Article

An Intersectional Analysis of Chinese International Students' Experiences in Postsecondary Institutions in British Columbia

Karlo Avenido
Simon Fraser University, Canada

ABSTRACT

Internationalization continues to be a priority of the education mandate in British Columbia (BC). While there is currently a lack of exploratory studies on international students' (IS) experiences of challenges in their host institutions, little research has examined their experiences from sociocultural context-based standpoints. This study fills this gap by examining the daily lived experiences of Chinese postsecondary IS in BC through the lens of intersectionality. First, the notions of cultural distance, nationality, and language proficiency were conceptualized as intersectional categories. Next, narrative data were collected from six Chinese IS and then analyzed through an iterative coding framework that connected narrative themes to the theoretical framework of intersectionality. The results show how the interlocking categories created instances of minoritization among the participants due to power imbalances brought upon by compatriots, peers, and federal/institutional policies. Implications in future directions of intersectionality research, policy, and practices are presented.

Internationalization continues to be a top priority of the education mandate of the province of British Columbia (BC). In addition to economic benefits, welcoming international students (IS) to Canada also brings positive intercultural and academic contributions to universities and colleges (Raby & Valeau, 2019). Because of this, postsecondary institutions tend to admit IS based on their ability to fulfill the economic, political, and diversity needs of the institution (Yao, Mwangi, & Malaney, 2019). Moreover, institutions tend to treat IS as a

homogenous category based on their nationality and status as temporary residents, resulting in the essentialization of various cultures, nationalities, and languages (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014; Wang, Li, Noltemeyer, Wang, & Shaw, 2018). In effect, institutions tend to gloss over these categories outside of the mandatory institutional reporting of source countries for compliance purposes.

The majority of international students in BC come from China, with a population share of 35%, and are forecasted to grow (Heslop, 2018). Despite this growth, Chinese IS face significant challenges in terms of acculturative stress (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Tian, McClain, Moore, & Lloyd, 2019), racism and discrimination (Yeo, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Huntt, 2019), and academic challenges (Andrade, 2006; Freeman, Keri, & Li, 2019). While there is a surfeit of exploratory studies focusing on international students' experiences in their host country and institution, there is a dearth of research examining these experiences from historical and sociocultural context-based standpoints (Andrade, 2006; Le, LaCost, & Wismer, 2016). This study filled the current gap in the literature by addressing Chinese IS as individuals embedded in sociocultural and historical contexts, bringing attention to their complex and contextualized experiences. Specifically, this study responds to Yao's (2018) call to examine the lived experiences of Chinese postsecondary IS with a focus on their experiences related to their intersecting identities as members of minoritized cultures, English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners, and temporary resident status holders in Canada.

I applied the framework of intersectionality (Atewologun, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989) to this study with the goal of examining the experiences of Chinese IS within a critical and social-constructivist perspective. This study is divided into five parts: (i) conceptualizing the constructs of culture, nationality, and language as intersectional categories; (ii) presenting the theoretical framework of intersectionality, (iii) reporting on data collection and analysis, (iv) discussing the findings of the study, and (v) presenting implications for further research and policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

I addressed the future research directions of Yao's (2018) study of Chinese IS in dormitories in North America to include the overlapping effects of the nuances brought by cultural distance, language, and nationality on their experiences of discrimination. To conceptualize these, I reviewed studies within the past five years that mainly discussed these three factors among IS in Canada and the USA.

Cultural Distance

Cultural distance between collectivistic and individualist cultures can be a challenge for IS to navigate (Calder, et al., 2016; Ge et al., 2019). An example of this disparity can be found in classrooms, where Chinese IS can be mistakenly perceived as passive and reserved compared to domestic students (Chen & Zhou, 2019). This classroom cultural distance from the general approach of discussion-

based seminars in the global West may cause inaccurate stereotypes about classroom behaviors based on ethnicity. Freeman and Li (2019) further iterate that these cultural differences may create unintended cultural conflicts in terms of relationships with instructors and domestic students.

Additionally, international students from various cultures experience acculturation and acculturative stress differently depending on the cultural distance between their home and host cultures. For instance, Tian et al. (2019) and Andrade (2006) demonstrate that Asian international students in Canada and the United States report heightened acculturative stress and more difficulties in acculturation than their European or Latin American counterparts.

Nationality/Status

The fact that Chinese IS are members of a minority ethnic group and are temporary residents in Canada can be a source of unequal experiences that can lead to distress. International students are also often homogenized into a category based on their status as temporary residents (Wang et al., 2018). This is problematic because homogenization can lead to unreliable and inaccurate academic outcomes arising from the overgeneralization that international students share the same experiences (Rhein, 2018).

Furthermore, the differential treatment due to nationality among minority IS is stark (Okazawa-Rey, 2017). Similar to the fact that experiences of acculturative stress depend on cultural distance from the global West, IS from predominantly White regions such as Western Europe experience much less discrimination than non-White students (Guo & Guo, 2017; Li & Zizzi, 2018; Yao et al., 2019). Students of Asian descent, regardless of citizenship status, also experienced racism from their non-Asian peers, suggesting a relationship between race and status (Yeo et al., 2019).

Chinese IS also face institutional and social barriers because of stereotypes based on misperceptions of socioeconomic status in relation to their nationality. For instance, Liu (2017) noted that misperceptions of Chinese IS as financially self-sufficient students have led to the rejection of scholarship and bursary applications. Chinese IS may also be viewed as 'cash cows', putting commodification ahead of their care and attention to welfare (Liu, 2017; Sharma, 2019; Yao & Viggiano, 2019). In effect, Chinese IS may be considered subjects of racial capitalism (Altbach & Knight, 2007), receiving preferential treatment in recruitment and admissions because of their stereotyped high economic status resulting in a disjoint perception of actual economic status (Yao et al., 2019). Because these realities lead to highly unequal experiences, the notion of nationality among international students can therefore be considered an intersectional category in this study.

Language Proficiency

Language issues are a major barrier for international students (Andrade, 2006; Yao, 2018; Yao et al., 2019). International students who identify as English as an

additional language learners (EAL) have demonstrated difficulties in academic adjustment, citing poor English proficiency as a barrier to a successful classroom (Ge et al., 2019). Similar to the previous intersectional categories of culture and nationality, individual factors such as cultural distance and country of origin have an effect on linguistic adaptation. For example, Andrade (2006) noted that IS from Western Europe and Latin America tend to have better sociolinguistic and academic adjustment experiences than Asian IS.

In contrast, due to a perceived lack of English proficiency, Chinese IS felt increased levels of anxiety about having successful interactions (Yao, 2018). Chinese IS cited negative interactions such as social awkwardness, harassment and discrimination based on accent, and embarrassment (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Liu, 2017). These notions of linguistic barriers and hegemony of the English language lend to a deficit approach that assumes EAL learners' language proficiency and previous education experiences "do not align with the disciplinary requirements and literacy practices in English-speaking institutions, and thus, are barriers limiting their capacity" (Freeman et al., 2019, p. 20) and therefore invalidate the identities associated with the native languages that international students speak. In fact, one of the Chinese participants in Yao's (2018) study even mentioned that "Better English is the better mind" (p. 82), in reference to interacting with other students, reifying a value-laden notion placed on English language proficiency.

Therefore, language itself is also considered an intersectional category with various experiences mutually affecting and being affected by multiple positions, such as cultural distance and country of origin. The theoretical framework of intersectionality (Atewologun, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989) demonstrates how these three categories –cultural differences, nationality/status, and language proficiency – affect each other in a multidimensional approach to create systems of oppression among Chinese IS.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Intersectionality refers to the interlocking relationships of different identities and how these identities play a role in the multidimensionality of oppression and privilege. This critical framework specifically arose from the work of Crenshaw (1989), who sought to draw attention to the differential treatment of African American women within the legal context, whose experiences of oppression were distinctly caused by neither their race nor their gender. Instead, oppression in this context was a result of the overlapping identities of being both black and female. In this regard, intersectionality insists on resisting the notion of single axis thinking, as it undermines multiple dimensions of identity that may arise from other axes of privilege or oppression (Cho et al., 2013).

Traditionally, intersectionality has been applied to the categories of race, gender, and social class (Atewologun, 2018; Liu, 2017) but has expanded to a multiple-axis analysis that also recognizes nationality, dis/ability, and other categories that mutually affect each other to create experiences of privilege and oppression (Ge, et al., 2019; Windsong, 2018). This multiple-axis analysis is useful in the current study because international students have been treated as a

monolithic group by institutions and policymakers, which neglect the inherent richness in the diversity of international students' experiences and identities. Specifically, this study focuses on the intersection of cultural distance, nationality, and language in Chinese IS.

METHODOLOGY

Having explored and validated the intersectional categories of culture, nationality, and language in the context of international students in the literature review, this study examines the intersection of these categories in the experiences of Chinese IS in BC.The two research questions that guide the study are as follows:

- RQ1: How do the intersecting categories of culture, nationality, and language play a role in experiences of Chinese IS in postsecondary institutions?
- RQ2: How do the sociocultural and individual contexts of Chinese IS influence these experiences during their studies in postsecondary institutions?

Research Design

As this study explored the experiences of Chinese IS in Canadian postsecondary institutions, narrative inquiry was used to examine these lived experiences through a theoretical lens (Creswell, 2012). Using this method to respond to the research questions puts the subject in a "microanalytic picture of individual stories" (Creswell, 2012, p. 502) that is embedded in broader social and cultural norms. These stories, in effect, are collated into contexts of "stories of social worlds on their own terms" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 7). In addition, narrative inquiry is also a method to investigate the continuity of people's experiences, an approach that suits the theoretical framework and research questions (Chan, 2010; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Most importantly, narrative inquiry serves to empower marginalized voices in society by understanding how inequalities are institutionalized within and across social structures and how genuine resistance to inequalities occurs in local contexts (Chase, 2018; Duran & Jones, 2019). Since narrative inquiry explores the experiences of individuals based on their social, historical, and cultural contexts, it was best suited as a methodology to examine experiences through the theoretical lens of intersectionality.

Sampling and Participants

I used a purposive sampling of Chinese IS and recent graduates from private and public postsecondary institutions to ensure a maximum variation of experiences in the study. Doing so allows for the exploration of various individual narratives across a wider group and to determine whether common themes or patterns were present in this variation (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; O'Leary, 2014). I contacted various institutions' registrar's offices to invite qualified students and distributed

a poster through Chinese diaspora social networks. Six participants directly responded to the recruitment phase of the study.

The participants ranged in age from 18 to 30 years, with an average age of 22 years. Four participants studied in undergraduate programs, while two studied in graduate programs. Participants self-identified by geographic region of China, highlighting an integral part of their nationality (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants Recruited

Pseudonym	Institution	Gender	Field of Study	Years In Canada	Region
Emma	Private	Female	Sociology	2	North
Faye	Public	Female	Education	4	South
Jerry	Public	Male	Hospitality	4	South
Gigi	Private	Female	General Studies	5	Guangdong
Lily	Public	Female	Economics	3	North
Ray	Private	Female	Computer Science	2	North

The study was conducted over two semi structured, in-depth interviews and ranged between 50 and 90 minutes in length. The questions in the interview protocol (Appendix A) were developed to establish a comprehensive life narrative and were validated through pilot testing with Chinese academic colleagues. The interview protocol contained questions ranging from general rapport building to an in-depth exploration of the participants' life trajectories and experiences from early childhood, life in Canada, and plans and hopes for their future. The first round of participant interviews was concluded in winter 2020, and the follow-up interviews took place after data analysis occurred in spring. The follow-up interviews served as a check-in opportunity to enhance the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of the interpretation of the data and to explore some of the responses from the first interview to further enrich the obtained narrative. Due to the physical distancing measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, follow-up interviews were held via teleconference. Interview data were anonymized through assignment of pseudonyms.

Reflexivity

Crucial to the work of researchers operating within the qualitative paradigm of intersectionality and similar branches of critical theory is reflexivity (Duran & Jones, 2019). Reflexivity involves awareness of inherent biases present in researchers that might influence motivations for initiating the study, the processes of data collection, and how their interpretations may shape discussions about the lived realities of the participants (Creswell, 2012). Thus, to enhance the credibility and validity of the study and the trustworthiness of data analysis, it is imperative

that the positions that I occupy were explicitly presented to both the participants and readers of this study.

I oriented my identity in relation to the study and its participants as a first-generation immigrant to Canada from the Philippines. As an insider to this experience, I arrived in Canada immediately after high school, experiencing the struggles of socio-academic adjustment, acculturation stress, and being an EAL student. I also oriented my insiderness through my professional experience, having worked in Chinese schools and possessing conversational fluency in Mandarin. On the other hand, I am an outsider to this experience due to my permanent resident status upon arrival to Canada and my nationality outside of China. However, my insider-ness perspective immensely helped in establishing rapport while talking about participants' lives and topics in contemporary Chinese culture. The awareness of this in/outsider-ness helped me become aware of how these un/shared experiences may affect interactions with the participants in the study.

Analysis

The main goal of using narrative-style inquiry in this study was to explicitly interpret the connection between individual experiences and the broader social contexts through the theoretical lens of intersectionality. As such, the analysis of narratives in the study serves as "a meaning-finding act through which we attempt to elicit implications for a better understanding of the human existence" (Kim, 2016, p. 190). To accomplish this, I used the iterative data analysis framework developed by Srivastava and Hopwood (2009). This was done over three iterations to serve the following purposes: (i) clarify the connection between the raw interview data and the theoretical lens, (ii) connect the theoretical lens with the research objectives, and (iii) identify dialectical relationships between data and the theoretical lens by continuously refining insights through consistent reflexive practice and member checking.

The iterative coding process involved using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12. The first stage of iterative coding involved thorough, repeated readings of the interview transcripts and deductive coding. The codes by which the raw data were first analyzed were deduced from the life stages in the interview questions (see Appendix A), the narrative elements of setting, characters, problems, and resolution (Creswell, 2012), and the intersectional categories of culture, language, and nationality as established in the literature review.

The second stage of coding examined how the first-level coded data and the theoretical framework relate to the research objectives, answering the question, "How does the data present the lived experiences of the participants through the lens of intersectionality?" This stage involved identifying emergent themes by rereading the raw data with an inductive and interpretive coding approach (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). This process revealed commonalities that exist across the transcripts and field notes (Kim, 2016).

The final stage involved uncovering the dialectical relationships between the emergent themes and the theoretical framework while refining the data set to

answer the research questions. This was done through another reread of the raw data, engaging in a continuous meaning-making process (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). This resulted in uncovering the overarching themes of (i) exploitation by fellow compatriots, (ii) experiences of discrimination, and (iii) internalized intersecting pressures. Once these third-level themes emerged, I conducted follow-up interviews with the aim of continuously refining the narratives through cross-checking, collaborating, and validating the narrative themes with the participants.

FINDINGS

The threefold reflexive iteration process of the analysis of narratives allowed for the emergence of narrative themes at the same time as maintaining the context and the significance of lived experiences within the theoretical lens of intersectionality. The findings show a significant influence of sociocultural and individual contexts on the intersection of culture, language, and status in the participants' life stories.

Exploitation by Fellow Compatriots

One common thread within the participants' narratives is the exploitation of temporary residence status by Chinese compatriots. As temporary residents, IS are especially vulnerable to exploitation and minoritization due to their differential access to public resources and job opportunities compared to domestic students (Kovacs Burns et al., 2014). For instance, Faye initially felt stuck working for Chinese-operated companies due to local employers' preference to hire citizens or permanent residents (PR). This resulted in a power imbalance with the Chinese employer taking advantage of her work schedule. Faye recalled:

> As an international student, the offer for you is limited. You have only worked for other Chinese company, you could not get to local company because you are not PR here…previously, [employer] only made me work during the weekends which I do not truly like. Another option was to resign. I was like, "Okay, this truly sucks, because you have to be here because you're not [PR]."

Similarly, Jerry reported dishonest and unscrupulous Chinese businesses that exploited ISs in particular. He recalled in his university orientation session that a business acting as a "one-stop shop" targeted newly landed Chinese ISs. The business claimed to maximize tax returns of $600, but in order to do so, they claimed that the Canadian government charged a certain amount to file taxes. Jerry narrated:

> …you pay [the business] $80, [Canadian government] pay you $600. That is literally what they said. All the students sitting down there are straight out of high school… So they just give that information to us

and at the end of the speech, all the Chinese students have cash in their hand, lining up to pay.

After thinking through this highly questionable arrangement, Jerry asked the business owner:

I ask, "What's the $80 for? Is it for labor?" He literally told me, "$80 is what government takes. I do it for you for free."

Jerry was deeply troubled by this experience and lamented the inequality of access to information, clearly demonstrating the exploitation of new Chinese ISs.

The incidents discussed showed how experiences of minoritization can be associated with the intersection of Chinese IS status and race, as the participants' temporary status was exploited by compatriots. These experiences echo the fact that international students are perceived socially as an outgroup, not only because of their nationality and ethnicity but also because of their temporary student status (Quinton, 2019).

Experiences of Discrimination

The participants also described experiences of discrimination in their daily lives. Jerry shared an experience of blatant racism from one of his hotel clients that made him feel trapped between leaving the guest unreprimanded or reporting the guest and being involved in a situation he claimed might have negative implications on his employment. He narrated:

She tells me, "I cannot believe they let so many foreigners in here." Like what can I say? I do not know how to respond that, right? She was a guest at the hotel and I cannot say, "You know what? You're wrong." I can't be disrespectful. She just keeps on talking. She obviously realized that I'm international. She said, "The other day, I was talking to someone on the phone, she's probably Chinese. She should not do that job. I cannot understand her." She was telling this to me one-on-one. What do you expect me to say?

Jerry felt trapped because if he reported the guest, he thought that the guest might retaliate, and this might have serious implications on his employment, a job that he needed to fulfill his Canadian permanent residency requirements.

Participants also shared experiences of discrimination in school because of a combination of aspects of their identity. Ray majored in computer science, and she narrated how her classes were mostly dominated by male South Asian students who were not willing to speak English with her. She also indicated how her instructors were not sensitive to the fact that she felt secluded, putting her into work groups that only magnified this isolation. She explained:

Right now I'm the only girl in the class. There are only three to four who's not Indian in my class. Other Indian people they usually speak Punjabi. In group work, sometimes they just skip and talk in their own language. They put me in an awkward position.

She tried to find someone to connect with in class, but as the only Chinese female in class, she felt deeply isolated and neglected. She further narrated, "It's so weird. I'm just alone. I go to the classroom and not say hi to people who sit next to me. In other classes, I just walk away. I do my homework alone. I study alone. I don't know what I can do." Ray's experience in her class demonstrated how her gender, race, and language caused experiences of minoritization. Intersectionality in her case sought to demonstrate racial variations within gender and gendered variation within race through these experiences (Nash, 2008).

On the other hand, Lily recounted an exchange between Chinese domestic and international students after a cheating incident in class. A Chinese domestic student and a Chinese IS were caught cheating by a third domestic Chinese student. The third domestic student tried to report the situation to the instructor, but to no avail. Lily shared:

> And then [domestic student who reported cheating] said, "Oh, Chinese international students are defending cheating!" So now all the local students thought we would be okay with cheating. In addition, the class now thinks, "Chinese students would have high grades, but would betray everything, they don't care about academic integrity."

She was deeply disturbed by this experience. Lily started to think that she would be better off rejecting the identity of being both culturally Chinese and being an IS. She had since been trying to pay closer attention to Western culture, changing the way she dresses and speaks so that she can no longer be perceived as an outsider.

Most of these incidents of minoritization went beyond the basic category of a biological marker such as race toward a component of 'cultural racism' based on the combination of other aspects of their minoritized identities (Grosfoguel et al., 2015). Furthermore, the incidents shared in this section ventured beyond minoritization based on the 'traditional' intersectional categories of race, gender, or socioeconomic status (Atewologun, 2018; Liu, 2017). These incidents encompassed intersecting experiences of both traditional intersectional categories and the categories of culture, language, and status.

Internalized Intersecting Pressures

Participants also identified internalized pressures from the intersection of their identities. For instance, Gigi came to Canada as a high school student as part of her parents' plan to move to Canada. After graduating with a diploma in general studies, she had been unable to find a job that meets the minimum requirements to qualify for permanent residency (PR). Although Canada's immigration system allows for an open postgraduate work permit that can lead to job opportunities qualified for PR programs, students can receive only one postgraduate work permit in their lifetime (IRCC, 2020). As her deadline to apply for the postgraduate work permit approached, she felt trapped between continuing to look for qualified work and hearing from university admissions to go back to school to improve her job prospects. She dreaded:

> I only have two months to decide, shall I work or study? If the university offer comes late, I have no idea. That's why pressure's big because if you want to apply to a full-time job, they're asking you what kind of status are you right now? Like, will you go back to school? If they hire you, you need to be at least half-year available for them because when they train you for three months and then you leave, it's not possible for them.

The pressure became insurmountable in her current situation because her parents had exhausted all their savings in her education, hoping that she could bring them to Canada as permanent residents. Moreover, as a Chinese citizen who did not write the Gaokao, she was not eligible to enrol in an undergraduate degree in China. She further notes, "That's why my parents told me so, whatever you do, you must get your [PR]. This is your last chance to get the better life."

Jerry felt a similar pressure right after landing in Canada, as the duration for these work permits is usually equivalent to the duration of the program of study (IRCC, 2020). His graduate diploma program duration was only one year. He was initially hopeful to find an eligible job given his level of study, but he recalled seeing postings related to his career path compared to his experience and the work permit duration:

> However, that one-year working permit you have to work yourself to a particular type of job which usually you require more than five years of experience. Regardless of your language level, those jobs usually require more than five years of experience.

By looking at the overlapping pressures caused by the short duration of Jerry's postgraduate work permit after his redundant one-year postgraduate diploma, it can be seen that policies and institutions homogenize the diverse experiences of international students. Instead of enabling international students to succeed, these policies and practices add to the multiple oppressions atop the cultural and linguistic pressures that they are already encountering as minoritized individuals in Canada.

Other participants also shared how their intersecting identities exacerbated feelings of pressure and anxiety in their daily lives. For instance, Emma indicated feeling guilty and helpless over spending her parents' money on her tuition fees. She was upset to learn that IS in her college pays seven times more than domestic students. She notes, "It is like mental pressure more than other. Feeling guilty about my parents' money. I consider working, but my parents say the main goal for me is to get the transfer to University of Toronto so they tell me to focus there." She further shared that her parents' expectations for her to transfer to a larger university, the exorbitant tuition fees due to her IS status, and her unfulfilled desire to help out financially by working had caused another mental health crisis. Upon receiving suggestions to seek counseling, she notes, "It's hard in Vancouver to find a counselor who can speak Chinese because sometimes it is just better to express yourself in your mother tongue…if you want to see a Chinese counselor, you should pay much higher".

These stories offer instances and themes where the intersection of culture, language, and nationality manifested minoritization and distress in several levels, from individual stress, pressure from family, discrimination by peers, all the way to federal immigration policies.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the intersecting identities of Chinese IS in relation to their experiences as cultural and linguistic minorities with temporary residence status. This study examined experiences beyond the traditional intersectional categories of race, gender, and status (Liu, 2017), as it examined categories of culture, language, and nationality. These categories were considered specifically for the international student population, as these are usually aspects of identities by which policies and practices overlook individual differences (Guo & Guo, 2017). Yao's (2018) study also identifies culture, language, and nationality as factors in racism and discrimination on the college campus; however, this study goes beyond the scope of the campus to include quotidian experiences at work, school, and with peers. The results show that the intersection of these categories creates instances of minoritization in the study's participants due to power imbalances brought upon by sociocultural expectations, compatriots, peers, and federal/institutional policies.

The findings also show how these factors combine to create instances of minoritization in the participants from individual, social, and macropolicy levels. At the macropolicy level, Gigi's and Faye's struggles to look for fulfilling work due to their temporary status bore similarities to a prior study (Calder et al., 2016). At the social level, the intersection between language and culture has been apparent in Jerry's situation with the experience of discrimination with the hotel guest. Their experiences resembled the compounding oppression of intersectionality: their temporary status as international students, cultural gap as ethnic minorities, and EAL status prevented them from finding meaningful work. In addition, Lily's experience of being discriminated against as a Chinese international student during the cheating incident in her class showed minoritization due to the intersection of both her race and temporary status.

On an individual level, these instances of minoritization due to the intersection also have negative implications on mental health. For instance, Emma struggled to find an affordable Chinese counselor who speaks Mandarin to assist with her depression, while she dealt with anxiety and guilt about feeling that her parents should have been enjoying their retired life instead of paying for her tuition fees. Gigi's experiences of her impending status also created anxiety and stress that could have otherwise been mitigated by additional mental health support.

One important consideration was the mistreatment of IS by compatriot Chinese. Five out of six participants reported some form of exploitation by their compatriots because of their international student status. Jerry tried to address this exploitation by raising awareness with the university's administration, but his efforts were ineffective. These acts remained invisible to institutions and

administrators, who are mostly domestic Canadians. This was an unforeseen finding that brings to question why Chinese IS are mistreated by compatriots. It can be seen that both groups lack the social and linguistic capital to succeed in Canada. As a result, the individuals in relative power – in this case, the compatriots with a permanent status in Canada – seemed to have resorted to mistreatment and exploitation of IS with temporary statuses, reflecting the nature of nationality/status as an intersectional category. Jerry also noted his distress when his complaints were dismissed by administrators at his Western university. This illustrates how power imbalances brought upon by the contact of Eastern and Western cultures and the effects of postcolonialist neoliberalism are the roots of inequality, discrimination, and marginalization in the participants.

The findings also show minoritization based on the traditional intersectional categories of race, gender, and status. For instance, Ray noted that she was the only Chinese girl in her computer science classes full of South Asian males, which ultimately alienated her from her peers. This showed an intersection between her race and gender, as well as language, since most of her classmates would speak their non-English native tongue, perpetuating her feeling of isolation. This closely mirrored the results of a study conducted by Liu (2017) with regard to the ignorance of gender causing minoritization in female Chinese IS contexts.

It is also clear from the students' narratives that the underlying plight of the participants in the study is the ever-careful balancing act between sociocultural expectations back home and in Canada. Chinese IS come to Canada carrying pervasive sociocultural expectations that are often overlooked as essentialized racial stereotypes (Liu, 2017; Louie & Qin, 2019). For instance, Lily, Gigi, and Ray shared how they struggled with their newfound independence while living alone in a foreign country, as they have been used to being told what to do by their parents and instructors. This was incorrectly interpreted as being submissive and shy by their peers.

The findings indicate that the participants live multiaxial realities and demonstrate how occupying these realities within the intersectional categories of culture, language, and nationality has led to minoritization. These stories present rich insights into the mechanisms through which identities are intertwined to create dynamics of oppression due to power imbalances from peers, compatriots, institutions, and policies.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

As a narrative-style qualitative inquiry into the experiences of Chinese IS in the lower mainland of British Columbia, this study is not generalizable to the entire population of Chinese IS throughout Canada. One complementary research direction would be measuring the quantifiable manifestations of the intersection of cultural distance, language proficiency, and nationality in Chinese IS in Canada.

Another limitation of the study is the focus on the negative aspects of intersectionality in the participants' experiences. Future research can focus on exploring protective factors and counterstories that serve as a strengths-based

analysis of these experiences. Finally, this inquiry took place during a brief period in the participants' experience of living in Canada. To address this, ethnographic approaches can be deployed to fully immerse in ISs lives through the framework of intersectionality (Brown, 2009).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study suggest pivoting toward an intersectional approach in policymaking, as this requires rethinking one-dimensional targeted policies that fail to account for multiple identities and within-group diversity (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011). Intersectional approaches to policy examine and dismantle processes that reify the status quo of homogeneity to address the long-lasting effects of minoritization for different groups of minoritized individuals (Bishwakarma, Hunt, & Zajicek, 2007, as cited in Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011). One example of this would be re-examining the Student Direct Stream (SDS) program (Government of Canada, 2019), an IS policy that expedites the issuance of student visas but imposes the same financial and academic requirements on IS regardless of country of origin.

The findings also suggest building a community-based approach to providing student affairs services to Chinese IS (McKenzie & Wharf, 2016). Providing a community-based approach would enable these services to have better outreach to support Chinese IS living in the community. For instance, student affairs professionals working in the front lines would manage individual international students as a holistic case, taking charge of academics, housing, and collaborating on opportunities for career advancement. However, this would require significant investment from the institutions to establish infrastructure and staffing.

CONCLUSION

Intersectionality is an opportunity for an alternative viewpoint of Chinese IS experiences, allowing for the multidimensionality of being a temporary resident, an academic sojourner, and an ethnolinguistic minority. Through the use of narrative inquiry and an iterative coding framework of data analysis, this study uncovered the interlocking mechanisms of oppression and minoritization that occur due to their multidimensional identities and how participants are affected by the intersecting influences of these systems. As Khanlou (2019) states, "[I]n real life, each student's individual lived experience matters, as do the changing socioeconomic environments affecting their postgraduation opportunities and their current economic barriers and [related] disparities" (p. 416). With this framework, this study aims to inform international education practitioners, institutions, and policymakers and to encourage policies and practices that move beyond the current homogenization approaches and toward recognizing the inherent richness of IS' various identities and experiences.

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Author bio

KARLO AVENIDO, M.Ed, is a passionate student affairs professional. His research interests lie in creating policies, processes, and services that provide just outcomes for equity-seeking students. Karlo's professional experience includes leading the student services and registration portfolios of a public–private partnership institution, as well as administrative leadership in private and public colleges. With a strong passion for student success informed by the pursuit of equitable outcomes through policies and processes, Karlo brings an excellent blend of theory and practice in championing strong student affairs. Email: kavenido@sfu.ca