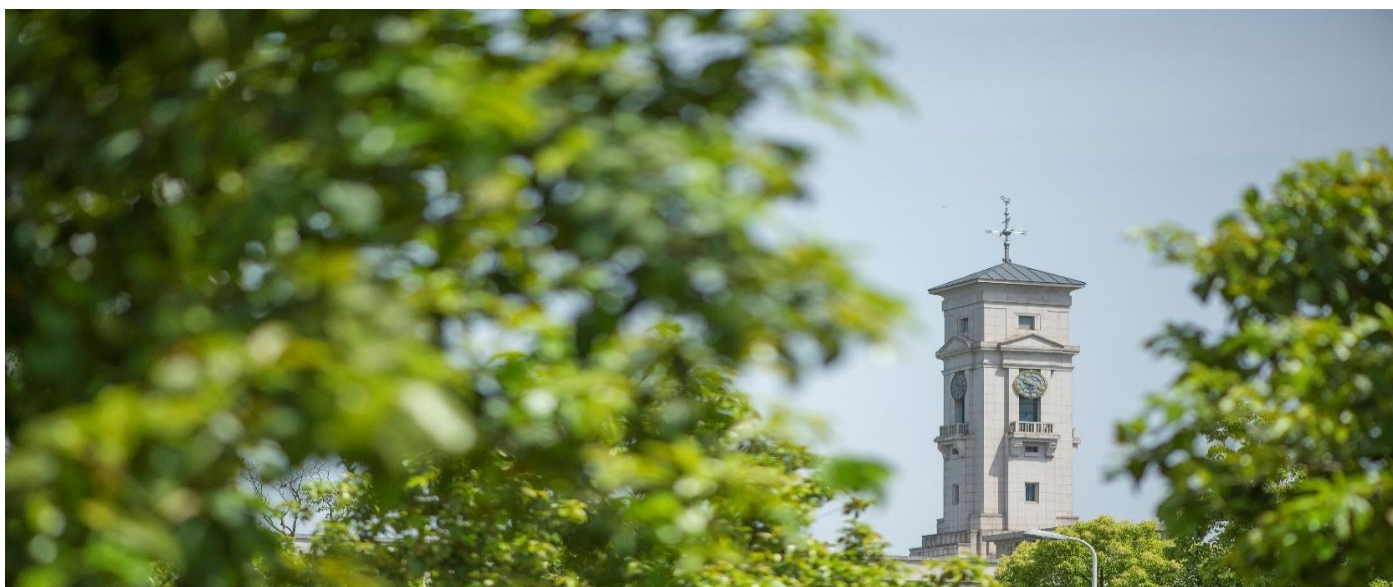# Juggling Multiple Identities: The Untold Stories behind a PhD Ethnographic Study

Hou, J. and Feng, A

University of Nottingham

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

Juggling Multiple Identities: The Untold Stories Behind a PhD Ethnographic Study

This paper explores the fluidity and dynamicity of a Chinese PhD student's research experience in negotiating her identities in a longitudinal ethnographic study, first in China and then in the UK. It adopts retrospective and reflexive document analysis of research journals written by her over a five-year period of overseas study. The analytical framework for the critical reflection of knowledge production synthesising key concepts of ontology, epistemology, reflexivity, positionality, serendipity and intersectionality to describe and interpret the researcher's struggles between insider and outsider, uncertain feelings about different values and beliefs, and emotions due to changing circumstances of family life. The reflexive analysis indicates that PhD students who undertake qualitative studies would function in a far more fluid manner than the often simplistically documented binary roles between an 'insider' participant and an outsider researcher in their theses. The paper argues that this fluidity in identity shifts and complexity in data collection and analysis are in most cases part and parcel of the research process, which is crucial for researchers to be aware of. Researchers should feel confident to tell the 'messy stories' reflexively so as to enhance credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Keywords: multiple identities; critical reflexivity; ethnographic study; international students; serendipity; intersectionality; intercultural transition

Introduction

International students pursuing their doctorate degree would, over their years abroad, experience tertiary socialisation in which they would partially transform their identity (Byram, 1997; Doyè, 1999), so as to become a qualified researcher, qualified as seen by academics in the host country. This journey could be especially complicated for social science students who adopt qualitative research methods in their PhD journey. This is

due to the fact that, in qualitative research, the self-presentation of researchers'
identities plays an important role in influencing the process of knowledge production
(Razon & Ross, 2012). The researchers' gender, age, race and, if he/she is an insider,
the shared identities are influential identifiers which significantly affect their decision
making, and how they approach and work with research participants in the field (Best,
2003; Blix, 2015; Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Hawkins, 2010; Hendrix, 2002; Razon &
Ross, 2012). These multiple identities embedded in the self-other relationships of
hidden spaces (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013) have been considered as fluid, dynamic
and socially constructed in specific contexts (Alcadipani, Westwood & Rosa, 2015; De
Andrade, 2000; Razon & Ross, 2012).

While PhD students' struggles to negotiate multiple identities in hidden spaces are
widely acknowledged, empirical evidence detailing the struggling process is
surprisingly under-reported. Reflections on the issues related to the researchers'
experiences, often quite untidy, and practical concerns in the field are normally
considered as non- 'standard' and remains largely invisible in the literature
(Thummapol, Park, Jackson & Barton, 2019, p.1). However, failure to give a reflexive
and critical account of all contextual factors and actions taken in a seemingly 'messy'
process would indeed affect credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative study. This
paper is thus intended to look at the issue by revisiting and re-examining a 'typical'
Chinese PhD student's research journey in China and the UK, as a case study, aiming to
explore the iceberg under the water line to show reflexively the 'messy' process of the
study and her acquisition of the international student researcher identity. In this paper,
pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of all the stakeholders in the field.

Analytical Framework

Researchers in general and ethnographers in particular are encouraged to reflect on their research journey, "particularly in relation to difficult or challenging experiences and emotions generated by fieldwork" (Thummapol et al., 2019, p. 9). To that end, researchers would normally consider establishing an analytical framework to facilitate critical reflection and make sense of the fluidity and complexity of the research journey. In this section, we would first give a brief descriptive account of the case for analysis, with a focus on the period under analysis, associate the case with most relevant key concepts for qualitative interpretation and, on that basis, set up the analytical framework.

Jessie, the first author, was a university lecturer of English in the People's Republic of China before she became an international student in the UK at the age of 31. One year later, she was awarded a Masters degree in education studies with distinction. During that year, she made friends with some Chinese students coming through China-UK articulation programmes[1], whose intercultural transition process looked very interesting but was apparently an under-researched area. Therefore, at the age of 32, she applied and secured a PhD scholarship to explore the topic in her research project. Five years later, she attended her congregation day. Jessie conducted an ethnographic study among a group of 50 Chinese undergraduate students who had first studied in a university in Eastern China prior to taking up courses in a university in North-eastern England. To protect the confidentiality of the field setting, the two

[1]China-UK articulation programmes are the transnational higher education programmes set by a Chinese university and a British university. Students undertake part of a British qualification in China and then transfer to the British institution with study credits which help them to complete the qualification at the British institution in the UK. Students will be awarded qualifications by the institution in the UK or joint/double degrees from both institutions.

universities are referred to hereafter as Southeast China University (SECU) and North Britain University (NBU). Jessie carried out 5-month fieldwork in China when her participants were in their last semester in SECU and followed them through a whole academic year in NBU, conducting on-site and online participant observations. It is worth mentioning that, at the age of 36 during her writing up stage, she gave birth to a baby girl, which was a joy but inevitably affected her progress of writing up the thesis. During those five years, as it could be expected, Jessie herself experienced many of the normally reported issues and challenges for studying abroad, but in a unique fashion as a unique individual, as it is reported later.

As a retrospective reflection, we embrace a critical reflexive perspective to explore the many positioning shifts undergone by Jessie throughout her PhD journey, the popping-up, changing, waning or ambivalent roles of her identity in relation to her research participants, particularly during the second year of her intensive mingling with them in that process. To represent the complex, dynamic and sometimes self-contradictory identities, many key concepts and theories for critical reflection appear pertinent to analysing the ethnographic research process and ethnographic data, including ontology, epistemology, reflexivity, positionality, serendipity and intersectionality. Looking into the rich data that were not fully reported in her thesis, we arrived at the conclusion that most of these concepts and theories looked promising to describe and interpret her struggles between insider and outsider, uncertain feelings about different values and beliefs, and emotions due to changing circumstances of family life. A synthesis of these major methodological concepts, therefore, would formulate a meaningful framework to critically represent her experiences, as illustrated in Figure 1.
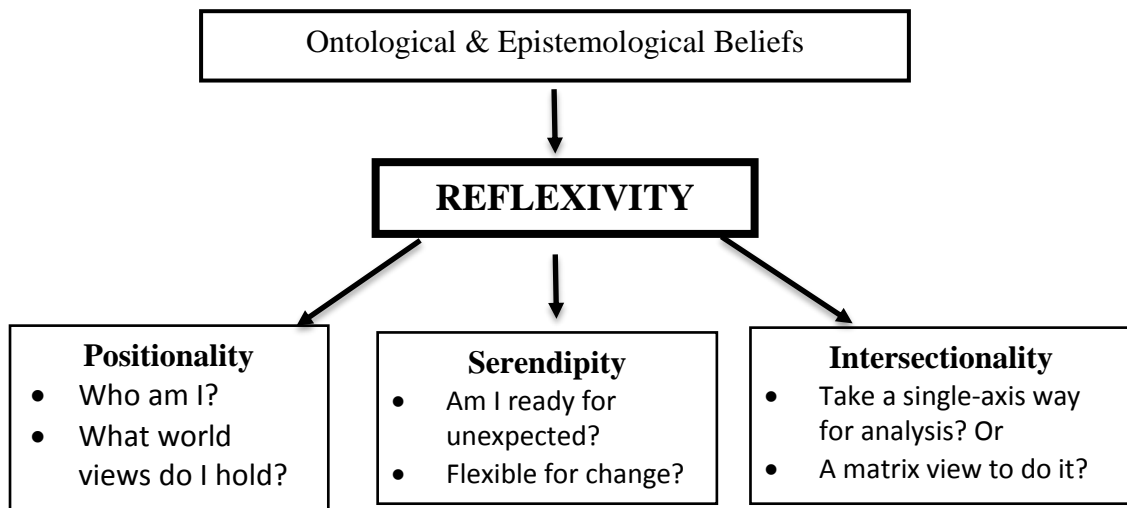
```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Ontological & Epistemological Beliefs    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      │
                      ▼
        ┌───────────────────────────┐
        │        REFLEXIVITY         │
        └───────────────────────────┘
```

Positionality
- Who am I?
- What world views do I hold?

Serendipity
- Am I ready for unexpected?
- Flexible for change?

Intersectionality
- Take a single-axis way for analysis? Or
- A matrix view to do it?

Figure 1 – Analytical Framework for Critical Reflection of Knowledge Production

In terms of the underpinning philosophical stance, we would adopt a predominantly interpretivist paradigm to analysing the data not fully reported in Jessie's thesis. Such a paradigm is usually defined as a widely accepted philosophy by which ethnographic data are seen as socially constructed and the knowledge produced based on the data and presented in the thesis or any other publication is situated knowledge derived essentially from personal reading and understanding of the data obtained in specific space and time (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Following this paradigm, in the words of Burrell and Morgan (1979), ontologically, we would adopt a nominalist stance which allows us to take the data from the ethnographic study as results of human interactions between unique individuals in natural settings, thus without assuming their generalisability and objectivity that natural scientists look for. Epistemologically, we agree with the view that ethnographers in particular see knowledge as personal, subjective and unique and thus would try to make sense of the subjectivities of the research process and products.

With these ontological and epistemological beliefs, ethnographers conduct reflexivity to recognize to what extent they, as "research instruments" themselves, shape

the phenomena they explore (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 17). In this reflexive process, the researchers are consciously experiencing the self and coming to "know the self" during the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 246). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 191) state that, as part of the social world, the ethnographer must constantly conduct reflexivity as the process expands from the proposing of the research question to the data collection, analysis and the presentation stage, when the researchers transform their "experience of a social world into a social science text".

During critical reflections of the research process, a key question an ethnographer asks is his/her positionality in conducting the research. Despite its elusiveness of the term, positionality is used to describe a researcher's social identity and his/her world views adopted for a specific research task (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Positioning along the life path is, as Giddens (1984, p. 85) argues, always "closely related to the categorizing of social identity", with age and gender as prominent attributes. He continues by stating that "[a]ll social interaction is situated interaction---situated in space and time", and can be "fading away in time and space", yet "constantly reconstituted within different areas of time-space" (Giddens, 1984, p. 86). During critical reflection of the ethnographic process, therefore, it is essential to enunciate who the ethnographer is, and/or desires to be, in the specific time and space and how that social identity is negotiated between him/her and the research subject(s). Nothing is "more central to, and distinctive of, human life than the reflexive monitoring of behaviour, which is expected by all 'competent' members of society of others" (Giddens, 1993, p. 120).

Another dimension that appears relevant to analysing the case is termed intersectionality that embraces a matrix worldview as opposed to a single-axis perspective of perceiving subjectivity and power (Crenshaw, 1989). As an analytical

and political orientation, according to May (2015, p. 3), intersectionality "approaches lived identities as interlaced and systems of oppression as enmeshed and mutually reinforcing: one aspect of identity and/or form of inequality is not treated as separable or as superordinate". An analysis of intersectional identities can be multi-dimensional as intersectionality can take multiple forms in intercultural interactions. In this analytical study, we adopt the feminist point of view to explore intersectionality of femaleness with Jessie's other social identities, her age, class, race, and nationality which were essential in her interactions with the participants and the knowledge construction in her study. To gain an in-depth insight into power and inequality in Jessie's PhD journey, any single-axis approach would be inadequate.

Last but not least, as Madden (2017) points out, ethnographic research is considered as an unpredictable process, and uncertainty has become one of the prominent features and challenges for "doing ethnography" (Rivoal & Salazar, 2013, p. 178). With an open mind, researchers are likely to experience instances of fortunate discoveries by accident, that is, the serendipitous moments. The experience of serendipity is "the discovery of something useful while on the hunt for something else" (Martínez, 2018, p. 2), which is "the art of making an unsought finding" (Van Andel, 1994, p. 631). Researchers should thus be ready to consider or receive new and different ideas and embrace flexibility, as serendipity is linked to chance, sagacity and epiphany, a moment of sudden insight or understanding.

In the following pages in which Jessie's PhD journey is retold in detail, the framework is used as a guide for critical reflection. To facilitate the analysis, Jessie's journey is presented in chronological order, starting from her ethnographic study among a group of 50 engineering undergraduate students in China, moving with the participants to the UK, studying and mingling with them on the UK campus and

beyond, till her struggle in the writing-up period and graduation. As it is shown later, the analytical framework serves the purpose by helping to make sense of the multidimensional, fluid and sometimes ambivalent nature of her PhD journey.

A 'Confident' Researcher in China

At the planning stage, Jessie was confident which is clearly reflected in her journal:

> As a brand-new researcher, I attended training courses and had discussions with my supervision team to figure out my philosophical assumptions and research approaches to answer my research questions. I am confident to locate a field, meet my participants, and collect abundant data to answer my research question, as I believe that I am a researcher who have received systematic training of qualitative research in the UK (Jessie's Journal Written Before Her Leaving for China).

The initial belief of being a trained researcher who would study a group from within in depth gave Jessie the drive in conducting complex qualitative research. Jessie, at this stage, did not realize that the methodological choices were not only "about *doing* research but about *being* a researcher (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013, p. 366). Being a 'native' ethnographer who shared the same ethnicity and nationality with her participants, Jessie carried out an ethnographic research and her studying experience in the UK would inevitably influence the entire research process (Kim, 2012, p. 134).

Being an international student studying international students from the same country would, as Jessie believed, facilitate her access to the field. However, she found that, as many other researchers (McAreavey & Das, 2013), she also need to bargain with some gatekeepers for her access. The unofficial gatekeepers in Jessie's study were two Chinese agents, who had set up the links between the two universities and were in charge of the communication issues in the programme. When Jessie made the initial contact, the agents declined her request who worried that her ethnicity, being a Chinese,

might hurt their business in the future. Jessie learned from reliable sources that the agents had invested in great effort and money to nurturing the programme, and that any unintentional mistake might harm their business. Jessie managed to exchange emails with the agents and organised face-to-face meetings to reassure them of the nature of the study. It was an uncertain time, but with the help of her principle supervisor and her connections in China, she finally overcame their apprehensions and gained their trust. The agents helped greatly with her fieldwork, not only assisting her to set up links with both Schools, but providing many insightful opinions about the programme, government policy and students' development issues. With their help, the Deans of both Schools signed organisational consent forms and expressed a hope that her research might help to enhance cooperation and the students' learning experiences. Directors at the International Offices of both universities were informed of the research study plan.

On her arrival at the Chinese campus, the agents introduced Jessie to the students' *Ban Zhu Ren*, Mr. Yang. In China, *Ban Zhu Ren* is a staff member who is in charge of a class and plays an important role at different stages in the Chinese education system. It is similar to a personal tutor in the UK universities, but has more power and personal responsibilities. For example, Mr. Yang inspected students' accommodation regularly to check the state of hygiene and to see whether they were playing poker. He would phone the absentees to find out why they were absent from class, or sometimes phone their parents to discuss the students' performance. After the examination period in each semester, he texted parents with the students' results and rankings.

In this research, Mr. Yang became the facilitator to help Jessie access the field. On the first day when they met, he set aside time before his teaching and introduced her to the students as *Hou Lao Shi* (Miss Hou, a teacher), a PhD candidate from the UK. In agreement with Pickard (2007), Jessie believed that all research should be overt as

research participants had the right to choose to participate or not on the premise that they were fully informed about the nature, purpose and process of that research. Although there was no research ethics review system for social sciences in China (Hou, Hu & Zhu, 2013), Jessie showed them the Chinese version of invitation letters, information sheets, and consent forms. Some students responded with the words, "The UK research process is rigorous, but you really don't need to be bothered". Worried that they might have to sign some forms due to the pressure from their *Ban Zhu Ren*, Jessie made it clear that their participation in this research was completely voluntary and would not affect their study in China and the UK. Jessie believed that she successfully took up her role of ethnographer as she was legible as a researcher and perceived as legitimate in her endeavours (Adjepong, 2019).

On that very first day, Jessie explained the nature of the research to the participating students and gave them time to ask questions about the research. She expected them to ask questions about 'data collection', 'confidentiality' or 'anonymity'. However, they were more curious about her study abroad experience. Meeting a senior student from a university in the UK, these students quickly bombarded her with various questions about her life abroad. She suddenly realised that her own identity as a Chinese international student in the UK had offered her privileged access (Merton, 1972). A shared identity led to the immediate treatment of an insider (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010), which facilitated her body squeeze into the space she was going to study.

With the help of Mr. Yang, Jessie was allocated a room in the students' accommodation, which was next to the 16 girls in the group. Four girls stayed in one dormitory and formed four groups naturally. This was also the case with the boys. These small dormitory groups would do many activities together. Those two groups who were opposite or next to her room were the first to get to know her. They took turns

to show her around the campus and shared with her the detailed information known about the class. This enabled Jessie to develop familiarity with the setting and acquire a good sense of the social structure and culture of the group (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). She tried to remember every student's name and sought opportunities to talk with them. Gradually, she became familiar with their time schedules, daily activities, backgrounds, academic performance and individual personalities.

With the advice that, as a guest in the field, the ethnographer can be "dismissed for misbehavior" (Lindholm, 2007, p. 88), Jessie was very cautious to adapt her daily activities to her participants' schedule. In the class, Jessie was a student as well as an observer. She took notes in the core modules, sometimes did the exercise work outs, joined in their discussion in the English class, and played *Tai Ji* in the PE class. Students and the staff gradually overlooked her attendance as a researcher. However, this participant role was not complete. She did not take part in the activities in the laboratories as they were too complicated for her. On these occasions, she pursued her role as a complete observer, that is, an outsider researcher. Meanwhile, Jessie was constantly aware of the danger of "going native", losing her critical faculties to become an ordinary member of the field (Brewer, 2000, p. 60). As she wrote in one of her journals,

> As an observer, my focus in the class was on teaching practices, students' behaviour, staff-student interactions and interactions among students. As the dormitory groups normally sat together, I deliberately sat with different groups, listening, watching and interacting with them. During breaks, I chatted with students beside me about their study and current preparation for studying abroad. When students asked questions after class, I went to observe their interactions with their teachers. Although not all students accepted me as a member of the group, the majority did gradually learn to accept me (Jessie's Journal Written Two Weeks After Her Arrival in China).

Jessie was pretty confident in her fieldwork in China, keeping the balance of being an insider and outsider while conducting the observation systematically and effectively with the aim to ensure a full and representative range of coverage (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). At this stage, the participants called her *Hou Lao Shi* (Miss Hou, a teacher) as their *Ban Zhu Ren* had introduced, or even more intimately, *Xue Jie* (senior female student at school) which are two respectful addresses in Chinese culture. She was a mature international student supported by full PhD studentship offered by a British University. She was in a sense 'successful' considered by her research participants. Her experience as an experienced international student abroad became a hot topic in their daily discussion. Jessie became worried, rightly, that her personal experience and opinions might influence their expectations for their life abroad. Therefore, she began to experience the uneasy role between an insider and outsider by living and studying with them but deliberately avoiding topics about life and study in the UK and keeping a distance from them.

The textbooks (Brewer, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) she read in the UK told her that the outside observer position allows an observer to reflect critically on what is observed and gathered while doing so, which will prevent her from losing the sense of being a stranger, thus losing the critical, analytic perspective. To maintain this sense of strangeness, Jessie took some measures. As Jessie described in her research journal in China:

> After a whole day's observation, I would shut myself in the room writing research journals and exchanging emails with my supervisors while drinking a cup of Earl Grey (Jessie's Journal Written in the Middle of Her Fieldwork in China).

Personal and emotional difficulties of accepting such estrangement was part of her learning process in understanding her participants' transition experiences (Hammersley

& Atkinson, 2007). The identifier of being a Chinese international student facilitated the process of becoming a trusted insider. The more Jessie revealed about herself, the easier it was for the participants to accept her as an in-group member (Mahoney, 2007). However, she was constantly worried that their sharing of information might influence the credibility and trustworthiness of the research, which in turn evoked her to reflect more, taking an outsider's perspective. As a social science researcher, Jessie was keen to understand what her participants were doing and how they were experiencing the world. This could only be obtained by "intimate familiarity" with daily practice and the meanings of the action (Brewer, 2000, p. 11). Therefore, Jessie did not perceive herself as a total stranger from an alien culture attempting to make sense of that culture from an outsider's perspective, nor a complete member in the researched group (Coffey, 1999). However, maintaining a sense of strangeness proved more and more difficult when Jessie started her fieldwork in the UK.

A 'Clumsier' Juggler in the UK

This part demonstrated how the identifier of being an international student hindered Jessie's journey of maintaining an outside researcher identity, and how her relationship with the participants became more complex as her own lived experience entangled in her own study. Jessie was experiencing an observer's paradox as she wrote in her journals in the UK:

> Seeing my participants at the airport was like seeing old friends in another country. In the following weeks, I accompanied them so that they could become familiar with the city just as they had done for me in China. I was invited to different flats for dinner. I was surprised by their creativity and enthusiasm in reforming Chinese and Western cuisines. We shopped, cooked and chatted together (Jessie's Journal Written One Week After Her Participants' Arrival in the UK).

Jessie's participation, her help and greetings may well have cushioned the widely reported 'culture shock' experienced by many immigrants and international students (Hou & McDowell, 2014).

The development of their relationship could be evidenced in the three rounds of interviews with 16 key participants. The first round of interviews had taken place in China one month before they finished their last semester in SECU. Many of them were a little nervous and cautious. Jessie tried to conduct in-depth interviews starting with 'How is everything going on?', but found they were not talkative. The interviews normally ended within half an hour. The second round of interviews took place two months after their arrival in the UK. They had undergone the induction week and several weeks' study in a new learning environment. They felt they had more to tell Jessie about their exciting and frustrating experiences. The interviews with an average length of over an hour turned out to be friendly and emotional with more self-reflection and discussion, which was partly due to that they used the interview as an opportunity to discuss their concerns with her.

> Being an elder 'sister' in the group, I could not ignore these students' asking for help. Their eagerness for help has triggered my questioning of the current personal tutor system and the international students' support system at North Britain University (Jessie's Journal Written Two Months after Her Participants' Arrival in the UK).

The last round of interviews was conducted in the month after they finished their final examinations of the first academic year. The average length was around two hours.

> Some of them mentioned what they would have liked to have done over the last 15 months if they could have gone back to their last semester in China. So did I. During the interview, we were like old friends reminiscing about our past together (Jessie's Journal Written at the End of Her Participants' First Academic Year in the UK).

14

The researchers' identities are performed continuously in every interview situation (Blix, 2015). Jessie's reflection on the reflexive interviews, especially at the second and third stages of the research process, offered her a great opportunity to think more clearly about who she was and how those identifiers influenced the meaning construction in the research (Denzin, 2001).

> Students started to address me as *Xiao Hou Jie* (elder sister Hou) instead of *Xue Jie* (senior female student at school) or *Hou Lao Shi* (Miss Hou, a teacher). *Xiao Hou Jie* is more intimate than *Xue Jie* and *Hou Lao Shi*, which showed that they had become closer to me and accepted me more as a member of their group. While enjoying the pleasure of the reunion, I suddenly noticed that I had become the information source for these students. With my research questions progressively refined, their questions changed at different stages of transition. When they first arrived in the UK, they were eager to know how to enlarge their social circle and make friends with other international students. Starting their course, they asked me to share tips about communicating with some 'unfriendly' staff. Before their final examination, they worried about how to meet the standards of assessment. Even after I officially finished the fieldwork in their final year at North Britain University, they still contacted me asking questions about the Masters course and studentship. Here, on one hand, my participants and I had become close friends. They left notes on my webpage, encouraging me to go through the thorny process of my PhD course. On the other hand, the unavoidable consequence was that my participants and I had developed dual roles. I: officially a researcher for my study and an informal informant; my participants: official informants and informal 'researchers' for their 'study' (Jessie's Journal Written in the Process of Data Analysis).

Here, on one hand, as Turner and Norwood (2013) have argued, there was no one-way glass between the qualitative researcher and the participants as the researcher might become the researched at any point. Therefore, in the research process power is fluid and constantly in flux between the researcher and the participants (Mayeza, 2017). On the other hand, the participants' perceptions of Jessie's identity shifted as her fieldwork

progressed. Age, here, had a significant impact in terms of how she was perceived, especially at the intersection with gender when she was considered as an elder sister (Damsa & Ugelvik, 2017). The distinction between the self and the other, and perhaps the insider and the outsider, is blurred and the relationship is not a binary opposition any more (Sherif, 2001).

Although frank acknowledgment of the convergence of subject-object roles will not threaten the credibility of social science (Jewkes, 2011), this kind of over-rapport relationship with the participants was likely to lead to a skewed perspective of a cultural setting (Coffey, 1999). Jessie tried hard to maintain the distance, as she described in her journal:

> I tried to minimise my influence on their experiences in the UK. I tried my best to answer their questions by directing them to the university information service system. For instance, I suggested that they check the university website, go to Student Services, or write to their personal tutor. This was not easy for me emotionally and culturally. They helped me greatly when I stayed on their campus. When they came to the UK, I felt I should help them in return (Jessie's Journal Written Six Months After Her Participants' Arrival in the UK).

This echoes the privilege access Jessie was offered at the entrance of the field, while the seemingly shared identity did come at a cost at this stage of data collection. Like other ethnographic researchers in the field, ethnic similarities between Jessie and her participants helped her to establish common ground in the field, however, she was constantly concerned about the distance and neutrality she should keep. The emotional stress she had experienced was gradually intensified. Coming from China where respect for the elderly and care for the young is a traditional virtue, Jessie found it really hard to say 'no' to them, and even felt guilty for doing so as an 'elder sister'. For instance, while observing their online chatting, Jessie noticed they were going to attend their first

meeting with their personal tutor in the office but wondering where it was. The tutor's office was close to Jessie's own, but Jessie had to refrain herself from doing so as she wanted to see how they would find the answer themselves, which was part and parcel of their study-abroad experience. This kind of unnatural behaviour became pretty frequent. When Jessie started to sit in their class for observation, the struggle to maintain less involved or interventional became harder, as shown in her research diary:

> Fang Fang and Xiao Jie didn't come this morning. I did want to call them. I was a lecturer in China. Each time, students didn't show in my class, I asked the monitor what happened. Are they sick? Something wrong? Need my help? As a researcher, however, I have to minimise my influence on the setting as much as possible (Jessie's Journal Written Two Months After Her Participants' Arrival in the UK).

Jessie thought for a long time about how to help them without being too interventional. In the second round of interview, she went through their first interviews in China as she did with other participants. She deliberately emphasised the plans they had told her.

> Both Fang Fang and Xiao Jie realised that they had gone back to their old habits unconsciously in the UK. I really did not know whether what I had done was right or not, especially when the end was not positive. Both of them failed the year (Jessie's Journal Written in the Process of Data Analysis).

The over-rapport relationship even made Jessie overlook things that were taken for granted but meaningful in terms of intercultural transition (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The closeness had caused her failure to notice the culturally significant term, *Zi Ji Ren* (In-group members). For example, when applying for dormitory vacancies in the UK, some of the participants preferred to stay in the accommodation with their own Chinese classmates.

> I didn't apply to live with British students because I don't want to have conflicts with them as our cultures are different. I'll stay with my Chinese classmates. They

are *Zi Ji Ren*. It is more secure and easy to look after each other. With *Zi Ji Ren*, you can do whatever you want to do (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Jessie did not notice the frequent references of *Zi Ji Ren* in Xiao Yu's interview, as in China they use it very often to refer to people from the same group. This is indeed a significant term. When Jessie was confused about the reason why Xiao Yu and other students did not interact with the staff and foreign students directly, but preferred to ask their classmates to be the intermediators whenever possible, she read the transcripts again and realised that these students preferred *Zi Ji Ren* because they assumed that *Zi Ji Ren* could give them freedom without worrying about courtesy or conflicts. Xiao Yu's deficiency in English aggravated his reluctance to communicate with British flatmates and increased his negative feelings towards studying abroad.

To a great extent, they also considered Jessie as a *Zi Ji Ren*. To ensure credibility in the research, Jessie invited her participants to view the main themes generated from the interviews. Some of them would say, "It's OK. I trust you, *Xiao Hou Jie*". Some even say, "What do you want me to say in the interview? Tell me, I can help you". When the kinship type of *Zi Ji Ren* relationship is established, the trustworthiness of the results might be affected if the researchers are not cautious enough about the blurred relationships of sisterhood, friendship, mentorship, and the researcher and researched (Bhattacharya, 2007)

Being *Zi Ji Ren*, Jessie was told many stories about 'racial discrimination'. In the second interview, Xiao Hua told Jessie about his experience in a Walk-in medical centre. He had food poisoning and told the nurse that he believed that he was going to die. The nurse told him that he had to wait in the queue. 'Can you believe that? If I were a white guy, she wouldn't have treated me like that.' Race, at that moment, came up to the surface and reminded Jessie that her participants and herself, as Chinese, were both

adjusting to the 'white society'. As Brown and Johns (2013) state, physical distinctiveness from the host community may increase international students' vulnerability to abuse. However,

> In my initial arrival to the UK, I was more likely to attribute the incidents like what Xiao Hua had confronted to the colour of our skin. When I understood more about the social values and norms, I would take a more individualised perspective rather than a national cultural standing point. Xiao Hua constantly questioned me, 'You are Chinese. You should have noticed that before. Right? I can't understand those *Lao Wai* (foreigner, here refers to British people)!' If I gave him a big-sister talk at that time, he would be annoyed. I shared some incidents I had experienced with him, then analysed them from intercultural communication perspective. I explained the queue culture in the UK (Jessie's Journal Written Two Months After Her Participants' Arrival in the UK).

At this stage, Xiao Hua and other participants just stayed in the UK for two months. As discussed in the next section, they formed into a very close group, taking others as out-group members, *Lao Wai*, which is an informal term in Mandarin for 'foreigner', especially white Europeans. It is used in a neutral way in most circumstances, while here, Xiao Hua used the term to show his anger inside with some sort of derogative meaning. In the third interview, surprisingly, Xiao Hua told Jessie that he had made many white friends. He did not call them *Lao Wai* any more, but *Ge Menr* (Buddy) instead, to clearly indicate a change in attitude.

As a Chinese by nationality, Jessie's race identity further drew her into the participants' insider circle in the UK. They took Jessie as an in-group member, *Zi Ji Ren*. When confronting frustrations from the unfamiliar environment, her participants revealed more and became closer to her. However, comparing their interpretations of the incidents they came across, Jessie became more aware of the relevancy of the theories to dealing with problems while living overseas, such as, adopting intercultural

contact theory (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) to interpret the segregation between Chinese and the UK students in the classroom.

Jessie's experience in the UK, from the ways the participants addressed her (from *Hou Lao Shi* or *Xue Jie* to *Xiao How Jie* or *Zi Ji Ren*) indicates that her insider-outsider identities became even further blurred. Her subjective positionality also seemed to have shifted from a consciously-controlled balance between insider and outsider to a more empathetic positioning towards the participants. Jessie, thus, found it more difficult to remain neutral in doing ethnography.

Experiencing Serendipitous Moments

Researchers adopting qualitative methodology would often experience what could be called serendipitous moments, fortunate discoveries by accident (Rivoal & Salazar, 2013). Jessie experienced such moments in the field owing to her juggling with frequently changing roles during her five years of study. Jessie's struggle with being a Chinese international student while keeping a balance between an insider and an outside researcher came to the climax when she carried out observation in the UK classroom. This group of 50 joined a class of 25 students who had studied together for over one year in the UK. This class included mainly UK students but also two non-Chinese international students. Very soon after the course started, Jessie noticed that, for lectures, Chinese students usually came earlier and sat in the front. UK students were 'forced' to sit at the back.

> I, sometimes, was the only person who sat in the middle (I did this deliberately to make myself able to chat with either the British or the Chines students). While I was chatting with the British students, Chinese students asked me in Chinese, 'Can you understand their jokes?' My Chinese ethnicity immediately pulled me back

into the Chinese group (Jessie's Journal Written in the First Month of Her Participants' Arrival in the UK).

This situation of self-categorizing themselves into 'Us' and 'Them' is not rare in intercultural contexts (Hou & McDowell, 2014). As a Chinese international student in the UK, like her research participants, Jessie herself also had to attend some research training sessions such as those for preparing for the Mid-Point Progression and other required research modules. Jessie found some similar Us-and-Them phenomena between Chinese students and the UK students in the PhD training sessions.

> When I entered the class, my Chinese PhD friends would wave to me and let me sit beside them. It was rare for me to sit next to someone I barely knew except when some lecturers asked us to. Until then, I realised that it was a common phenomenon for international students. When I re-entered their (my research participants') class, the 'strange' phenomenon became natural and understandable (Jessie's Journal Written Five Months After Her Participants' Arrival).

Because of lack of direct interactions between my research participants and the local or other international students, there seemed to be a missed opportunity and thus there was little mutual understanding between them. In Jessie's interactions with the British and other international students, however, she found that:

> The British students and other international students who studied with my participants for a nearly whole year asked me questions about Chinese students, such as 'Why did they choose the course?'; 'How were they educated in China?'; 'Are their tuition fees a lot more than they are in China?'; 'Is there much interaction between teachers and students in China?'; 'What are their future plans after graduation?'; 'Are there a lot of jobs waiting for them in China?'; and many other questions that could have been answered directly by the Chinese students (Jessie's Journal Written at the End of Her Participants' First Academic Year in the UK).

Jessie answered these questions 'on behalf of' the Chinese students. All these questions

clearly demonstrated to Jessie that home students were as curious about the Chinese students as the latter were curious about the former. This curiosity is a favourable factor (Byram, 1997) which may well lead to willingness of the two parties to interact with each other in the multicultural learning environment. From the educational point of view, this unexpected noticing looked clear to Jessie that both home and international students should made aware that intercultural communication is two-way traffic and deliberate efforts have to be made to initiate interaction. This awareness could be increased by some kind of induction for both of them in order to create a favourable environment for interaction.

Having noticed lack of interactions and occasional misunderstanding between the two parties, Jessie began to play what she understood as a representative or mediator's role for Chinese students. Sometimes, as Jessie reflected, that role could go very far. In the interviews with the British lecturers, for example, in addition to her research agenda, Jessie tried to clarify some 'misunderstanding' held by some 'western' scholars that many Chinese international students were playing the identity card when found keeping silent in class or when found plagiarising.

> I was over defensive in the discussion of the popular accusation of Chinese students' plagiarism in Western universities. I gradually noticed that I became a representative and a defender of the Chinese student group when negotiating with the British staff (Jessie's Journal Written at the End of Her Participants' First Academic Year in the UK).

Jessie announced to her research participants that she would leave the field when her participants finished their first academic year in the UK, but in their final year at NBU, she was still invited to have dinner at their flats or China Town, chat at the coffee bar, or help them to solve various problems including settling quarrels between lovers. She attended their graduation ceremony with their parents. As friends, some of these

students often encouraged Jessie while she was later struggling in writing up the PhD thesis. Her participants at this difficult stage (as shown in the following part) became Jessie's emotionally supporters.

To sum up, the unexpected discovery of the lack of interactions between home and international students has clear implications for educational intervention. The mutual supports and friendship Jessie developed in the research process with the participants proved beneficial to both the participants and herself. Ethnographers are very likely to experience such serendipitous moments (Madden, 2017) during their field work and recognition of these moments would help them deepen understanding of the research process and findings.

Turning into a 'Vulnerable' International Student

In general, Jessie's own learning and living experience in the first three years in the UK was relatively smooth and positive.

> The staff in my Masters and PhD courses were supportive. They gave me tutorials whenever I had queries. I was awarded an MA in Education Studies with Distinction in 2007 and started my PhD course with a full studentship the following day. I also joined the University Student Community Action group and won awards for my distinctive volunteer efforts. I made friends with students from different countries. I often organised parties at my flat (Jessie's Reflection Note Taken at Her Writing-up Stage).

When Jessie started to observe the Chinese students on the UK campus, it seemed that most of the difficulties that other Chinese students might come across did not exist for her. Therefore, when Jessie heard her participants complain about this or that, subconsciously she would doubt about how true their complaints could be. She believed that sometimes they were not positive enough or had not tried their best. For instance, Fang Fang was depressed, locked herself in her room and missed all her examinations.

Jessie interpreted her 'failure' simply as lacking motivation.

> Why did not she study as hard as others? Why did she watch cartoons all day?
> Why did not she go to Student Services for help? It was obviously mostly her fault
> (Jessie's Reflection Note Taken at Her Writing-up Stage).

Unexpectedly, in Jessie's last two-year's study in the UK, her own life changed dramatically too. This had even made her doubt about her interpretation of Fang Fang's case.

> I was 36 years old when I started to write up my thesis. My mother-in-law called
> me many times from China, 'You got to have a child!' When I asked my husband's
> opinion, he said, 'Without this doctorate degree, our life will move on, but without
> a child, our relationship will be different'. I totally understood him, the eldest son
> in the family (Jessie's Reflection Note Taken at Her Writing-up Stage).

As a female Chinese PhD student in the UK who was 36 then, married without a baby, Jessie also experienced what might be called intersectionality of a somewhat feeble international student and gender (Crenshaw, 1989). Her femaleness, her presumed responsibility as a wife and daughter-in-law in Chinese culture, and non-English native speaker who was in the doctorate writing-up stage in the UK made her struggle in the interaction of multiple axes. She had to make a hard decision.

Jessie became pregnant, while her husband, who got his MSc in Business Information Technology in the UK, found it uneasy to find a job when the UK was undergoing an economic recession. As a former manager with 10 years' working experience in China, he decided to go back to China where he was offered the position of the deputy-chief manager in a software company. Jessie had to stay in the UK to finish her PhD course.

After he left, I suddenly realised that my 'real' learning experience as an international student had just started. I was used to having my husband looking after me. He took care of everything from shopping to cooking, from moving house to changing light bulbs. I told him everything, whether happy or unhappy, when I finished studying each day. He always listened patiently to my long stories. He was also the first audience for my small pieces of writing. His leaving was a big loss to me (Jessie's Reflection Note Taken at Her Writing-up Stage).

Like some Chinese students she observed before, Jessie started to skip meals as it would be troublesome to cook. On a rainy day, she could stay in bed for a whole day watching Chinese soap operas. It was a way to escape the pressure of the course. Unexpectedly, the writing-up stage was the most challenging part for her, as many other PhD sojourners were experiencing (Elliot, Reid & Baumfield, 2016). The tremendous amount of work, up-coming deadlines and loneliness gave Jessie huge pressure.

I became sensitive, emotional and irritable. Whenever I heard someone kindly asking 'How's your PhD going?', I started to have tears in eyes. I felt I gradually understood Fang Fang and all her troubles. Before things became worse, other PhD students noticed my unstable mood. Rung and Jo chatted with me over lunch very often. Angelina took me out for dinner. Sarah dragged me to have a half-an-hour walk in the afternoon. Gillian invited me to her house, in which I felt at home when running after her lovely son, Max. My supervisors also gave me strong support at this time. They gave me the 'PhD tissue' while I was crying in the supervision. I realised that I was not alone at this difficult stage. Their support helped me to calm down and carry on (Jessie's Reflection Note Taken at Her Writing-up Stage).

When Jessie reread the data, she had more insight into those troubles her participants had encountered. Moreover, she had further questions about the current student services and school administrative system.

There could have been alternative endings in Fang Fang's case. If someone had noticed her trouble earlier, went to talk to her, encouraged her, and gave her the help just as I received, would Fang Fang have failed the year? 'Someone' here

25

could be her peers, personal tutor or student services. Most often, we take for granted that international students should go to ask for help themselves. Under some circumstances, we need to go to them to offer our help. I know some people might argue that these students are adults and should take full responsibility themselves. However, sometimes it is really hard to open the door when you lock yourself inside (Jessie's Reflection Note Taken at Her Writing-up Stage).

Jessie's 'vulnerable' international student's experience gave her the insight of her participants' struggle. It made her more aware of the need for student support systems, which she had argued in a significant proportion in her PhD thesis.

Discussion and Conclusion

Reflexive researchers are required to flesh out the social dynamics of research (Best, 2003). However, locating our bodies in the research is 'a messy enterprise' in which meaning is found, and the examination on how our insider/outsider bodies might muddy traditional research roles and rules (Turner & Norwood, 2013). Jessie's research experience shows that it was more complicated than the traditional dichotomy of insider/outsider in conducting qualitative research when her own roles and those of her participants were considered (Savvides, Al-Youssef, Colin & Garrido, 2014). To understand her participants' transition experiences, and their inhabited social world, Jessie went 'inside' and built up a close relationship with them to learn how the participants understand their social world (Blaikie, 2007). Multiple realities were continually being co-constructed by Jessie and her participants, rather than existing independently (Bryman, 2008). Meaning was constructed through shared personal relationships and social experiences over the course of the fieldwork (Mahoney, 2007).

Jessie's PhD journey re-testifies that it is indeed impossible to be an objective outsider, as Creef (2000) witnessed, when doing ethnographic fieldwork with culturally entangled identities. She was constantly reminding herself to keep a sense of

strangeness in order to keep her critical stance as an observer, which is crucial for fieldwork in familiar settings (Coffey, 1999). Her notions of self intersect with the participants in multiple ways affect the formulation of knowledge and its interpretation (Sherif, 2001). In the transcultural research, she constantly moved back and forth between the two positional boundaries of being an inside learner and an outside expert being pulled by her late role, as a struggling Chinese international student. Jessie's being a Chinese international student was given meaning by her participants. They called her *Xiao Hou Jie*, took her as *Zi Ji Ren*, and gave her the privilege to become a representative of their group. Challenges and ethical dilemmas brought by her identities influenced her understanding of the research (Hawkins, 2010).

The whole process witnessed Jessie's juggling with multiple roles, from an 'experienced and successful' international student in the eyes of her research participants, an insider researcher who was trying to become a research expert, a *Zi Ji Ren*, a student ambassador and a 'vulnerable' international student. Jessie's fieldwork was a dynamic process of role co-construction and re-construction. She was trying to locate herself in the fieldwork by constantly reflecting on her own positions as a participant observer in the field, a listener as an 'elder sister', an ambassador for the group she was researching into, and at the same time, she was aware and concerned about the potential influence she might have given to the research. From being a senior and experienced Chinese international student who turned to be a struggling individual, the same insider identity, yet different Jessie, enabled her to understand her participants' labyrinthine intercultural adjustment journey from various angles and facilitated yet sometimes "hindered" her juggling with the positions as being an insider and outsider, during the process of development of her researcher identity. Through carrying out the

research projects, the ethnographers were born when knowing themselves through learning about their participants (Aberese-Ako, 2017).

As presented in this paper, the unpredictable journey illustrates the extreme complexity and dynamics of the relationships between the researcher and the participants, and, hence, the creation of knowledge. Jessie experienced serendipitous moments when she 'abandoned' her intention of deliberate distance-keeping with her participants and linked her study and living experience as a Chinese international student herself. The discovery of useful while exploring something else (Martínez, 2018) offered her many moments of sudden insight of understanding her participants and herself.

Epistemological concerns are more addressed in literature of ethnography rather than in "the practicalities involved in the analysis, triangulations, and construction of meaning" (Ayala & Koch, 2019, p. 2). The analysis of Jessie's reflexivity journey benefits from an intersectional lens to manifest the disadvantages she had experienced which were "erased" by any single-axis framework of her femaleness, her age, her ethnicity, and even her language in the "conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Her gender, age, language, being a Chinese, which have advantages in helping her establish a rapport relationship with her participants, pushed her into a corner at her writing-up stage. The intersectional lens is a way to unpack the invisible actors in her PhD journey. These identity-based categories are intertwined, therefore, hard to be separated from each other. Understanding these configurations of advantage and disadvantage would shed new insight to invite universities to come up with strategies to provide extra support for female international PhD students.

American philosopher, George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) argued that "self-consciousness resulted from empathetic identification with others: We become individuals when we experience in ourselves the feelings of those who surround us and respond to our actions" (Lindholm, 2007, p. 150). A reflexive perspective can be beneficial to an ethnographic research process. Questioning the 'neutrality paradigm' in social studies could add to critical qualitative studies. A closer examination of ethnographic process, reflexivity, serendipity, intersectionality, insider and outsider identities would increase credibility and trustworthiness of ethnographic studies by taking into account these multiple axes in social science research. PhD Examiners may not expect PhD candidates to demonstrate such deep understanding and sophistication in conducting a doctoral-level study as examiners would normally follow the basic guidelines to examine PhD theses. However, it can be argued that all researchers and PhD candidates, regardless of the country or culture they come from, should look into these multiple dimensions or axes so as to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative data reported.

To conclude, Jessie's juggling among multiple identities during her five years of ethnographic study indicates that there is always a danger to perceive and describe the qualitative research process as a simple balancing act between an insider participant and an outsider researcher. Instead, PhD students conducting such research studies would often experience bewilderment about the fluidity in their own identity change and insecurity in data collection and analysis. As a researcher sharing similar identities with his/her participants in a study-abroad context, numerous contextual factors and changed circumstances would 'mess up' the research field, the procedures and data collected. This 'messed-up' process, however, we would argue, is, to a lesser or greater extent, part and parcel of qualitative research. What the PhD students should bear in mind in

these situations is, we suggest, first, to show full awareness of the potential messiness and fluidity of ethnographic research; second, to try to stay alert and reflexive about all the factors that may affect the data collected, and, last but not least, to feel confident to tell the 'messy stories' critically and reflexively so as to enhance trustworthiness and validity of the research. Pretending that all right steps were taken and everything went according to textbook procedures while it did not would, on the contrary, reduce the true value and penetrating power of ethnographic research.

To end the paper, Jessie offers the following to the 50 Chinese Articulation Programmes Students:

It's a journey I myself as a sojourner undertook, while I witnessed another 50 sojourners experiencing their transition from China to the UK.

It's a journey I struggled with for five years and was reluctant to retrospect in the following years.

It's a journey during which I gradually know who I was, who I am and who I will be.

It's my PhD research journey in China and the UK.

They may not know who I am

And I may not know who they are

It's the research journey linking us to experience part of our life together

I know myself better through knowing them

They know their transition deeper through helping me knowing their journey

We know ourselves through knowing each other

Acknowledgement

References

Aberese-Ako, M. (2017). 'I won't take part!': Exploring the multiple identities of the ethnographer in two Ghanaian hospitals. *Ethnography*, 18 (3), 300-321.

Adjepong, A. (2019). Invading ethnography: A queer of color reflexive practice. *Ethnography*, 20 (1), 27-46.

Alcadipani, R., Westwood, R. & Rosa, A. (2015). The politics of identity in organizational ethnographic research: Ethnicity and tropicalist intrusions. *Human Relations*, 68 (1), 79-106.

Ayala, R. A. & Koch, T. F. (2019). The Image of Ethnography---Making Sense of the Social Through Images: A Structured Method. *International Journal of Qualitative Method*, 18, 1-13.

Best, A. L. (2003). Doing Race in the Context of Feminist Interviewing: Constructing Whiteness Through Talk. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9 (6), 895-914.

Bhattacharya, K. (2007). Consenting to the Consent Form: What Are the Fixed and Fluid Understandings Between the Researcher and the Researched?. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13 (8), 1095-1115.

Blaikie, N. (2007). *Approaches to Social Enquiry: Advancing Knowledge*. 2nd Edn. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Blix, B. H. (2015). Something Decent to Wear: Performances of Being an Insider and an Outsider in Indigenous Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21 (2), 175-183.

Brewer, J. D. (2000). *Ethnography*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Brown, L. & Jones, I. (2013). Encounters with racism and the international student experience. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38 (7), 1004-1019.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods*. 3rd Edn. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Burrell, G. & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis: Elements of the Sociology of Corporate Life*. Hants, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Byram, M. S. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Coffey, A. (1999). *The ethnographic self: fieldwork and the representation of identity*. London, UK: Sage.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education*. 7th Edn. Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Creef, E. T. (2000). Discovering My Mother as the Other in the Saturday Evening Post. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6 (4), 443-455.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1, 139-167.

Cunliffe, A. L. & Karunanayake, G. (2013). Working Within Hyphen-Spaces in Ethnographic Research: Implications for Research Identities and Practice. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16 (3), 364-392.

Damsa, D. & Ugelvik, T. (2017). A Difference That Makes a Difference? Reflexivity and Researcher Effects in an All-Foreign Prison. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1-10.

De Andrade, L. L. (2000). Negotiating from the Inside: Constructing Racial and Ethnic Identity in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 29 (3), 268-290.

Denzin, N. Y. (2001). The reflexive interview and a performative social science. *Qualitative Research*, 1, 23-46.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2017). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 5th Edn. London, UK: Sage.

Doyè, P. (1999). *The Intercultural Dimension: Foreign Language Education in the Primary School*. Berlin, Germany: Cornelsen.

Elliot, D. L., Reid, K. & Baumfield, V. (2016). Beyond the amusement, puzzlement and challenges: an enquiry into international students' academic acculturation. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41 (12), 2198-2217.

Ergun, A. & Erdemir, A. (2010). Negotiating Insider and Outsider Identities in the Field: "Insider" in a Foreign Land; "Outsider" in One's Own Land. *Field Methods*, 22 (1), 16-38.

Gaertner, S. L. & Dovidio, J. F. (2000). *Reducing intergroup bias: the common ingroup identity model*. Philadelphia, PHL: Psychology Press.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1993). *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies*. 2nd Edn. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practic*e. 3rd Edn. London, UK: Routledge.

Hawkins, R. L. (2010). Outsider in: Race, Attraction, and Research in New Orleans. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16 (4), 249-261.

Hendrix, K. G. (2002) "Did Being Black Introduce Bias Into Your Study?": Attempting to Mute the Race-Related Research of Black Scholars. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 13, 153-171.

Hou, J., Hu, Z., & Zhu, Y. (2013). The Introduction and Cultural Adjustment of Ethical Review to Chinese Social Science Research. *Journal of Hunan University Social Sciences*, 27 (5): 125-129 (In Chinese).

Hou, J. & McDowell, L. (2014). Learning Together? Experiences on a China-U.K. Articulation Program in Engineering. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 18 (3), 223-240.

Jewkes, Y. (2011). Autoethnography and Emotion as Intellectual Resources: Doing Prison Research Differently. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18 (1), 63-75.

Kim, Y. J. (2012). Ethnographer location and the politics of translation: researching one's own group in a host country. *Qualitative Research*, 12 (2), 131-146.

Lindholm, C. (2007). *Culture and Identity: The History, Theory, and Practice of Psychological Anthropology*. 2nd Edn. Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications.

Madden, R. (2017). *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*. 2nd Edn. London, UK: Sage.

Mahoney, D. (2007). Constructing Reflexive Fieldwork Relationships: Narrating My Collaborative Storytelling Methodology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13 (4), 573-594.

Martínez, F. (2018). The Serendipity of Anthropological Practice. *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, 27 (1), 1-6.

May, V. M. (2015). *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mayeza, E. (2017). Doing Child-Centered Ethnography: Unravelling the Complexities of Reducing the Perceptions of Adult Male Power During Fieldwork. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1-10.

McAreavey, R. & Das, C. (2013). A Delicate Balancing Act: Negotiating with Gatekeepers for Ethical Research When Researching Minority Communities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 12, 113-131.

Merton, R. (1972). Insiders and Outsiders: a Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (1), 9-47.

Pickard, A. J. (2007). *Research methods in information*. London, UK: Facet Publishing.

Razon, N. & Ross, K. (2012). Negotiating Fluid Identities: Alliance-Building in Qualitative Interviews. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18 (6), 494-503.

Rivoal, I. & Salazar, N. B. (2013). Contemporary Ethnographic Practice and the Value of Serendipity. *Social Anthropology*, 21 (2), 178-185.

Savin-Baden, M. & Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative Research: The Essential Guide to Theory and Practice*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Savvides, N., Al-Youssef, J., Colin, M. & Garrido, C. (2014). Journeys into Inner/Outer Space: reflections on the methodological challenges of negotiating insider/outsider status in international educational research. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 9 (4), 412-425.

Sherif, B. (2001). The Ambiguity of Boundaries in the Fieldwork Experience: Establishing Rapport and Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7 (4), 436-447.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups & social categories: studies in social psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Thummapol, O., Park, T., Jackson, M. & Barton, S. (2019). Methodological Challenges Faced in Doing Research With Vulnerable Women: Reflections From Fieldwork Experiences. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1-11.

Turner, P. K. & Norwood, K. M. (2013). Body of Research: Impetus, Instrument, and Impediment. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19 (9), 696-711.

Van Andel, P. (1994). Anatomy of the Unsought Finding. Serendipity: Origin, History, Domains, Traditions, Appearances, Patterns and Programmability. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 45 (2), 631-648.