Self-formation highlights the role of reflexive agency in which students actively monitor and continuously nurture their own personal development (Marginson, 2023). Although the process of self-formation is experienced by everyone at one point or another, international education makes the process more challenging, and international students tend to grow to stronger salience in pursuing higher education in a new environment where they are relatively disadvantaged because the local social circumstance is out of their control and they sometimes have to manage their lives reflexively. Additionally, Marginson (2014) also stated that rather than viewing international students simply within the normative framework of higher education, international education grounded in reflexive self-determination helps to build "conscious international student agency" and involves a "never-finished" process of fostering international students as worthy of respect for their histories, identities, perspectives and learning practices rather than "a journey of conversion to a (non-existent) stable equilibrium" (p. 19).

During their study abroad experiences, students embark on a complex journey, shaping not only their individual “self” but also navigating the interplay between their identity from their home country, their identity in the host country, and a broader range of cosmopolitan possibilities.

Self-identity is an important topic to talk about because it helps with one’s self-resilience and self-esteem, and self-identity is a key factor in the regulation of emotions (Rajan-Rankin, 2014). In other words, as international students engage in the process of constructing and reconstructing their self-identities, they develop more mature and resilient personalities. Studying abroad affects international students' career development and attitudes towards life (Moskal, 2020). In the study that investigated international graduates’ mobility, identity and career development, Moskal writes that students reported that after their cross-country study trips, they became more open and courageous to explore new job opportunities, became more independent, and became more confident in life. These growths not only equipped them to navigate life’s challenges effectively, but also motivated them to aspire for greater success. The next section of this paper identifies factors that may impact the formation of international student self-identity.

Intercultural Interaction and Communication

Intercultural interaction and communication with the host country impacts international student’s self-identity (Li, 2015). In transitional situations like studying abroad, it is crucial to have a greater capacity for reflection in order to maintain a strong self-identity and remain mindful of the new set of norms and expectations (Ye & Edward, 2017). To better adapt to and have effective cultural interactions in the host society,

international students international students show behaviours that are geared to the local culture when interacting with another ethnic group. Ye and Edward (2017) posit that international students' endeavour to interact with the local people to tell them more about their home country demonstrates their intercultural competence. These actions promote the building of students' personal capital, offering chances for self-improvement, and building their self-identities.

Living in a new environment, international students are relatively more susceptible to experiencing negative feelings such as being unconnected and loneliness, and previous research indicated that experiencing a deep sense of connection or belonging with at least one peer or social community will benefit their well-being and therefore help to build a healthy self-identity (Kiang et al., 2021).

The sociocultural differences among countries may impact intercultural interaction and communication. Looking into the challenges that international students encounter during their study abroad journey, one should not underestimate the impact of sociocultural, economic, and political factors (both common and unique) in the students' home country and the host country (Brown & Brown, 2013). Such factors (for example, economic power, political orientations, and media perceptions) have an impact on international students' construction of self-identity. It has been observed that international students originating from 'Western countries', typically characterized by higher economic development and societal advancement, tend to experience smoother adjustments to their destination countries, especially when those destinations are also 'Western countries'. This ease of adaptation is often more noticeable when compared to their counterparts from 'non-Western' backgrounds (Bailey, 2017). This, according to

Brown and Brown (2013), is a reason for educational institutions that are attended by international students to better know their students and to be able to provide them with relevant supports as needed. Similarly, international students in a foreign country are more likely to build connections with others who have the same cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds as them (Brown & Brown, 2013). Social networking in the host country impacts international student' self-identity, while the establishment of new social networking is significantly impacted by the social-economic situation of international students' home countries. A similar socioeconomic situation nurtures similar values, attitudes, and lifestyles. In a foreign country, international students actively establish diverse social networks that are shaped by the intricate individual social and cultural identities of each member, and their identities is also shaped by many factors such as culture, language, religion, academic pursuits, workplace environment, housing situation, and personal interests (Gomes et al., 2014).

The effects of intercultural interaction on self-identity are not only seen in long-term programs such as master's programs and Ph.D. programs that usually take more than one year, but also in short-term programs such as short-term exchange programs. In one study on the impact of short-term programs (5-week in this case) on international student self-efficacy, cultural intelligence, and adjustment in their host country, Nguyen et al. (2018) found that studying abroad aided the students who participated short-term programs in their personal growth and enhanced their intercultural skills. Nonetheless, instances of feeling marginalized and not fully belonging, can potentially contribute to the formation of personal and social identity and raise awareness of racism and other forms of oppression.

Diverse Constraints Abroad Due to Temporary Status

Being strangers in their host countries, international students often have a feeling of being discriminated against, exploited (international student tuition is about three times that for domestic/ Canadian students), or marginalized (Yao, 2018). Such feelings, whether perceived or real, can erode international students' self-esteem and sense of belonging (Tran, 2017). As Tran puts it, "International students' non-citizenship status in the host country has [sometimes] led to less than equal entitlement and protection, exclusion and discrimination" (p. 6) on campus, in the workplace, and the host society in general. Therefore, international students have frequently found themselves compelled to reaffirm and redefine their identities as they adapt to a new educational and social environment (Sung, 2022). Many international students, placed in novel and unfamiliar situations, tend to encounter challenges in shaping their identities.

While studying abroad offers international students opportunities to engage with the host society and explore different cultures through interactions with their peers, it also presents challenges. Sobkowiak's research (2019) suggests that the academic journey abroad may not provide sufficient chances for students to fully immerse themselves in the host society, particularly for those in short-term programs. To overcome this limitation, international students must actively seek opportunities to learn about foreign cultures from local and other international peers surrounding them. This active engagement is crucial for enriching their experiences, broadening their horizons, and contributing to a culturally diverse personality. On a positive note, the expanded knowledge and broader perspective gained from exposure to different cultures can enhance international students'

self-identity, fostering the development of more mature and well-rounded personalities (Sobkowiak, 2019).

Special times and events may magnify these challenges for international students as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. Deuel (2023) explores the uncertainty experienced by international students during the pandemic. He concludes that international students were impacted by travel restrictions which left many feeling abandoned, stranded at home, and experiencing financial strain. Despite these challenges, international students also exhibited strength and resilience in dealing with challenges. For example, international students in the study by Tran (2017) employed strategies to find a 'space' for comfort, mutual support, and communal strength, as well as to resist what they regarded as injustice. Deuel (2023) suggests that one of the most effective ways of empowering international students is to enable them to achieve their potential and becoming stronger individuals. The diverse cultural and educational backgrounds of international students can make it challenging for them to adapt to the host country. These differences may also pose challenges to power dynamics in both education and society. It is important for international students to recognize and be educated about their abilities in navigating these challenges. The studies cited above provide useful suggestions to institutions and university staff who work with international students, but they still need to pay extra attention and be creative when working with different students and in various periods, such as their initial arrival and efforts to foster deeper connections with the host country.

Educational Background and Personal Experience

Education serves as a vital factor that affects individuals' interaction with their inner selves and the outer world (Marginson, 2014), and the past learning experiences of international students profoundly influence their early interactions within a new culture (Rabbidge & Banerjee, 2022). The development and engagement of international students' self-identity are influenced not only by external factors but also by internal elements such as their personalities, life experiences, and educational levels. These internal factors play a significant role in shaping their new identities. Notably, these differences become more pronounced when we consider international students from various age and educational level groups. While a considerable amount of research has concentrated on international students pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees, some valuable studies have focused on Ph.D. students (Gao, 2019, 2021; Soong et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2021). This broader research perspective provides us with a more comprehensive understanding of the process of self-identity formation among international students during their study abroad experiences. Soong et al. (2015) conducted an autobiographical research to illustrate the transformation of doctoral students as they engage in self-reflection regarding their management of academic, personal, and cultural identities within the context of international doctoral education. In comparison to bachelor's and master's students, Ph.D. students tend to be more mature both in terms of their personality and academics. However, they often face greater stress due to personal life and academic demands. In this research, Soong et al. (2015) analysed challenges encountered by international Ph.D. students, some difficulties are commonly faced by international students, such as restriction, marginalization, and unrecognised prior (academic) experiences. Soong et al. (2015) concluded that international Ph.D.

students who participated in their study often mediated the multiple identities emerging during their doctoral study. This process is described as “process of self-empowerment and re-construction of oneself as a flexible and reflexive human being” (p.11).

Similarly, Ye and Edwards (2015) focused on Chinese Ph.D. students in the UK to assess the degree to which personal experiences in an intercultural environment can impact one’s self-identity. Having richer lived experiences and a relatively mature personality, Chinese Ph.D. students in this study showed that they were actively engaged in a process of self-identity construction, employing varying levels of introspection and personal agency. They proactively employed diverse coping mechanisms to address challenges in order to adapt to the novel social, cultural, and academic landscapes in the United Kingdom. Ye and Edwards (2015) noted that the Chinese Ph.D. students in the UK who participated in their study is not a homogeneous group. Rather, the students possess diverse personalities, and each individual’s efforts to navigate life’s challenges and pursue success should be acknowledged and respected.

Furthermore, a qualitative study conducted by Lin et al. (2022) employed the autoethnographic research method to investigate the developmental pathways of Chinese international students in Australia. This research identified three distinct phases within the self-formation process of international students: 1) self-exploration, 2) self-positioning, and 3) self-determination. From master’s students to doctoral researchers, the participants in this study not only achieved academic maturity but also experienced personal growth. Studying abroad and completing degrees represented not just academic pursuits but also higher aspirations for their lives.

Language

The language barrier is an unignorable challenge for international students, which impacts their interactions within campus and off campus. As language works not only as a tool that international students complete their studies in different linguistic settings but also as an important medium through which international students express and receive information and make social and emotional interactions with the host society. Wilczewski and Alon (2023) stated that proficiency in the host language enhances students' understanding of the host culture, diminishes their sense of uncertainty, and fosters effective intercultural communication. Conversely, the deficiency and unfamiliarity in the local language make it harder for international students' adjustment and strengthen the feeling of otherness. Previous research (Dewi Zakiya et al., 2022) found that language acquisition and proficiency are closely related to an individual's social practice with the host society, and that these two are mutually reinforcing.

Learning and using a second language can be a big challenge that could cause anxiety. This is often complicated by the fact that many language learners do aspire for perfectionism when using the language that they are not familiar with (Yasuda, 2018). Both anxiety and perfectionism impede individual expression and communication in the language naturally, which further impacts the process of social adjustment.

English-speaking countries are among the most popular destination countries for international students (Soong et al., 2015; Ye & Edwards, 2015); and English proficiency is increasingly necessary for a successful academic experience and social interactions. Therefore, most research focusing on the impact of language barrier on international

students are based on English-speaking societies, while relatively less research has highlighted lived experiences of international students who use English as their second language and are completing their studies in English in another language-speaking society. For example, Dewi Zakiya et al. (2022) conducted a study focusing on international students from Thailand pursuing their degrees in Indonesia. The study found that a lack of confidence in English language proficiency led to anxiety among the international students. Dewi Zakiya et al. also suggested that difference in classroom practices (such as classroom settings, classroom interactions, role of the students and instructors, etc.) between international students' home country and their host countries made some international students anxious. Anxiety among international students was exacerbated in cases where the students did not have a 'close' connection to the host society. According to Dewi Zakiya et al. (2022):

'Using Bahasa Indonesia helped them to maintain good social relationships. However, this situation was not supportive to their being English department students. Not only that they had very limited home country's friends to speak or practice English, but also their Indonesian peers did not use English in and outside campus contexts. It is dissimilar from anxiety of EFL students who studied English in the context where English is a first language where they could benefit from surrounding community who use English in daily life for acquisition'. (p. 21)

Language is a crucial element in the lives of international students as it significantly influences everyday communication and is intricately connected to cultural

traditions, which, in turn, is linked to their ethnic identity. The following section of this paper will further explore the topic of international students' ethnic identity.

International Student's Ethnic Identity

When entering a new environment, newcomers, especially international students, typically face a range of challenges in their daily lives, including acculturation, academics, and emotional well-being. Moreover, their temporary status often limits their access to certain social benefits and supports (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). In such circumstances, local ethnic communities can play a pivotal role in assisting international students as they navigate the challenges of their new environment, facilitating connections that may have a lasting impact on their well-being and career opportunities and trajectory (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998). Furthermore, international students are likely to receive both emotional and practical support from these communities. In essence, ethnic communities serve as valuable pillars in aiding international students in their initial adjustment to the new environment, particularly during their early days in a foreign land. These ethnic communities may also reinforce international students' ethnic identity, which can be instrumental in helping them cope with emotions like homesickness and culture shock.

Self-identity at the personal level and ethnic identity often share a close and interconnected relationship. A study by Anderson (2020) highlighted this connection and revealed that international students perceive their identities as shaped by the cultural values, perspectives, and traditions of their home countries. International students who participated in the study by Anderson emphasized the significance of their heritage and cultural values in influencing their identities, and expressed a deep appreciation for tradition while also exploring alternative ways of thinking.

Ethnic identity is a form of identity rooted in a shared cultural heritage with a specific group of people (Phinney, 1996). It extends beyond self-recognition to encompass a sense of belonging, the pursuit of knowledge about one's ethnic group, and one's attitudes toward and involvement in the customs and activities associated with that ethnic community.

Living and studying in a new environment often fosters a stronger ethnic identity tied to one's home country or culture among international students (Brown & Brown, 2013; Batterton & Horner, 2016). This ethnic identity can serve as a buffer, helping international students confront the challenges they encounter in the host society. In a study conducted by Glass et al. (2014), researchers identified obstacles faced by non-European international students when it comes to engaging in recreational activities. The findings highlighted that students from Eastern/South-Eastern Asia encounter more limitations in this regard compared to their counterparts from Southern Asia and the Middle East/North Africa. Furthermore, non-European students tend to form closer friendships with fellow co-nationals rather than host nationals. Additionally, this group of non-European students expressed a lower sense of connection to their universities in comparison to their European peers. Such disconnection can lead to feelings of loneliness among international students. In contrast, a strong sense of belonging to their mother country offers comfort and reinforces their ethnic identity. The importance and effectiveness of finding solace in their ethnic identity and a sense of ethnic belonging are particularly pronounced during times of special significance.

When international students arrive in a new host country, they leave behind their familiar surroundings and the social support systems they had back home. This transition

often results in a temporary sense of disconnection from their usual social networks. As a result, one of the primary goals for international students, especially during their initial stay abroad, is to establish new social connections. Research by Cao et al. (2017) has shown that for many international students, primary social networks often consist of individuals from their home country. This could be the case in Canada where over 50% of international students come from just six countries. Thus, establishing connections within a community that share a similar cultural background strengthens international students' ethnic identity. This reinforced ethnic identity, in turn, has an impact on the formation of their self-identity.

Ethnic communities can play a crucial role in providing emotional support to international students. Jang and Choi (2020) demonstrated in their research that ethnic communities, including online communities, effectively mediate information and address negative feelings, particularly for those who may feel insecure due to language barriers and immigration status. Similarly, a study conducted by Bailey (2017) focused on Caribbean students studying in the U.S. and found that individuals tend to identify more strongly with their stigmatized reference group when they have encountered a higher number of racial experiences, such as discrimination and stereotypes. In this study, Bailey noted that the Caribbean international students were deeply concerned about the persistent focus on race, the categorization based on racial identity, and the subtle acts of racial discrimination present in the United States. This atmosphere consistently underscores the notion that the Caribbean international students in the United States are seen as outsiders, and as a result, they “continue to cherish their national or regional identity” (p. 14). Similarly, in a recent article by Oh et al. (2023), ethnic identity is

presented as a sociocultural asset that plays a pivotal role in promoting positive adjustment and personal development, particularly among individuals who face discrimination. The study by Oh et al., which involved Asian international students and workers, found that those with higher levels of ethnic identity responded to instances of racial discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic by cultivating a stronger sense of belonging, heightened feelings of unity, and increased social support within their ethnic communities.

One's living experiences in their mother country and immersion in their native culture significantly contribute to the formation of their ethnic identity and also play a role in shaping their self-identity, while the experiences and perceptions they received in the host society help with the self-identity process as well. Studying abroad provides international students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in different cultures, ultimately leading to transformations in their identities. Biwa (2022) introduces the concept of multicultural identity, rooted in self-identification, which pertains to individuals adept at navigating and seamlessly integrating two or more cultures, enabling them to function effectively within diverse cultural contexts. Biwa emphasizes the mutual reinforcement of multicultural identity and cultural adaptation. As stated in the article, "Sojourners can benefit from unpacking the meaning-making processes involved in their ever-evolving and expanding identity" (p. 7). Likewise, Anderson (2020) described the phases that Muslim international students experience their religious, ethnic/racial, and gender identities. This research underscored four phases of Muslim international student experiences. During Phase 1 their identities were shaped by the cultural values, perspectives, and traditions of their home countries. In Phase 2, as they faced challenges

and obstacles, they discovered unexpected opportunities for personal growth and development. During Phase 3, Muslim international students expressed a strong connection to their heritage and cultural values as integral components of their identities. In Phase 4, they acknowledged the importance of tradition while also exploring alternative ways of thinking and living.

Studying abroad often necessitates international students to use another language, commonly English. Language holds a significant role in shaping an individual's ethnic identity, and adopting a new language can have a profound impact on their original ethnic identity and, consequently, their self-identity. Research conducted by Lee (2015), which focused on Korean undergraduates who embarked on early study abroad programs in the U.S., revealed that these Korean youths experienced shifts in their self-identities due to the process of learning English and adapting to American culture. The study participants expressed that their self-identities were influenced by their engagement with English and their assimilation into American culture. One participant in the study noted that speaking in English had a notable effect on their ethnic identity:

‘You know...I am obviously different from Korean-Koreans who are born and stay there forever. I live in the [United] States and I can speak both language, English and Korean. And I have my life here and back in Korea, too. English helps me...helps me to have my second life in the states, and I am different from other Koreans in terms of that. I’m not telling you that I want to show off my English ability or something, but I just want to say I’m different’. (p.6)

This result underscores the significance of language in shaping an individual's ethnic identity and its subsequent impact on their self-identity. Language is deeply rooted in culture, serving as a reflection of the cultural logic and ideological perspectives carried by that culture. Therefore, the adoption of a new language during the process of learning abroad assumes a pivotal role in shaping and transforming one's identity.

Interestingly, similar to adapting to a language, the changes in name can also reflect the changes in self-identity of international students and their attitudes toward growing a new self. In exploring the changes and formatting process of international students' self-identity, the change of international students' names is always an interesting topic that draws scholars' attention. Quaglia et al. (2016) stated that the role of names is significant in initiating critical psychological processes during the development of one's personality. Additionally, it plays a decisive role in either facilitating or hindering an individual's socialization. According to Quaglia et al. (2016), "Many preconceptions revolve around names, since in our name there is often imprinted a code that identifies us as belonging to a sex, a social class, a political or religious creed, a geographical place, or a race" (p.15). When studying abroad, especially in a country that has a distinct cultural and linguistic context, many international students choose to find themselves a name in the local language, which reflects international students' attitudes towards their learning abroad lives and the formatting process of their self-identities in the host society.

It is commonly seen that Chinese international students, as well as international students from other Asian countries, change their names while studying abroad, especially when their original names may be challenging for English speakers to

pronounce (Edwards, 2006; Zhao & Biernat, 2017). This change is often made to ease communication and better integrate into the local community, particularly in English-speaking societies. Many Chinese international students opt for an English name for their daily use.

Traditionally, Chinese names are comprised of characters that indicate expectations and wishes from parents and family members to the individual. International students selecting names that conform to the host society's expectations can be seen as their way of trying to adapt and become the person they aspire to be. In other words, choosing a new name is an action through which international students re-evaluate and refine their self-identity. Guccini (2017) presented that names are employed strategically in various social contexts, primarily with the aim of establishing a 'sense of recognition'. This desire is driven by the need for one's identity or a range of identities to be evident through the chosen name. For international students who find themselves in a transnational context face a complex process of shaping their identities. They depend on ever-changing identities that offer glimpses into both their current selves and the individuals they aspire to become (Xu, 2020). Similarly, research conducted by Fang and Fine (2020) argued that naming is a multi-layered action for most Chinese international students, and some of them suggested that the English name, in this article, helps them reconstruct a new identity. Fang and Fine describe the use of a new English name by Chinese international students thus, "Their naming practices respond to their life choices with identities embedded in those names" (p.11).

These research studies (Xu, 2020; Fang & Fine, 2020) examine the relationship between name change and the evolving identities of international students. Within these

articles, both personal and ethnic identities are explored. Some international students mentioned changing their names multiple times in an effort to find a name that aligns with their personalities. This reflects their evolving self-identity. Furthermore, the process of changing names provides insights into the transformations occurring within the stable identities of international students, encompassing both their personal and ethnic identities. These two aspects of identity are interconnected and mutually influence each other.

The presence of a strong and positive ethnic identity has been found to have a significant impact on the well-being and academic success of international students. A study conducted by Gu et al. (2019) suggests that ethnic identity and ethnic socialization play a crucial role in safeguarding and fostering international students' motivation to learn and their academic achievements. These ethnic minority students, who are pursuing higher education, align their ethnic and academic identities, demonstrating 'a sense of agency' (p.1). They engage in critical self-reflection regarding both the host society and their heritage communities. Additionally, they perceive themselves as responsible for promoting community advancement and cultivating a more positive social image for ethnic minorities within their generation.

Living and studying in a different cultural society often necessitates individuals to make adjustments and meet the expectations of two distinct cultures: their own mother culture and the culture expected by the host society. As a result, studying abroad promotes the development of international students' bicultural self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's personal belief in their capacity to effectively navigate and fulfill the expectations of two separate cultural norms—the culture of their heritage and that of the

host country or culture. Jin et al. (2022) conducted a study examining the effect of bicultural self-efficacy among international students in Korea. Their research findings indicated that bicultural self-efficacy plays a significant role as a complete mediator in the relationship between acculturation to the mainstream culture and career decision-making self-efficacy.

Furthermore, a profound sense of belonging to one's home culture fosters increased cross-cultural interactions. Research conducted by Tian et al. (2019) reveals that individuals who exhibit a stronger commitment to their own ethnic group tend to display greater openness to engaging with other ethnic groups. This, in turn, contributes to a reduction in the stress associated with adapting to a new culture. In essence, maintaining a connection to one's ethnic group not only enhances psychological well-being and successful college adaptation but also promotes a greater willingness to establish social connections with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

However, the connection between an individual's ethnic identity and their home country does not always guarantee positive emotions or attractiveness. Previous studies (e.g., Brown, 2009; Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune, 2011; Pazil, 2019) have indicated that transient migrants and international students often form close bonds with fellow co-nationals as a coping strategy for dealing with their transitory status. Simultaneously, they may uphold or establish class distinctions while residing abroad. For instance, international students and white-collar professionals typically do not socialize with co-nationals engaged in low-skilled or unskilled occupations. In other words, while ethnic identity can play a positive role in the lives and academic pursuits of international students, it may not always serve as a primary source of assistance or a buffer when they

confront challenges in overseas life, particularly when considering factors such as socio-economic situations (Gomes, 2019).

Ethnic identity differs from national identity, and while many research studies (e.g., Tian et al., 2019; Rienties et al., 2012; Iwamoto & Liu, 2010) have focused on ethnic identity among international students based on their citizenship or even larger cultural groups, it is important to note that international students from the same country may belong to different ethnic groups. This complexity adds an additional layer to the study of ethnic identity. Sude et al. (2020) conducted an examination of ethnic minority students from China, all hailing from the same home country, to explore how they expressed and shaped various facets of their identities. This qualitative study revealed that different ethnic groups within the same national context may undergo distinct experiences in terms of self-perception and how they are perceived by others while studying in a foreign country. These findings underscore the need to question and revise the overly broad and homogeneous definition of a “Chinese student”. Both Chinese and Western scholars should embrace diversity and consider the internal diversity within the Chinese nation when analyzing the figure of the “Chinese student”. Furthermore, this consideration should extend to the analysis of international students originating from ethnically diverse countries.

CHAPTER III: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Research Gaps

During my literature review about international student's self-identity, and the link between self-identity and self-efficacy, I have found extensive articles on how learning abroad experiences contribute to these students' self-formation and personal growth; as well as their academic experiences, career prospects, and overall health and wellness. A significant amount of research has been conducted in the most popular destinations for international students like the U.S. (e.g., Quinton, 2020; Suh et al., 2023), the U.K. (e.g., Tran, 2015; Barron et al., 2010), and Australia (e.g., Lin et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2015), while there is comparatively less research in the Canadian context. Despite Canada being a popular destination with similarities in language and educational systems, its unique multicultural and socially tolerant background, emphasized by official policies (Kubota, 2015), sets it apart.

Therefore, conducting research in this Canadian context is valuable and can be highly beneficial for international students and educational institutions they attend. Furthermore, there exists a noticeable research imbalance between international students in non-English-speaking countries and those in English-speaking countries. It is essential to acknowledge that diverse cultural backgrounds in different countries lead to unique experiences and emotions among international students, influencing their multifaceted self-identity formation process. As a result, research in this area has the potential to become more comprehensive and enriched. Additionally, one's self-identity may be

linked to their choice of majors and future career prospects. Further research could delve into the impact of their academic and career development experiences during their studies.

Implications for International Students

Undoubtedly, learning abroad is a precious and meaningful opportunity for individuals to explore different cultures and societies, challenge themselves and experience personal growth. Various socio-cultural interactions that international students encounter during their time abroad influence their self-identities. These interactions can be both random and structured, shaping how students perceive and construct their new identities.

However, the benefits and personal development one can gain from learning abroad will not always happen automatically after one arrives in their destination country, and the benefits and personal growth will be different from individual to individual. Therefore, it is important for international students themselves to seize the moment and the opportunity to build themselves and grow mature personalities. It is crucial that international students themselves recognize such opportunities for direct and meaningful engagement. As a result, they will have higher capabilities for observation, acceptance of ambiguity and uncertainty, and will be more adaptable to unfamiliar cultural settings (Sobkowiak, 2019).

Similarly, Kudaibergenov (2023) suggested that international students not only adapted their behaviour to fit into the local society but also actively crafted a new personality by choice. That is, international students consciously behaved and acted in a manner that aligned with the person they aspired to become.

Implications for Educational Institutions - Academic

International student enrolment at Canadian universities has been growing steadily in recent years. To foster a more inclusive and multicultural educational institution and society with higher energy and more dynamic, institutions and staff should make efforts to support international students more effectively. The implication for educational institutions can be divided into two aspects, one is implication from the academic side, and the other is from the non-academic side.

For most international students, academic pursuit is an investment with academic accomplishment and enhanced career prospects as their main goal. While they come from different regions with distinct educational system backgrounds, institutions and instructors should consider those differences and employ multiple strategies according to the student's educational levels, majors, educational backgrounds, etc.

Smith and Zhou (2022) suggested that in order to improve students' academic performance and experiences, instructors should consider the students' satisfaction and perceptions when they design and deliver their courses. Although the content is always an important criterion for the course, teaching styles and instructor's characteristic also matter (Smith & Zhou, 2022). Moreover, instructors using appropriate teaching strategies corresponding to different academic areas will make lessons more effective.

In addition, the diverse cultural backgrounds of international students serve as valuable assets for educational institutions. They offer students and educators a broader perspective within their respective fields. Ng et al. (2014) suggested that institutions can work to foster stronger connections among local students, teachers, and students from

diverse backgrounds. By encouraging mutual acceptance and integrating international perspectives into the curriculum, institutions can enhance their programs with a broader range of viewpoints and content.

Implications for Educational Institutions - Non-Academic

On the non-academic side, universities can work on facilitating interactions and communications between students with diverse cultural backgrounds. Institutions serve as crucial platforms for international students, providing multiple ‘international social spaces’, such as dormitories and classrooms (Batterton & Horner, 2016). Within these settings, students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in distinct cultures and engage with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Various places within universities or colleges may afford international students the chance to assume multiple roles, including those of discoverers, ambassadors, and negotiators, which, in turn, impact their identity development. Regarding the services and resources offered by institutions to promote their students’ success on campus, it is important not only to offer what students need but also to ask them for their input on what would help students succeed. This way, universities can identify what international students think would improve their success and create a campus environment that supports their achievements (Oloo, 2022).

Secondly, for student workers, one important thing is that they should acknowledge international students’ ability to build and rebuild their self-identities and grow stronger personalities. It is unnecessary to always try to “help” international students manage the challenges they encounter during their first arrival time. As every student has different personalities and personal experiences in different situations, it is

hard to make a process that can assist everyone at the most effective. Therefore, it is necessary for staff who work with international students to help the students build and boost their self-efficacy so that they will be able to cope with the challenges that arise in their lives on their own. Such staff who work with international students should avoid labelling international students such as using the term “international student” all the time because these words may work as a stereotype or preconception that will restrict those students’ ability and achievement. In the study conducted by Starr-Glass (2017), it was suggested that when someone is categorized as an “international student,” they are effectively marked as separate and distinct from a “domestic” student. This labelling places international students into a uniform category, which may serve institutional purposes but can also perpetuate stereotypes, mask the richness of diversity among them, and gradually erode their individual identities. In this article, Starr-Glass (2017) described an educational setting that avoids the use of the term “international students” to label their students. This setting boasts remarkable national diversity. In 2016, statistics revealed that the college where the researcher worked housed an international program with 550 individuals originating from no fewer than sixty distinct countries. This college adopted a student-centric approach, aiming to identify and address each student’s individual needs instead of providing generic assistance or workshops for groups of students. This approach is commendable as it prioritizes the unique needs of individuals and avoids stereotyping students. However, I also believe that institutions offering general assistance or workshops for specific student groups, such as international students, can be highly beneficial. This approach allows a broader range of students, including those who may require assistance but are hesitant to seek it due to their personality or a

lack of information, to choose and participate in activities tailored to their specific needs. In my view, the key is to ensure that students have the autonomy to make these choices for themselves.

Additionally, Arias-Valenzuela et al. (2016) have argued that international students studying in Montreal have the autonomy to select which cultural identities they want to embrace or adapt to. Essentially, international students are not simply influenced by their surroundings, they actively participate in the process of cultural adaptation and identity formation. They make choices based on their backgrounds and interactions with various cultural communities. This discovery implies that institutions should aim to comprehend why international students opt for particular cultural identities and, accordingly, can introduce policies, initiate programs, and organize activities to foster positive and successful acculturation experiences.

REFERENCES

- Alruwaili, T., & Ku, H.-Y. (2020). Saudi female international college students' self-identities through the use of social Media in the United States. *Journal of International Students*, 10(3), 629–645. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i3.1270>
- Al-Sharideh, K. A., & Goe, W. R. (1998). Ethnic communities within the university: An examination of factors influencing the personal adjustment of international students. *Research in Higher Education*, 39(6), 699-725.
- Anandavalli, S., DiAnne Borders, L., & Kniffin, L. E. (2021). “I am Strong. Mentally strong!”: Psychosocial strengths of international graduate students of color. *The Professional Counselor (Greensboro, N.C.)*, 11(2), 173–187. <https://doi.org/10.15241/sa.11.2.173>
- Anderson, D. L. (2020). Muslim international students in the United States: A phenomenological inquiry into the experience of identities. *Journal of International Students*, 10(2), 320–338. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i2.965>
- Arias-Valenzuela, M., Amiot, C. E., & Ryder, A. G. (2016). Which one to take on?: International students' identity acquisition in the hyperdiversity of Montreal. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 48(1), 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ces.2016.0002>
- Bailey, E. K. (2017). “I am studying in the US but”: Observations and insights from Caribbean college students. *Social Identities*, 23(1), 87–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2016.1179568>

- Barron, P., Gourlay, L. J., & Gannon-Leary, P. (2010). International students in the higher education classroom: initial findings from staff at two post-92 universities in the UK. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 34(4), 475–489.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2010.512076>
- Batterton, J., & Horner, S. L. (2016). Contextual identities: Ethnic and national identities of international and American students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20(5), 472–487. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315316662979>
- Biwa, V. (2022). Multicultural identity development: An autoethnographic examination of a sojourner's journey. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 91, 119–126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2022.09.008>
- Brown, L. (2009). International students in England: Finding belonging through Islam. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 29(1), 57–67.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13602000902726772>
- Brown, J., & Brown, L. (2013). The international student sojourn, identity conflict and threats to well-being. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 41(4), 395–413.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2012.729026>
- Campus France (2023). 2023 key figures: Europe is the leading host region for mobile students.
https://www.campusfrance.org/system/files/medias/documents/2023-06/Chiffres_cles_2023_en%20.pdf

- Cao, C., Zhu, C., & Meng, Q. (2017). Predicting Chinese international students' acculturation strategies from socio - demographic variables and social ties. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 20(2), 85–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12171>
- Castiello-Gutiérrez, S. (2022). From being to becoming: An international student's journey at becoming an international education scholar. *Journal of International Students*, 12(S2), 13-31.
- Chao, C., Hegarty, N., Angelidis, J., & Lu, V. F. (2017). Chinese students' motivations for studying in the United States. *Journal of International Students* 7(2), 257-269.
- Crane, T. C., Hamilton, J. A., & Wilson, L. E. (2004). Scottish dress, ethnicity, and self-identity. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 8(1), 66-83.
- Crossman, E., Choi, Y., Lu, Y., & Hou, F. (2022). International students as a source of labour supply: A summary of recent trends. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2022003/article/00001-eng.htm>
- Deuel, R. P. (2023). International education as an ethical practice: cultivating a care of the self. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 44(4), 579–594. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2022.2050677>
- Dewi Zakiya, E., Kusumaningputri, R., & Khazanah, D. (2022). “It’s not easy to speak English”: International students’ language anxiety in academic intercultural communication practices. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 9(2), 381–409. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v9i2.534>

- Donthu, N., Kumar, S., Mukherjee, D., Pandey, N., & Lim, W. M. (2021). How to conduct a bibliometric analysis: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 133, 285–296. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.04.070>
- Edwards, R. (2006). What's in a name? Chinese learners and the practice of adopting 'English' names. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 19(1), 90-103.
- Fang, J., & Fine, G. A. (2020). Names and selves: Transnational identities and self-presentation among elite Chinese international students. *Qualitative Sociology*, 43(4), 427–448. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-020-09468-7>
- Gao, Y. (2021). Understanding of international doctoral students' challenges: A literature review study. *Journal of International Students*, 11(2), 505-513.
- Gao, Y. (2019). Experiences of Chinese international doctoral students in Canada who withdrew: A narrative inquiry. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 14, 259-276.
- Glass, C. R., Gómez, E., & Urzua, A. (2014). Recreation, intercultural friendship, and international students' adaptation to college by region of origin. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 42, 104–117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2014.05.007>
- Gomes, C. (2019). Identity as a strategy for negotiating everyday life in transience: A case study of Asian foreign talent in Singapore. *Current Sociology*, 67(2), 225–249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392118792929>
- Gomes, C., Berry, M., Alzougool, B., & Chang, S. (2014). Home away from home : international students and their identity-based social networks in Australia. *Journal of International Students*, 4(1), 2–15. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v4i1.493>

- Guccini, F. (2017). *A 'Sense of Recognition': Negotiating naming practices and identities of Overseas Chinese students in transcultural social spaces*. Göttingen: Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3249/2363-894X-gisca-12>
- Gu, M. M., Guo, X. G., & Lee, J. C.-K. (2019). The interplay between ethnic and academic identity construction among South Asian students in Hong Kong tertiary education. *Higher Education*, 78(6), 1109–1127. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00391-7>
- Hendrickson, B., Rosen, D., & Aune, R. K. (2011). An analysis of friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction levels of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(3), 281–295. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.08.001>
- Holmes, R. M. (2020). The self, identity, and personality. In *Cultural Psychology*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199343805.003.0007>
- Hsieh, M. (2006). Identity negotiation among female Chinese international students. *College Student Journal*, 40(4), 870-884.
- Iwamoto, D. K., & Liu, W. M. (2010). The impact of racial identity, ethnic identity, Asian values, and race-related stress on Asian Americans and Asian international college Students' psychological well-being. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(1), 79–91. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017393>

- Jang, I. C., & Choi, L. J. (2020). Staying connected during COVID-19: The social and communicative role of an ethnic online community of Chinese international students in South Korea. *Multilingua*, 39(5), 541–552. <https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2020-0097>
- Jiang, S. (2021). “Diversity without integration? Racialization and spaces of exclusion in international higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 42(1), 32–47.
- Jin, Y. Y., Ahn, S., & Lee, S. M. (2022). The mediating effect of bicultural self-efficacy on acculturation and career decision-making self-efficacy for international students in South Korea. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 602117–602117. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.602117>
- Jung, E., Hecht, M. L., & Wadsworth, B. C. (2007). The role of identity in international students’ psychological well-being in the United States: A model of depression level, identity gaps, discrimination, and acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 31(5), 605–624. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2007.04.001>
- Li, X. (2015). International students in China: Cross-cultural interaction, integration, and identity construction. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 14(4), 237–254.
- Liu, W., & Rathbone, A. N. D. Y. (2021). The complexity of international student identity. *Journal of Belonging, Identity, Language and Diversity*, 5(2), 42–58.
- Kiang, L., C. Brunsting, N., Tevis, T., Zachry, C., He, Y., & Takeuchi, R. (2021). Identity fusion and adjustment in international students at U.S. colleges and

- universities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 25(5), 524–545.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315320932320>
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.
- Kubota, R. (2015). Race and language learning in multicultural Canada: towards critical antiracism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 36(1), 3–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2014.892497>
- Kudaibergenov, M. (2023). “Because we all change, right?”: A narrative inquiry of an international student’s self-formation in South Korea. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 96, 102708–.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102708>
- Lee, M. W. (2015). Transnational English learning experiences and the trajectory of ethnic identity: Korean early study abroad undergraduates and their parents. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 24(4), 645–655. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-014-0212-3>
- Lin, Y., Shi, J., & Zhang, C. (2022). Working toward becoming doctoral researchers: A collective autoethnography of international students in Australia. *Journal of International Students*, 12(S2), 68–87. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v12iS2.4278>
- Marginson, S. (2014). Student self-formation in international education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 18(1), 6–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315313513036>

Marginson, S. (2023). Student self-formation: an emerging paradigm in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, 1–15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2252826>

Marom, L. (2022). Outsiders-insiders-in between: Punjabi international students in Canada navigating identity amid intraethnic tensions. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 20(2), 221-235.

Mezirow, J., & Taylor, E. W. (2009). *Transformative learning in practice: insights from community, workplace, and higher education* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Moskal, M. (2020). Gendered differences in international graduates' mobility, identity and career development. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 21(3), 421–440.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2018.1499039>

Ng, R. Y., & Lau, L. (2014). An empirical study of mainland Chinese students' learning needs, perceptions of self-identity and sense of belonging. *SpringerPlus*, 3(Suppl 1).

<https://doi.org/10.1186/2193-1801-3-S1-O2>

Nguyen, A.-M. D., Jefferies, J., & Rojas, B. (2018). Short term, big impact? Changes in self-efficacy and cultural intelligence, and the adjustment of multicultural and monocultural students abroad. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 66, 119–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.08.001>

OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014: Highlights, OECD Publishing.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag_highlights-2014-en

- Oh, S., Litam, S. D. A., & Chang, C. Y. (2023). Racism and stress-related growth among Asian internationals: Ethnic identity, resilience, and coping during COVID-19. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 45(2), 226–248. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-022-09494-w>
- Oloo, J. A. (2022). Understanding and enhancing academic experiences of culturally and linguistically-diverse international students in Canada. In C. Smith & G. Zhou (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching Strategies for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse International Students* (pp. 61-74). IGI Global. <https://doi-org.ledproxy2.uwindsor.ca/10.4018/978-1-7998-8921-2.ch004>
- Onosu, G. (2021). The impact of cultural immersion experience on identity transformation process. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(5), 2680–. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052680>
- Owens, D. L., Srivastava, P., & Feerasta, A. (2011). Viewing international students as state stimulus potential: Current perceptions and future possibilities. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 21(2), 157–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2011.623730>
- Pazil, N. H. A. (2019). Familiarity as a family: Close friendships between malaysian students and their co-national friends in the UK. *Journal of International Students*, 9(3), 896–911. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i3.732>
- Phinney, J. S. (1996). When we talk about american ethnic groups, What do we mean? *The American Psychologist*, 51(9), 918–927. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.51.9.918>

- Quaglia, R., Longobardi, C., Mendola, M., & Prino, L. E. (2016). Names in psychological science: Investigating the processes of thought development and the construction of personal identities. *Integrative Psychological & Behavioral Science*, 50(2), 277–295. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-015-9326-2>
- Quinton, W. J. (2020). So close and yet so far? Predictors of international students' socialization with host nationals. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 74, 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.10.003>
- Rabbidge, M., & Banerjee, M. (2022). Positional identities of an international student in South Korea: Denied rights and neglected duties. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2021.2014844>
- Rajan-Rankin, S. (2014). Self-identity, embodiment and the development of emotional resilience. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 44(8), 2426–2442. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct083>
- Rienties, B., Beusaert, S., Grohnert, T., Niemantsverdriet, S., & Kommers, P. (2012). Understanding academic performance of international students: The role of ethnicity, academic and social integration. *Higher Education*, 63(6), 685–700. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-011-9468-1>
- Rise, J., Sheeran, P., & Hukkelberg, S. (2010). The role of self-identity in the theory of planned behavior: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40(5), 1085–1105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2010.00611.x>

- Sá, C. M., & Sabzalieva, E. (2018). The politics of the great brain race: public policy and international student recruitment in Australia, Canada, England and the USA. *Higher Education*, 75(2), 231–253. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0133-1>
- Sharp, D. (2023). The right to emigrate: Exit and equality in a world of States. *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy*, 24(3), 371–. <https://doi.org/10.26556/jesp.v24i3.2182>
- Smith, R. A., & Khawaja, N. G. (2011). A review of the acculturation experiences of international students. *International Journal of intercultural relations*, 35(6), 699-713.
- Smith, C. & Zhou, G. (2022). Teaching culturally and linguistically-diverse international students: Connections between promising teaching practices and student satisfaction. In C. Smith & G. Zhou (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching Strategies for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse International Students* (pp. 1-16). IGI Global. <https://doi-org.ledproxy2.uwindsor.ca/10.4018/978-1-7998-8921-2.ch001>
- Sobkowiak, P. (2019). The impact of studying abroad on students' intercultural competence: An interview study. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 9(4), 681–710. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2019.9.4.6>
- Soong, H., Thi Tran, L., & Hoa Hiep, P. (2015). Being and becoming an intercultural doctoral student: reflective autobiographical narratives. *Reflective Practice*, 16(4), 435–448. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2015.1023276>
- Starr-Glass, D. (2017). Troubling metaphors and international student adjustment: Reflections from a transnational place. *Journal of International Students*, 7(4), 1126–1134. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1035979>

- Sude, Yuan, M., Chen, N., & Dervin, F. (2020). "I think it would be easier for Chinese ethnic minorities to find themselves as a minority if they go abroad": Chinese Minzu individuals' identity and the study abroad experience. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 102, 101584–. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101584>
- Suh, H. N., Pigott, T., Rice, K. G., Davis, D. E., & Andrade, A. C. (2023). Meta-analysis of the relationship between self-critical perfectionism and depressive symptoms: Comparison between Asian American and Asian international college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 70(2), 203–211. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000653>
- Sung, C. C. M. (2022). Identity conflicts and negotiations: Narratives of Asian international students' experiences in Hong Kong. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 43(5), 639–656. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2022.2063818>
- Teng, M. F., Reynolds, B. L., & Ha, X. V. (2023). Social participation and identity change during study abroad: British sojourners in China. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12476>
- Tian, L., McClain, S., Moore, M. M., & Lloyd, H. (2019). An examination of ethnic identity, self-compassion, and acculturative stress in Asian international students. *Journal of International Students*, 9(2), 635–660. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i2.617>
- Tran, D. (2015). Binaries of self and other: Student identity and learning in higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. *The International Journal of Diverse Identities*, 14(3), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-7866/CGP/v14i03/40029>

- Van De Mierop, D., & Schnurr, S. (2017). *Identity struggles: Evidence from workplaces around the world*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Waite-Jones, J. M., & Rodriguez, A. M. (2022). Sociability, self-identity, and self-esteem. *In Psychosocial Approaches to Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing* (pp. 79–98). Springer International Publishing AG. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99354-2_5
- Wallin, J. A. (2005). Bibliometric methods: pitfalls and possibilities. *Basic Clinical Pharmacology & Toxicology*, 97(5), 261–275.
- Wang, C. C., Andre, K., & Greenwood, K. M. (2015). Chinese students studying at Australian universities with specific reference to nursing students: A narrative literature review. *Nurse Education Today*, 35(4), 609–619. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2014.12.005>
- Wilczewski, M., & Alon, I. (2023). Language and communication in international students' adaptation: a bibliometric and content analysis review. *Higher Education*, 85(6), 1235–1256. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00888-8>
- Xu, X. (2020). Exploring the logic of name changes and identity construction: A reflective self-narration of assimilation expectations. *Names*, 68(1), 32–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00277738.2018.1452937>
- Yasuda, T. (2018). Psychological expertise required for advising in language learning: Theories and practical skills for Japanese EFL learners' trait anxiety and Perfectionism. *Sisal Journal*, 9(1), 11–32. <https://doi.org/10.37237/090103>

- Ye, L., & Edwards, V. (2015). Chinese overseas doctoral student narratives of intercultural adaptation. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 14(3), 228–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240915614934>
- Ye, L., & Edwards, V. (2017). A narrative inquiry into the identity formation of Chinese doctoral students in relation to study abroad. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 20(6), 865–876. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1294570>
- Yao, C. W. (2018). "They don't care about you": First-year Chinese international students' experiences with neo-racism and othering on a US campus. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 30(1), 87-101.
- Yuan, R., Li, S., & Yu, B. (2019). Neither “local” nor “global”: Chinese university students’ identity paradoxes in the internationalization of higher education. *Higher Education*, 77(6), 963–978. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0313-7>
- Zhang, Y. (Leaf). (2016). International students in transition: Voices of Chinese doctoral students in a U.S. research University. *Journal of International Students*, 6(1), 175–194. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v6i1.487>
- Zhang, Y., O'Shea, M., & Mou, L. (2021). International students’ motivations and decisions to do a PhD in Canada: Proposing a three-layer push-pull framework. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 51(2), 61-73.
- Zhao, X., & Biernat, M. (2017). “Welcome to the US” but “change your name”? Adopting Anglo names and discrimination. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 70, 59-68.

VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Shuo Liu

PLACE OF BIRTH: Taiyuan, China

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1994

EDUCATION: Quanzhou Normal University, Bachelor of
History, Quanzhou, Fujian, China, 2017

University of Windsor, Master of Education,
Windsor, ON, Canada, 2023