

Living as a Self-sufficient Second-class Citizen: Chinese International Undergraduate
Students' Journey to Permanent Residency in Canada

by

Yuet Chan

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract:

In recent years, Canada has become one of the world's most popular destinations for studying abroad, and China has become the top sending country of international students to Canada. In Canada's 2015 International Student Survey, more than half of international students indicated an interest in applying for permanent resident status following graduation. Meanwhile, the deflation of Western degrees in the Chinese market and recent spate of media coverage circulated portraying the outbound Chinese students as low-quality students have created barriers for studying abroad returnees for seeking desirable employment in China. Thus, it is logical to estimate that a considerable percentage of current Chinese international students will eventually become Canadian citizens. During my undergraduate years as an international student at the University of Waterloo (UW), I heard many of my fellow Chinese international undergraduate students express their strong and sustained desire to stay permanently in Canada but complained about Canada's "backwardness" and its "lack of urban vitality". Such irony sparked my scholarly interest and I decided to conduct an ethnographic research on the Chinese undergraduate student community at UW. My thesis looks at the University of Waterloo's undergraduate students' aspirations and perspectives on becoming permanent residents in Canada. Specifically, I examine how they envision their future in Canada in relation to their individuality, self-happiness and self-satisfaction, neoliberal potentials, moral personhood, and skepticism toward Canadian multiculturalism.

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For my parents, Kei Hoi Chan and Siu Mei Fang-Chan

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Chapter 1

Vignette

In 2016, *Ultra Rich Asians in Vancouver*, a controversial three-season Canadian reality TV show featuring the extravagant lives of the daughters from wealthy Mainland Chinese immigrant families in Vancouver, prompted intense discussion in both North American and Chinese media (Fan, 2016). In the TV program, these young women often parade around wearing designer-brand attire, including Chanel silk coats, as they frequent Vancouver's high-end restaurants. Beyond simply providing the viewers with a glimpse into the extravagant lifestyle of Chinese immigrants, Kevin Li, the Canadian-born Chinese producer of this reality TV show, intended to present an upscale version of transnational Chinese dreams. As the beneficiaries of the official sanction of profit-making during the post-Mao era, the parents of these rich Chinese women accumulated enormous wealth through their business savvy, hard work, and government connections; ultimately, they migrated to Canada and obtained their citizenship. As the beneficiaries of their parents' wealth, most of the cast members are highly educated and have launched their own businesses. While the creator of this program had intended to showcase the success stories of these rich young women, the conspicuous consumption it revealed and the neoliberal message it conveyed garnered strong criticism from the public. Cast member Pam Zhao dismisses this criticism by arguing that luxurious consumption is simply part of her daily life: "just like some people going to McDonald's for breakfast, but with more money" (CBC Radio, 2016).

Nevertheless, neoliberal images of wealthy transnational Chinese are not new to North American public or scholarship. Beginning with its assembly in 1978, revamping in 1984, and extension in 1986 to recruit wealthy entrepreneurs who would advance Canada's economic development, the Business Immigration Program has attracted a large number of wealthy transnational Chinese (Mitchell, 2004, p. 57-60). Since the arrival of these nouveau

riche Chinese immigrants, much Canadian media attention has been given to the new lives of these immigrants in Canada. Although not all Canadian media outlets speak unfavourably of the wealthy transnational Chinese, media coverage of transnational Chinese in Canada tends to focus on their frantic real estate activities and other conspicuous consumption behaviours, which have essentialized Chinese immigrants as being hyper neoliberal and materialistic. Meanwhile, numerous ethnographies have been conducted in response to the demographic and socio-geographic changes brought about by the arrival of a massive body of Chinese immigrants in Canada's gateway cities (Mitchell, 2004; Waters, 2008; Yu, 2012). This body of literature is primarily concerned with British Columbia geographically and with Hong Kong Chinese demographically. However, the large number of recent Mainland Chinese immigrants has captured very little anthropological attention — despite the fact that they have begun to reshape the demographics of Chinese in Canada (Mitchell, 2004; Waters, 2008; Yu, 2012). In an attempt to fill this gap in the literature, my research focuses on Mainland Chinese in Ontario, notably the province with the largest Chinese population (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Although the existing literature has eloquently detailed and theorized the neoliberal calculative schemes of transnational Chinese, its heavy emphasis on how the neoliberal Hong Kong Chinese deploy their familial, citizenship, and socio-geographical strategies to accumulate various forms of capital certainly leaves the impression that these nouveau riche transnational Chinese are one-track minded homo economicus with little social or political engagement and no awareness of how they are viewed by mainstream Canadian society. In reality, Chinese in Canada are greatly burdened by the need to keep pushing back against these negative media images (Bula, 2017; Stiem, 2016). In this thesis, I attempt to break away from the existing literature and examine how Chinese international students have adopted the anti-neoliberal narrative to rationalize their desire for Canadian citizenship.

While most of the existing literature on transnational Chinese in North America primarily focuses on middle-aged entrepreneurs, some scholars have examined the educational strategies of transnational children (Mitchell, 2004; Ong, 1999; Waters, 2008; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Building upon Bourdieu's model of capital conversion, this body of ethnographies has been devoted to the calculative educational strategies of the middle-class Hong Kong and Taiwanese Chinese immigrants in Canada. These ethnographies have reported that middle-class overseas Chinese parents are very eager to convert their economic capital into their children's university degrees. This eagerness is rooted in the parents' hope that Western university degrees will not only allow their children to seek employment in the countries where the degree is awarded, but also enable their children flexible accumulation of capital throughout Asia Pacific (Ley, 2010; Mitchell, 2004; Waters, 2008). However, the Chinese international student (visa student) population — now the most visible international presence on North American university campuses — has been overlooked by anthropologists (see Abelmann and Kang, 2013; Fong, 2011; Yang, 2016). Thus, my thesis also contributes to the discussion of the mobility of transnational Chinese students in the developed world. Although excellent studies have been conducted on transnational Chinese students in the U.S. and some other developed countries, the Canadian case is very different from the cases in U.S. and other developed countries. Fong's (2011) work focuses on transnational Chinese students at disreputable educational institutions in certain less popular study abroad destinations such as Ireland. According to Fong (2011), such countries usually attract very marginalized lower-middle class transnational Chinese students who could not afford to go to school in the more popular study abroad countries such as U.S. and Canada. Yang (2016) among others looked at Chinese international undergraduates in the U.S., which is the most popular country for studying abroad. Overall, studies on Chinese international students in the U.S. have focused on how these students navigate their career path in China as a result of

restricted immigration policies in the U.S. Canada is unique in its favourable immigration policies to international students, as international students are the major source of future skilled immigrants.

The History of Chinese in Canada

The institution of citizenship has been fundamental to Canada's process of settlement, nation-building, and economic development. In the early age of Canada's development, by negating the rights of the indigenous and alienating them from their own territory, European settlers, colonizers, and migrants transformed themselves into insiders and exalted themselves as "true" nationals. Immigration was key in the recruitment of "true" nationals (Thobani, 2007, p. 74-75). From Confederation until the 1960s, Canadian immigration and naturalization first prioritized the British and French, followed by other Europeans, as the preferred race for de jure and de facto membership to the nation (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002). The other non-preferred race was categorized as strangers and intruders who would threaten the nation's wellbeing. In the Canadian national imagination, Asians were depicted as filthy, wicked, slothful, diseased, and cunning people who contaminated the white nation with their deviant nature. According to popular belief, Chinese were thought to have a propensity for petty theft as well as other serious crime, and thus they could only be trusted under supervision (Thobani, 2007, p. 85-86).

Since 1858, there have been countless waves of Chinese immigrants arriving in Canada (Li, 1998, p. 18). From the late seventeenth century to the early twentieth century, most Chinese immigrants to Canada came from Guangdong Province. These early Chinese immigrants were mostly poor and uneducated labourers or owners of small businesses such as restaurants and laundromats (Yu, 2012, p. 113). As part of the non-preferred race, the early Chinese migrants were deemed unworthy of citizenship. In response to the anti-Chinese sentiments in Canada, the federal government passed the Chinese Head Tax. This new ruling

required all Chinese entering Canada to pay a levied tax of fifty dollars, roughly equivalent to two years of wages for a labourer. The head tax increased in successive years. From 1923 to 1947, all immigrants from China were prohibited from entering Canada under the Chinese Exclusion Act (Yu, 2012, p. 113; Mitchell, 2004, p. 246). This anti-Chinese climate continued until the 1960s, when the need for labour made the presence of immigrants indispensable to Canada's further economic development. At this point the "non-preferred race" finally began to have greater access to citizenship.

After the racial preferences in immigration policy for Europeans were removed in 1967, a new wave of Hong Kong Chinese immigrants, many with familial connections to previous waves of Chinese immigrants, arrived in Canada during the 1970s (Yu, 2012, p. 116-117). Although Chinese immigrants were excluded by Canada for almost eighty years, they have currently been highly sought after as business immigrants since the 1980s. When Canada's Business Immigration Program was revamped in 1984, Canada attracted its new wave of Chinese immigrants, most of whom were wealthy entrepreneurs from Hong Kong. Demographically, up until the end of the late twentieth century, the majority of ethnic Chinese in Canada were of Cantonese ancestry stemming from eight counties in Guangdong Province (Yu, 2012, p.109-111). Hence, historians conducting extensive research on various waves of Chinese immigrants have concentrated on "Cantonese Pacific" (Anderson, 1995; Yu, 2012).

My thesis is concerned with the newest wave of Chinese immigrants to Canada — Chinese international students who will apply for their permanent residency status following their graduation. In recent years, Canada has become one of the world's most popular destinations for studying abroad as a result of the Canadian government's world-renowned favourable policies toward international students (CBIE, 2016). The benefits of international students in Canadian classrooms and as future citizens are positively presented by the

Canadian government through policy frameworks such as the International Education Strategy: international students are not only a major source of income for higher education institutions, but also a future source of skilled immigrants. While the government continues to decrease its funding for higher education, large enrolments of international students have offset the financial deficits experienced by Canadian higher educational institutions (Waters, 2008, p. 47-48) (Appendices A, B, and C). International students are believed to be well-suited for permanent residency in Canada, as they have acquired Canadian credentials, they are fluent in at least one of Canada's two official languages, and they often have relevant Canadian work experience (Global Affairs Canada, 2015). Indeed, in Canada's 2015 International Student Survey, more than half of international students indicated an interest in applying for permanent resident status following graduation (CBIE, 2016). Among all international students in Canada, 120,000 were from China (CBIE, 2016) (see Appendix D). China is ranked as the top sending country of international students to Canada, as the result of the burgeoning of China's middle class and the increasing number of high school students avoiding China's fiercely competitive college entrance exam (Gu, 2017; Iskyan, 2016). Moreover, unlike past generations of Chinese returnees (haigui) who were able to convert their degrees into desirable income and social status because the number of returnees was limited, the current generation of haigui have much less advantage over their domestically-educated counterparts in China's job market. For the past decade, the number of haigui has significantly increased and thus deflated the value of Western degrees (Yang, 2016, p. 87-88). Meanwhile, the recent spate of negative media coverage portraying Chinese international students at Western universities as low-quality, corrupted, and irresponsible has significantly harmed the reputation of the current generation of haigui and created further barriers for haigui to seek desirable employment in China (Yang, 2016, p. 88). Thus, it is logical to

estimate that a considerable percentage of current Chinese international students will eventually become Canadian citizens.

During my undergraduate years as an international student at the University of Waterloo, I heard many of my fellow Chinese international undergraduate students express their strong and sustained desire to stay permanently in Canada, a country which they paradoxically described as “boring” and “stagnant”, instead of returning to China, which they viewed as “fun” and “vibrant”. Such irony sparked my scholarly interest in Chinese international students in Canada.

Chapter 2

I do have an enterprising spirit, but I also enjoy a laid-back lifestyle. Life is not about money. I think people in China are too obsessed with money. They are too fuzao and too hard-working. Even if you are not so obsessed with money, you will still feel uncomfortable surrounded by people who are obsessed with money. The web development company I'm working for was founded in 1999. There are only five of us working including our boss. Our boss doesn't want the company to grow too big, because he wants to take care of his family. —Jason, a stocky and extroverted second-year computer science major Chinese international student, came to Canada after experiencing a mental breakdown while preparing for his university entrance exam during his twelfth grade in China.

I open this chapter with Jason's quotation, as he highlights a perspective shared by most of my interlocutors. Most of my interlocutors were reluctant to return to China following their university graduation, as they believed that Chinese society is too "fuzao" — people are overly anxious about material success. My interlocutors condemned the highly materialistic and anomic Chinese society for depriving them of fulfilling their psychological desires for happiness and self-satisfaction. Most importantly, in justifying their preference to stay permanently in Canada, my interlocutors' psychological desires for happiness and individuality were highly emphasized.

Literature Review

There is a growing number of anthropological works on the rise of individualism in contemporary China. Yan's (2010) groundbreaking research has provided a historical account of China's path to individualization. During the Maoist era (1949-1976), through land reform and socialization of industry and commerce, first, individuals were encouraged to break away from formerly all-inclusive social categories of the extended family, kinship organization, and local community; next, they were mobilized into newly-formed rural collectives and urban work units; finally, individual rights and identities were totally denied (Yan, 2010, p. 489-494). In the post-Mao reform era (1976-present), while individuals are allowed to seek material comfort and personal happiness, their individuality has been restrained — especially for those at the bottom according to social stratification (Yan, 2010, p. 505). Above all, the

surge of individualization is particularly prominent among contemporary Chinese youth as a result of the combination of China's One Child Policy, the competitive university entrance examination system that solely emphasizes individual testing, the state school system that intentionally promotes the ideology of "enterprising self" through school curricula and a range of extracurricular activities. While the promotion of individualism has taught the Chinese youth the need to be self-reliant, it also conveys the message of self-centeredness, utilitarianism and hedonism (Hansen, 2013; Yan, 2006). As an important body of anthropological literature on China's only children demonstrates, in most Chinese families, children are the recipients of attention and affection from up to six adults — parents, paternal grandparents, and maternal grandparents. This child-centric approach to family has formed a climate of self-centredness which effectively allows the egos of children to grow, thus earning them the title of "Little Emperor/Empress" (Guo, 2000; Yan, 2006). For example, in her ethnography on China's urban middle-class parenting during the reform era, Kuan (2015) notes a dilemma faced by today's Chinese parents: they struggle to equip their children to be competitors in China's daunting educational system and employment market while respecting them as autonomous and happy individuals (p. 1, 25-26). Indeed, when I asked my interlocutors why they preferred to stay permanently in Canada, the mentality that "my psychological desires of happiness and self-satisfaction matter" was very apparent in their narratives — they believed staying in Canada would allow them to be happy and economically productive individuals. Although contemporary Chinese youth were raised under a regime in which personal happiness and self-satisfaction are highly sought after, many lower-middle class academic elites, as Bregnbæk's (2016) ethnography on academic elites at China's most prestigious universities reveals, felt their individuality had been restrained by their intergenerational contract to repay their aging parents by providing for them financially. For my interlocutors, the importance of self-satisfaction is clearly

demonstrated by their decision to become permanent residents in Canada. Unlike previous waves of Chinese students who studied abroad with the patriotic goal of learning knowledge and technology which would enhance China's national power (Yang, 2015, p. 17-19), my interlocutors, while lamenting the degrading moral sense within Chinese society, did not express a desire to change the status quo in China by returning to China to work following graduation. Furthermore, they did not communicate their sense of obligation or desire to fulfill filial piety by taking care of their aging parents. While previous anthropological works have shed considerable light on how the structural changes in contemporary China impacts the growth of individuality, the role of class in the forming of Chinese youth's individuality has not been adequately studied. Unlike the lower-middle class students in Bregnbæk's (2016) ethnography, my interlocutors believed that their parents did not expect them to return to China to provide care in their old age, as their parents had sufficient savings to either support themselves or to live in a high-end seniors' home. In other words, their parents' economic capital had released my interlocutors from their intergenerational contracts to take care of the aging parents and thus allowed them to pursue their personal desires for individuality, happiness, and self-satisfaction. My interlocutors were free to fulfill their psychological aspirations in Canada. Thus, I argue that it is my interlocutors' class background that allowed them to pursue their goals related to personal happiness and self-satisfaction.

My thesis looks at why the privileged Chinese international undergraduate students at the University of Waterloo would give up the cosmopolitan life in urban China where they would be ensured good jobs through their parents' connections for not so exciting lives in Canada where they had experienced racism and discrimination.

In the following pages, I will first discuss my interlocutors' familial, academic, and economic background and examine how their self-satisfaction has been bound up with their

class background. Next, I will examine how my interlocutors' psychological desires for individuality, happiness and self-satisfaction have led to their aversion for China's neoliberal and hyper-materialistic sociality in favour of Canada's laid-back social environment and meritocratic working environment. Finally, I will analyze how my interlocutors' individualism has led to their discontentment in either China or Canada.

Participants

Over a period of three months in the summer of 2017, I conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve Chinese international undergraduate students from the University of Waterloo (UW). Study participants consisted of nine undergraduate students, one graduate student who first came to UW as an undergraduate student, and two recently graduated alumni who had bachelor's degrees from UW. During each interview, questions related to informants' financial circumstances were asked to examine how their economic capital shapes their perceptions of cultural citizenship. A written questionnaire was utilized to ask questions of a sensitive nature which could lead to awkwardness in regular conversation. Participants, who were recruited via posters on campus and by word of mouth, consisted of three main groups: those who had attended high school for one or two years in Canada; those who had come to Canada as first-year university students; and those who had first attended university elsewhere before transferring to UW during their undergraduate years. The first group consisted of two females and two males: two had planned since their youth to study abroad; one had decided to repeat his twelfth grade in Canada after failing his gaokao in China (a nation-wide college entrance exam which every Chinese student must take at the end of grade twelve in order to apply to university); and one had left China after experiencing a mental breakdown as the result of high stress from gaokao during his grade twelve year in China, believing that Canada's secondary and post-secondary education — with higher acceptance rates and fewer competitors than that of China — was his remedial path. The

second group consisted of three females: one had attended high school for four years in Singapore with full scholarship; and the other two had attended international-track high school programs in China. While these international-tracked programs in China require students to study Chinese, English, math, science, and English to complete their high school diplomas, students are not required to study Communist-inspired philosophy. Instead, students may take TOEFL and IELTS preparation courses as well as extra English writing and conversational courses to better prepare them for studying in an English-speaking country. The third group consisted of three female and two male transfer students: three had transferred to UW from first-tier Chinese universities through UW's 2+2 joint academic programs, one had transferred to UW from a prestigious first-tier Chinese university after finishing his first year in China, and one had transferred from a liberal arts college in the U.S. For half of my interlocutors, their decision to study abroad was made during their mid-teenage years. In his ethnography on global-track Chinese high school students who were preparing to attend universities in the U.S., Yang (2016) notes that many of the Chinese students who choose the studying abroad path to circumvent the social, emotional, and psychological pressure of China's national university entrance exam are often not academic elites.

Five of my interlocutors were studying computer science, three were studying mathematics-related subjects, three were studying geography-related subjects, and one was studying physics. All of my interlocutors had come from first- or second-tier Chinese cities of more than two million inhabitants. Although each participant had a unique studying abroad journey to Canada, they were all linked by their decision to choose Canada as their destination over other countries based on their common belief that Canada is a safe and peaceful country. Although some of my interlocutors believed that most Canadian universities are less known than many prestigious American universities, they were haunted

by the news reports of mass shootings in the U.S. Thus, their perceived safety in Canada outweighed any prestige that attending American universities would bring. For my interlocutors who majored in computer science and mathematics, UW was their first choice for university, as UW's worldwide reputation is based on these fields that are deemed practical by both Chinese and Canadian standards. For my interlocutors who were studying other subjects, UW's co-operative and career-focused education had drawn them to attend this university.

When I started my research in May of 2017, UW's international tuition fee ranged from \$13,470 to \$19,397 per four-month academic term, depending on the program of study; and average cost of living expenses ranged from \$6,450 to \$8,900 per four-month academic term, depending on the individual's lifestyle and personal needs. Though significantly lower than the international student tuition fees at the U of Toronto and the University of British Columbia, UW's international tuition fees are three times greater than its domestic tuition fees (University of Waterloo, 2017). With the exception of two students in the Faculty of Math's co-operative program who were able to offset some of their living expenses with their earnings from their work terms, all other research participants were fully supported financially by their parents. For their children to finish a four-year education program at UW, parents would be required to spend a total of at least \$160,000. Parents of study participants, aged from mid-forties to mid-fifties, are part of a generation who were born at a fortuitous time in the history of contemporary China, as they were able to make a fortune in the post-Mao market reform economic liberalization which enabled the mushrooming of private business and accumulation of private wealth (Osburg, 2013; Zhang, 2011). In China, this new middle class is a highly heterogeneous and complex formation comprised of people with diverse occupations, social backgrounds, and incomes (Zhang, 2010). In alignment with the social context in China, the parents of my interlocutors presented a variety of occupations

including entrepreneur, engineer, medical doctor, teacher, and civil servant. In this reform era, it is difficult to estimate one's income or identify one's source of income based on occupation, as private wealth accumulated by middle-class professionals, merchants, and entrepreneurs often comes from unconventional and even illegal channels. Thus, their commonality is not a shared social structure of an occupation or relationship to the means of production, but rather a similar orientation in lifestyle expressed by homeownership and consumerism (Zhang, 2010). Unlike the lower-middle class Chinese parents in Fong's (2011) study who spent virtually all of their savings to send their children abroad to study while being required to work part-time, none of the parents of students in my study required their children to work part-time during their academic terms, and all of them were able to maintain their upper-middle class lifestyle in China after having sent their children to study abroad. All of the parents of students in my study owned multiple apartments or houses in China.

Although owning multiple apartments or houses in China and spending at least \$160,000 on their children's education in Canada may be considered evidence of wealth by world standards, all of my interlocutors positioned themselves as "middle-class Chinese" as opposed to "wealthy Chinese". I will unpack their self-identified "middle-classness" in the latter part of this thesis. Moreover, it is important to note that all of my interlocutors came to the interviews dressed in modest clothing. None of my interlocutors wore designer brand apparel — a choice which I interpret as their being wary of being judged by me, the researcher, who is also a Chinese international and a marked departure from the extravagant lifestyle of Chinese international students portrayed by the media.

All interviews, which took place at coffee shops and lounges either on- or off-campus, were first audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Due to the time constraints of my Master's program, I was not able to conduct extensive participant observation. However, the lack of extensive participant observation was offset by my four-year-long membership in the

Chinese international student community at UW and the fact that I conducted ethnographic research at a university where I have attended both as an undergraduate student and as a graduate student. As a native Mandarin and Cantonese speaker and a Chinese international student, I could interview my interlocutors in their native tongues. As well, my familiarity with Chinese metacommunicative norms enabled me to further analyze my interlocutors' narratives.

Setting

My research is situated at the University of Waterloo (UW) in Southern Ontario. Known internationally for its mathematics, engineering, and science programs as well as the world's largest cooperative education program, UW is attended by almost 40,000 undergraduate students. In the academic year of 2016-2017, international students comprised 18% of UW's undergraduate student population. The number of Chinese international students grew more than threefold from 195 in the academic year of 2011-2012 to 647 in the academic year of 2016-2017. China has been the largest sending country for international students at UW over the past six academic years (University of Waterloo, 2017).

The University Plaza, a retail centre immediately adjacent to UW containing mostly low-cost restaurants, offers more than ten Chinese restaurants specializing in various Chinese regional cuisines along with a well-stocked Chinese grocery store and a Chinese-owned makeup store that sells primarily Asian cosmetic brands favoured by young Chinese women. Beyond University Plaza but within walking distance to UW's main campus, there are five more Chinese restaurants, four Chinese-owned bubble tea shops, two Chinese Karaoke, and a Chinese bakery. All of these amenities have enabled many Chinese international students at UW to continue practicing their lifestyle as though they were still living in China.

Although one can hardly find the Waterloo Region on a world map, this Canadian technology centre is only one hour's drive from the Greater Toronto Area and home to two

important Canadian universities (University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University), three well-known think tanks, the once information technology giant Blackberry's headquarters, Google's Canadian headquarters, and more than four hundred high-tech firms. The Region of Waterloo's population grew by 5.5% from 2011 to 2016 and is currently 535,154 (Outhit, 2017). Although the Region of Waterloo's population is predominantly Caucasian, the City of Waterloo's higher education institutions and technological development have attracted people with diverse ethnic backgrounds (The Regional Municipality of Waterloo, 2014). Yet in spite of Waterloo's rapid technological development, many Chinese international students call the City of Waterloo the "Loo Village", not only because Waterloo's size is comparable to that of a small rural town in an underdeveloped region of China, but also because Waterloo is much less urbanized than most second-tier cities in China.

Waterloo has a great number of long-term naturalized Chinese Canadians who work mainly in the high-tech and higher-educational sector. According to the 2011 census, China is the second most common country of birth for immigrants in Waterloo, and Chinese-born immigrants accounted for 9% of the Region's population (Statistics Canada, 2011). The Chinese in Waterloo have formed a sizable Chinese residential area in the northwest part of the city, with many niche businesses such as Chinese traditional medicine shops, acupuncture clinics, Mandarin-speaking medical and dental clinics, as well as Chinese hairdressers.

Self-positioning

Most of my interlocutors carefully drew class distinctions between themselves and ultra-rich Chinese international students by positioning themselves as modest, reserved, and thrifty middle-class Chinese international students who practiced a wholesome lifestyle and who exhibited responsibility in both schooling and finances. Their self-image contrasted with the negative images of ultra-wealthy Chinese international students portrayed by both

Chinese and North American media. By the media, Chinese international students are often portrayed as self-indulgent in their consumption of endless parties, designer brands, alcohol, drugs, expensive cars, etc. while being uncommitted to their education (Johanson, 2016; Wang, 2016; Elkenburg, 2017). Likewise, from my interlocutors' viewpoint, the ultra-wealthy Chinese international students they encountered in their daily lives spent money like water and led self-indulgent lifestyles similar to the media portrayals. By criticizing the moral compass of the corrupted ultra-wealthy Chinese international students, my interlocutors distanced themselves from their ultra-rich counterparts.

When I asked Zachary (a tall and muscular second-year geomatics student and fitness enthusiast from Yueyang, China) to describe how he and his friends usually spent their spare time, he said: "We usually go to the gym, go out to eat, or drink something at home... I know there are Chinese students who go to casinos, but I'm not part of that circle. Their circle is kind of messy (luan)." The word "messy" used by Zachary contains certain moral components as he referred to and criticized the self-indulgent lifestyle of ultra-wealthy Chinese international students. Similarly, in response to the same question, Alan, a tall, lean, and suave fourth-year mathematical finances student from Guangzhou who transferred to UW after finishing his first-year at a prestigious Chinese university, said: "We usually get together and chat or grab bubble tea together..." When I asked: "Do you go hiking or travelling with your friends?", Alan answered, "Not really, because none of us has a car. The rich international students might drive around and have fun. People usually hang out with people from the similar family background, so my friends are mostly from middle-class background." Although considered wealthy by Canadian standards, and in the fortunate position of receiving some financial assistance from their parents, my interlocutors confessed that they would still have to work after graduation to support themselves. These circumstances directly contrasted with those of their ultra-wealthy counterparts whose

parents' wealth would be sufficient to support them for the rest of their lives, even if they did not work following graduation.

Becoming Immigrants in Canada

While nine of my interlocutors intended to stay in Canada permanently following their graduation, only three had come to study in Canada with the intention of returning to China after they had received their degrees. As most of my interlocutors were “accidental immigrants”, their journeys to permanent residency in Canada were quite similar. Considering all had come from highly populated cities of over two million residents, when they first arrived in Waterloo, most held very negative views of the laid-back urban landscape and lifestyle in Waterloo and most Canadian cities, including Toronto, as these urban centres contrasted with the rapidly expanding, skyscraper-filled, and ultra-commercialized urban landscape in Chinese cities. As I mentioned above, many Chinese international students from UW jokingly called Waterloo the “Loo Village”. Many of them even called Toronto — the largest city in Canada — the “To Village”. Similarly, complaints about Toronto’s backwardness and the lack of urban vitality and modern amenities compared to South Korea have been voiced by the community of Korean visa students and their mothers in Toronto (see Shim, 2012). Yet after two or three years of living in Waterloo, my interlocutors had become well-adjusted to the slow-paced life in Canada, and hence their desire to stay in Canada had grown.

Such antipathy toward Canada is illustrated by Linda’s initial disappointment. Originally from Changzhou, a developed second-tier Chinese city in southern Jiangsu province with almost four million residents, this poised fourth-year math and business major student who had attended her eleventh and twelfth grades in Canada came to the interview wearing light make-up. She expressed her disappointment with the “backwardness” of

Waterloo at the beginning of her undergraduate studies, when she could not wait to go back to China:

It was too boring here...especially in the evening. There was not much to do in the evening. There was nothing to do here. It was just like a village. During my first three years here, I often told myself: 'When I finish schooling, I will go back to China right away... I'm not even staying here for one more second!' After having been here for a few years, I'm well-adjusted to the life here. On the contrary, I'm not adjusted to China anymore.

Coming from a highly populated city in China, Linda first experienced strong culture shock as she could not adjust to the laid-back and even "boring" lifestyle in Canada. Nevertheless, three years later, she experienced reverse cultural shock when returning to China. Although she had at one point been very eager to return to China for a vacation, she had now become well-adjusted to the same laid-back lifestyle in Canada she had once abhorred. Similarly, Zachary was not impressed when he first landed in Canada. Having planned on studying abroad since his early teenage years, Zachary left Yueyang, a second-tier city with over five million residents, and came to Canada to attend grade twelve at a private Christian high school in Breslau, a community located in Waterloo Region. During grade twelve he lived with a local host family in Kitchener to hone his English conversational skills. Upon his arrival in Breslau, Zachary experienced great inconvenience in his daily life:

I couldn't adjust to life here when I first came over. In China, there are always restaurants and grocery stores around where you live. But here, you might have to travel far to eat or get grocery. I still remember what I felt when I first came to the University Plaza. I was like 'this is so developed' [compared to Breslau]. You know, there are only cornfields in Breslau. You can't go anywhere without the school bus.

Interestingly, though initially feeling antipathy for Canada's "boring" and "inconvenient" lifestyle, after two or three years of studying in Canada, the majority of my interlocutors, like Zachary, became well-adjusted. They even started to develop an appreciation for Canada's quietness, especially after visiting or working in China. As they realized that the oft-praised "convenient life" in China in actuality brought about hyper

materialism and even immorality, they developed an antipathy for returning to China during their second or third year of university.

The Overly Neoliberal Chinese Self: “China is too fuzao”

Although all of my interlocutors came from families who had been beneficiaries of the neoliberal post-Mao reform era, they painstakingly set themselves apart from some norms commonly seen in China, such as hyper-materialism, the immoral practices of *guanxi* (social connections), nepotism in the workplace, etc. Strikingly, the Chinese term “fuzao” was voiced by four of my interlocutors to describe these norms and moral issues associated with China, and the term “neoliberalism” has been used by anthropologists of contemporary China to relate these norms and issues to broader scholarly discussions in the context of globalization (see Fong 2011; Osburg, 2013). As defined by Harvey (2005), neoliberalism is the “political economic practices that all human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Nevertheless, my interlocutors’ views on neoliberalism were inconsistent and problematic — while they denounced some neoliberal norms commonly seen in China, they appreciated Canada’s supposed meritocracy, personal autonomy, and sincerity in social interactions, which are the ideals of neoliberalism. Now, I would like to clarify a couple of points. It is very important to note that since all of my interlocutors, though well-travelled within Canada, had only lived in Canada between two and six years, their knowledge and understanding of Canada could be limited. For instance, they perceived China as a highly neoliberal nation to which only neoliberal individuals belong, whereas in their essentialized and idealistic portrayals of Canada, they understood Canada as a modest, moral, and non-materialistic nation to which everyday middle-class individuals could belong. Nevertheless, for the

purpose of this thesis, I intend to illustrate my interlocutors' subjective perceptions of Canada rather than present what others may consider the objective reality of Canada.

After having lived in Canada for more than two years, during his work term in China at the beginning of 2017, Zachary (second-year geomatics student from Yueyang, China who had come to Canada for grade twelve) experienced a strong sense of reverse cultural shock from the moral code in China:

I think Canada is way better [than China]. When I first came to Canada, I didn't think I would have such a strong desire to stay. The longer I have been in Canada, the more I want to stay in Canada. Now I'm so used to Canada, and I don't fit in in China anymore... when I went back [for a co-op term], I found people are so fuzao and so loud, and the places were dirty. I couldn't wait to come back to Canada...

In this excerpt from Zachary's interview as well as in the excerpt from Jason's interview that I open this chapter with, fuzao refers to the hyper materialism and fast-paced lifestyle in urban China. For Zachary, hyper urbanization and materialism in China left him with a strong sense of uneasiness and unhappiness, as the busy urban lifestyle leaves no room for reflection on what one believes to be really important and satisfying. According to Zachary, the tranquility of life was the major source of his personal happiness and self-satisfaction. Nevertheless, the lack of tranquility in urban Chinese life along with the social obligations that living in China entailed left him feeling trapped and unsettled. For example, in urban China, shopping malls and retail stores usually stay open until 11 p.m. and many food service businesses are open even after midnight. While many people deem these business hours convenient, Zachary reflected,

Twelve a.m. is pretty late for people here, but in China, many businesses are still open at midnight, which is very convenient. The thing is, such convenience makes people more fuzao. I like the quiet life here, as such quietness allows me to reflect on what I want. Here, I can plan every day out in advance, because there isn't so much emergency coming up. In China, you might get a call...from your friends out of the blue, asking you to go out for a drink, and you can't really say no. Here, if people want to have a night out, they will plan it in advance, and you can easily reject them if you don't really want to go...

While drinking with friends after midnight is a common form of masculine social interaction and leisure, it was deemed a social obligation by Zachary. In China, social interactions are infused with *renqing*. *Renqing* is understood as the affective ties between kin, friends, and colleagues and “the norms and values that regulate interpersonal relationships” (Osburg, 2013, p. 23). *Renqing* often involves reciprocity — one does a favour for another with the expectation of being repaid sometime in the future (Osburg, 2013, p. 23). As a result, Zachary felt drained by the reciprocal and obligatory components of his interactions with friends in China, for he felt that investing his time in non-authentic relationships came at the expense of his autonomy. In a similar vein, after living in Canada for three years, James, a second-year computer science student, began to disdain the conspicuous consumption which is prevalent and deemed acceptable in Chinese culture (Mitchell, 1997, p. 231). When recalling his high school friends bragging about their designer clothes and luxury cars at a high school reunion, James expressed aversion toward the unhealthy social trend of conspicuous consumption in China: “I don’t think I can fit in anymore. When I got together with my high school friends, all they talked about was designer brands and fancy cars, and they love to *chuiniu* (brag), which is really annoying.” According to James, he was offended and repulsed by these conversations which centred on conspicuous consumption. When I asked him, “What do you usually talk about with your friends here?” James answered, “We talk about basketball, fitness, and silly things we have seen on the internet.” In his narratives, James portrayed himself as leading a wholesome lifestyle as opposed to the extravagant lifestyle of the ultra-wealthy international students portrayed in the media.

According to Yan (2011), in the post-socialist reform era, many Chinese people complained about the loss of moral standards in China and felt nostalgic for the early-socialist morality when everyone had a pure and selfless heart to build the new socialist country. Liu’s (2002) ethnography also captures the feeling of meaninglessness and anomie

experienced by successful entrepreneurs in Beihai during the post-socialist reform era—their fantasies of the Communist-party-led collectivist utopia vanished and their lives in the reform were only about money and pleasure. Although my interlocutors had not lived in the time of socialism, they mapped these same reflections onto a different scale by criticizing the degrading morality and the anomie in contemporary China. However, their laments were not out of any nationalistic concern, but were rather based on their personal desires for happiness and self-satisfaction. As expressed by Jason’s quotation at the opening of this chapter, most of my interlocutors believed that they would feel uneasy and unhappy surrounded by people who had a degraded moral compass; thus, they were reluctant to return to China following their graduation. While critical of the void of moral standards among contemporary Chinese and irresponsible Chinese international students, they praised the morality in Canada. Participants reflected on how their experience of studying in Canada justified their desire to stay in Canada, for staying permanently in Canada would allow them to maintain their newly-formed moral standards.

“The Rules in China are blurry”

Although my interlocutors commonly expressed that “China has fun things to do” and “China has a lot of good food”, they agreed that these food and entertainment options were outweighed by the stress of living in such a hyper-materialist and neoliberal society. The lives they envisioned living in China were dark and negative, despite the fact that they had come from privileged social and economic backgrounds and would eventually inherit wealth from their parents. They complained that in China the entry salaries are low, while the real estate prices are overwhelmingly high. They were afraid of being financially dependent on their parents. They lamented that the workplace in China is filled with nepotism and scheming, and personal talent is overlooked. Among all the grudges my interlocutors held against neoliberal life in China, the aspect my interlocutors resented the most was the

immorality and unfairness of the instrumental interactions between clients, colleagues, family members, and friends, locally known as guanxi (social interaction).

Reflecting on her internship experience at Price Waterhouse Coopers in China, a dream company for many business or accounting major students in China, Linda recalled her coworkers spending a lot of time flattering their managers, a behaviour which she considered immoral. Similarly, Zachary recalled that during his work term in China, he once received a phone call from his boss outside of regular work hours: “He asked me to go to a drinking party with him and entertain our clients. At the drinking party, I had to pour the wine in a certain way, hold the glass in a certain way, and say a lot of flattering things, which is really annoying.” Zachary predicted that a life in China working as a young professional would be filled with non-genuine business entertainment events like the one he described. Thus, he was reluctant to participate in this form of social interaction: “I know what to say at different social occasions. I just don’t feel like doing so [being fake]”. In the Chinese business world, dining and drinking with clients is crucial to the cultivation of guanxi. In contemporary China, guanxi lubricates every industry and everyday life experience — having the right guanxi can ease a job search, secure a promotion, reduce the wait time to visit a doctor, or even provide a businessman with a government contract to build a road (Osburg, 2013; Yang, 2016). Although all of my interlocutors had grown up in a society where guanxi is the foundation of everyday life, and despite the fact that they might have personally benefited from their parents’ guanxi network in China, most considered guanxi practices to be immoral and unfair. My interlocutors believed that guanxi practices blurred laws and rules; most importantly, they considered guanxi practices to be insincere. They believed that investing their time, money, and energy into guanxi practices would cause them to lose their autonomy, and ultimately, they would not be able to become their “true selves”.

“In Canada I can do what I really want to do”: Becoming an individual self

As stated earlier, my interlocutors' incomplete and even naïve beliefs were shaped by their limited stay in Canada and their lack of close Canadian friends. While the lives they envisioned living in China were dark and negative, their fantasies of their future lives in Canada were bright and positive. As they predicted what their lives in Canada would be like in ten years, the individualistic self was emphasized: they would be middle-class professionals with decent incomes, whether working as software developers, business consultants, or financial analysts; in the Canadian workplace, they believed they would be placed in fair competition with co-workers from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities, as they perceived that talent is truly valued in Canada; in their fantasies, Canadian labour law and workplace regulations would protect them from working overtime without being paid; they would not be asked by their boss to entertain clients after regular working hours; and they would be free to spend their spare time cultivating genuine friendships, rather than forcing relationship for the sake of reciprocity; by the time they reached their thirties, they believed they would own a townhouse. While none of my interlocutors depicted themselves as highly ambitious, they all hoped that they would be self-sufficient, stable, and respected. Most importantly, they hoped that they would be free from the social pressure to achieve normative life goals at prescribed life stages.

For instance, after living in Canada for four years, Amy (a geography-major who had obtained her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from UW and was seeking work in the GTA at the time of the interview) deeply appreciated her freedom in Canada from "being told what to do". She did not have to be tied to a real estate mortgage:

Something I really appreciate about the Canadian culture is [that the] collectivism that we saw in China doesn't exist here. People here don't judge you if you aren't going to buy your own house or condo. It's your own choice. In China, everybody should be doing the same thing at the same pace. In China, everybody thinks judging others is appropriate. People are like, 'I tell you what to do because I care about you.' People like your annoying relatives and even your friends are like, 'If I don't tell you what to do, who will tell you what to do?' They would also always ask you questions, 'Why don't you want to get married

now? Why you are not having kids now?' I'm a person who likes to think outside of the box; I often disagree with what my friends and relatives have told me to do. I have put on more than ten pounds after coming to Canada. I don't feel ashamed of my body like I did in China, because no one would say I am fat here.

According to Amy's perspective, young people in China lack autonomy due to expectations for young adults to meet normative life goals at prescribed life stages. While expecting young adults to meet normative life goals at prescribed life stages is perceived as overbearing and even rude by Canadians, in contemporary China, encouraging young adults to maintain such expectations is a way of caring for them. For example, when Chinese young adults enter university, they are often pressured to date. Those who do not follow the normative life trajectory are viewed with skepticism. Some of my interlocutors perceived such expectations from their relatives and friends as a source of social pressure rather than care, and they believed that they would be inundated by this social pressure if they returned to China. In contrast, they believed that staying in Canada would allow them to be free from such social pressure and their individualistic selves could thrive.

“¥4,000 — no way you can live on that”: Economic prospects in the new China

Most of my interlocutors who intended to stay in Canada were highly invested in their presentation of the moral self. However, as I consciously demonstrated a non-judgmental attitude, they gradually became less guarded and more open to discussing the underlying economic factors relevant to their decision of where to live. The high cost of living in juxtaposition with low entry salaries was a key factor that deterred my interlocutors from returning to China. Although many were reluctant to disclose this initially, in the latter parts of the interviews, when I asked finance-related questions such as “What is the salary like in China?” and “Are living expenses very high in China?” my interlocutors gradually revealed that the high living expenses in China were a key deterrent for not wanting to return to China. Interestingly, when I asked my interlocutors: “Why do most of your friends want to stay in Canada?” instead of “Why do you want to stay in Canada?”, they were more open to

discussing economic issues. My interlocutors believed that the high salaries they anticipated earning in Canada would remove their financial dependence on their parents and grant them the autonomy they desired. For instance, when I asked James to identify his personal reasons for staying in Canada following graduation, he said that the decline of moral standards in China had stopped him from returning to China. However, when I asked James to identify the common factors which stopped his peers from returning to China, he said: “It has something to do with the economic factors. They can earn more here.” Alan expressed the following:

A programmer’s monthly salary is around \$5000 here, but the average salary in China is 4000-5000 RMB (approximately \$1000 Canadian dollars). With 5000 RMB monthly income, many of my friends are still living a good life, because their parents pay for everything for them.

As identified by Alan, if any of my interlocutors chose to return to China, even with their comparatively low income they would live a high-quality middle-class life due to their parents’ financial support. When Zachary worked at a medical equipment company during his work term in Nanjing, a first-tier city in Southeastern China, his monthly salary was 4000 RMB (approximately \$757 CAD), the average salary of a new university graduate. Yet with an income of 4000 RMB in a large city in China, Zachary could hardly make ends meet:

Living expenses are very high in China. When I was working in Nanjing last term, monthly rent was more than 2000 RMB, and I had to spend almost 100 RMB on three meals and coffee every day. If I hadn’t got a part-time job as an IELTS tutor, I would have had to ask my parents for money.

Although it is very common for wage-earning young adults in China to receive financial assistance from their parents, most of my interlocutors considered this an unwelcome financial tie which inevitably led to feelings of obligation to their parents. As the Chinese idiom warns, “If you take food from other people, your mouth would become soft (chi bie ren de zui ruan).” If you accept gifts from others, then you will not be able to resist their demands. Therefore, my interlocutors believed that if they accepted financial assistance from their parents, then they would always be obligated to obey their parents; hence, they would lose their autonomy.

While most my interlocutors understood that living expenses in large Canadian cities would not be lower than living expenses in large cities in China, they believed that relatively high incomes in Canada would offset the high living expenses.

Conclusion: “This is a disaster for me!”

After having dedicated much text to Chinese international students’ strong desire to stay in Canada, I am wary of leaving the mistaken impression that Canada was perceived as a paradise by my Chinese international interlocutors. Staying in Canada was not an easy decision for any of my interlocutors to make. Most of my interlocutors agreed that if they chose to return to China, despite facing economic and social stress, they would be comfortable and secure, as China is the country where they feel at home. Although they thought they would be able to live a “sufficient life” in Canada, they were wary of being immigrants with little sense of belonging, and they were skeptical toward Canada’s official rhetoric of multiculturalism.

During Amy’s interview, I asked why so many Chinese international students chose to stay in Canada permanently. She believed that this decision was not an easy one to make for any Chinese international student:

I think everybody is facing a dilemma — to live a self-sufficient life as a second-class citizen in Canada or to live an oppressive life in your homeland. It’s more like you have to choose between material life and spiritual life. In Canada, we have access to things that are inaccessible to most people in the world, like the clean air, safe food, and high incomes. But I still think there is something missing, and this is a disaster for me. No matter how well I understand this culture, it is not my culture. I don’t have a sense of belonging.

Not having a sense of belonging is a common struggle that every one of my interlocutors had faced: ten of my interlocutors claimed that they did not have any close non-Chinese friends in Canada. Lacking a sense of belonging made them feel lonely, isolated, and unsatisfied. On the one hand, they were appreciative that they had access to Chinese food and amenities and that they had many Chinese friends while living in Canada; on the other hand, having to live in a Chinese bubble within Canada’s greater society fostered a strong sense of

isolation. This strong sense of exclusion led my interlocutors to realize that they had a false interpretation of Canadian multiculturalism: when they first arrived in Canada, they had thought multiculturalism meant all ethnic groups could come together as genuine friends in day-to-day life; after studying in Canada for a few years, they were disappointed to realize that multiculturalism seemed to be comprised of token gestures which only involve the coexistence of multiple ethnic groups.

Multiculturalism within an English-and-French-bilingual framework was adopted in 1971 under the post-War Keynesian welfare state as Canada's official policy mainly to ease the tension between English-speaking Canada and French-speaking Canada. Indeed, although Canada's official stance of multiculturalism did serve to challenge the British-dominant social order and remove some barriers for visible minorities to fully participate in Canadian society in the 1970s, the promotion and implementation of multiculturalism were limited to the "song and dance" aspects of cultural diversity, which inevitably fostered stereotyping and the essentialist assumption that all ethno-cultural groups were internally homogeneous. Thus, these limitations effectively furthered the isolation and divisiveness between different ethno-cultural groups. Since the beginning of 1980s, with the rise of neoliberalism and globalization, multiculturalism was first linked to business prosperity and used as a marketing strategy to enhance Canada's competitive edge and attract business immigrants and skilled immigrants from outside of Canada. Canada's multicultural policy has since shifted its focus to the spheres of business and trade and selling multiculturalism to the world. As a result, multiculturalism as a branding strategy has not only attracted a large number of business and skilled immigrants but also significantly enhanced Canada's reputation in the arena of international politics. Meanwhile, the multicultural policy has failed to recognize the needs of individuals (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002).

When I asked Alan to identify his friends in Waterloo, he said: “Mostly Chinese international students. Other people are not interested in making friends with us.” I asked, “So what do you think about multiculturalism in Canada?” He laughed and said, “Multiculturalism? No matter how multicultural the society is, a Chinese international student just won’t naturally have a lot of things to talk about with a white person... I don’t watch the TV shows they like to watch, and they don’t watch the TV shows that I like to watch.” Alan’s statement emphasized that the major challenge for Chinese international students in trying to establish meaningful friendships with Canadian students is the lack of shared interests or hobbies as well as insufficient cultural references to support meaningful conversations. Instead of attributing the difficulty of establishing meaningful relationships with Canadians to racism, most of my interlocutors considered this to be a result of people only being comfortable with their own cultural or ethnic groups. Likewise, when asked to identify his opinions about Canada’s multiculturalism, Amy said: “When I first came here, I thought people here were all mixed together. However, multiculturalism is just the co-existence of multiple ethnic groups, like brown people only hang out with brown people, and Chinese only hang out with Chinese.” Although Canadians have long been proud of the “cultural mosaic” model of multiculturalism (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Thobani, 2007), instead of being appreciative of not having to be assimilated, many of my interlocutors understood this cultural mosaic as a form of exclusion. Living in their Chinese bubble not only disallowed them to feel at home in Canada, but also increased their sense of uneasiness with and isolation from mainstream Canadian society.

Most of my interlocutors confessed that when they first came to Canada, they had a strong desire to blend into mainstream Canadian culture. Nevertheless, after experiencing considerable difficulty, they were discouraged. Ultimately, most shrunk back to their comfort zone, even to the point of rejecting being Canadian. Amy told me that when she first came to

Canada, she wanted to eliminate her Chinese identity in order to fit in: “When I first came over, I kind of wanted to get rid of my Chineseness to fit in. I didn’t want to speak any Chinese.” After going through difficulties, she came to see her Chinese identity as something unchangeable: “Now I know I’m a Chinese. I’m just a Chinese living in Canada.” Like Amy, many of my interlocutors had gone down such paths during their time in Canada. Although most had a strong desire to blend in, after encountering daily micro-aggression and racism, they eventually came to realize that they would never become a “real Canadian”, which they identified as someone who speaks English without a Chinese accent, dresses in North American clothing, plays hockey in their spare time, and spends vacations at the cottage with their families.

Although their future lives in Canada may be filled with uneasiness, isolation, and even loneliness, they believed that the lives they had left behind in China would not have been any easier in any emotional sense. As the UW brand is not well-recognized in China, my interlocutors believed that they would have a hard time capitalizing on their hard-earned degrees. Moreover, despite the comfortable middle-class life they foresaw in Canada, the lack of belonging was unsatisfactory.

In American journalist Leslie Chang’s (2008) *Factory Girls*, a biography of poor and uneducated farm girls who left rural China to become migrant workers at a southern Chinese city, these factory girls were grateful for the lives they led in the cities, despite the fact that they had to share their factory dorm room with twelve other girls, work for more than thirteen hours each day, and constantly encounter discrimination from the natives in the city. They were content with their living and working conditions in the city, as they believed that they were much better off than they would have been in their home villages. They were positive about their future, as they believed that by bettering themselves, they would lift their families up out of poverty. Unlike these factory girls, in spite of their privilege in both China and

Canada, my interlocutors were not content with life in either country, as they could not completely fulfill their psychological desires for happiness and self-satisfaction.

My interlocutors were born into families with significant financial means to satisfy their every desire; thus, they found real life frustrating and unsatisfying. Repulsed by the hyper-neoliberalism and degrading morality and deterred by the overwhelmingly high real estate prices and low entry salaries, they were reluctant to return to China following their graduation. While living in Canada would allow them to live comfortable middle-class lives, they were dissatisfied with the thought of living as second-class citizens in a country where they had little sense of belonging. Many of the Chinese international students I interviewed seem to have been raised with such lavish treatment and excessive attention that typical adult life could only disappoint them. After coming of age, these “Little Emperors/Empresses” have found that the empires they imagined would not be given to them so easily.

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Appendix A: Tuition Revenues from International Students (Source: CBC News)

Tuition revenue from international students

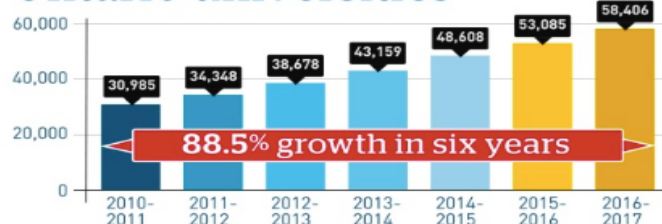


Appendix B: Comparison of Tuition Fees of First Year Computer Science Students (Sources: University of British Columbia, University of Toronto & University of Waterloo)

Institutions	University of Waterloo	University of British Columbia	University of Toronto
First-Year Tuition and Incidental Fees			
Domestic Students	\$14,557	\$6206.47	\$14,557
International Students	\$30,511	\$35,927.57	\$50,780

Appendix C: International Students at Ontario Universities (Source: CBC News)

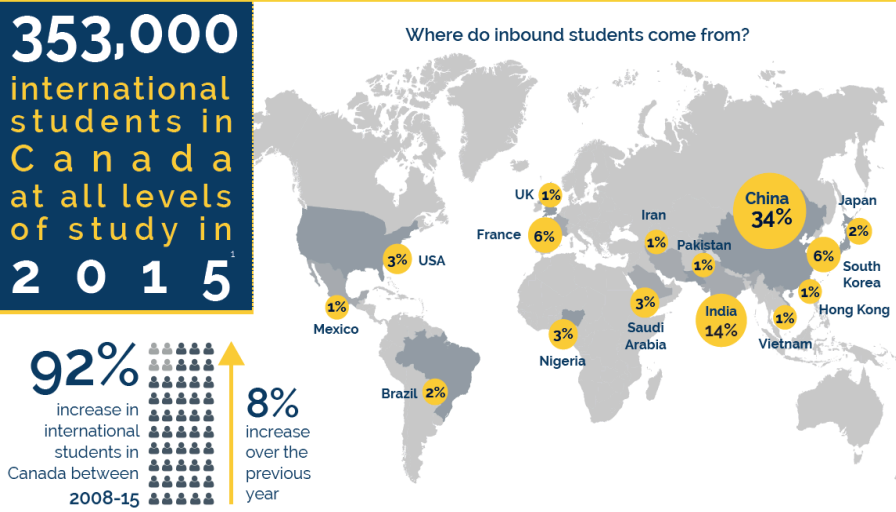
International students at Ontario universities



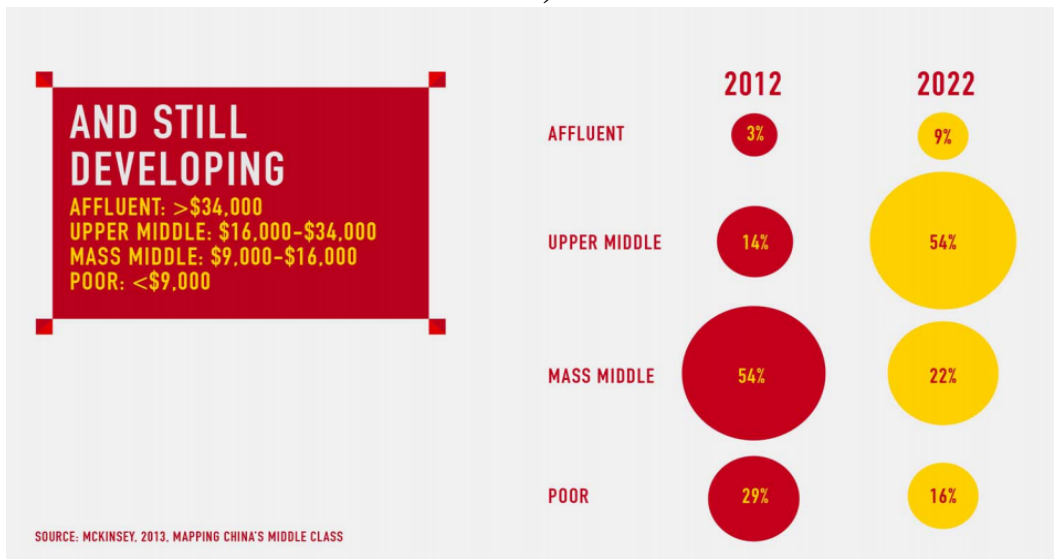
Appendix D: Sending Countries of International Students in Canada (Source: CBIE, 2016)

Canada's Performance and Potential in International Education

International Students in Canada 2016



Appendix E: Mapping China's Middle Class (Source: Business Insiders, 2016)



Appendix F: China's Outbound Students and Returnees (Source: World Education News and Review, 2016)

