Chinese International Student Perspectives of their British Columbia Offshore School Experiences

by

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B.A., Mount Allison University, 2001
B. Ed., Brock University, 2005

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Abstract

Over the past twenty years, high school students in China have been learning the British Columbia (BC) public curriculum in certified private offshore schools with the intention of attending post-secondary institutions abroad. This internationalization and privatization in the Chinese education system began after critical reforms that allowed non-state actors to own and operate schools or programs that offer foreign curricula and credentials. BC offshore schools (BCOS) are one of the foreign curriculum options available to students in China and are comprised of approximately 12,000 students in thirty-seven certified schools. These students then may become international students when they migrate abroad, often to Canada.

Within this setting, this case study explores the perspectives and experiences of five female first-year university students who have just recently graduated from three different BC offshore schools. The theoretical framings of sociocultural theory, second language socialization, community of practice, and transnationalism help situate the perspectives of the students in this dynamic educational phenomenon. The primary data sources include semi-structured interviews at the beginning of their first and second semesters at a large BC university and participant responses to journal prompts through the semester, as well as publicly available BC educational documents.

This study's findings indicate that graduates of BCOS were prepared for undergraduate academic courses because of their socialization into foundational research skills, essay writing, lecture listening, and project-based assessments. The similarities between the BC and university curricula have helped these participants transition from high school to university as well as from China to Canada. Each participant revealed different challenges that they faced including

systematic grammar knowledge, increased reading requirements, and socializing with Canadian peers. Overall, Chinese BCOS graduates are a dynamic, diverse, and under-researched population. Participants' socialization into the learning environments in British Columbia offshore schools has helped them prepare and learn skills necessary for favourable experiences in university.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis reports on a five-month study of the perspectives and experiences of five Chinese international students as they reflect upon their British Columbia offshore school experience at the onset of their Canadian university education. This introductory chapter introduces the phenomenon under investigation, outlines the conceptual framework and research questions, and a description of the role of offshore schools in Chinese education. The introduction also clarifies definitions and terminology by providing an overview of offshore schools and how these fit into transnational and international education. Chapter two describes the theoretical framings which help inform the design guiding this case study, followed by a review of literature relevant to the study and research questions. The third chapter explains the case study approach and a discussion of researcher positionality as well as an overview of data collection and the analytical approach used in this project, thematic analysis. Findings from this are then described in chapters four, five, and six guided by each research question. The closing chapter has a discussion of the findings of the study and conclude the thesis.

1.1 Introductory Context of British Columbia Offshore Schools in China

The vast Chinese education system underwent critical reforms around the turn of the twenty-first century to allow private Chinese citizens to own and operate schools that can offer a foreign curriculum and credentials (Liu, 2018; Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017; Young, 2018). British Columbia offshore school (BCOS) programs are one of the most popular foreign curricula that Chinese schools can host and is authorized by the Canadian province of British Columbia (BC). The BC offshore school program certifies schools to employ BC certified

teachers and administrators to teach, assess, and evaluate the public BC curriculum as well as confer the same BC high school diploma that domestic students in Canada earn. There are currently 37 certified BC offshore schools or programs in China out of a total of 44 worldwide in seven other countries (Government of British Columbia, 2019a). The 37 BCOS make up a great amount of Canadian provincial curriculum schools in China of which there are a total of 82 authorized by seven of the ten Canadian provinces according to the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC, 2019). These exist in various forms but all operate as divisions of larger Chinese schools and almost all are private enterprises (Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017). The size and scope of these schools range from small departments of just under 100 students to a large multi-city system of at least ten schools (CICIC, 2019). Each BC high school has BC certified principals and teachers as well as a liaison with the BC Ministry of Education and are inspected by the Ministry at least once every two years (Government of British Columbia, 2019c). The BCOS model is one example of how educational systems in both countries are intertwining with international and transnational movements of people, curricula, and capital.

The recent and rapid economic rise of millions of families in China has led to an emerging private school market with expanding choice for students and their families (Liu, 2018; Liu & Dunne, 2009). This is because economic development in the 1990s and 2000s raced ahead of educational development which is still struggling to build schools, reform curricula, and educate teachers in its K-9 public system (Kwong, 2016; Wang, 2017). Private foreign education became a valuable component of Chinese education because of the demands and desires of middle class families and the difficulties China had in providing resources for the world's largest

public education system (Kwong, 2016; Schuetze, 2008). The injection of a private foreign option into Chinese education was a pragmatic way of development and response to societal pressures (Liu, 2018; Schuetze, 2008; Young, 2018). At the individual and community level, the schools and teachers of Canada and the students and families of China have generally benefitted from partnering with each other in education (Wang, 2017). Canadian schools are growing, diversifying, and receiving revenue (CBIE, 2019; RKA, 2017) while Chinese students have discovered an alternative graduation assessment and a chance of gaining social and cultural capital by studying abroad (Waters, 2005; 2006; 2008; Young, 2018). These developments have led to an intertwining transnational educational phenomena in Chinese and Canadian education.

Chinese middle and upper-class families have a range of school choices (Gaskell, 2017; 2019; Liu, 2018; Wang, 2017; Young, 2018) and the seven Canadian provinces that authorize certain Chinese-owned private schools to deliver their public curricula offshore are popular options (CICIC, 2019; Wang, 2017). These foreign curriculum private schools are in addition to the Chinese schools (both public and private) that deliver the Chinese national curriculum to the majority of the population. With these various types of schools, it appears that Chinese international students (CIS) are a heterogeneous group who have taken an array of pathways to learning in universities abroad. This diverse population, especially graduates of BCOS, have yet to be appropriately studied or conceptualized.

1.2 Conceptual Framework of this Case Study

In conceptualizing this study, I recognize that people construct their own meaning of their educational worlds while recognizing also that an objective reality exists parallel to these

subjective interpretations. This study is therefore informed by a constructionist epistemology (Crotty, 1998) rather than objectivism. Constructionism suggests that "different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). If the people are students and the phenomena are their BC offshore schools and university, then the case in this study is their construction of the meaning of their education. Offshore schools, like all schools, are social spaces where students and teachers construct knowledge and understanding in social contexts. The bicultural and transnational nature of these schools magnifies the sociocultural facets of this framework which draws on sociocultural theory in addition to second language socialization, communities of practice, and transnationalism; chapter two, the theoretical framework for this study, outlines these in detail. Because of the social basis of education, a social constructivist approach is appropriate for studying these students' perspectives and experiences.

A notable feature of this study is my own positionality. I have an awareness and understanding of Chinese students operating in cross-cultural environments due to my own experience as an expatriate working abroad in education. I was employed as a BC teacher in two different offshore schools in China from 2011 to 2017, so have brought some insider knowledge and also certain subjectivities into this study. While teaching in China and helping prepare students for English-medium university success, I eventually sought to question: In what ways do Canadian offshore schools in China prepare students for university in Canada?

While studies of Canadian offshore school policies have provided a big picture of the phenomenon (Cosco, 2011; Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017), these policy analyses do not include perspectives of the students. This case study is therefore designed to collect, co-construct, and

analyse experiences and perspectives of five students in order to enhance understanding of the impacts of BCOS and begin to address this research gap. This multiple case study (Yin, 2014) can also be conceptualized as a unique case with participants' perspectives as multiple "embedded units" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550). Using this case study, I have explored the perspectives of five female first-year students from China who have graduated from three different BC offshore schools. The participants volunteered to share their perspectives and experiences during their first five months of studying in a large university in British Columbia, Canada.

BC offshore schools should be considered as spaces where students regularly cross and straddle cultural borders (Heng, 2018; Ong, 1999) and use various strategies and tactics to navigate, adapt, and thrive in and across different cultures. This is intrinsically worth exploring and describing through qualitative research co-constructed between researcher and participants. While intrinsic interest may not be enough to justify a master's thesis (Duff, 2008), the size and scope of BC offshore education should warrant extensive study. The offshore district can be considered British Columbia's largest school district with 12,000 students (Government of British Columbia, 2019a) who form all of the certified BC offshore programs in seven different countries (Government of British Columbia, 2019a). Students are influenced by their schooling so I began this exploratory (Yin, 2014) and intrinsic (Stake, 1995) case study to seek answers to the following research questions while taking account of my positionality.

Research Questions:

1: In what ways do BC offshore school students constitute a (sub)category of Chinese international students?

2: How do BC offshore school graduates perceive their initial university experience?

3: From the perspective of Chinese students, in what ways does a BC offshore school education prepare students for university in Canada?

The following are some defining and operationalizing constructs in the research questions:

In what ways: The non-quantifiable ways in which students perceive they were prepared for university is a central goal of this study.

Category: Much previous research portrays Chinese international students as homogeneous; however, this study proposes a conceptualization of BCOS students as a new (sub)category in international and transnational education.

Prepare: The main rationale for BCOS is to prepare students for English-medium universities in Western countries; prepare is both an active and passive verb wherein students can use their agency to prepare themselves academically and socially for transition to a Western country. Students can also be prepared by the teachers, the school system, and the curriculum.

1.3 Internationalization and Privatization of Education in China

This section is a recent history of Chinese educational reforms which is needed to better understand the context of internationalized education in China and the experiences of the students. While education in the 1949-1976 Mao Zedong era was centralized and standardized,

the 1980's saw some administrative and financing power devolved to the provinces and cities (Liu & Dunne, 2009; Young, 2018). In the abrupt pivot toward a market-oriented economy in the 1980s, schools had to suddenly catch up and be "re-oriented to produce knowledgeable, motivated, competitive, and innovative graduates" (Kwang, 2016, p. 8). Basic education from grades one to nine was made compulsory in the 1980s with high school remaining optional and including both academic and vocational streams. This nine year public education system is a critical element in the authorization of foreign offshore schools. Financial reforms then opened the door for some non-state funding of schools (Law, 2002) and these were exemplified by experimental classes for fee-paying students and the recruitment of students from outside the school's neighbourhood who would be charged fees (Liu & Dunne, 2009). These educational choices were responses to the new middle-class parents who began demanding and paying for choices that would provide an advantage for their children (Liu, 2018; Liu & Dunne, 2009; Waters, 2008; Young, 2018). This led to rankings of schools with the top schools subsequently becoming overcrowded with fee-paying students and weaker schools running under capacity and being under-resourced (Liu & Dunne, 2009). While stratification and streaming produced some educational diversity, the teaching and learning activities remained narrowly confined to the regime of exams focused on core subjects.

The public educational system continued to have difficulty coping with the swift developments while Chinese industries needed a more highly-educated workforce. Reforms in 1999 were made to "develop creativity, problem-solving skills and lifelong learning attitudes" (Liu & Dunne, 2009, p. 464) but the introduction of more student-oriented teaching methods were mostly dismissed or rejected by many Chinese teachers who "were pressured by

the necessity of preparing students for the very competitive public examinations and more often than not had to resort to drills and rote" (Kwong, 2016, p. 9). There was desire for reform but since the *zhongkao* – the high school entrance exam – and the *gaokao* – the university entrance exam – remained intact, only the non-state financial investments in education endured. The primacy of these exams in the Chinese educational system was a driving factor in the growth of offshore schools and educational emigration.

The 1995 *Education Law* legally opened up the education system to private actors but stressed that such schools may not open for the purpose of making a profit (Wang, 2017, p. 527). In 2003, the Chinese government further opened up the possibility of schools to make profits through the privatization of basic education allowing "investors to obtain reasonable returns from school support" (Wang, 2017, p. 530) along with more regulations for foreign investment in all levels of educational institutions (Wang, 2017, p. 530). These new regulations and allowance of reasonable returns likely made investment more attractive and private schools increased collaboration with foreign educational services (Liu, 2018; Wang, 2017).

The need for private education was rationalized because of the demands of middle class families and the difficulties that a developing country like China had in providing resources for the world's largest public education system. The injection of private actors into the nation's education system was overseen by Vice Premier Li Lanqing who called for "the balance and stability of a *third wheel*, namely education provided through joint Chinese-foreign cooperation… With one big wheel [public schools] and two small ones [private Chinese and foreign schools], China's education will move ahead more smoothly and quickly" (Li, 2004, p. 59 & 61 as cited in Schuetze, 2008, p. 7). This "three-wheel" educational arrangement, which

had gained government affirmation, showed that China was leaning toward pragmatic development. The two types of private schools, Chinese and foreign, were added to the education system to supplement the public education system and to ease the pressure to modernize too quickly.

1.4 A Place for Offshore Schools in Transnational and International Education

This section is an overview of how Canadian offshore schools/programs are positioned in the fields of transnational and international education as well as Chinese education systems. Transnational refers to the delivery of courses and credentials across borders and, international means the movement of students and teachers. Offshore schools are outliers in the academic literature where much of the field is focused on international and transnational *higher* educational contexts. When international K-12 education is featured, it is often about traditional international schools (Bunnell, 2014). This section applies the characteristics of BCOS to frameworks from two recent papers. It begins by positioning the category of Canadian offshore schools alongside the transnational education (TNE) framework proposed by Knight (2016). Then offshore schools are compared with the Type C Non-Traditional International Schools category illustrated by Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2016). These comparisons should help with understanding the terminology and the boundaries of the case before exploring the methodology and findings later in this thesis. In this section, I also discuss characteristics of offshore schools though BC government documents and my experiences as a teacher.

Terminology is an ongoing complication in the international education (IE) and transnational education (TNE) fields at both the practical and academic levels. Knight (2016)

assessed the various terms used in the academic literature and public discourse, and her paper proposed definitions that would help alleviate the confusion. Most literature in IE and TNE features studies of higher (university) education, and Knight's (2016) proposals of "a common TNE framework and definitions" (Knight, 2016, p. 34) is solely focused on higher education. This framework can be modified with the addition of K-12 education, although offshore and international schools cannot simply be plugged into Knight's (2016) TNE higher education framework and definitions. There are comparisons but they do not exactly match with the characteristics and roles of Canadian offshore schools. Knight (2016) specifically states (p. 36) that the TNE framework refers to higher education institutions and therefore does not address secondary education. The following paragraphs are an attempt to carve out a position for BCOS in this field. The age proximity of high school to undergraduate students justifies this inclusion, as does the nature of BC offshore schools amidst the broader TNE landscape.

At their core, offshore high schools are a form of transnational education which "has come to mean the movement of academic programs and providers between countries" (Knight, 2016, p. 36). Unlike some university branch campuses and twinning programmes, offshore high schools (at least in China) intersect with "international education which focuses more on students" (Knight, 2016, p. 36) because almost all of the Chinese graduates of these offshore schools move abroad for their post-secondary education (Liu, 2018; Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017; Young, 2018). Therefore, offshore schools first engage in the transfer of curricula and teachers to the host country and then the students, who have been educated and prepared by the teachers and curriculum, migrate to a post-secondary institution in the curriculum provider

country or elsewhere. Offshore schools and students thus operate in an additional category of Knight's (2016) TNE framework because of this intersection.

Canadian offshore school growth over the past twenty years necessitates inclusion in the conceptual framework associated with TNE while also recognizing that offshore school graduates contribute to international student bodies in Western universities. Knight (2016) presented two categories of TNE activities at the higher education level: the collaborative category and independent category (p. 39). Offshore schools seem to contain aspects of both categories. Most offshore programs are hosted in local private schools (Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017) which are authorized by their respective Canadian provincial governments to deliver their curriculum. This requires a high degree of collaboration between Canadian and local educators to ensure the successful day-to-day operation of offshore schools. As offshore schools are centered upon a licensed foreign curriculum, then Knight's (2016) definition "*independent* [which] refers to the lack of direct academic cooperation in program design or delivery between a foreign sending provider and a local HEI [or in this case school] in the host country" (Knight, 2016, p. 38) better describes offshore schools. Since Knight (2016) determined that the differentiation between collaborative and independent TNE is primarily related to the "actual delivery or teaching/learning of the academic program" and less so the host facilities and local investments, BCOS fall closer to the independent side of this spectrum.

Offshore schools are not currently operationalized within Knight's (2016) framework (p. 44). While these schools should be placed in the independent category because of their governmental oversight and awarding of credentials, they are not defined as branch or franchise campuses. They are mostly locally owned, so the *twinning* definition — foreign senders

(provincial ministries of education) who offer academic programs though a host country institution — may be the best term. The foreign sender provides the curriculum and awards qualifications (p. 44) while the hosting school provides the facility and much of the boarding and pastoral care. In the case of British Columbia, all teachers of academic courses must be certified by the BC Teacher Regulation Branch (Government of British Columbia, 2019a) yet they are employed by the school owner/operator. The twinning category is the l*east collaborative* in the collaborative category which also includes joint/double/multiple degrees and cofounded universities (Knight, 2016), which have closer integration of the two cultures. To conclude, BCOS are special because of the intersections of transnational movements of curricula and credentials and international movements of students and teachers. The autonomy of the public BC curriculum while collaborating with Chinese schools is also distinctive.

The category of offshore schools, specifically BC offshore schools, also fits into Bunnell, Fertig, and James' (2016) discussion of Type C Non-Traditional international schools which have increased dramatically since the 1990s. Type C schools are privately owned, profit driven, and largely composed of host country students and are newer and different from *traditional* (Type A) and *ideological* (Type B) international schools. Since the mid-20th century, this relatively small collection of parent-funded, non-profit, expatriate schools have been the only types of international schools (Bunnell, 2014). The Royal Society of Arts (RSA), a British social organization, commissioned a 2019 report (RSA, 2019) stating that the growth of Type C schools "may be diluting the distinctiveness of the [International School] model" (Hallgarten, Tabberer, & McCarthy, 2015, p. 3). Type C schools are exemplified by prominent international school brands in multiple countries as well as branch campuses of elite British or American private

schools (Bunnell et al., 2016). Offshore schools do not exactly fit these models but do "enrol their students from the local … population and serve an '*aspirational middle class*'" (Hayden & Thompson, 2013, p. 7 as quoted in Bunnell et al, p. 411, 2016; emphasis in original). When reading this thesis, readers should be aware that most students in offshore schools in China (including the participants in this study) are Chinese citizens, with only a small percentage of students being from other countries (Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017). In China, the BC curriculum is only authorized for grades 10 to 12 so most of the students attended Chinese public schools before transitioning to a BCOS. These offshore school traits necessitate a discussion of the definitions of international schools.

The "international school" definition has been both narrowly and broadly bounded. For example, a broad definition is used by The International School Consultancy (ISC Research, 2019) which considers any school that delivers an English language curriculum outside of an English-speaking country to be an international school. This definition would have to include BCOS and numerous other schools that are almost totally constituted of local students. In addition, "English language curriculum" and even "English-speaking country" can be vaguely interpreted in the 21st century discourses. The emphasis on English in the definition is problematic as it implies that English is the only global language and that international schools are all English-medium.

Narrow bounds have been proposed by Bunnell (2014) who discussed the changing reality and definitions of international schools. The traditional definition holds that international schools cater to expatriate families and retain multicultural student bodies of 30 to 40 expatriate nationalities. Many new Type C international schools now mostly serve local students from the

aspiring middle class (Bunnell, 2014) which are different from traditional international schools so that a narrow definition may be more appropriate. This is why *international schools* should now be categorized into Bunnell's three types or alternatively named offshore or bicultural schools, if appropriate. The increase in Type C international schools has been fast and "the growth of for-profit schools serving largely a local clientele fundamentally undermines the accepted academic classifications and categorizations of International Schools" (Bunnell, 2014, p. 140). Since most of the literature on international schools concerns internationally-minded transnational families and "third-culture kids" who grow up in these schools for segments of their childhood, my study into offshore schools addresses a considerable absence in the literature.

To summarize this section, the preceding discussion of the characteristics of offshore schools in transnational and international education has considered both global and local characteristics. BCOS are transnational because the BC curriculum, teachers, and administration transfer to another country so local students can learn and earn credentials that are legitimate because of the backing of the BC provincial government. BCOS are also heavily involved in international education because of the migration of graduates to post-secondary institutions in Western countries which is the original intention of these schools (Waters, 2008). BCOS are a form of Type C international schools which are profit-driven and cater to middle-class families in the host countries (Bunnell et al., 2016). Although offshore public curriculum schools are not examples used by Bunnell et al. (2016) they fit the category and are not traditional or ideological international schools. Throughout this thesis, BCOS in China are classified as *offshore* schools and not *international* schools because BCOS are limited to grades 10 to 12, nearly all students are Chinese citizens, and graduates typically intend to migrate to Western universities. The

exclusion of offshore schools from the international school (Type C) category is to show clear differentiation and not intended to rank offshore schools as lower in quality than international schools.

The BCOS inspection reports (Government of British Columbia, 2019a) provide insight into the requirements and expectations that school leaders must address to remain certified. Key administrative categories include a business plan, building safety, principal and teacher certification, and policy development. In the educational program section, inspectors examine course outlines that show curriculum implementation, course planning, assessments, resources, progress reports, and instructional time allotment. The inspectors enquire into the school's English language assessment for incoming students and continued acquisition throughout the program. Until 2011, all offshore and domestic BC high school students had to write externally-assessed provincial exams for academic courses. Many exams were phased out from 2011 to 2019[1] and the inspection team often used the differential between the internally-assessed school mark and the exam mark to assess the academic rigour of the BCOS. Evidence is often found in Section 4.6 of the BCOS inspection reports with phrases such as, "[the inspection team] noted the difference between English 12 and exam and school marks was higher than the difference provincially" or "[the team] confirms that school marks and provincial exam marks are within acceptable Ministry guidelines" (BCOS Inspection Report, Government of British Columbia, 2019a, Section 4.6). An analysis of the inspection reports from the three schools in this study as well as other schools has been beneficial in triangulating the perspectives of the participants with the observations and evaluations of the inspectors in the published reports.

[1] Provincial exams for English 12, Communications 12, Social Studies 11, English 10, and Science 10 remained for most of these years.

The introductory discussion in this section analysed the place of BCOS in comparison with prominent definitions in higher education TNE and international school definitions. Further discussion of the literature is in chapter two. This introductory chapter will now culminate with brief discussion of the profiles of the five participants in my case study and their three BC offshore schools. This personal context should aid in adding concrete examples to the theoretical discussion above.

1.5 Profile of Participants and their Schools

The following section includes a brief profile of the five female participants and their schools as a way to introduce and contextualize the people and settings of the phenomena. The participants asked the researcher to choose their pseudonyms which are all common Chinese family names. The three schools are numbered and the vague descriptions are intended to disguise any conspicuous characteristics of the schools. All participants implied that they came from middle class families since tuition at BCOS is more than public schools.

Table 1.1: *Participants and their Offshore Schools*

Participant	School	Grade Commenced	Size	Chinese-BC Mix	% of Chinese Students
Zhao	BCOS-1	Grade 7	Large	Integrated	90%
Bai	BCOS-1	Grade 10	Large	Integrated	90%
Chan	BCOS-2	Grade 9	Medium	Separate	99%
Duan	BCOS-3	Grade 10	Small	Separate	100%
Fei	BCOS-3	Grade 10	Small	Separate	100%

Zhao attended BCOS-1 which is a large and well-established offshore school located in a developing suburb of a major coastal Chinese city. Zhao lived with her middle-class parents and went to public school until grade 7 when she moved into the dormitory and began studying in this boarding school on the outskirts of the city. Like all BCOS, only grades 10 to 12 are permitted to deliver the BC curriculum (Wang, 2017), but it also has an affiliated middle school on the same campus where students learned a Chinese curriculum. Some of these students were later admitted to the BC high school. Zhao went to this school from grade 7 to 12 and stated that the middle school was "very Chinese," meaning that students stayed in the same classroom all day and subject teachers came and went for each class period. They did learn some basic science (in English) from a foreign teacher in one class each day.

In grade 10, when the BC offshore program commences, she went to the neighbouring high school on the same campus. She took four BC courses and one Chinese-taught course each day in a semester format. The school had an online grade-book that was visible to parents; however Zhao said that her parents never checked it because her "parents don't care because they are very believe me." This level of independence seemed to permeate into her living situation when she said that at some point in high school, she moved into an apartment near the campus that her parents rented for her and her friends. Sometimes her parents visited on weekends but overall they trusted her to live and study with limited supervision.

Bai moved from another province in China to attend BCOS-1 and lived in the student dormitory on campus for grades 10 to 12. Her father also moved to this province at the same time for employment and lived in a nearby city. This was her first time to attend a school with an English-medium curriculum and subjects taught by foreign teachers. Findings in chapter four

include more detail about her first few days living and studying on her own, but she called this change a "sudden" decision which set her on a trajectory to a future abroad. Her prior experience learning English was through lectures, books, and test preparation in Chinese elementary and middle schools. Bai has a positive and proactive attitude toward education and explained how she engaged teachers and fellow students for help in making sense of the different types of assessments and structures in Canadian schools.

In BCOS-1, the BC and Chinese courses are somewhat integrated in the students' daily schedule with students taking about 80% of their classroom time in BC courses with BC certified teachers. The Chinese classes constitute the necessary time needed for students to be awarded the Chinese high school diploma, but without writing the national university entrance exam – the *gaokao* – they cannot attend a university in China. The Chinese and BC teachers shared students and spaces but there did not seem to be integration between teachers, curricula, or classes at Bai's school.

Chan went to BCOS-2 which was smaller than the above school but located on a similar type of campus in a developing rural suburb of a major coastal city. This private school originally focused on the BC high school program but Chan said that during her time there, primary and middle schools were built on the campus which taught the Chinese curriculum in the Chinese style. In the high school, most grade 10 students took BC courses in the daytime and then Chinese courses in the late afternoon and evening. Often by the end of grade 10, many of the higher-achieving students that were finding success in BC courses had cancelled their Chinese courses. According to Chan, this decision was made by her three roommates early in grade 10 but her parents would not let her drop her Chinese classes for several additional months. Once a

student had dropped their Chinese classes then the student was fully committed to graduating with a BC diploma and unable to get a Chinese diploma in case they wanted to drop out of the BC program. Cancelling the Chinese program allowed students in this school to focus most of their efforts toward their BC courses (and continued English-language learning) or their own personal interests since they now had more flexible time in the evenings. Some students tried to take both BC and Chinese courses and some would drop out of the BC program if it was too difficult for them. Chan described cancelling the Chinese courses as liberating and a great opportunity to develop skills and do projects for herself.

Chan recollected her parents deciding to send her to this school for pre-BCOS courses in grade 9 for students who wanted to improve their English before starting the credit courses in grade 10. She was unhappy and under stress and her parents wanted her to "be happy." Chan reflected that she often relaxed and only did the minimum amount of effort in grade 10 because she thought she deserved a break after "escaping Chinese school." As she began to notice her classmates prepare for university, she began to engage more academically and became a self-regulated learner who was able to manage time effectively.

Duan attended a small BCOS which was situated on one floor of a large Chinese school in a mid-sized inland city. BCOS-3 is one of the many BC programs that are described as "schools within schools" (Wang, 2017). Students had to attend a full day of school starting with morning exercises at 7:00 AM followed by BC courses until mid-afternoon, Chinese courses in the afternoon and evening, and then some evening hours of studying until returning to dormitories at 10:00 PM. The day was a punctuated with a two-hour lunch break which included time to nap in the dormitory and "club time" before dinner. Although the BCOS was an

autonomous program, students had to attend both BC and Chinese classes — essentially attending two high schools simultaneously. Duan explained that this full timetable made it difficult to complete homework or pursue non-academic interests.

Duan had played the piano from a young age and was admitted to the university's music school after getting accepted into engineering. She said that in middle school, she had the time to commute a few hours on weekends to learn from a reputable piano teacher in the province but upon starting BCOS in grade 10, she no longer had that time. After arriving at the university in September, Duan approached the Faculty of Music and was admitted to the school after a piano audition. Duan applied to the engineering program at the university because it was "easier" to get accepted and hoped that she could eventually transfer to the music program once on campus. Duan also expressed interest in reading English literature and these were her favourite classes in high school.

The fifth participant, Fei was also from BCOS-3 and she described this school from another perspective. Each grade had three streamed cohorts determined by a Chinese-administered test in grade 9. Fei stated that they stayed within their cohorts for the duration of their high school program and she was in the lowest stream and described many of her classmates as weak students and that her Chinese teachers did not "teach them well." Fei described being frustrated in the lowest stream within the first few minutes of her interview with me a few days after Duan's interview. Fei was clearly aware that she was a member of the lowest-streamed class and felt that she should have been promoted to the next level. Duan never mentioned any streaming of cohorts in the first interview. When asked about this in the second interview, Duan denied that there were levels but said the three cohorts were static through the

three years in BCOS-3. Once the BC principal had tried to mix them up but Duan said that the students rejected it because "we get along" and "get used to that." While Duan generally described her school as pleasant, Fei characterized her education as a struggle though barriers set up by Chinese teachers, classmates, and peers. In contrast she appreciated the efforts of BC teachers to support her and treat students "equally" and "with respect."

All students except Zhao took credit courses at the university mostly in Social Sciences and Humanities. Zhao mostly took ESL bridging courses to help her prepare for academic courses the following year.

Table 1.2: *First Semester Courses*

Zhao	Bai	Chan	Duan	Fei
Social Science ESL-Speaking* ESL-Writing* ESL-Grammar* *non-credit	Economics Public Speaking Math Philosophy (Canon) Philosophy (Logic)	Economics Commerce Math Guitar	Music Piano Music Choir Music Chamber Musicianship Music History English	Economics English Lit. Learning 101 Geography

This first chapter introduced the context of BCOS in China, the conceptual framework, and research questions. This was followed by a history of internationalization and privatization of education in China and proposed definitions of offshore schools and international schools for the literature. The introduction concluded with a profile of the five participants to preview the findings in later chapters.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framings and Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framings

The framing of the research questions and interviews have been informed by the following four theories: sociocultural theory, second language socialization, situated learning in communities of practice, and transnationalism. These theoretical framings informed the research questions, the interview questions, and data analysis in this case study.

2.1.1 Sociocultural theory.

Offshore schools, like many international schools, operate in a cultural borderland (Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017). Students and teachers navigate these cultural boundaries regularly and this navigation likely influences students in their transition abroad. Given these conditions, this study has drawn on sociocultural theory, a theoretical lens that states that a learner's interactions with people, material, and institutions are the most important form of cognitive activity (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). Learning within one type of school system in one's own culture may be confining, but a transition to an additional or alternative system would likely expand sociocultural interactions. The teacher, and by extension the school, is the mediator (Vygotsky, 1978) who connects the learner with the material. The offshore school and its teachers guide the students as they transfer from one realm to another, adopting and working with the ideas and practices that are valued in their future universities. The acquisition of a second language is a major part of transitioning cultures; also important are adopting the typical learning structures and educational values in the new culture. Offshore schools may provide students with this opportunity for intercultural activities. Some findings from this study have indicated that

learning and engaging in these foreign structures and values to be an important part of the participants' adaptation to Canada.

The cross-cultural aspect of sociocultural theory can be refined by framing the case study enquiry around Heng's (2018) key tenet that humans are "embedded within and shaped by their sociocultural contexts [and they] participate in more than one sociocultural context" (Heng, 2018, p. 24). Learning is shaped by various contexts and when changing contexts, "humans possess agency in improvising, interacting, or contesting values, beliefs, and behaviour associated with different sociocultural contexts" (Heng, 2018, p. 24). This study explored student agency when they encountered different sociocultural contexts in their offshore schools and university. Sociocultural theory is a broad theory for all sorts of education but the interactions in offshore schools in China are obvious examples of cross-cultural webs of activity because of the intersections of transnational teachers and curriculum offshore and the international migration of students to the onshore.

2.1.2 Second language socialization.

Another key theory that has guided this study is (second) language socialization (Duff, 2010; Morita, 2004; Ochs, 1986), a theoretical and methodological framework that provides insights into language learners and users' negotiation of membership in their target language communities. This is a view of language learning as social processes "through interactions with others who are more proficient in the language and the cultural practices" (Duff, 2010, p. 172). It is a situated form of learning where mentors explicitly and (or) implicitly advise newcomers of the "normative [and] appropriate uses of language" (Duff, 2010, p. 172). Offshore schools teach

curriculum content, in addition to the English language, ideally using Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) theories and strategies (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). The participants' negotiation of learning English and course content simultaneously was one of my interview topics. The interview questions sought to understand if and how the BCOS student community(ies) negotiated English learning and practice in an environment where often only the teachers are native English speakers. Besides external socialization by teachers and peers, this study also considered the construct of internal or self-socialization (Anderson, 2017), as students self-regulate their behaviour and language use in order to maintain in-group acceptance. The questions in the second interview inquired into the participants' language choices in conversation, reading, and studying during university and sought answers to the question: In what ways do students negotiate their amount of English discourse and practice while maintaining belonging in a sizeable Chinese-speaking university community? Language socialization into academic discourse communities therefore guided aspects of this study.

2.1.3 Situated learning in communities of practice.

Situated learning is a form of community learning articulated by Lave and Wenger (1991) who described forms of learning as social actions of learners moving in a trajectory from legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) to full participation in communities of practice (COP). Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice, where apprentices engage in the community to become masters, illustrate a form of learning that is driven by social observation and practice. The authors state that situated learning is one aspect of learning and does not negate or subsume the intended instruction of teaching and schooling. Although BCOS are schools with traditional

intentional instruction, their unique place and role as a foreign school for local students means that they could be considered communities of practice with similar goals of overseas university admission.

Montgomery and McDowell (2009) interviewed and observed the social interactions of international students at a UK university and determined that they formed a community of practice with one of the purposes appearing to be the "reconstruction of social capital that the students had lost during their transition to the UK" (p. 2). This has parallels with the schools in this study, which are three-year programs where 15 year-old Chinese students transition out of their national education system and into a foreign system while still living in their own country. Many students arrive at this school alone and have to construct social and academic capital. The schools could be considered a community of practice with goals as many members are striving for acceptance in a university abroad. Considering the participants' situation as learning in community(ies) of practice and their trajectory from disoriented newcomers to fully participating old-timers is therefore a useful framework for this present study.

2.1.4 Transnationalism

Transnationalism refers to the human and institutional connections and relationships across national borders (Vertovec, 2009). Viewing BCOS and international students as transnationals (Ghosh & Wang, 2003; Huang & Yeoh, 2011) reflects the growth of 21st century flexible citizenship (Fong, 2011; Ong, 1999) in the accumulation of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Ong, 1999; Waters, 2005; 2006; 2008; Young, 2018). Ong (1999) and Waters (2005; 2006; 2008) mostly studied the students and families of Hong Kong and their educational

reasons for pursuing migration in the 1990's to California (Ong, 1999) and Vancouver (Waters, 2006; 2008). The growth of BCOS and other foreign private schools in Mainland China, and the high population of Chinese students in Canadian schools (CBIE, 2019) indicates that this phenomenon is not only in Hong Kong. Fong's (2011) longitudinal study of Chinese students from Dalian who had studied abroad in the 2000's shows that many students desired a better life for themselves, their families, and a hope to develop their country in the pursuit of flexible citizenship, a finding reiterated by Anderson's (2016) study of Chinese transnational PhD students in a Canadian university. The focus of this study is on the perceptions and experiences of Chinese students who had their first transnational experiences while attending BCOS while still in their own country and have just begun their next transnational experience at university. BC offshore schools deliver the BC curriculum in China which is a form of transnational education. Unlike traditional international schools which have been intended for expatriate children accompanying their parents in overseas postings, BC offshore schools transfer a curriculum, teachers, and accreditation to children of other countries who choose it.

2.2 Literature Review

The forthcoming literature review is organized into four sections: Chinese international students in Western universities, Chinese educational migration, internationalization of Canadian universities and schools, and offshore and international schools in China. The four sections of this literature review represent four aspects related to this case study. There have been studies into academic and social adaptations of Chinese international students, especially at universities, but few studies have enquired into how these students consider their experiences in offshore schools.

2.2.1 Chinese international students in Western universities.

This study explores the perspectives and experiences of Chinese international students (CIS) of their Canadian education in both China and Canada. Most existing studies addressing Chinese international students focus on documenting the struggles and challenges these students encounter in higher education and less so in K-12 education. This study aims to explore the under-researched (sub)category of BC offshore school student which, to date, has been overlooked in the extant literature.

Zhang and Zhou (2010) sought to gain insight into perspectives, expectations, and experiences of Chinese international students in their mixed-method study. It enquired into the many academic and social challenges of CIS at their university. One of the academic challenges that participants expressed were the writing and formatting expectations of academic papers. One respondent, who had graduated from an “international school” in China said that she had to “learn everything from the very beginning” and that she had never heard of a paper before

leaving China (Zhang & Zhou, 2010, p. 52). This study contrasts with this study's Chinese students from offshore schools who were able to write research papers. Further studies could investigate the meaning of *international school* in China and differentiate between students based on their educational backgrounds.

A phenomenological study by Wang (2016) into the perspectives of Chinese international students at a Canadian university found that "participants appeared to embrace the Canadian educational system, where creativity and independent thinking are highly encouraged" (Wang, 2016, p. 469). Wang (2016) states that, "participants' particular preference for a student-centered educational model illustrates benefits" (p. 469) of a Canadian university education even though their workload was taxing with the need to learn English and course content simultaneously.

A qualitative study by Heng (2018) counters some of the lingering stereotypes of deficient CIS as reported in Abelman and Kang (2014) and Ruble and Zhang (2013). Heng's research centered on the tenet that "humans… participate in more than one sociocultural context" (Heng, 2018, p. 24). This means that humans can typically adapt themselves to act according to the cultural norms and rules that are expected of them. While Chinese students may have deficiencies in key skills necessary for academic success in Western universities, they have the ability to learn these skills and improvise in their other culture. Heng (2018) concludes that the Chinese students' agency and adaptability is greater than their deficiencies which are not a great barrier to success. Heng's participants not only found learning English challenging, but also had difficulty with logical, critical, and divergent thinking which were skills that they had not had the opportunity to develop in Chinese schools. In addition to the linguistic adaptations, Chinese students had to adjust to unfamiliar pedagogy and unclear classroom expectations. This study

sought to discover if BCOS graduates felt that these possible deficiencies were mitigated by learning in offshore schools in the years prior to their migration to university abroad.

2.2.2 Chinese educational migration.

Some longitudinal qualitative studies of Chinese educational migration have revealed contrasting conclusions about the motivations to study abroad. Research by Waters (2005; 2006; 2008) and Fong (2011) each have a wealth of anecdotes and descriptions about Chinese students who have migrated abroad. Fong (2011) concluded that many of her participants — 256 middle-class public school graduates from Dalian, China — sought education abroad not only for their own benefit, but as a way to repay and serve their homeland of China. These students were all from Chinese public high schools in a mid-sized provincial city which indicates that overseas education is not only for elite families but also for middle-class students from outside major cities. The conclusion that Chinese students get education abroad for their love of their country, however, is not consistent throughout the literature or in the author's experience as a teacher in China.

The transnational lives of Chinese families from Hong Kong and Vancouver were studied and illustrated by Waters (2008) who found that the main purpose of these migrations was to earn degrees from Canadian universities. Waters (2008) drew on Bourdieu's (1986) forms of capital to state that foreign education was part of the accumulation of cultural capital (Waters, 2008) that was desired because of a growth in the number of Hong Kong citizens graduating from local universities. The perceived dilution of a degree from a university in Hong Kong led to some elite families trying to earn degrees from universities abroad. Through interviews, Waters

(2008) found that the Western credential was perceived as stronger and allowed for better job opportunities back home in Hong Kong. These students considered their sojourn abroad as a way to help themselves and their family's status (Waters, 2008); not sentiments of service to the homeland.

Fong (2011) and Waters (2008) both examined Chinese educational migration but found different reasons in each case. The middle-class Dalian students studied abroad not only to support their parents and grandparents, but also to help the development of China (Fong, 2011). The Hong Kong students interviewed by Waters (2008) seemed to have an easier pathway in crossing cultures and jurisdictions compared to the Mainland Chinese students. The middle-class public school students in Dalian and the upper-class students in Hong Kong constitute two different categories of the CIS. The Hong Kong students found it so convenient to attend top Canadian universities and make a home in Vancouver, that Waters (2008) likened the Hong Kong-Vancouver link as a "transnational class" (Waters, 2008, p. 145). In contrast, Fong's (2011) student participants often had trouble getting student visas and acceptance to Canadian, American, or British universities so they often had to migrate to lesser-desired nations like Ireland and Japan. The social, cultural, and political differences between Hong Kong and Mainland China would have certainly contributed to the different experiences.

Waters (2008) and Fong (2011) both gathered data in the early 2000s when offshore schools and other Chinese-foreign collaborations were just becoming established. Waters (2008) included excerpts from her 2003 interview with the Inspector of Independent Schools for the BC Ministry of Education who oversaw the establishment of the pilot BCOS in Dalian, China.[2] This

[2] It is noteworthy that the first Canadian offshore school was in Dalian which is the same provincial level city that Fong (2011) drew participants yet there is no mention of offshore or international high schools in her study at all.

interview revealed the early conceptualization of schools as channels to create "enduring social and economic linkages" (Waters, 2008, p. 63) between Canadians and Chinese which would lead to business ties. Exchange programs with BC school districts with declining enrolment would also help save teacher jobs and bring revenue into the schools which connects with the internationalization of Canadian schools reviewed in the next section.

The above studies document the migration motivations of socially and economically elite (Waters, 2008) and provincial middle-class (Fong, 2011) Chinese students, yet the characteristics of offshore students may constitute a further category. Before reviewing literature about offshore and international schools in China is a discussion of the factors that attract students to Canada and internationalize education.

2.2.3 Internationalization of Canadian universities and schools.

Canadian educational institutions have met the desires of Chinese students by increasing the number of international student places in universities, colleges, and schools. Altbach and Knight (2007) stated that a key motive for universities to internationalize is to earn revenue, and it seems likely this has been a prime motive for Canadian universities as well. This was concluded even in light of Knight's own survey of universities (Knight, 2006 as cited in Altbach & Knight, 2007) which indicated that universities claimed that their reasons to internationalize is to enhance research and to increase cultural understanding. These reasons are not mutually exclusive yet scholars have raised concerns about the slow pace that universities have taken to accommodate students that are culturally and linguistically diverse (Anderson, 2015; Andrade, 2006, Heng, 2018). Anderson (2015) found that declining provincial government funding of

universities since the 1990s has coincided with increased revenues from international student tuition. Much of the increased tuition revenue has come from the significant growth in international students which is more than double the percentage growth of Canadian students (Anderson, 2015). As internationalization has increased, researchers should consider what challenges and opportunities continue to exist.

Internationalization has greatly increased in British Columbia's public schools (Deschambault, 2018; Poole & Fallon, 2015; Waters, 2008) mostly at the high school level but also in elementary schools. Waters (2008) used her interviews from 2003 with the Vancouver School Board about a relatively new initiative to admit fee-paying international students to study in under-capacity schools, thus saving teacher positions and creating revenue that could enhance school facilities and programs. Poole and Fallon (2015) argued that this partial privatization of public school districts has created a fourth tier[3] of schools that are partially privatized. They analysed funding and enrolment in thirty school districts and compared with local demographic data to argue that this privatization of public schools "gives rise to greater stratification of public schools, [and] exacerbates an already tiered education system" (Fallon & Poole, 2015, p. 341). School districts desire the additional tuition fees and have increased marketing to international students to choose BC as a place to study and thus contribute to international education.

This "pull" factor was investigated by Deschambault (2018) who analysed *The BC Jobs Plan's* (Government of BC, 2012) section on international education that framed BC's public education system as a "commodity-like resource" (p. 55), and recruitment of students (and eventually immigrants) from abroad as beneficial to the citizens of the province. In interviews,

[3] The fourth tier comes after fully private schools, partially public funded independent schools, and public schools.

students spoke of frustrations of the language challenges and how barriers existed for students to complete non-credit ESL courses before commencing the high school program (Deschambault, 2018). The experiences of fee-paying Chinese international students in BC schools have a resemblance to the experiences of Chinese students in BCOS courses. These studies of internationalization of Canadian universities and K-12 schools share similarities with the rationale behind BC offshore education. Chinese students may attend BC schools as international students or they may learn the same curriculum from similar BC teachers in at various locations in China. The final forthcoming section brings together the student development, push factors, and pull factors and the literature review closes with a discussion of four studies of offshore schools in China.

2.2.4 Offshore and international schools in China.

The Canadian offshore school situation was analyzed by Schuetze (2008) in the form of a multiple case study. This pioneering study profiled three BC offshore schools and analyzed aspects of the structure and administration of the schools. The author paid particular attention to the conflicting BC and Chinese policies and how these tensions played out in the administration and financing of the schools. Chinese law states that the principal must be a Chinese national so in effect each BC principal is *de lege* a deputy principal within the Chinese principal's school, although the BC principal has autonomous control over the BC school (Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017). Schuetze (2008) also described high teacher turnover, English levels of students, and challenges of curriculum values in crossing cultures.

Cosco's (2011) report profiled all types of Canadian offshore schools in Asia. It concluded that Canada should be more supportive and engaged in its provincial curricula being delivered abroad. This report asked for Canada to appreciate the hard work of Canadian teachers and administrators, as well as the non-Canadian students, who are endeavouring to enhance Canadian values and culture worldwide. This report also emphasized how provincial ministries of education are involved in offshore education and that the Canadian federal government has limited involvement.

Another study of Canadian offshore schools completed by Wang (2017) emphasized some conflicts between Chinese and Canadian aims. The central concern is that both the Chinese national government and each Canadian province make policies that align with their own self-interest. Neither side is integrally invested in this transnational activity to benefit the other. While coexistence in this situation is possible, it has not always played out flawlessly (Wang, 2017). Some of the challenges of offshore education are quality assurance, governance, and cultural differences. Some of the benefits include the creation of jobs, cultural exchanges, and economic activities as well as localizing international education and making it more accessible for students unable to move abroad. Both Schuetze (2008) and Wang (2017) have succeeded in making sense of these schools using document analysis but students' perceptions are overlooked. These are valid studies into the broad scope of offshore schools in China but they lack the perspective of the individuals – students and teachers – who have been most impacted by these schools.

To help understand how offshore schools were able to become embedded in the Chinese education system, publications by Liu and Dunne (2009), Young (2018), and Liu (2018) provide insight but also further questions. A case study of three schools in one Chinese city by Liu and

Dunne (2009) illustrated the difficulties that schools encounter when attempting to implement educational reforms while all stakeholders are driven to succeed on high stakes examinations and school rankings. In the 1990s, Chinese schools were experimenting with non-state investments including recruiting out-of-neighbourhood students for key schools as well as experimental classes with better teachers for high achievers. Liu and Dunne (2009) found that a high-achieving key school became burdened with overcrowding and intense competition while the lower tiered schools tried to compensate by extending class hours and reducing non-academic courses. The proposed educational reforms that the national government implemented to try to steer schools toward progressive and inquiry-based learning could not be implemented while all stakeholders strove for high exam scores. The marketization of the schools exacerbated the competition between students and schools so that a broadening of education beyond the scope of standardized exams became unfeasible (Liu & Dunne, 2009). This gridlock in reform and the openness to privatization may have been the window that foreign offshore schools and programs needed to become embedded in Chinese schools. The next two studies by Young (2018) and Liu (2018) both illustrate the complex market and the undefined category of Chinese students and families who choose these alternative pathways.

Recent studies by Young (2018) and Liu (2018) of new types of international schools provide differing perspectives of the place of offshore or Chinese-foreign collaborative schools. Young (2018) viewed the offshore school in her case study as a second opportunity for students to get some education after failure to achieve a good result on the *zhongkao* — the high school entrance exam. Liu (2018) investigated Chinese public high schools that had American testing

courses integrated into the curriculum and determined that these "cultural strategies entrench privilege" (p. 204).

Young (2018) investigated student perspectives in a Beijing "international school" which is an offshore school with a Canadian provincial curriculum. By using a critical sociological lens, Young (2018) suggests that this is a "new type" of international school that caters to the newly rich entrepreneurial class in China. Students come from rich families with economic capital but Young (2018) found through surveys and interviews that their parents had lower education attainment than other international student families. Since many of the students were migrants from other provinces to the capital city, there were hurdles to high school and university entry. Young (2018) found that most students were not aiming for an elite education abroad, but had failed or opted out of the *zhongkao* and thus enrolled in the offshore school as backup. Although there were some hard-working students, a great number chose the Canadian school for a more relaxed atmosphere and less pressure. The findings in Young's (2018) paper have similarities to my experience as a BCOS teacher and link with findings in this case study.

BC offshore schools are regulated under a policy known as The China-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) which allow for public and private schools to supplement a portion of the Chinese curriculum with English-medium courses (Wang, 2017). Other schools in China supplement their schools with programs such as Advanced Placement (AP) offered by the College Board and the Global Assessment Certificate (GAC). Liu (2018) characterized CFCRS within a neoliberal context which she calls for us to understand as a "global assemblage — a complex ensemble of global and situated elements" (Liu, 2018, p. 204). In this multi-sited ethnography of neoliberal policy flows, Liu (2018) questions how China's

traditional merit-based education system can allow wealthy students to gain access to courses that lead to “elite” American universities.

Liu (2018) explored schools that are more integrated with their partner Chinese school than most BC offshore schools. Liu studied a key Chinese public school that had made arrangements with a Chinese education company to integrate AP and GAC courses to be the electives in the school’s Chinese curriculum. Unlike the more autonomous BC offshore schools, Liu’s examples are different in that the Chinese school and company have more negotiated power over the AP courses whereas the BC program is a full curriculum. Liu (2018) characterized the students who attended this school as having *zhongkao* scores that were “not high enough for entrance to elite public high schools” (p. 204). This is represented as inequality because it gives an advantage to students with financial means but who had not met the academic standards (Liu, 2018). While Liu criticized CFCRS for exacerbating inequality in China, there is no critique in this work of the appropriateness of the *zhongkao* for determining a child’s future. What Liu (2018) may see as a meritocracy that is being sullied by undeserving students buying entrance to an international education and subsequently “the world’s elite universities” (p. 211), Young (2018) considers to be a salvation for students who face sociocultural barriers to academic success and who use their economic capital to get an education leading to “admission to mid- or low-tier universities or two-year colleges” (p. 172). Whether CFCRS benefit only to the social elite and if they mitigate or exacerbate inequality remains unknown.

Both Liu (2018) and Young (2018) have researched offshore schools/programs but the discrepancies in how the students are characterized, whether they have social capital in addition to economic capital, shows that research gaps should be addressed. Liu’s (2018) framing of the

phenomenon risks exasperating the stigma associated with students who opt out of the meritocratic entrance exams while Young (2018) provides evidence that many offshore students are not elite and that societal and educational barriers such as the household registration system and non-recognition of learning disabilities have directed them toward offshore education and subsequently abroad.

2.2.5 Conclusion.

This review of existing literature about Chinese international students in Western universities (Chinese motivations for migration, internationalization of Canadian universities and schools, and offshore and international schools in China), has revealed missing pieces in the research which have only recently been addressed by Liu (2018) and Young (2018). These initial studies of Chinese-foreign collaborations have added value to the literature; yet, the divergent characterizations of the students as either elites or non-elites in these studies raise further questions. In addition, although Wang's (2017) analysis of offshore school policies provides a substantial base of knowledge, the views of students and teachers require attention in future studies.

Chapter 3: Methodology, Methods, Positionality, and Analysis

3.1 Case Study

The research discussed in this thesis reports on a qualitative case study of the perspectives and experiences of five female first-year Chinese international students who have graduated from BC offshore schools in China. First-year students were chosen because their recollection of high school would be most immediate and the first interview would be on the cusp of a university career. BCOS graduates in their upper years of university were excluded as participants even though they could also provide descriptions of how their BCOS prepared them (or not) for university. Including various students in different years of education would have expanded the case beyond the feasible focus on newcomers. The researcher explored the perspectives of students at this moment between high school and university and gained insights into their first impressions of university while in the transitional moment of life.

Case study is a research methodology that deeply and thoroughly analyzes a person, community, or phenomenon, and their experiences over a period of time (Yin, 2014). Case studies can answer "how" and "why" questions and this methodology is useful "when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 2014, p. 1). Duff (2008) notes that case studies of individuals have been a very important component of applied linguistics research into second language acquisition. Initially most case studies in this field involved linguistic and cognitive processes, but relatively recently a greater sociocultural orientation is more explicitly emphasized (Duff, 2008; Lantoff, 2000). The focus of this case study is on the sociocultural

aspects of education as part of preparation for university abroad but linguistic elements were also researched.

While quantitative studies can produce results that are potentially generalizable across other BCOS students and contexts, a goal of this qualitative case study is to produce "thicker" and "richer" findings that educators find applicable to their own schools or systems. This case study expects readers to use their own "judgement […] to inform a problem of practice in other settings" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2015, p. 360). Educators may find resonance with some student perspectives and experiences and then make their own interpretations, perhaps leading to adjustments of practice or further research. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2015) explain that "a thick description of the participants and contexts that comprise the case" (p. 361) can help readers determine if the case is applicable to their own situations. It is also an exploratory case study (Yin, 2014) since BCOS student perspectives have yet to be rigorously explored. The research questions seek to be explanatory (Yin, 2014) but they serve as guiding questions that may not yield a full explanation of "how" but should begin to explore "in what ways" the students are prepared from the participants' perspective.

This is an exploratory study of the case of student perspectives of their BCOS and university education. With five female participants, there are multiple units embedded within the bounded case. Their age, gender, nationality, high school curriculum, and choice of university are all similar but they differ in personality, school structure, academic achievement, and university major. This case illustrates student perspectives and provides a thorough "documentation and exploration of the phenomenon" (Duff, 2014, p. 237). Studying a case with multiple participants is preferable in the context of this study because similar perspectives and experiences were found

among the different participants that have helped aid in analysis and enhanced trustworthiness. A cross-case analysis has revealed some similar participant experiences but readers should make their own judgements of applicability as they mesh this research with their own experiences (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2015, p. 361). Case studies seek to "gain insight and understanding" yet recognize that there is "limited transferability" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550) and generalizability about these students' perspectives to other populations. Contrasting results may provide avenues for further research into the contrasting phenomena (Yin, 2014). For example, divergences of participants' perceptions or experiences could provide a rationale for a more focused investigation.

Since there are 37 BCOS in China of varying structures and sizes (Government of British Columbia, 2019a), it is beneficial to collect the perspectives and experiences of graduates from a variety of schools. Although there is variance among the schools, the academic work in each school complies with the same BC domestic high school curriculum from grades 10 to 12. Student perspectives (from interviews and student-produced written reflections) have been triangulated with an examination of BC Ministry of Education inspection reports some of which are published online (Government of British Columbia, 2019a) after annual inspections. I have also examined BC curriculum documents and grade 12 provincial exams which all students wrote in order to graduate[4] to get a general sense of what they were learning.

[4] In 2017, BC began phasing in a new redesigned curriculum which included a reduction in standardized provincial exams and more flexibility for schools and teachers. All participants in this study graduated in June 2018 therefore studied the old curriculum and wrote the English 12 provincial exam.

3.2 Methods of Data Collection

Data has been collected from three sources: semi-structured interviews, journal responses, and relevant documents in order to write a thick description of their perspectives of high school and university. The following is an explanation of each source and reasons for using these methods of research.

Two sets of semi-structured interviews with each of the five participants constitute the principal data source in this study. The first audio-recorded, individual interviews were completed in September 2018, the first month of the semester. After courses were completed and the participants had their winter holiday, we met again for a second interview in January 2019. The two interviews were designed to elicit data from participants' recollections of high school, first impressions of university, and reflections on the completed semester. Framing the interviews around the beginning and the end of the semester provides an opportunity to listen to the participants at two key stages of their initial university experience. The first interviews took place while they were just through their first week of classes, settling in to their new residences, and becoming accustomed to a new lifestyle in a new country. The second interviews took place after the participants had fully experienced their first courses, including final exams, and issuance of grades. January was the best time to hold the final interviews because all the participants left on the winter holiday and I also asked questions about the first weeks of their second semester courses.

Semi-structured interviews can be rich sources of data for case studies because the conversations can produce detailed and contextualized descriptions of perspectives and experiences (Weiss, 1994) which are the key elements in the case. Duff (2008) states that case

study interviews in applied linguistics are a method to collect "insights and perspectives of research participants … [with] a content or thematic analysis" (p. 133). These semi-structured interviews had a series of open-ended base questions with follow-up questions and topics that were more spontaneous so that the participant could say what they wanted about their educational experiences.

The second source of data are student-written journal responses at regular stages through the data collection period. Three of the five participants regularly generated responses. The researcher facilitated these by sending emails twice a month during the semester with a choice of two questions or prompts about studying and living at university. These provided a little more context to their perspectives and some expansion on previously discussed themes. The third source of data is a collection of relevant educational documents from the participants' university courses and publicly available BC curriculum documents, exams, rubrics, and BCOS inspection reports. The use of these sources aided in triangulating the data from the interviews.

3.3 Positionality

My positionality in this research is that of a former BC offshore school teacher who had taught the type of students that would become participants thus having both insider and outsider characteristics. Teachers are part of the school community and share experiences and knowledge with the students, although from a different position than the students. Both the researcher and participants have crossed cultural boundaries and have operated in bicultural institutions. I could regard the struggles and triumphs of the participants with empathy as I was once a person who had left my country to live in theirs. Although our circumstances were very different — I went to

teach and they are coming to learn — the act of moving to a very different country for a professional purpose may have built rapport and innate trust between interviewer and interviewee. In the recruitment and interviews, I was able to use language, examples, and anecdotes that participants understood and we found commonalities in our experiences. This may have made participants comfortable and talkative.

There may also be drawbacks for conducting research into a case that is close to the researcher's professional past whose key assumption is that learning in the BC curriculum offshore can help students have successful experiences in the university of their choice. Students who have attended BC offshore schools have had exposure to the Canadian curriculum taught by certified BC teachers in a cross-cultural environment. Successful and engaged students would have not only learned English, but they would have had a chance to learn about Canadian culture, society, history, politics, science, and literature. This requires the researcher to strive for the continued success of offshore education and fully recognize that positionality influences the research. Nonetheless, by bracketing these assumptions, asking appropriate questions, and analysing the data inductively can mitigate the researcher's subjectivities.

Another concern regarding positionality is the likelihood of being viewed as a BC teacher from the participants' standpoints. Even though this study was the first time we met, and I have become a researcher, interviewer, and student (like themselves) in another institution and another country, there may still be a lingering perception of teacher-student relationship throughout the process. Such a relationship intensifies the power-over position that many qualitative researchers often have to consider. During the study, I explicated that I was a former teacher who is not associated with their former school and clearly indicated that their identities and words were

confidential. Beyond the teacher-student relationship, Shamin and Qureshi (2013) and Vanner (2015) warn that there are also potential power inequalities when a Western (white) researcher is involved with racialized participants or cultures that once suffered from colonial practices. A Western researcher/educator's awareness of positionality should be fully considered in the design and enactment of the study, interacted with the participants, interpreted their data, and represented their voices. I strived to do this in and authentic manner.

3.4 The Use of English: Limits and Considerations

All communication, including recruitment, the consent form, the interviews, the journal responses, and member checking have been conducted in English. It is important to discuss this aspect in regards to ethics, communication, and representation. The reason for using English is because the researcher is monolingual and the participants are proficient in English, but all speak Mandarin as their first and dominant language. Some previous studies of Chinese international students have used a language of the participants' choice (which is usually Mandarin), because they were conducted by bilingual researchers who had the capacity to use both English and a Chinese language during data collection and analysis (Fong, 2011; Gu, 2005; Heng, 2018; Huang & Yeoh, 2011; Li, 2011; Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Such bilingual researchers in these studies may have been able to establish a closer rapport and to ask more nuanced questions than a non-Chinese-speaking person like myself. Alternatively, a Chinese participant may be more open with a foreign researcher and feel safer and more comfortable to criticize Chinese culture, government, or educational system. Other researchers (Anderson, 2019; Deschambault, 2018; Waters, 2008) have been able to recruit Chinese participants for English interviews. Young

(2018) hired Chinese research assistants to conduct interviews while she supervised. Young's felt that since some questions asked about attitudes toward foreigners, her "whiteness would potentially bias responses" (p. 176).

The language of a study can have an impact on participant recruitment, interview depth, analysis, and interpretation of data. Conducting such interviews in the participants' first language has the advantage of fluent responses, more precise vocabulary, and possibly higher participant numbers. The major disadvantage is the need to adequately translate the interviews to English for analysis and publication. Further issues, as explored by Li (2011), show that researchers should consider whether to transcribe and translate concurrently or whether to transcribe into Chinese and then translate the text. In addition, the researcher would also have to decide whether to analyze and disseminate the data in Chinese, English, or both. These issues are avoided if the participants communicate their perspectives in English.

Even though Chinese students in English-medium schools have some English proficiency, there are limitations to only using English in this study. My recruitment of participants was lower than desired and it is possible that this may have been because the posters stated that English would be used throughout the study. This may have only attracted participants who were more willing and comfortable conversing in English. Some potential participants may have been deterred when realizing that the upcoming interviews and journals would be in English. However, some potential participants may have been attracted to an English interview. This may have made the participant pool skew toward higher achieving and more extroverted students with more confidence in their oral English therefore narrowing the bounds of the case by possibly restricting it to higher-achieving students. Some candidates may have felt that the

interviews would have been extra work and may have found an extensive English conversation tiring while other may have taken advantage of having more chances to practice English. While these interviews generated worthwhile data, this study may have neglected more introverted students with lower academic success. All participants were able to express their perspectives and experiences functionally and proficiently in the interviews. Although there were some grammatical errors and unorthodox word choice, this usually did not interfere with understanding the meaning. The participants' original words and sentences have been mostly preserved in the excerpts in the following chapters. Some excerpts have been slightly edited for clarity and ease of reading.

The use of English reflects the researcher's positionality and is part of the co-construction of knowledge. Some of the previous Chinese-medium interviews have a theme and tone of complaining about the hardships of international students (Heng, 2017; Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Perhaps because those interviewers are Chinese or of Chinese descent, the participants may have divulged more critical views than positive views. Overall, participants spoke positively about their BCOS experience and BC teachers, yet one cannot help but consider that they may have wanted to praise the BCOS which I cannot help but represent even in my researcher role.

3.5 Recruitment of Participants

My teacher positionality and background was helpful in recruitment but I was mindful to minimize any power-over relationship and expose the confidentiality of participants. I was a teacher for six years in two different BC offshore schools with both teacher and student acquaintances who could help with recruitment. These professional connections were a possible

recruitment avenue but this had to be approved from the research ethics board and I had to devise a way to advertise and recruit without a teacher-student power relationship interfering with the process. Instead, recruitment occurred at the beginning of the Fall university semester when the new students arrived on campus which provided the best participant anonymity. For this reason, descriptions of schools were purposely vague so it would be difficult for people to identify which three of the thirty-seven BCOS were represented in this study.

The study was approved by the university's research ethics board at the end of July 2018. In late August, recruitment posters were put up (Appendix A) around campus a few days before students were scheduled to arrive. In addition, I posted the digital version on social media and the university's international services Facebook page. Emails to organizations and clubs within the university that helped disseminate the study call-out. I also volunteered to help with international student orientation and told some upper-year Chinese students, who were also volunteering, about this project. They offered to help recruit through WeChat and Weibo groups that new students may already have joined in China. These are large group chats and message boards of Chinese students which are usually used to post notices and advertisements. Many students are in some of these groups; however newly-arrived students may not have joined yet. The posters had a WeChat QR (quick response) code and every potential participant contacted me through this Chinese chatting and social media application. This is one of the most popular apps in China and is very common among the Chinese diaspora (Zhang, 2018). It is primarily used for text messages but also used for social media and a variety of other services. It has stronger privacy controls compared to Facebook and Instagram, so that the researcher can be a contact with someone but we cannot see each others' lists of contacts. Although group chats are

common on WeChat, and people posted the recruitment poster in several groups, I did not congregate the participants into a group; only maintaining one-to-one texting conversations with each participant and potential participant as if it was a phone number. It is likely that the use of WeChat strongly increased participant interest in this research project because it may have helped acquire more of an insider status among the participants and it is convenient for them. When arriving in Canada, seeing that a Canadian researcher is using a Chinese application for communication may make the participants more comfortable and at ease in the study. In addition, the QR code on the poster makes accessing the study much more accessible than taking a photo of a URL or email address that can get lost or forgotten. This was the primary communication tool used with participants. Participants were compensated for their time and investment with a $50 university bookstore gift card following the second interview.

3.6 Participant Selection

About fifteen people who saw the posters made contact requests on WeChat during the first week of classes. Only five were deemed suitable candidates for participation within the boundaries of the case study. Upon receiving new contact requests, I introduced myself to the candidate and then asked them if they went to a BCOS in China and if they were in their first year at the university. Through this process, people who were graduates of various other foreign curriculum schools in China were excluded. Before recruitment, participants from offshore schools of other Canadian provinces or other international type schools or programs were considered. Including these schools would have expanded the case and since it is more difficult to assess the quality and structure of non-BCOS in China, only these candidates were only

retained for backup. This study planned to use publicly available documents such as BC offshore school policies, inspection reports, provincial exams, and curriculum guidelines to triangulate participant perspectives. This researcher was not familiar with non-BC offshore schools, but I did know the BC curriculum and was fairly certain that each BCOS abided by the requirements of the provincial government inspectors.

By early September, five female BCOS graduates who had read the informed consent form (Appendix B) and met with the researcher individually at the university were prepared to join the interviews. Some second, third, and fourth year students had made contact and including these perspectives could be helpful for an expanded study; in the end, the focus would only be the perspectives and experiences of first-year students who had graduated from BCOS. The decision to have a bounded case of five BCOS females was better than the possibly of five BCOS females with only one or two males of different educational circumstances; males were excluded and the case study focused on female first-year BCOS graduates. Although a male-female balance consistent with the university population would have been preferable, the study had to be designed with the participants who volunteered.

3.7 Data Collection: First Set of Interviews

Participants were sent the consent form and we scheduled a pre-interview meeting at the university where they signed the consent form and we arranged some possible times for meetings. The interviews were held in group study rooms in the library because these were quiet, neutral spaces for an audio-recorded interview. These semi-structured interviews all contained some of the same core questions with the option of follow up questions or prompts as

appropriate. A list of key questions are in Appendix C. These are some root questions, but with each participant, the responses soon veered into topics that the participant wanted to talk about. The semi-structured format welcomes this and the interviewer practiced some customized replication (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) to eventually return to the root questions so that there is commonality among participant interviews.

3.8 Journal Responses and Document Gathering

The collection of data through five journal responses and a request for relevant documents was written in the consent form and were discussed at the end of the first interview. Each participant received a paper with the dates of the journal responses spaced two weeks apart during the semester (see Appendix A). Participants were shown examples of documents that should be shared with the researcher. Most participants said that they had discarded all of their grade 12 notes and handouts — paper and digital — and they would not be able to find them. They also no longer had access to their school's online grade-books and Moodle. They were willing to send anything they could gather and could send documents from their first-year courses.

Four participants responded to the early journal prompts (see Appendix D) and three responded to the latter prompts. When Zhao was contacted in November, she said that she returned to China for health reasons but would be back in university for the next semester in January. She was offered the opportunity to withdraw but she said that she was willing to participate in the second interview. Her situation could have limited the breadth of the case but

we held her second interview in the fourth week of the second semester so that she could have drawn from more university experiences.

3.9 Data Analysis

The participants' spoken and written words were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, 2012). Thematic analysis is a six-step systematic process of identifying themes or patterns within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes were applied to important, salient, and/or recurring themes in the ten interview transcripts and eleven journal submissions in a repetitive and recursive process. Although guided by research questions and the researcher's understanding of BCOS education, data was coded and analysed inductively so that the participants' perspectives and experiences would be described and explored in the thesis. A theme, generated inductively through coding, in these data sources "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Through the steps of the coding process, I began to contemplate the themes that were in the data. Initially, participant profiles were produced by analysing each individual transcript and my experiences with them in and around the interviews. Then I considered themes that seemed to both connect and diverge the different participant experiences.

The analysis process began with the first interview in September. I began transcribing the recordings (Appendix E) a few days after the fifth interview but first listened to recordings of each full interview to assist in overall recollections and impressions. Then I transcribed each interview myself and listened to each one a second time and corrected any errors or made

adjustments. Before coding, I read all the transcripts to identify any salient themes and patterns that were noteworthy and wrote these in brief memos. This began with open coding (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 250) by setting the research questions and my own assumptions aside and assigned codes to data items and text segments that seemed forceful, repetitive, or otherwise germane to my research topic. Paper transcripts with notes and colored highlighters were coded first, followed by written memos, reflections, and prepared questions for the second interview. Since qualitative research is recursive, I coded the interviews again with a popular software program. The second interview followed the same process.

3.10 Second Set of Interviews

The primary goal of the second interview was to collect data about the participants' experiences in their first semester at university. Since the research question asked if and how their BCOS prepared them for university, experiences from their first semester were vital. This interview had questions about academic preparation and also some questions about socialization into university. Focal areas were language choices, lecture listening, interactions with other students, and academic writing in English. All interview excerpts cited in-text do not have explicit citations to help with "flow" but block quotes are cited with the time in the interview and the date. Journal responses are cited to differentiate from interview excerpts.

3.11 Conclusion

This methodology chapter described and discussed a range of processes and issues related to the design of this study. It began with an overview of the case study methodology, appropriate

for deeply studying an applied linguistics phenomenon (Duff, 2008). The next section outlined data sources: semi-structured interviews with participants, journal responses, and documents about BCOS and the students' university courses. The section about researcher positionality described how it informed the study, thus necessitating my need to regularly and critically reflect on the research process. Part of this positionality is the researcher's need to only use English in this study which requires participants to express their perspectives and experiences in their second language. After the selection of five female volunteers that fit the bounds of the case was a description of the interview process and the experience collecting written data in the form of journal submissions produced by the participants. The final section explained why and how data was analysed inductively through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis neared its end in March 2019 but additional analysis continued through writing and refining the findings chapters, which are now discussed in the following sections.

Chapter 4: Findings

Constructing BCOS Student Perspectives of their High School Experiences

This chapter aims to construct the (sub)category of *BCOS student* as represented by their own experiences. Constructing this category through their experiences is crucial in understanding the ways that their BCOS education prepared the participants for university. This category could exist because BCOS students have a different experience than Chinese students who went to Chinese public schools, international schools, or in K-12 schools in Canada. These findings are organized into three macro-themes: self, school, and peers. Themes in the first section are the participants' commencement of BC offshore school and developments from grades 10 to 12. The second section is about school and the participants' impressions of teachers, assessments, and curriculum. The third section is based around peers which includes the choice of using English or Chinese and interactions with classmates. Although the sections of self, school, and peers aim to divide their perspectives into macro-themes, there are connections so that each section has some crossover. The data in this chapter primarily comes from the first interviews, journals, and relevant documents. All participants are represented in each section; however, there is a focus on two or three rich and salient descriptions in each section. Quotations in the body of the paragraphs represent the participants' spoken words and longer excerpts are in block quotations sometimes with interviewer questions in order to contextualize the source of the data.

4.1 Self: Participants Commencing BC Offshore Schools

All of the participants attended Chinese public schools (CPS) up until about grade 9 which is the final year of compulsory public schooling (Liu, 2018; OECD, 2016). This is the year that all students take a major exam, the *zhongkao*, which determines high school admissions. A good score on this exam greatly helps a student's admission to a better high school (Liu, 2018; Young, 2018). *Zhongkao* preparation coincides with the year that offshore schools are allowed to admit students and the British Columbia high school program commences (Schuetze, 2008). I asked the participants about commencing their BCOS and the transition to a type new school. Participants sometimes compared their BCOS with their own Chinese public K-9 schools or Chinese education in general. Therefore, participants' commencement of BCOS is often portrayed as transition from one system to another.

Duan and Fei started BCOS-3 in grade 10 in the same large Chinese school. While the majority of students in this school were using the main CPS curriculum, Duan and Fei began the BC curriculum in a segregated section of this school. At BCOS-2, Chan began in a grade 9 feeder program for students who had already intended to commence the BC program in grade 10 and therefore had no reason to take the *zhongkao*. This program had foundational English and content courses to prepare students for grade 10 BC courses. These grade 9 courses did not count for credits and were optional since some other students stayed in Chinese school until the end of grade 9. Although BC offshore programs officially begin with grade 10 courses, many students opt to learn some English foundations early if the families are certain about the BCOS pathway. This junior program was in a small section of BCOS-2. Zhao also attended a similar feeder school on the BCOS-1 campus that went from grades 7 to 9. She described it as "just like the

public [Chinese] school I think" with one out of seven classes (usually Science or Art) taught by a Canadian teacher. Bai started BCOS-1 in grade 10 after moving to the boarding school from another part of China.

The remainder of this section focuses on the Chan and Bai's transition to their offshore schools. When asked why she went to BCOS-2, Chan said that it was primarily a parental decision. Chan reported that her parents noticed that she looked "very tired in [her] Chinese school" and they knew another parent who had a child in BCOS-2. Her parents decided to enrol Chan in the school so that she could "be happy and do whatever [she] want[ed]." Chan expressed that in grade 10 she had never considered going abroad for university but was happy and relieved to be finished with Chinese school. As she reflected upon her grade 10 self during our interview, she said that all of her new classmates came to BCOS to study but she "just tried her best to have fun" after the stresses of Chinese schools.

After a few months of grade 10 at her BCOS, Chan realized that all of her roommates and other friends had dropped their Chinese courses which were scheduled in the evenings. She found that Chinese courses had become a negligible part of her education. This is exemplified when she said, "I can't remember anything from [Chinese courses]" in the first interview, meaning that she has little recollection of the classes or the teachers, except that they were taking up what she perceived to be her valuable time in the afternoons and evenings. This is when she began negotiating with her parents for permission to cancel the Chinese program and focus on BC courses. This change is like the removal of a safety net that exists for students who cannot succeed in BC courses. While Chan said that her parents chose this school for her happiness and well-being, she explained that they were hesitant to fully remove her from the Chinese system.

When asked if her parents felt there were any risks involved in transferring to a BCOS, Chan said:

> Chan: My parents think that international high school like maybe be too, like it is dangerous because, like students in those high schools, they don't know how to manage their time, and they always, like playing and do things they like. Not studying, so they are afraid I was gonna be really bad, and not studying just play all the time. (Excerpt 4.1 - First Interview, 7:32, Sept. 14, 2018)

Chan's parents' perceptions may be part of a general perception in China that students who are lazy and want to escape the rigorous Chinese program can fall back onto an international curriculum provided they can pay for it (Anderson, 2019; Liu, 2018; Young, 2018). When asked if that impression turned out to be true Chan replied, "Not really, but at first, I was really scared because the first day at [BCOS], like everyone is, like really mature and have their hair dyed or something. And I was pretty scared and but actually it is not that." Chan remembered the moment of transitioning to an offshore school as scary because of the maturity level and style of the students and this is similar to the trepidation that she described in her first semester of university with Canadian classmates which will be described in the next chapter.

Chan's reflections on her grade 10 self in this interview often centered on her relaxed and relieved attitude. She admitted that, "I didn't put much effort into my studies in my grade 10. I think I finally escaped from my z*hongkao* so I need to have fun! I just don't care much about my study." A few times in this interview she likens her first year of BCOS-2 as a time to relax after escaping the grueling exams at the end of grade 9. When asked if that was a general feeling for many students in the school, Chan said, "No, I don't think so. They don't want to escape

z*hongkao*, they come here to really study, really want to go abroad. And so they put an effort into their homework and study. And I just try my best to having fun." This attitude toward education dissipated in grade 11 because of the influence of friends and thus demonstrating Chan's socialization into more ideal student behaviours, as exemplified in the following excerpt:

> Chan: Like in my grade 10, I think everything was pretty easy and I don't want to worry about many things. But when I, like enter grade 11, like the second semester, and everyone around me was like, "Oh what university did you apply to?" and "What do you think about this school?" and I have no idea what they are talking about. I never thought about what like university I should be go to in my future. And what is my plan? And I don't know what is my GPA. I don't, I just don't know. And after that I start thinking about this question. And I think I need to work hard. And yeah apply to university. (Excerpt 4.2 - First Interview, 18:40, Sept. 14, 2018)

Chan explained that she improved her academic performance because she modelled attributes that she saw in her peers. In this case, she socialized into a school culture that was driven by overseas university admissions. After enjoying the increased freedom of opting-out of the *zhongkao*, Chan became one of the higher-achieving students. Young (2018) also described her case school as having a mix of higher and lesser achieving students in an atmosphere more relaxed than Chinese schools.

Bai described her early days at BCOS-1 as a "sudden" and "confused" change in response to interview questions about adapting to a Canadian school. She moved from another city in China to BCOS-1 because her father got a job in a city nearby. They made the decision to go to this school (and subsequently abroad) "very suddenly" and she was confused and disoriented in her first few days in the new school. There were a mix of students from many parts of China and some had already gone to "international schools" for their elementary or middle

school years. Bai said that these students, as well as teachers, helped her adapt to the variety of projects that are assigned in BC courses. Probing about the exact nature of her friends' "international schools" did not lead to clarification, but it may mean a school with some foreign teacher classes or schools in other countries. In the following excerpt, Bai reflects on her early confusion at BCOS and the help she received from others:

Ian: So what was the hardest change to adapt to [your] school?
Bai: Language is the most difficult one, and (.) ah like (.) I went to [BCOS] for study, it was a very suddenly— sudden decision. I didn't prepare well. So when I like, first day in [BCOS] after my parents leave, I just, I lost my sleep, so confused like. I don't know what I should do in the future and I don't know why, suddenly in need to go abroad for my university so the problem like this is happen a lot and also like, umm do the presentation. I even don't know what's the word presentation mean.
Ian: How did you learn that? Do a presentation. Who helped you?
Bai: Teacher? We have this kind of project assignment (.) and learn from others like other student, they maybe like, when they were young they study in this kind of international school from they're little, so they taught me. Also teacher taught me how to do it. Learn like copy. (Excerpt 4.3 - First Interview, 17:34, Sept. 14, 2018)

Bai first states that language (learning/using English) was the hardest change but explains how this was combined with confusion, loss of sleep, and uncertainty about where she would go in the future. By calling it a "sudden decision" she places herself in a deficit position behind "other students" who had gone to other "international schools" when they were young and were therefore better prepared to not only learn in English but also know about presentation projects. She spoke of how Chinese public school students do not do presentations in both interviews. Asking about differences between grade 10 and 12 earlier in the interview, Bai described how her initial disorientation eventually became "smooth" by grade 12:

Ian: So what was it like in grade 10 compared to grade 12? Any differences?

Bai: Lots of differences. Like grade 10 I even cannot understand what— I couldn't understand what the teacher was saying in class, and I don't know how to do like presentation and do poster like (.) I never learned it before in public school. But when we were in grade 11 we faced like course choice… we should have some elective course but I don't know how to do it. But in grade 12 like, so much seems like getting smooth. (Excerpt 4.4 - 6:20, First Interview, Sept. 14, 2018)

The above excerpt also illustrated her description of her inability to choose elective courses in grade 11 which is a feature of Canadian schooling in high school and post-secondary education. It is likely that BCOS-1 gave students the opportunity to choose electives for their own agency and also to prepare for choosing courses after high school. I then asked if grade 10 or 12 was harder. She separated the academic work, which was difficult in grade 12, with the "confusion" that made grade 10 difficult.

Bai: For grade 12, like the course is hard. The knowledge we learned is getting much harder, but grade 10 I was very confused about like everything in school, like I don't know the culture, I don't know how to, like, how to study like. Like what should I do? Like. I was very, like confused about like future or something. But in grade 12 it's like, the hardest thing is only the course, right. They are different. (Excerpt 4.5 - First Interview, 7:12, Sept. 14, 2018)

The above excerpt was early in the interview when she spoke of how she was confused and uncertain of her role as a grade 10 student in a foreign curriculum. She also hints that her confusion extended beyond school by saying "confused about like future or something" which may mean that she was unsure why she was suddenly in a BCOS.

Near the end of the first interview we returned to this theme and she expressed a more critical reflection of the overall workload in her three years at this school. In what follows, Bai

explains that the school/teachers ("they") should give more work in grade 10 because the work in grade 12 is too hard. In essence, she would have preferred a balance that "equally separate our work […] in the three grades" and "force us to read more English book" which presumes that she would have felt better prepared for grade 12 and this university.

> Bai: Yeah I think English is the most biggest [difficult] part. They should like, sometimes grade 10 is too easy for students. In grade 10, I didn't learn much. I think, like they should give us more work, like force us to read more English book, or read the book, or like train us writing skills since grade 10. Because grade 12, they, we are, we learn a lot and it's hard. But grade 10, I think they should equally, separate our work, our trainings equally in the three grades. But grade 10 is too easier and I didn't learn a lot. (Excerpt 4.6 - First Interview, 50:47, Sept. 14, 2018)

In the above excerpt, she says "that grade 10 is too easier" and in hindsight would have preferred a heavier workload but a few minutes later upon reflection of her first year at BCOS-1 she described how she read an English novel but "can't understand" it.

> Ian: So the grade 10 courses, you found easy but you didn't understand English well?
> Bai: I mean like ah, I think especially Math class, and Science class, it's very easy. It (.) even though it's English, but it's also like easy for, I don't know, for us. English class is hard! But, I remember when I was in grade 10, they, we we learned some, we learned like novel. I can't understand the novel. But like, I can't understand what's the novel the teacher ask us to read. But umm, it's a huge gap between that. Even though I can't understand but I didn't think I learned a lot. I don't know how to explain it, I assess my ability so I didn't learn a lot from grade 10's English. (Excerpt 4.7 - First Interview, 53:04, Sept. 14, 2018)

Bai gave mixed messages about the ease and difficulty of grade 10. The assigned novel was far above her current reading level and not comprehensible to her. This typically renders the material useless for second language acquisition and learning (Krashen, 1981). BCOS usually

educate through content and language integrated learning (CLIL) where subject content and the target language are taught simultaneously (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). This seemed to have worked for Bai's Science and Math classes where she said that the grade 10 BC curriculum content is similar to Chinese middle school content. Bai thought that she would have benefitted from more scaffolding in the English literature course by saying "give us more work" and "train our writing" and "exercise our language" which may indicate (second) language focused instruction, particularly in grammar and vocabulary, was neglected in her school. I then followed up about her grammar-learning experiences in BCOS:

> Bai: I don't know how to explain it. I ah, they taught us English, of course, but umm, I maybe at that time I didn't familiar with this education system. But I learn of course, but I think they need to give us more practice. Because the grade, in grade 10, we don't have that much homework. And if a teacher never give us, we never, we don't do it by ourselves. (Excerpt 4.8 - First Interview, 54:25, Sept. 14, 2018)

In this excerpt, she shared responsibility for her difficulties in grade 10 English. Part of it is because of her unfamiliarity with this education system but also suggests that "more practice" is needed. Upon inquiring about why she did not work harder on her own in grade 10, she said:

> Bai: Because when we grow up, we have like, we know what we want. And I know the time is getting, I don't have that much time to improve myself, I need learn, I need to get high marks for university, and to be prepared for a foreign country, for foreign language. But in grade 10, we are, we don't know [laughs] too naive! (Excerpt 4.9 - First Interview, 52:45, Sept. 14, 2018)

Bai stated that it was because they weren't grown up yet and didn't know what they wanted, "We are […] too naive!" and by grade 11 or 12 felt that time was "getting" (running out) to prepare

for “a foreign country.” This naivety of Chinese students (according to Bai’s “we”) connects with her differentiation of Canadian and Chinese teachers in the next section.

Bai and Chan reacted differently to how they commenced their BCOS education. These excerpts describe their self-awareness as they reflected upon their learning three years prior to our interview. Bai recalled confusion at her sudden change of life-course and a need to catch up to others while Chan dwelled in her moments of freedom while eventually socializing into the academic culture of the senior students. Their experiences in BCOS over three years can be interpreted as examples of students socializing into English language discourses and becoming comfortable and competent in a new academic and cultural environment. The next section is the bulk of the chapter and describes more direct perspectives of their school.

4.2 School: Perspectives of Teachers, Assessments, and Courses

This section conveys findings related to the school which focuses on participants’ impressions of BC teachers, and include discussion related to the assessments (tests, projects, presentations) and courses in those schools. Participants often compared BCOS characteristics with CPS and Chinese teachers because they all attended Chinese schools until grade 9. This section also describes some participant perspectives of the Chinese-Canadian relationships inside their schools since BC offshore schools are partnerships with Chinese schools. All participants are featured in this section with an initial focus on Bai, Zhao, and Duan who talked about teachers. This is followed by Chan’s and Fei’s perspectives of some assessments in their BCOS as well as tensions between Canadian and Chinese control of their schools.

In the previous section, Bai credited teachers and classmates with helping her socialize into the BCOS curriculum and classes. She felt that she arrived at the school with deficiencies in English as well as unfamiliarity with new kinds of assessments like presentations and posters. Even though Bai was assisted in her transition, she also recounted how "self-study" was a key skill that she developed in her offshore school. In this excerpt, Bai describes the value of "self-study" by contrasting with CPS pedagogy.

Bai: I think like international school the self-study is ahhh more important than in public [Chinese] school because in public school we, teacher is always like pushing us, lead us how to learn. And ah, we basically just follow what teacher said, right. But in international school my skill of self-study improved a lot [small laugh]

Ian: What's self-study mean? How do you define it?

Bai: Ah self-study because umm we have not, we didn't have that much time to get along with teachers, but in public school teacher always like, whole day they are with us and we can like ask them questions or like, they always, like even though the class is like finished in the break time, they always— in public school I mean, they teacher is always come in and continue teach us and answering questions. But in [BCOS] when class is over, the teacher like, is leaving. We don't have that time to, like asking questions or basically learn from them so, like we always during night study we like, my friend we have study group, and we reading textbooks, and learning by ourselves. (Excerpt 4.10 - First Interview, 20:30, Sept. 14, 2018)

In this excerpt, shows how she differentiated the teacher's duty of care in the two cultures. Bai described her Chinese teachers as "pushing us, lead us how to learn" and "continue teach us and answering questions" which implies that they spend more time in school and use a more teacher-directed form of learning. In comparison, she represented her BC teachers as treating it more as a day job, and whether intended or not, compelled students to learn more on their own or with their classmates; an approach in line with BC teacher education programs. In the last sentence, she

used the pronoun "we" and implies that they have a community of practice among the classmates. Bai later explained that individual teachers vary since some held optional tutorials outside class time and others did not. When asked why only some BC teachers had tutorials, she replied that "maybe it depends on teacher's habit" or their view of after school being "their personal time. They don't want to teach." Bai said that all of her own teachers "contribute their time to teach us." In comparison to CPS, the BCOS approaches to teacher-student contact time is more similar to Western universities.

Zhao discussed something similar when talking about the different learning goals that Canadian and Chinese teachers possess. In the following excerpt, Zhao explains the different expectations in Chinese and Canadian systems and the effect on students:

Zhao: I think Chinese school is not care about the participate mark or the like daily exam. They don't care about that. But in Canadian high school, they care about each work, each exam, so the students in Chinese high school they may not very hard working in the every day class. They only care about like, do you know the *gaokao*?

Ian: Yeah

Zhao: Yes, that exam all Chinese students do very heavy like pressure about that because the knowledge they have learned. They are not very sure about how much they learn, or they learn enough. So they need to do so many questions like— it always be very, very hard the book to practice the questions. And this is very normal in Chinese high school so they need to like the — like the ocean, the questions. They need to do all of it. And after that they all know, also they, even they did that questions they aren't sure if they are good enough.

Ian: But you didn't do that school, right? You didn't do it?

Zhao: Yes in Canadian school, teacher will tell you like, you learn this, you learn this, you understand this knowledge you will good for go to the exam. But in Chinese school, even the teacher will not sure, like the question in *gaokao*. Some question in *gaokao* is very ridiculous. […] Yeah. I think the Canadian high school is good. Even if sometimes we need to do the project or something we need to ask teacher a lot. It is

not like that much pressure than Chinese school. (Excerpt 4.11 - 44:50 - First Interview, Sept. 12, 2018)

Several differences are revealed in this passage. The most salient point is the way students are prepared for summative assessments. While Zhao conveys that Canadian teachers will explain what students ought to know for their exams, Chinese teachers and students are not fully confident about what content could appear in the "ocean" of possible questions on the externally-assessed *gaokao*. It is likely that *zhongkao* preparation in grade 9 is similar. While Zhao perceived BC education as organized with set outcomes and goals, and thus able to build confidence in students, she contrasts it with the Chinese system which she perceives keeps students and teachers in permanent uncertainty of what knowledge is required to perform well on the *gaokao*. Before analyzing the effect of the *gaokao* on education, Zhao began with a description of how BC high schools used formative assessment and "car[ing] about each work, each exam" which perplexed some Chinese students. They were socialized into a summative assessment system until grade 10 which may encourage students to be "not very hard working in the every day class." Similar responses by Chan who did not know the word "projects" and Bai who never knew about "presentations" show some replication across cases. Bai compared CPS and international school assessments like this:

Bai: I think umm international school more concentrate on the student's, their creativities and we do lots of presentations. But it's never happened in public school. We don't, they don't teach students that kind of skill.
Ian: How do you get marked in public school?
Bai: Test! Test, test, test. [laughs]
Ian: One big test? Or many tests?
Bai: Actually it's always like for one big midterm and final. If you want to go to university we have a university entrance exam. So that's stressful. The only test can

decided which university you should go, right? But, but it doesn't count for GPA, like Canada, right? (Excerpt 4.12 - First Interview, 15:20, Sept. 14, 2018)

Bai referred to the formative assessment over the BC courses as counting for GPA and it seems that in China, these marks are worth much less than the *gaokao* which counts for almost everything. Throughout the whole interview, Bai praised her BC teachers in her school while showing some scorn for Chinese teachers and their methods. The following is an early question in the first interview after asking about differences between Chinese and BC schools:

Bai: Lots of differences. I think the biggest difference is like our teacher is come from Canada, right? And from learning like, in Chinese school we basically just like, listening what teacher said and like making notes and having tests. It's, because I like, I stayed in public school for many years like, it's very boring I think, it's exhausted. I don't think like, and teachers usually don't respect students like Canadian teachers. (Excerpt 4.13 - First Interview, 12:40, Sept. 14, 2018)

In BCOS-3, Fei and Duan expressed both positive and negative feelings about their teachers. Duan stated that quality of the school is "directly" related to the teachers. Fei spoke throughout the interview about her poor opinion of Chinese teachers and preferred the "equal" Canadian student-teacher relationships, "because some Chinese teachers treat us just like, not equally." Fei also criticized some of her Canadian teachers as "they maybe lack of teaching lessons sometimes" and her English 10 teacher as having a "teaching style is so, was so strange" and she "could not adapt." Since grade 10 was her first year in English Language Arts, her reaction to this different form of teaching may be exaggerated.

Duan who also went to BCOS-3 spoke with conviction about the impact of teachers on the quality of education but before that she described high BC teacher turnover at her school when asked if anything had changed from grade 10 to 12:

> Duan: Anything changed? I loved my school best in grade 10 because (.) there, almost all of them are good teachers, but I have, I don't complain about my school because [my city] is not a big city. And I think good teacher from Canada, they want good living environment and a high salary of course, so most of them are willing to Beijing, Nanjing, or the other, Shanghai. Not in [my city]. And the good teachers, of course all the schools want to hire good teachers and offer them a salary, offer them the living place, so the people, the good teacher always leave after one semester or two semester. (Excerpt 4.14 - First Interview, 16:51, Sept. 17, 2018)

She seemed to be accepting and understanding that foreign teachers would only stay in her inland provincial city for a short time and then seek jobs in bigger cities or return home. A high turnover of BC teachers is a challenge for many offshore and international schools (Daneault, 2015; Schuetze, 2008). Schools in smaller provincial cities likely face the greatest challenges in retaining teachers. Fei's perceived conflicts between Chinese and Canadian educators at BCOS-3 may also be a reason for the higher turnover and this had been noticed by Duan. She clearly states that teacher quality is very important near the beginning of the first interview:

> Duan: I think the quality of the offshore, international school is directly related to teacher. Because, when I was in some semester, we hired a very helpful teacher, and students are willing to learn and get some help from teacher. But some semester, students are not like the teacher, It's a boring and, boring time.
> Ian: So depending on the teacher—
> Duan: Directly (Excerpt 4.15 - First Interview, 10:53, Sept. 17, 2018)

She also described what traits she appreciated in teachers such as "a strong background of knowledge" compared to others teachers who "only know something in the textbook, they don't

do a lot of reading after class." In this interview, she paid particular homage to English teachers in grade 10 who "taught us about literature" and grade 12 year who:

> Duan: Well, we have, in grade 12 the English teacher is also pretty good. She— you know we have the provincial exam, and the literary terms are pretty hard and boring to learn. And he made these words reasonable, make the words become interesting. Because, the Shakespeare is, the poetry of Shakespeare is very hard, especially for ESL students. But he make it clear and easy to learn and we learn the background of the poet and we do interesting assessments. So we want to learn, although it's very hard. But by her help, we learn it easily and we learn lots of things. (Excerpt 4.16 - First Interview, 14:41, Sept. 17, 2018)

On the other hand, Duan was scornful of teachers who were not knowledgeable. She was upset when a science teacher also had to teach a practical English course in the BC curriculum known as Communications. She claimed that, "No one can understand what they are talking about [laughs] kind of waste of time because we didn't learn anything about that." To add nuance, she was sympathetic of teachers who try their best to teach but not those who "are too lazy" by saying:

> Duan: When I was in grade 11, I have a Physics teacher. […] I love him because he's hard working, he shows lots of effort, but he is not good at teaching, he know the thing but he can't told the students how to do that. But he is hard working so I respect him. But some teacher are too lazy. They are not responsible. (Excerpt 4.17 - First Interview, 57:42, Sept. 17, 2018)

Zhao also assessed the various BC teachers in her school, but in contrast to Duan, she seemed to evaluate teachers on how much work they assign and how they grade students. Like Duan and Bai, she used the pronoun "we" thus implying a community of practice and projecting this evaluation of teachers onto her schoolmates. In the following passage, Zhao talked about a

research paper that all students in grade 12 had to write explaining, “we need to finish that to graduate.” Different teachers required different number of pages ranging from eight to twelve. She also described classmates with “very mean” teachers who give them the “hardest test or vocabulary” and in the following excerpt, she explains how her community compares teachers:

Zhao: I remember that my teacher […] she’s very nice, she always talk with the students, and always smiling. But she really gave the lowest mark in all of the teachers because after class we always talk to the other students, what you do in your class? And they will tell us we do blah blah blah and the teacher gave the mark it’s nice, high or low, like.
Ian: High or low. So you compare with each other?
Zhao: Yes, we all know which teacher is good, which teacher give the higher mark. (Excerpt 4.18 - First Interview, 36:08, Sept. 12, 2018)

Zhao often characterized the value of BC teachers in regards to workload and grading criteria. The concern over marks was a feature of her school that increased from grade 10 to 12.

Ian: What changed between grade 10, 11, and 12? Did it get harder?
Zhao: Yeah! In grade 10 we all know that it is not very important than grade 12 so we not study very hard but the teacher is funny and the teacher is more kind. In grade 12 the teacher becomes a little bit mean [laughs] because of the mark (.) it’s very important to us. So maybe one test or one project we know the mark will go down very quickly. So I like have, we care, so we care so it is important and it hard. (Excerpt 4.19 - First Interview, 4:21, Sept. 12, 2018)

Zhao was the only participant that articulated her concern over marks but Bai and Chan emphasized the increasing workload in upper grades and the pressure to get accepted to universities. Much of the remaining findings in this section describe projects Chan completed in grade 12 and conflicts that Chan and Fei observed between Canadian and Chinese educators.

Chan's courses usually had a balance of tests and projects. Both the old and new BC curricula list projects as a significant part of assessment regimes (Government of British Columbia, 2007; 2019b). This was a big change for Chan who responded that in her Chinese schools they only had tests and had never heard of projects before.

Chan: In Chinese school, we never did project. We don't have project. Any project. Just tests.
Ian: How about elementary school? Do you have projects?
Chan: No, just tests.
Ian: Do you think that's normal across all of China?
Chan: Like in, like before I came to [BCOS], I never thought we had a thing called, like projects. That's my first time learning this word. (Excerpt 4.20 - First Interview, 14:36, Sept. 14, 2018

Chan described her grade 12 English course, where they were assigned a selection of projects that students had to complete over many months in a step-by-step manner with key deadlines. These included a mix of individual and group projects that required flexible time outside of the classroom. Chan credited the BC program with allowing her to have the free time to complete some projects that she was genuinely interested in doing. In addition, she recognized that her grade 10 self would not have bothered to do such grand projects. Chan said that she wrote and directed a short-film that was an assessed project which also won Best Picture in the school's film festival. When asked, she explained that she could not have accomplished such a project as a student in a Chinese school which had classes every night. Chan organized a long-term work plan saying she, "organized the time. I think the film is going to take a lot of time, so I start prepare making it like, like 4 or 5 months ago. I just doing it, every bit, every little bit." This film may not have been possible in a CPS because she reported that those schools have a rigid system with little choice for students:

> Chan: Like in Chinese high school, it is mandatory. You need to take everything the teacher told you too. And you have a schedule like between what time to what time to do what, but in BC high school, like in my high school [BCOS], I have many chances, I can choose if I want to drop the Chinese program. (Excerpt 4.21 - First Interview, 28:55, Sept. 14, 2018)

The responses that Chan provided signify that she had positive experiences at her BCOS. Her discovery of projects and her permission to cancel her Chinese courses allowed her to have time in the evening to work on these projects, rehearse for the school musical for two seasons, practice guitar, and eventually take on the responsibility of preparing for university. While Chan was a member of the musical in grades 10 and 11, she found that her grade 12 workload was too heavy even though she was not taking any Chinese courses by then. She did not join the musical because she was advised by her university admissions agent to take Calculus in order to be accepted to her Commerce program at university. She explained that, "My agent said that if I want to go to [university], I need to take Calculus 12 in order to receive offer from [university] so I just add the course, although I really don't want to do it, right." Many Chinese students employ the services of an agent (Hagedorn & Zhang, 2011) who helps students and families navigate the complicated procedure of applying to universities and acquiring student visas abroad.

Students often receive various types of advice from agents, BC teachers, BC academic advisors, Chinese teachers, friends, and websites about studying abroad – all influential sources on their socialization. Considering the viewpoints of various experts with their own rationales from different cultures is part of the transnational experience that these students have entered into during their adolescence. Many Chinese students become transnational when they finish

high school and go abroad for university while some others go abroad for middle or high school and have a transnational experience outside their home country. The experience in the offshore school is rather extraordinary because students have a transnational experience within their school building and have to weigh options and pathways according to different customs and expectations. Learning and operating in a cross-cultural environment may aid in their preparation for university, including becoming accustomed to western-educated instructors' pedagogical styles.

Chan provided an example of her BCOS implementing a "flag ceremony" once a week when she was in grade 11. She described it as a change that made students question the identity and culture of their school. When asked what it was like and whether it was a big change or inconsequential, Chan replied:

> Chan: Yes, it was a big change, like my friends and pretty much everyone at school, they don't want to go to the flag ceremony, because they say it is a BC high school, not a Chinese high school, so why need to, like act so much like a Chinese high school Like we don't need the flag ceremony and, and I think like two Korean people and they said, "We are Korean, why we need to attend the Chinese flag ceremony?" The teacher, like they force them to come. If you don't come, and like you'll get punishment, I think. (Excerpt 4.22 - First Interview, 32:24, Sept. 14, 2018)

While this may be typical of students not wanting to partake in assemblies and ceremonies created by adults, her use of "pretty much everyone" and "they" projects the sentiment on the whole student body. They felt that they should be excused from Chinese ceremonies because they felt that they had chosen to opt out all aspects of Chinese school. Even though BCOS-2 was a Chinese private school, Chan's cohort of students felt that something was being imposed on them after making the choice to partially removed themselves from Chinese society. This

experience illustrates Chan's community of practice as seeing themselves as transnational; perhaps separate from the Chinese authorities (and elements of Chinese culture, to some degree) in her school and more aligned with the transnational BC teachers. Her use of "two Korean people" added a dimension of portraying her school as an international student body who were there to learn in the BC school and not the Chinese school. Chan had confirmed that there were probably less than five Korean students in her school and that they all spoke Chinese in social situations.

Fei also described some discrepancies between Canadian and Chinese educators in the festivals and events at BCOS-3 which she said was "very messy."

Fei: Principal of Canada and Chinese principal sometimes the system is very messy.
Ian: So you think they had conflicts?
Fei: Yeah
Ian: How do you know that?
Fei: Because I am student. I can notice that. Like one time, Chinese teachers didn't like some festivals or some clubs in our school. Yeah from Canadian culture. Yeah because that will take their times.
Ian: I see. So Canadian clubs like sports or what?
Fei: Like sports, or some other, such as Pink Shirt Day (.) or Terry Fox Run. And we often have a lot of break, yeah in a month. So Chinese teachers will often think we have a lot of break [laughs] and that will cause our, our um, it will cause our (.) lazy. (Excerpt 4.23 - First Interview, 3:19, Sept. 20, 2018)

In this passage, Fei indicated her awareness of the conflicts in her transnational space although it was me who introduced the word "conflict" while Fei said "messy." In this instance, her Chinese teachers "didn't like" sports or typical Canadian school events that "will take their times" away presumably from lecture or study time. Fei also commented that Chinese teachers criticized the amount of vacation time in the Canadian school year that cause laziness. It is unknown if the

Chinese teachers said these opinions directly to students or if this is an impression that Fei got from their behaviour. In this portrayal, the values of two educational paradigms try to implement different events and cultures on/for the same students. While the BC teachers seemed to want to bring elements of Canadian schooling to their Chinese students, the Chinese teachers may have believed that these were not a good use of students' time. Like the flag ceremony at Chan's school, these are instances where students had to learn to navigate the values of two cultures in the same institution. Both Schuetze (2008) and Wang (2017) discussed instances where Canadian and Chinese administrators clashed over overlapping responsibilities in the operation of offshore schools. According to Fei, these inconsistencies infiltrated the general school rules particularly about the use of cellphones and laptops in school stating that, "Chinese teachers don't allow us use our cellphones at any time. But Canadian teachers allow us to use that (.) ehh when there is a break. And also Chinese don't even allow us to use our laptops." Fei's representation of differing policies for technology in BCOS can be the basis of further studies.

All participants generally had positive relationships with their BC teachers. Participants held varying views of how they evaluate and appreciate teachers. Zhao reported appreciating teachers with an easy workload, high marks, and who allowed students to speak Chinese in class. Bai was able to get individual help from some teachers but grew to appreciate the Canadian teachers who made students "self-study" by learning on their own or in their study groups. Bai specifically contrasted this style with Chinese teachers who were overbearing and "pushing us." Learning to learn individually or in peer-groups should help students socialize into the culture of Canadian universities, since this is an integral aspect of education in both K-12 and postsecondary settings. Chan enjoyed projects and musical theatre but turned her focus toward

academic courses to get into university. Duan emphasized that teachers had a "direct" impact on the quality of a BCOS after experiencing high turnover at her school. She had both engaging and boring experiences with different BC teachers. Fei expressed disdain for the Chinese teachers at her school, calling them "useless" a few times in the first interview. She described some BC teachers that were also low-quality but had praise for her principal in her grade 12 year. Overall, teachers had an effect on students and the relationships that students made with teachers was impactful in their transnational education and in their second language socialization into Canadian university cultures.

4.3 Peers: Language Choice, Class Participation, and Study Groups

Chinese is the first language of the vast majority of students in offshore schools in China (Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017) and their teachers and classes are English-medium. The CLIL (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010) method requires the teaching of subject content and L2 simultaneously. All five participants stated that their classrooms had English-only rules and that the hallways, cafeterias, dormitories, and other such places were areas where students usually communicated in Chinese. Most teachers included a participation mark in their course grades and the use of English or "not speaking Chinese" was a principal factor in the creation of these marks which were about five to ten percent of their final grade. These English-only rules indicate that English language acquisition is a high priority for BCOS.

When Zhao was asked if students used Chinese in her school she said, "Yes! [laughs] Of course, it just they cannot control themselves because they just want to talk to the other Chinese. They not always use English." Teacher responses to hearing Chinese varied with "some teacher

pretend they not hear the Chinese but some teacher just minus our […] participation mark." I asked her about students who wanted to speak English and she perceives that other students "they" speak English so that they can get higher marks and it is only useful to "speak English when the teacher [is] around" as described below:

Ian: Do some students want to speak English? Do some try to speak English?
Zhao: Yeah, umm because they don't want to minus marks, they just speak English when the teacher around. Like when the teacher not in the room, in the classroom I think (.) no English. [laughs]
Ian: What other times do you speak English? With other students in the room?
Zhao: Sometimes there are international students, like from Korea.
Ian: Right.
Zhao: So I don't know how to speak Korea so I just speak English to her. (Excerpt 4.24 - First Interview, 12:05, Sept. 12, 2018)

In this instance, it appears that English became the medium of communication out of necessity. This type of use of English as *lingua franca* is more common in international schools which are more plurilingual and is a major difference with offshore schools.

Although Bai went to the same school as Zhao, her experience with participation marks and her descriptions of language use in classrooms show some divergence. When reading these interview quotes, be mindful of our co-positionality in this interview. The researcher is a BC teacher who is co-constructing this experience with a student. Although I was never her teacher, I fit the role of her BC teachers who probably enforced English-only rules through the last three years of her life. This researcher-participant positionality has parallels to teacher-student roles so consider how Bai frames her and her classmates' justification for using Chinese while also recognizing the value of practicing English:

Ian: What about speaking Chinese in school? Are you allowed to use Chinese? Or you have to speak English in class?

Bai: In class we speak English but— but out of class, like actually it's the good way to learn English, I think every time we should speak English, like as our like first language is speak the way. But as we have so many Chinese students though like when we are together, like all my friends are Chinese, that when we speak English to each other, that's weird! So (.) and I mean, in [BCOS] we always speak, In usual life, some leisure time we speak Chinese, but in class we speak English. (Excerpt 4.25 - First Interview, 38:41, Sept. 14, 2018)

First, she confirms that in class, a formal professional space, "we" (students) use the authorized language. Before admitting that "in usual life […] we speak Chinese" she hesitates and says "like actually" as if remembering that her interviewer was a teacher. As if to show her awareness of best practices in language acquisition, she then makes excuses for this presumed transgression: that Chinese are the majority and that speaking English with friends is "weird."

After explicating that they usually spoke L1 (first language) socially, I wanted to know if they always spoke English in the classroom. She said that, "Every— in the beginning of class we also like making rules, like (.) and always the first rule is like no Chinese, right." Unlike Zhao's repeated descriptions of losing marks for speaking Chinese, Bai did not state that and upon questioning, she said she never "met that situation." Bai said that the marking was integrated with group discussions and projects where the teacher circulated and marked the students on their ability to work in a group. For the overall daily participation mark, I asked if students got more points for speaking English. She said that just speaking English is a baseline but "who spoke a lot will get higher mark" meaning an extra effort to speak English is key to a high participation mark.

The next passage illustrates the nuances of when, where, and why Bai perceived that BCOS students speak English and Chinese. Although introduced with a leading, probing question to begin this exchange, it was late in the interview and part of a larger co-constructed conversation about language use in offshore schools.

> Ian: Ok. No one breaks the rule? Secretly? When the teacher's not listening?
> Bai: Then we will speak Chinese! [laughs] Even when we are in class, like we are chatting with each other, sometimes we will speak Chinese.
> Ian: In group work, what if you are doing a group project?
> Bai: If this kind of group work will be, like marked. There is lots, we have lots of group work, like we're check, like discussing the questions and teacher was sitting beside us and marking like who spoke and, like mark mark mark us, then we'll speak English. But if only, like during night study we'll study by ourselves, we'll speak Chinese. Because especially use some Calculus questions use some Chinese, it'll be much more easier to understand what my friends are saying. (Excerpt 4.26 - First Interview, 40:17, Sept. 14, 2018)

These excerpts show that Bai observed that speaking English is largely confined to the classroom space specifically under the teacher's gaze. For the most part, English for academic purposes (helping with homework, studying together, group projects) was confined to the course readings and produced work. Discussion about school work was mostly in Chinese, especially for the hardest subjects like Calculus.

Chan explained the negotiation of English use in her journal as centered on the classroom and enforced by the threat of teachers reducing participation marks. She wrote that, "when I saw two people was speaking English outside class at [BCOS], I thought it was so weird and they were just trying to show off" (Journal Response, Oct. 7, 2018). In Bai's first journal response, she explained that there was peer pressure to not speak English, "so if some students who want to practice English in daily life will be laughed by these bad students" (Journal Response, Oct. 1,

2018). In a community of almost all Chinese speakers, the opportunities to speak English were confined to the classroom where it was socially safer to use English thanks to the classroom rules and expectations. This socialization is co-constructed by the teachers and students who enforce and submit to the English-only rules. In spaces where these expectations cease to exist, students can "self-socialize" into speaking Chinese to pre-emptively avoid being considered "weird" or a show off. Self-socializing (Anderson, 2017) into the practices of the "hallway culture" may therefore help students maintain in-group acceptance with their peers.

4.4 Conclusions

The findings in this chapter have been selected to illustrate the category of BC offshore school student from the participants' perspectives and experiences. The section titled "Self" explored Chan's and Bai's recollections of commencing their BCOS education and the struggles of transitioning to a different education system. Their perspectives illustrate their socialization into academic expectations and development into graduating students with their cultivation of social capital. Whether their communities were formed naturally such as in BCOS-1 and 2, or if they were cohorts formed by the BCOS-3 administration, the participants' social capital seemed to help with their academic and social growth through the three years of high school. The section titled "School" has excerpts from all participants who often describe their BC teachers and assessments in contrast to Chinese education. Learning to study without overt pressure from teachers helped participants get use to the sociocultural realities of learning in a Canadian university. This section concluded with Chan's and Fei's observations of how the Chinese and Canadian systems struggle to share the transnational spaces in the school beyond the curriculum.

The final section titled “Peers” examined the use of the Chinese and English languages in the school and found that BCOS were bilingual although there were pressures from some students to speak Chinese and from some BC teachers to speak English. The findings in this section provide the background necessary to make meaning of the participants’ experiences and perspectives in chapter five and their preparedness in chapter six.

Chapter 5: Findings

How do BC Offshore School Graduates Perceive their Initial University Experience?

The previous chapter reported findings that illustrated the discursive construction of the category of BCOS student from the participants' own experiences. This chapter describes participant perspectives of their first university semester and is also organized into sections about school, peers, and self. "School" refers to courses and professors, "peers" means interactions with other students, and "self" refers to the more individual parts of learning. Most of these findings are from an analysis of the second interview but first impressions of university from the first interview are also part of this chapter. Some journal responses and university course documents are used as data sources in this chapter.

5.1 School: Participants' Experiences with Courses and Professors

Each participant discussed their initial university experiences in the first interview and more in-depth perspectives of their first semester in the second interview. Bai, Chan, and Fei took various courses that were typical of first year students in Commerce or Humanities. Duan mostly took Music courses in her program as well as a basic first year English course. Zhao began the semester with a Social Science lecture course plus the English courses in the ESL Department that was adjacent to the main university. This was a bridging program for students who did not meet the basic English requirements for the university. Zhao only stayed until October when she went home to China for health reasons and returned to university for the

second semester. All other participants completed their courses with good marks and reported positive experiences overall.

5.1.1 Commencing university: Introduction.

Some questions in the first interview were about their initial impressions of university. Bai was asked about some differences she noticed in her courses. A key difference she explained was that her student support group had dissipated and she now had to rebuild social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Waters, 2008), which was now more difficult because it was a bigger school and everyone had various overlapping schedules and curricula.

> Ian: What's different between your BCOS and university so far?
> Bai: Ok so, in university I think, we are, students, each student like have (.) like when I finish a class, I want to get some classmates to go to the library, like to study together. It's very hard to arrange a time cause we have different schedules and we have different class. But in [BCOS] like, each class we can have, many like many friends and we, like do our work together and discuss. Yeah, it's like a, more like a cooperate— a team, like we are more, umm familiar with each other. But in university, I think everyone is individual, like they are getting apart from each of us and didn't that close, like in high school. (Excerpt 5.1 - First Interview, 45:34, Sept. 14, 2018)

Bai explicated that in high school, her friends did "our work together" and were like a "coopera[tive] team." Now that this support system has disbanded she had to navigate new social terrain. She had already noticed how "everyone is individual" and the various class schedules makes it harder to arrange study times. While Bai focused on her temporary loss of social capital, Duan described the distant stance of professors in contrast to student-teacher relationships she formed in high school.

Duan: In [BCOS], the teacher will care about every student. Because [the teacher] need to make sure everyone can good job. But in here, if you don't understand, unless you ask for help by yourself, the teacher [professor] won't, won't notice you. Won't notice there is a student in there.

Ian: In the university?

Duan: Yeah, You need to be active here. Because in, in my high school, the class is smaller and the teacher will care about everyone. (Excerpt 5.2 - First Interview, Sept. 17, 2018)

By using verbs like "notice," "care," and "be active," Duan portrayed the new university courses as cold and distant even though she first mentioned that high school and university classes were basically similar. Prompts in the second interview followed up with these feelings where both participants explained how they have found their places as students and classmates. More will be reported in upcoming sections.

At this university, undergraduates are required to pass a required academic writing course. Each department has different passing requirements before moving on to second year courses. Students have a choice of three courses of which one is non-fiction writing and the other two are English literature courses. Students may also take a more foundational academic writing course before taking one of the required courses and Duan made this choice. Her experiences will be in upcoming sections.

Chan began the non-fiction English Academic Writing course and found that some of the assignments were similar to her English 12 writing assignments. In the second interview, Chan explained that she had dropped the course because she feared that she would not get the 65% required by the Commerce Department and she wanted more time to prepare so she planned to take it in the Summer semester.

Table 5.1: *Required Academic Writing Courses for Each Participant*

Name	First Year English Course	Term of Course
Bai	Required Non-fiction English Academic Writing Course	Winter 2019
Chan	Required Non-fiction English Academic Writing Course Dropped in early September.	Summer 2019
Duan	Optional Non-fiction English Academic Writing Course Foundations (must take required course next)	Fall 2018
Fei	Required Fiction English Academic Literature Course (required for graduation)	Fall 2018
Zhao	ESL Department - Bridging Program (non-credit) (required for admission in lieu of IELTS)	Sept. to Oct. 2019 Started again in Winter 2019

Duan extensively discussed her foundational course saying "I think I do love English last term. […] We learn the academic writing and reading, it's pretty nice. Actually I don't like reading academic reading and writing at all [laughs] but I do like the professor, she help us a lot." Fei stated that she had some difficulty with "self-control" because university was the first time she lived away from her parents. She had trouble with a first year course on studentship (Learning 101) but was happy to tell me that she got the highest score in her English literature course because she worked together with classmates and the assessments were designed similarly to her BCOS English courses.

5.1.2 Lecture listening.

The participants each had various experiences listening to lectures. In the second interview, Chan explained that attending lectures and reading textbooks and notes was her

favourite way to learn. She found the lecturers easy to understand and valued professors who "always talk, have lecture, never told us to do like group discussion, just talk talk talk. That's what I like the best." When she was asked what was the easiest part of university she said when, "the professor will give us the instruction and we can work on our own." In these quotes, Chan simply states that she prefers to listen and work alone as a way of acquiring knowledge. This is useful for the large introduction to Economics class that three of the participants took. They described this course as taking place in a large lecture hall with a professor with a strong accent. They also attended labs taught by TA's who made multiple choice questions and students responded with i-Clicker software which constituted a participation mark.

While Chan studied individually, Bai made a Chinese friend who took the Advanced Placement (AP) exam in grade 12. Bai relayed this anecdote after being asked if she had found people to work with at university.

> Bai: Ah like my Econ class Economic class I, it was hard it's not like that easy for me to like mm because I still have something like can't understand because ah my professor is from [not North America] so sometimes (.) she got some accents well like I'm not saying it's bad but like for me as a foreigner, I got like trouble to understand it. But like meet a friend she's also from China she has study AP Economics so like sometimes she taught me how to do the question. […] I always study Economics with her, because that class for her is so easy (Excerpt 5.3 - Second Interview, 25:38, Jan. 18, 2019)

While listening to a professor with an accent was a noted challenge for Bai, she seemed to make up for it by rebuilding the community of practice which assisted her through her BCOS. This incident mirrors her report of getting help in grade 10 from students who had been to

"international schools." The next section describes how Bai made use of opportunities to get help from professors as well.

Neither Chan nor Bai discussed whether they studied and learned Economics in English, Chinese, or both. Fei said that she went to Chinese language tutorials that were advertised to Chinese students at the university.

> Fei: Okay: .hh there there was labs in that class and also ah ah here ah we have a group study ah leading by ah leading by Chinese um professor? uh or teacher I don't know. She will teach us .hh before every exam but she she was charging us fees like tutorial?
> Ian: I see, how how does that help you?
> Fei: Oh I think ah because sometimes because of language barrier I cannot understand some slides from professor but she uses Chinese to explain the knowledge. (Excerpt 5.4 - Second Interview, 10:55, Jan. 24, 2019)

Fei stated that she attended these tutorials in the interview and Chan wrote in a journal entry that she "went to the mid-term review activity held by the [university] Chinese Student Association" because "Economics is a more difficult and challenging course" (Second Journal, Oct. 18, 2018). This is another example of international students using their L1 in order to make sense of the knowledge required in their L2 courses like they did in BCOS. These bilingual study strategies have been replicated in China and Canada and indicates a way that their transnational education helped prepare them for university. When the primary objective is scoring a high mark on multiple choice exams, learning content may take priority over developing L2. Since many participants were successful in utilizing both languages in their education, it is likely they would transfer these practices to university.

Since Zhao was in the Bridging ESL program, she only took one academic course that counted for credit. In the first semester, she attempted a Social Science course which was based on the theme of cities. When she returned in January, she chose Math instead which she reported was a much better experience. Her first response of the second interview follows:

Ian: Just tell me about your first semester in your classes.

Zhao: Umm I think cause I'm in a Language [ESL] class I think it's so heavy because I have many work to do, and about the lecture, last semester I have a lecture of Social Science, and I think mm it- professor speak so quickly, and we cannot take note for everything, we just memory a little bit, of the lecture and we need to read a textbook so a lot of information of textbook in order to join the test, so I think maybe yeah, it um we cannot pay more attention on the lecture because we cannot memory it, because it short maybe 50 minutes and we need to do do the work outside of the class. (Excerpt 5.5 - Second Interview, 1:03, Jan. 31, 2019)

In this excerpt, we can see the difficult transitions Zhao made to university that is likely common for many students: a fast-talking lecturer, dense textbook, and a shorter class duration than high schools which usually allow time for students to work in addition to lecture. Zhao also had more instruction time in the Bridging program which she later explained had a heavy workload and close attention to grammar and pronunciation. We returned to lecture and professor styles later in the interview:

Ian: So you had difficulty understanding that lecture, what about your English teachers and Math teachers? Do you understand them?

Zhao: Yeah I understand my English teacher and Math teacher, because Math is taking notes, it need to copy it and we can we can finish it ah like the Sociology it more like in the professor's experience or opinion, about it and I think the exam um I don't know what is the best way to review it because it have the multiple choice but maybe the vocabulary is hard. (Excerpt 5.6 - Second Interview, 26:43, Jan. 31, 2019)

She also criticized the Social Science course for seeming to have a haphazard pace which made her (and perhaps her classmates) "confused" compared to the Math class she was taking at the time of the second interview.

Ian: And did you enjoy the professor's talk lecture style?

Zhao: Not so much because ah for example we this week they just finish teaching 2 chapter 2 but the professor said, "Next week we will test on chapter 4, no chapter 1 to 4." but maybe he just finished chapter 3 and chapter 4 hurry, just very quickly, we cannot just um know every chapter very good and we, sometimes we confused.

Ian: Right um your Math class, the lecture is it? It's better?

Zhao: Yeah because it have like 2.2, 2.4 and the teacher will give us like the practice test we have the online homework system just like "My Math Lab" like, and we can practice online, and we know what we should do. (Excerpt 5.7 - Second Interview, 27:36, Jan. 31, 2019)

When asked near the end of the interview to describe any ways that her BCOS helped prepare her for university, she noted that there are similarities between her high school Math and the Math course at university. Even though the content was more advanced, the style and structure was familiar "it is same as the [BCOS] Math teacher, they all teach in the same style." The main difference is that university classes are twenty minutes shorter and they have their self-study time at home instead of the last twenty minutes of class.

While Duan was in smaller Music classes with more practical activities such as playing piano and singing, she also took a Music History course which she explained was "not friendly to me" and she "didn't get much out of the book." The assessments were based on the lectures and textbook. Duan said they just had three tests described the class as, "We just have the lecture, we don't have the projects, I think that I think that professor need to […] give us (.) project instead of all the reading." Although Duan's BCOS gravitated toward project-based assessments,

especially in grade 12, Duan found that this university course was assessed in a more traditional format which would be considered out of date according to the rationale behind the new BC curriculum (Government of British Columbia, 2019b).

This section about listening in lectures described positive and challenging experiences that participants had in their first semester. While Chan thrived ingesting lecture content, Zhao had great difficulty in her first lecture course. The three participants in Economics had difficulty listening to a non-Canadian accent but made up for it by attending labs, getting peer-support (Bai), or attending L1 instruction (Fei, Chan). Duan was not very interested in the lecture and textbook style carried out in Music History but thrived in individual instruction of her piano course which is described in the next section along with other perspectives of their professors. The positive experiences were when lectures were similar to BCOS classes and when they were able to access Chinese-speaking community members to help learn the content and support each other in learning.

5.1.3 Assessments, grades, and professors.

One of the ways that participants responded to the first question of the second interview (How was your semester?) was by stating some of their marks. Bai said "pretty good" and "I'm very pretty satisfied with my grade" which were A in everything and A plus in Economics, which she said required her "to study well [and] a lot of work to do." Chan also had good marks, almost all A minus, yet she claimed these were "pretty easy" and she ambiguously stated that "I feel really okay about it." The main difficulty for Chan was that all the deadlines, "all come in like the same time and yeah it's a bit difficult, I don't know what to do. I'm kind of (.) nervous." Fei

had mixed results claiming that Learning 101 was structured in an unfamiliar format called "distributed marking" and that the participation mark was quite significant. She almost failed the class because she reported having trouble waking up early. On the other hand, Fei said that she got the highest mark in English Literature which she said was more suitable for her and similar to her English 12 course. Duan did not bring up her marks on her own, but when asked about her Foundational Academic Writing mark, she said "Ah I think it's not bad […] not very good but average mark" which she then said was 72% and "I think it's fine for me [laughs] I'm okay." Overall, it seems that they were successful in their first semester.

The following excerpts are from the second interviews with Duan about her English course and Fei about her Learning 101 course. Duan spoke often about her love for English literature in both interviews. Her favourite BC teachers had strong backgrounds in literature and made the stories and poems interesting. Because she switched from an Engineering major to Music major in her first week of university, she had a disrupted schedule. She went to a week of English Literature classes but found that starting two weeks behind was too hard to catch up so she took Foundational Academic English Writing instead. Duan said that she found literature studies to be much more interesting but she still admired the professor and felt that these fundamental skills and the writing practice would help her in the long-term.

Duan stated that she, "prefer[ed] literature. And although the teacher told us lots of new things like how to write formal stuff but what I learned is I have take that already." When she was asked if it was like review from high school, she said it goes "deeper." This passage describes some of what she learned:

Duan: In English? Uhh She introduce one form of writing, like compare and contrast and then she'll explain what is compare and contrast. And she will have debate to have us to feel the compare and contrast, like keeping a cat keeping a dog, compare and contrast of that, and mmm and she will let us write some short paragraph to practice compare and contrast. And then we build up the long essay.

Ian: Did you learn? You learned that or not in high school?

Duan: I think we learned but not that formal.

Ian: Oh ok, you found that class to be formal?

Duan: Yes: because ah now that in university it's not very common to use your opinion your own experience and or it's not very, teacher don't recommend us to use a story or something, we need to use reference. But in high school it's okay you can use whatever you want. (Excerpt 5.8 - Second Interview, 24:05, Jan. 14, 2019)

The key difference was that this course was all non-fiction and "formal" compared to a more creative, casual, and interactive course in grade 12. Duan had to learn to use references from reliable sources and not "whatever you want" like in high school. In the following passage, Duan explains her main challenges in writing:

Ian: What were the challenges for the writing in that class? Any challenges?

Duan: Ahh I find I got many problems in like writing deal with the structure of the essay, and I actually I think I can get a higher mark if I do not lose too many mark in the final essay. In the final essay it's very, I didn't, I make mistake in the structure, like I didn't write like the topic sentence of each paragraph, I didn't write that correctly. (Excerpt 5.9 - Second Interview, 20:02, Jan. 14, 2019)

One of the early topics in the second interview was how participants perceived their success in their university courses. Fei said that she got the highest mark in English Literature where she was part of an informal study group that worked together to understand the material. Fei believed that being in this group helped her with her assignments but she also found the course similar in structure to her grade 12 English course. In Geography, she made an informal

study group with the other three Chinese students in the class. As described previously, Fei attended some Chinese-language economics tutorials before her exams. However, Fei had most difficulty with Learning 101, a course that was designed to teach studentship and self-regulated learning useful for success at university. In the next excerpt, Fei explains how the course is "very hard" and she "got a bad mark." We then talked about how the English Literature course was perhaps more suitable for her style of learning and how the freedom to be absent from university courses can be detrimental to success.

Fei: I think that is very hard, […] it teach students how to succeed [laughing] in university. Yeah but I got a bad mark in the course.
Ian: What was so hard about it?
Fei: I think the most hard part is that its system is the (.) professor will use distributed mark to give us mark. […] like attendance mark and ah lab attendance, and lecture activity, and quiz after every lecture and also assignment, group work, paper.
Ian: And so distributed marking means almost every class, every day?
Fei: Yeah: so I was lazy, I was lazy last semester.
Ian: So how does that compare to your high school? Your BC high school?
Fei: BC high school ah forces students to attend the classes every day so (.) so and also my mom and dad forced me to attend classes every days but they about in here it depends on my self-control [laugh]. (Excerpt 5.10 - Second Interview, 4:21, Jan. 24, 2019)

Fei raised a number of difficulties that students may have when transitioning from high school to university. Fei said that the increased freedom and free time at university meant that she had to learn "self-control" which was not possible in her school because most of her days were fully scheduled from early morning to late at night. Fei said that she made study goals for her second semester but "I think I will not wake up in the morning so I will ask my mom to wake me up." She said that now that her mom calls from China every morning then she is able and

motivated to go to class. She said that she was used to that in China and "I know I can not make her disappointed." Whether or not this study strategy or form of self-control is considered good practice, Fei claimed that "It works!" thus representing a way that some families are involved in education. Fei's experience with expanded free time was detrimental to her success, especially in the course meant to teach self-regulated learning. In contrast, Chan stated that she was self-disciplined with her free time and perhaps having such time in her BCOS helped prepare her for university which she mentioned when contrasting her evening activities with her roommate who went to a CPS. Chan stated that she was better at time management because of her BCOS education but I cannot be certain if this is true or if she was socialized into believing that BCOS students had that advantage over CPS (or other) students.

Bai managed her time well and took advantage of professors who were willing to assist students. She was in two Philosophy courses in her first semester and this department held "drop-in hours" where any Philosophy student could drop-in and get help from professors or peers. Bai brought this up in the first interview but she had yet to attend. In the second interview, she said that she went often to get help and clarify the material "when I have something to like very confused me, like he [professor] will like teach me again." Bai stated that she went to these drop-in hours more than other students and was once, "the only student to be there and like many Philosophy professors are sitting the room and I am the only student [laughing] I was like three professor teach me alone." This represents an example of Bai perceiving her education as serious and these meetings as opportunities to learn more and get higher marks. In the first interview, Bai stated that some BC teachers held tutorials outside of class time so this similarity with her Philosophy professors likely helped her transition to university.

Contrasting Bai's, Chan's, and Fei's transition from high school to university gives insight into the different ways their offshore schools prepared them for university. Fei's school had stronger Chinese influence because she stated that she was in the same streamed cohort for the entire day with BC and Chinese classes continuing from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM with a napping break after lunch. This highly structured day limits free time and the steady cohort connects students into a tight community of practice. The transition to university would be a significant adjustment. In contrast, Bai and Chan went to BC classes for about five hours of the day and participated in more extra-curricular activities or some tutorials in the evenings. The findings of this study show that they adjusted better to extensive reading and self-studying at university.

This section described some of the scores that the participants had in some of their courses with a focus on Foundational Academic English Writing that Duan took and her struggles in developing her writing. While Duan got an average mark in this class, Fei got the highest mark in the English Literature class which was purported to be more challenging. This is interesting because these students went to the same BCOS where Duan was in the higher streamed class. One reason could be that the foundational course had a more rigorous marking scheme which resulted in more errors since Duan reported that they found a number of problems with her structure and word choice. Zhao also stated that the grammar marking in her ESL courses was tougher than in her BCOS. This similarity between the participants' challenges in the two basic English courses may be because the instructors wanted to strictly assess the foundations and grammar (thus improving writing) before moving on to content-specific courses. This finding will be further explored in chapter six. In addition, some participants did research in

their first semester of university but since this topic bridges both high school and university, I have placed those findings in the sixth chapter.

5.2 Peers: Interactions with Other Students

This section of the chapter is based on findings about interactions with other students at university. It includes participation in class activities, study groups, and social networks. The main theme is the participants' interactions with various students from China, Canada, and other countries. Interactive class participation is a key feature of Western education where students are expected to contribute to classes, seminars, and lectures. Participation is often a category in total marks for BCOS courses making up about 5-10% of participants' marks. Zhao, Bai, and Chan all reported that speaking English and not Chinese was a key factor of this mark. Therefore, some questions in the second interview asked about their perspectives of class participation and how this and any associated marks factored into their university courses.

Bai and Duan had positive experiences with class participation while Chan expressed negative feelings. Class discussion came up early in Bai's second interview when she explained that Public Speaking was her favourite course because, "I'll have more chance to communicate with the classmates. But because like many class, we only like sit in the class and writing down the notes […] I don't have that much time to like chat with the neighbours." Bai valued classes with interactions and construction of knowledge compared to the lectures like first year Economics and Math where knowledge is delivered to students. She also took two philosophy courses which had interactions and chances to participate although the content and vocabulary was inaccessible for the first half of the course. When asked later if she made adaptations over

the first few months, Bai replied that some of the class discussions were difficult to understand. She said that Philosophy used more abstract language and "not modern English" when compared to Public Speaking. Bai said that she "started to get it" after a month.

> Ian: So how did you get more efficient [in your studying]?
> Bai: I was like uh I don't know kind of like, well for example for my Philosophy class, at first I don't understand anything in the class. Not only the professor's teaching but also ah some classmates they ask some question, I don't even, can't understand their questions, I'm like it's driving me crazy but now it gets, I don't know, because maybe I started to get it. (Excerpt 5.11 - Second Interview, 17:07, Jan. 18, 2019)

She also explained that the Philosophy course which was based on logic was easier to understand than the introduction to Western Philosophy course where she had to learn a lot of the canon and general history of Europe. Her BC curriculum had only a few prescribed learning outcomes in philosophy and the Social Studies courses primarily focused on Canadian history and governance.

Duan described some positive experiences in her English class discussions. The following passage is a response to a question about how she experienced group discussions.

> Duan: It's [group discussion] very good! Yeah I I love to talk with them and I think there are like one-third of them are international students. Yeah and I remember there are two girls from China, […] and another people I don't know where they from but they're also take English as their second language and it was very nice because I remember once we had a debate, we had the time limit, like one minute we need to speak all the stuff, but for like people like me pick ESL they speak slower but my my group-mates and other people don't feel like, don't don't say like 'Oh why you speak so slow you waste of our time.' They're very nice like you speak whenever you can speak yeah. (Excerpt 5.12 - Second Interview, 31:02, Jan. 14, 2019)

Duan portrayed her classmates as empathetic and willing to accommodate the struggles that ESL students may face. Regarding interactions with Canadian students in group discussions, she replied, "Of course they are more confident in class [laughs] because it's English and but it's very nice cause we are learning some new things; some things for them are new as well." Duan implied that her interactions with domestic students were positive and affirming while recognizing that they enjoyed the confidence and comfort that comes with learning in your own country and cultural institution.

Fei did not talk about interactions inside the classroom but she explained that she worked in a group that met regularly to discuss the literature in her English class, "before every due date I will have some good friends from China or the local [Canada] and and we will meet in the library […] And have some (.) talk about our assignment." When asked if these were group projects that had collective assignments, Fei said that they just "share[d] our views about assignments" which were all individually submitted. In this format, Fei was able to enhance her learning about literature and use both English and Chinese to prepare her assignments reported that this was a factor in eventually earning a high mark.

In her Geography class, "there were only four Chinese students in that class so we made a group in WeChat and share our (.) ideas about this." which she said helped with the many projects in Geography. Forming chat groups is a way to support each other, clarify assignments, and remind each other of deadlines because, "every week we had projects like presentation and the poster board and other things." It seems that there were parallels with the project-based assessment that Fei and Duan experienced in their grade 12 year. Forming these small (possibly temporary) communities of practice helps students succeed and builds new social capital. Some

community support was already institutionalized at the university. Fei also paid a fee to attend the Chinese tutorials for Economics and said that these helped her, "because of language barrier I cannot understand some some slides from professor but ehh she uses Chinese to explain the the knowledge." Chan wrote in a journal that she went to Chinese tutorials before the mid-term.

Chan talked a lot about her difficulties engaging in discussion and showed little desire to participate in classes. She enjoyed Economics where they just had lectures and labs where they answered multiple choice questions with i-Clickers. Commerce was similar but they also had to discuss with partners as part of the class time. Chan also took English Literature for about three weeks before dropping the course to try again in summer. The next few excerpts are some of Chan's experiences participating in discussions in university while also contrasting with group discussions in her BC high school. In the early part of the first interview, Chan discussed her strengths and struggles so far. After explaining how she was very good at listening to lectures, she explained how she had difficulties communicating:

Ian: What do you struggle with in university so far? Anything hard?
Chan: Not really but I think I still find really difficult to communicate with other people. Like my last English class just now, and the professor told to, like separate ourselves in groups and I was in these three people's group and other two are boys and (.) at first we start talking and then they start talking, and I just don't know what to say, and it was really awkward.
Ian: In their own language?
Chan: Yeah, like I understand. I just don't know what to say, like I just don't know what to say. (Excerpt 5.13 - First Interview, 23:12, Sept. 14, 2018)

There was not much change in her inability to interact over the semester and in the second interview Chan expressed how she only found herself comfortable with Chinese or other Asian students. When recounting this story in the second interview she described that experience

as “scary” although she did not say that was a reason for dropping the English course. I followed up on this by asking about how she felt in group discussions in high school.

Ian: Have you ever done that in high school? Group discussion?
Chan: Yeah but they: they are all like (.) friends I know but in this course I just don’t know them and they just start talking, yeah I don’t like it [laughs].
Ian: What was the difficulty with people- other classmates who are not friends? What’s so difficult?
Chan: Maybe if it’s in China I think it’s still good but they are all like native speakers and… I just don’t know what to say, yeah, yeah.
Ian: Do you feel welcomed? by Canadians?
Chan: Yeah! they are all pretty nice but I just don’t know what to say. Just say my name like “Hi, my name is [Chan]” and they just start talking and I don’t know what to say, really I don’t know what to say.
Ian: Do you listen? To what they say?
Chan: Yeah I listen to what they say. I just can’t come up with sentences to like talk to them. (Excerpt 5.14 - Second Interview, 34:02, Jan. 11, 2019)

In the above dialogue, Chan states that at university she is unable to produce simple conversational English with English speakers. While she may know the words and phrases, she lacked confidence and felt embarrassed because of her perceived limited English. She did not blame Canadians for being unfriendly or unwelcoming (perhaps based on my positionality as a Canadian), but she criticized herself for not “coming up with sentences” and initiating dialogue. Our conversation continued when asked why she was more comfortable speaking Chinese and she pondered, “I don’t know, I just felt really nervous, embarrassing because I don’t talk (.) really well and (.) yeah. Then I just don’t talk at all [laughs].” After follow-up questions, Chan said that she was “confident” speaking Chinese and her problem was more of a language difference than a cultural difference. This indicates a drawback in the limited diversity of offshore schools if some

students have difficulties engaging in English conversations with classmates from other countries. The students were likely more socialized into using English for academic purposes while conversational language may not have been emphasized.

Chan did state that she had close friendships with classmates by grade 12 and great rapport with BC teachers, often chatting after class in English with teachers. She was the only student from her school to come to this university so this represents a need to rebuild social capital. In contrast, Bai stated that she faced a similar challenge yet she easily engaged with Canadian and Chinese friendships early and often. In the following, Chan analysed her interactions more deeply.

Ian: What kind of difficulties do you face with working with Canadian students?
Chan: Ah hh. I don't know just kinda scary cause I: don't see them like very often like I can't- I don't think I can (.) like connect to them, like ask them to do something I don't think they'll do it. I don't know why I just .hh I don't trust them as much as I trust like Chinese people [… who] I can talk to them and I can like share my opinion. (Excerpt 5.15 - Second Interview, 42:50, Jan. 11, 2019)

Chan then went on to say she felt, "More connected when I meet like Chinese people in my class I'll feel really happy" and she "sit[s] like next to like, Asian people." In Chan's first semester, she had yet to make meaningful connections with Canadian students and remained more comfortable with other international students.

Duan also brought up the perceived isolation of Chinese students sitting together when I asked whether she spoke more English or Chinese in class:

Duan: Usually in English I think. […] Sometimes we find that the people that they are Canadians (.) they, the education difference if the TV show they have watch when they grew up are the same, and when they talk about something and they have the same topic to talk with and even though no one knows what's that! That's another

> reason why why like we cannot be closer friend, it do happen like they talk about something and it's very funny they all laugh at that, but me and my Chinese friends like they have no idea what they are talking about. (Excerpt 5.16 - Second Interview, 56:58, Jan. 14, 2019)

Duan said that Chinese students often "sit together" because they do not understand the cultural references made by Canadians in their own conversations. While Duan says that she feels that language is not a barrier, an ignorance of topics makes it difficult to be "closer friends" as it can be difficult to catch up on all the discourses prevalent in another culture. At the end of the second interview with Fei, she suggested that BCOS teachers instruct more about Canadian culture because she sometimes felt left out of anecdotes in lectures and in conversations with others because "the local students [talk about] the national news but we cannot. Sometimes in classes, the professor will talk about some news, but we are Chinese, we just don't get it and we are very embarrassed." Although BCOS had the advantage of learning from Canadian culture, values, and manners from BC teachers, some participants still experience language gaps when they encounter Canadian peers who are different than the older teachers who behave as professionals among students. Bai was the only participant who reported becoming friends with Canadians and she said that the atmosphere of her Public Speaking class was helpful in facilitating these relationships. The final passage completes the participation section and helps transition into the section on study groups. Bai described the friendliness of the Canadians in her Public Speaking class as "one reason why [she] really like[d] this class" compared to her Math and Economic classes where she mostly socialized with Chinese peers.

Bai: Ahh: well: mostly it's Chinese but still for public speaking, I have meet many Canadian friends, in that class yeah. They are very friendly.
Ian: Do you feel like welcomed?
Bai: Yeah totally!
Ian: Great! Do you understand English and?
Bai: I understand yeah [spoken confidently]
Ian: Great yeah, were you scared or shy to talk to people in English?
Bai: Ahh: well I didn't like, I'm not saying sh- shy, but sometimes I don't know how to express myself like it's not about shy it's about I don't know how to express yeah so. (Excerpt 5.17 - Second Interview, Jan. 18, 2019)

In the participation section, Bai and Duan described how they had good relationships learning with Canadians in their classes. Duan qualified her description with concerns that sometimes Canadians have enjoyable conversations about cultural topics that Chinese students did not know about. Fei raised similar concerns and Chan may have had the same issues in group discussions but appeared to be more fearful overall. Many participants found that class participation in university had different meaning and purpose than the participation marks in high school which were more driven by language control. In university, participation included i-clicker quizzes that assessed attendance and knowledge. The findings in this section reveal that even though BCOS make an effort to embed Chinese students in a Canadian high school experience, the overwhelming number of students from their own culture indicates that students often do not get the change to be socioculturally engaged with their future Canadian and international university peers.

5.3 Self: Reading and Studying

The final section of this chapter features participant views of themselves and how they studied on their own at university. Chan spent a lot of her time studying alone and said she continued studying the same way as she did in high school. Even though she studied alone, Chan said that she tried to be efficient and "review everyday" in order to have more time to "hang out with friends." Overall, Chan felt comfortable with her self-regulated learning but hopes to become more of a collaborative learner in the future.

While Bai joined Chinese study groups for Math and Economics, and used English for the peer activities in Public Speaking, she explained that the most difficult courses were Philosophy where the English was beyond her level and there were no other Chinese students in her class for support. Bai used recursive reading techniques in both of her languages plus technology to understand Philosophy. She initially read "English first, some part I can understand, but not all" for an overall idea of the text. Then she used *Baidu* (a Chinese Internet search engine) to translate into Chinese to read some parts that she could not understand well. However, she described the computer translator as "cannot be so accurate" and "messy" yet she "can briefly understand, like what it's about and I will like re-read the English." Since the test is all writing, she must know it in English in order to succeed on the tests. In this excerpt, Bai explains how studying Philosophy in Chinese helped her:

> Bai: If I use a translator to translate all the text into Chinese its will only help me to briefly understand what they are saying, but in the test it's all, in the test in Philosophy, it's all about the writing. It's all the writing so you need to, at last you need to learn it in English, you know the original text so you can understand it. (Excerpt 5.18 - Second Interview, 18:25, Jan. 18, 2019)

Because the tests were based on writing, it was important to know the material in English. Bai may have indicated that studying Economics and Math in Chinese was possible because there were no essays, but it was necessary to learn Philosophy in English as well as Chinese.

Duan responded about her language of study by explaining that she had learned the new vocabulary in her field of Music by hearing and reading the terms so often. She said, "I didn't learn, I hear, I heard it about that every day." When asked if she translated to Chinese, she explained that, "I just learn by English because the translation is sometimes not relate[ed]." Duan became used to many of the commonly used terms in Music but she had trouble reading the Music History book, saying, "there's lots of stuff I don't know, I need to learn, they are so new to me […] the language more formal, it's like a history book." Duan had stated that she enjoyed reading English fiction and magazines while learning English in high school.

Fei suggested that she became a natural English reader after a few years in her BCOS by stating that, "after a long time life abroad maybe sometimes my brain will translate the vocabulary directly for me. […] so I can not translate them by using other translating translation app." Fei's statement may be a way of contrasting her higher amount of English comfort with other Chinese students who need to translate more deliberately than her.

5.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to outline how the participants perceived their first semester of university in Canada. Most of the findings in the chapter focused on their perceptions of the school including sub-sections on commencing university, lectures, professors, and assessments. Their transitions to the first year of university this disruption of social capital show

similarities to their first year in their BCOS three years earlier. By forming communities of practice, students may have achieved more academic success with the support of others and the ability to use their first language. The "peers" section profiled participation in classes as well as the types of study groups the participants joined. Their BCOS experience with participation marks likely helped participants adjust to university classes. Chan's difficulty in adjusting may indicate that some students may have difficulty socializing beyond their community. The third section on "self" described a few ways that participants studied on their own with an emphasis on their language choice when reading and studying. The next findings chapter will use some of these experiences to explain ways that their BC offshore school education has and has not prepared students for university from the participants' perspectives.

Chapter 6 - Findings

In What Ways do BC Offshore Schools Prepare Students for University?

The purpose of this chapter is to connect findings from the previous two chapters and provide answers to the third research question: From the perspective of Chinese students, in what ways does a BC offshore school education prepare students for university in Canada? The findings in this chapter are in addition to the findings in chapters four and five but, unlike those chapters, all findings are related to preparation in relation to school and university. While there are interpretations throughout, the discussion of all three chapters is reserved for chapter seven. The first section is about participants' experience with research skills and knowledge in their BCOS and university. This is followed with shorter sections about project assessments, learning grammar, and learning writing.

6.1 Research Skills and Knowledge

Most participants stated that the research skills they learned in BCOS courses are the greatest advantage that they have over Chinese public school (CPS) students. Knowledge of the requirements and practice writing a proper research paper has helped with their transition to university. All five participants wrote research papers in grade 12 either in English, Geography, or History classes and used internet sources and the search engine Bing (because Google is unavailable in China). Research is part of the English 12 "suggested achievement indicators [where students] record sources for citation during research and note taking" (Government of British Columbia, 2007, p. 108). Similar indicators are in other subjects and grades.

Each BCOS has a library with paper books and study spaces but no participant stated that they used bibliographic database providers. All participants had some instruction in citing sources and writing reference lists but only from the internet and none of the participants were aware of the concept of academic journals when asked. This does not mean they were ignorant but this knowledge was not revealed in the transcripts. When I showed some participants how to search the university library for journals, they said they were not familiar with academic papers. Therefore, participants said that they had more preparation for academic writing than CPS students but not a complete and correct understanding. These findings illustrate experiences researching and writing with citations in high school and/or university.

Fei said that citations were, "not new things for me" because she learned and practiced in high school and did not make any mistakes in her university courses. Therefore, she said her transition to university courses was smooth as she describes:

> Ian: Like did you learn referencing or citation?
> Fei: Ok! um uh that is not strange, not new things for me, ah in my high school actually my high school teacher […] his Geography class teach us to make citation and reference.
> Ian: And did you do any citation and reference at [university]?
> Fei: Yeah! I did a lot of citation references ah in the Geography assignment paper and also in English. (Excerpt 6.1 - Second Interview, 17:38, Jan. 24, 2019)

Fei's comfort with academic research is evident and little more was explored. Her best grade was in English Literature and she had said that it was structured and graded similar to her English 12 which included stories, poems, creative writing, and film making.

Zhao stated that a research paper was a graduation requirement in her school and students completed it in a step-by-step process over "maybe two months." She described how she interpreted the research process below:

Ian: What's the longest essay you've written?
Zhao: That is the (.) research essay. That is about that, you choose the topic and you do the research and you need to use the URL to make the resources — source. The source need to be put on the bottom and you need to mark where you use it, and how much you used, and also to use the information in your research to make a conclusion to write the essay. (Excerpt 6.2 - First Interview, 34:09, Sept. 12, 2018)

Zhao shows in this excerpt that she has at least some rudimentary knowledge of research but with an emphasis on websites; less so for academic papers or books.

Bai also attended BCOS-1 and said her Geography classes had more research activities than English class where students more often wrote creative stories. Bai learned how to research and avoid plagiarism but there were limited resources in her school library, and internet censorship in China limited research options. In excerpt 6.3, Bai explained that she was taught how to critically read and analyse websites and that they were introduced to "formal websites."

Ian: Like how did you find information?
Bai: Use Bing because we can't use Google [laughs] in China. And there are some more, like formal website. Like we use that, maybe like the teacher would let us know, […] which kind of website provide like reliable resources, and which kind of website we can't. Like Wikipedia we can not really believe it, because anyone can edit, like they tell us how to analyse it. (Excerpt 6.3 - First Interview, 36:02, Sept. 14, 2018)

I enquired about her school's library resources and Bai said it was a paper-based library but it was just starting to introduce some "online reading" in her final year. I asked about academic

papers and journals and Bai did not seem to differentiate peer-reviewed papers and reliable websites.

In the second interview, Bai said that she was not fully comfortable with the different formats (APA, MLA, etc.) but would learn quickly by following the outlines saying, "I'm not very used to it yet, but I will like, follow with the format, the outline I guess." While this preparation was meagre, Bai said that BC teachers were more concerned about plagiarism than Chinese teachers when asked if there were any rules that were strict for BC teachers. Bai said the rules were mostly the same but maybe they were more strict about plagiarism "because in public school we don't write that much essay […] so when we do the references, that part, we don't know how to do that actually. […] So I learn it in [BCOS] actually." Bai said that one of the skills she learned in BCOS-1 was how to avoid plagiarizing and she also talked about how there was a different conception of plagiarism in China compared to her BCOS. "Like in China, we don't have, we are not as strict so maybe that's the biggest problems for us, we are not used to it yet." Other students learned about how to cite sources but Bai is the only participant who contrasted this writing with Chinese writing.

Duan said that she learned a lot about formal academic writing in her first semester of university. While she said that she learned a little about citations in high school, it was "not very formal" consisting of, "we just learned to write on the (.) writer, the articles name, where you get it, just that." Before university, Duan said her high school use of citations was, "not very serious, not very strict." in comparison with the way she was evaluated in her university English course where "I always put wrong punctuation." In addition to the "strict" referencing rules, Duan had to consider using different sources that were more formal than what she used in English 12:

Ian: Did you learn? You learned that or not in high school?
Duan: I think we learned, but not that formal.
Ian: Oh ok, you found that class to be formal?
Duan: Yes: because ah now that in university, it's not very common to use your opinion, your own experience, and or it's not very, teacher [professor] do not recommend us to use some story or something, we need to use reference. But in high school it's okay you can use whatever you want. (Excerpt 6.4 - Second Interview, 24:58, Jan. 14, 2019)

Duan described how she was taught about the concept of research and citations but not in a fully academic framework. The purpose of the university English course, according to the outline, is to strengthen academic reading and writing skills through extensive practice (University Calendar) so it is likely that academic rigour was emphasized. In Duan's History 12 course, the teacher may have been happy to just teach the concept and basics of referencing as something is better than nothing. In other parts of the interviews, Duan described her BC English courses as based on literature and creative writing so that may have been why she thought using "some story" or her "own experience" was an appropriate reference. Duan was aware of citations but not fully prepared for university.

In English 12, Chan was assigned a five-page paper on a topic of her choice. This was a capstone project and she had learned research skills in all three grades of high school. Chan wrote her first university research essay in her Commerce course and she explained the difference as, "like in high school we wrote about like research essay. I think the big difference is that like plagiarism and quotation. It's really really important in university but in high school it's not that important." Chan expressed that she learned about plagiarism and citations in high school but the importance is much greater in university. She wrote this Commerce essay near the end of the semester but earlier she was enrolled in English where she had problems with her

reference list during her first week when, “they taught us how to write APA citation” and then she contrasted it to how it was assessed in her BCOS:

> Chan: And in high school we use MLA and we just copy that online and hand in to the teacher and it’s good like 100% of the mark is there, but in this we have the first week, we have the like assignment and the teacher told us to like write APA citation, and I followed what I learned in high school, just type in EasyBib I think-
> Ian: Yeah
> Chan: The website and I copied that and I hand in to the teacher and there’s many mistake. Like we need to do the like the (.) hanging indent, indent? […] I don’t know why the comma needs to [laughs] yeah! it’s really weird. And the second time I just really careful, be really careful about the every letter, every sentence, every comma. (Excerpt 6.5 - Second Interview, 26:02, Jan. 11, 2019)

Chan described how she thought she was learning proper citations while in high school using EasyBib (EasyBib, 2019), a free online citation generator, without double checking for accuracy and reliability with the style guide. Chan’s experience parallels with Duan’s in that they were both partially taught referencing skills but not at a university level. Chan expressed disappointment with how she was educated at her BCOS as what was marked as correct in high school, was marked as wrong in university. She now realized and reflected that proper citing was, “not so important [in BCOS]. Like the teacher said it’s important but they really (.) don’t care, don’t. Yeah they really don’t care about the citation.” Her evidence of not caring is that she, “handed in [to university professor] the APA yeah, but it has many mistakes” and that in her BCOS they, “just taught us like to like the in-text citation, and the citation bibliography at the end of the essay, they taught us to write that.” In Chan’s case, there was not enough attention to details like hanging indent and punctuation. Upon questioning whether she may have confused APA and MLA, she said she knew the difference but the punctuation was the main problem.

Near the end of the second interview, Chan does state that her knowledge about citations was better than CPS students and just being aware of in-text citations and paraphrasing was helpful.

> Ian: Finally what ways did your BC high school prepare you for university?
> Chan: I think they give us the fundamental things about the citation. Like some of my friends they come from the normal high school, they don't know what citation is, they don't know how to cite it but at least I know how to cite it, I know like how to paraphrase and the in-text citation, but they just don't know at all. So I think that really prepared me in some things. (Excerpt 6.6 - Second Interview, 1:13:09, Jan. 11, 2019)

While this study does not investigate the extent that CPS teachers instruct academic research and writing, an analysis of the BC curriculum documents shows that students are expected to understand plagiarism and acknowledge sources of information. The table below are some of the outcomes for grade 12 English:

Table 6.1: *English Language Arts 12: Instructional Resource Package, 2007, p. 155.*

Copyright/Citation of References
• define and explain **copyright** and **plagiarism** in **context** • acknowledge sources of information when creating **texts** (e.g. print, web-based) • respect and acknowledge **copyright** • embed quotations within sentences • cite research information, ideas, and quotations in a consistent and ethical manner, according to acceptable research methodology (e.g., cite sources using a recognized style such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Style)

The awareness and experience of referencing is one of the ways that participants believed they were prepared for university. All participants had experiences, while sometimes flawed, in

writing research papers but Chan, Bai, Fei, and Zhao all stated that their research, referencing, and writing skills were more advanced than CPS students. These students represented their BC teachers as socializing them into academic discourses that had high regard for research skills and rules. They believed that they had a better understanding of research skills than compatriots who went through CPS. After experiencing university level research, however, some participants felt that they were not prepared enough so their time in BCOS, and subsequent transitions to a BC university, may have created a false sense of confidence. Overall, they were aware of academic research and may have internalized this awareness into their identity construction as BCOS students.

6.2 Participant Perspectives of their Preparedness

This section illustrates each participants' perspective of ways that their BCOS prepared them for university. Many of these responses are to direct questions asking if and how they were prepared but some were generated by participants.

Fei stated that her English speaking skills are better than other Chinese students, "because in our high school we use English all three years, so that help us because I met a lot of [Chinese] friends here and most of them they are speaking ahh may not very, may not be very well." Fei credits her developed speaking skills to her three years of interacting with Canadian teachers. One of the drawbacks of her BCOS was that it was not a totally Canadian school since the BC principal's autonomy was bounded by the curriculum; extra-curricular or pastoral care was shared between the BC and Chinese administrators (Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017). Fei portrayed all Chinese adults in her school negatively throughout both interviews. In the passage below, Fei

also criticized some of her Chinese classmates and noted that she was streamed into the lowest cohort:

> Fei: I think on the cultural differences because offshore school is a place uhm uhh far from, far from Canada but just in China so some sometimes the cultural part is still hh. yeah [hesitant to say?]
> Ian: Still?
> Fei: Bad
> Ian: Bad?
> Fei: Yeah bad because because the teachers are from Canada but most students are just a um just a grew up in China, so we may we can not understand some cultural part. (Excerpt 6.7 - Second Interview, 28:33, Jan. 24, 2019)

By calling "the cultural part" of her school "bad," Fei highlights a possible limitation of her BCOS as being more about curriculum delivery than a complete school culture. Even though they had instruction from Canadians, the full schedule of evening Chinese classes, her relegation to the lowest cohort, and the limits on Canadian extra-curricular activities meant that Fei "just grew up in China" and still had to adapt to Canadian university life.

Chan's reflection on how her BCOS prepared her for university was nuanced, but overall she said that she felt able to succeed in all of her courses except English which she delayed until the summer. She said that her first semester was "pretty easy" and with a number of A-minus grades. In BCOS, she learned how to manage her free time and organize the demands of project-based courses. This is a very important finding as self-sufficient studying is crucial in university. Chan also explained that students from her school "are really good at listening and speaking" when contrasting to her friend who went to a "normal Chinese school." Chan used this student to explain how his training in writing and grammar may be an advantage over BCOS students.

Chan: And he's not really good at speaking and listening but he's really good at like writing like he prepared like he was training for the IELTS and like other tests and he just she just can write really fast and and like his like her grammar is really good but like for students in: [BCOS] they are really good at like listening and speaking. (Excerpt 6.8 - Second Interview, 1:16:01, Jan. 11, 2019)

Chan still felt unprepared in conversational English also stating that her BCOS should have had more speaking activities in class or "have maybe like English speaking class because for English course they all like focus on writing (.) yeah but not so much on speaking." Chan said that she was comfortable speaking with her BC teachers (this was, of course, their job) but had not yet adjusted to speaking with Canadian classmates. Chan remained hopeful in the second interview stating "I feel comfortable now but at the beginning of the semester I just can't do it but now it's getting (.) more comfortable." Like her reflection on her learning of citations, Chan believed she was better prepared than CPS students but she could have been better prepared.

To summarize, Chan claimed that her grammar may be weaker but students from BCOS are better at listening and speaking. Chan explained that she was skilled at listening and understanding lectures and readings but she was a "slow learner" who had to study meticulously and individually. In both interviews, Chan described her fear of speaking to Canadians and said, "I just don't know what to say" a few times in both September and January interviews. Chan said that she felt smarter speaking in Chinese but was willing to speak English with other Asians. She wrote in a journal that she joined a university pop music "club and found a lot of people that share the same music taste with me" (Journal 3, Nov. 2, 2018) so there is evidence that Chan participated in social aspects of university. She also joined the Acting Club because she had been in musical theatre in her BCOS.

Zhao found her non-credit bridging ESL classes at university to be quite different from her BCOS English Literature courses and she described how she had to practice so much grammar and make sure it is "perfect" and that there are, "so many things can influence your mark for example like vocabulary and sentence structure." As the only participant who did not take an IELTS test, she had to complete these non-credit courses to eventually take full-time academic courses at the university. Zhao said that in high school she learned a lot about essay writing such as organization and structure, but her sentence-level grammar was not strictly marked in her BCOS English courses. Writing skills are important for the credit courses but her ESL courses put more emphasis on grammar and pronunciation which she stated was less emphasized at her BCOS.

Zhao said that at her BCOS, they only learned a "little grammar" and that their English "teacher will give you marks based on the [essay/paragraph] structure." The essays seemed to emphasize creative writing:

> Zhao: We write the essay, or the OC [original composition, a major part of English 10 and 12 provincial exams], and but in the language [university ESL] class we know how to write the academic paragraph or essay it's more like academic and it have so many like, skills how we how we write a topic sentence, and how to how to make it perfect like this. But in high school only like structure. (Excerpt 6.9 - Second Interview, 13:06, Jan. 31, 2019)

A review of rubrics issued by the BC Ministry of Education for marking English 12, English 10, and Social Studies 11 shows that grammar is less emphasized in the mark bands. The examples below of level four out of six descriptors show that some errors of conventions are acceptable and that grammar is the final criteria.

Table 6.2: *Example of criteria for responses at the 'competent' 4 of 6 level marked holistically*

Course and Essay	Mark Band
English 12 "Stand-Alone" Paragraph Response to Literature	The four response is **competent**. The assertions tend to be simplistic; there are no significant errors in understanding. References are present and appropriate, but may be limited to only part of the text. The writing is organized and straightforward. Conventions of language are usually followed, but some errors are evident.
English 12 Analysis of Synthesis of two texts	The four essay is **competent**. Understanding of the texts tends to be literal and superficial. Some synthesis is apparent. The essay may rely heavily on paraphrasing. References are present and appropriate, but may be limited. The writing is organized and straightforward. Conventions of language are usually followed, but some errors are evident.
English 12 Original Composition	The four paper is **competent**. The composition conveys the writer's ideas, but without flair or strong control. Diction and syntax are usually appropriate, but lack variety. Structure, regardless of type, is predictable and relatively mechanical. The paper shows a clear sense of the writer's purpose. Conventions of language are usually followed, but some errors are evident.
English 10 Making Connections Through Reading	[4] The four response is competent in its discussion of ideas. Demonstrates some understanding of the texts at an interpretive level. Response is organized and straightforward, but may miss subtle or complex ideas. Supported by relevant details from the texts.
English 10 Writing Rubric	[4] Ideas are generally straightforward and clear, with some support and sense of purpose. Basic vocabulary, some sentence variety. Attempts to engage the audience, but lacks a consistent voice. Structure may be formulaic. Errors generally do not impede meaning.
Social Studies 11 Essay Rubric	• A relevant position/thesis, as directed by the command term, is adequate. • Competent recall of factual content; generally organized in a clear manner. • Position is supported with sufficient details and adequate conclusions are drawn. • Expression is sufficiently fluent; errors do not impede meaning.

(Government of British Columbia, 2019d)

Since the English courses at BCOS are generally English Language Arts, it is unclear how much direct grammar instruction students receive. A review of English 10 and English 12 provincial exams shows an emphasis on paragraph and essay production and reading as the main receptive language skill. Most multiple choice questions are about literary devices, comprehension, tone, and voice. BC provincial exams from before 2004 had a section on grammar but now it is only marked as part of the essay rubric. Zhao confirmed that she did not view grammar as high priority.

> Zhao: Maybe the teacher will teach us like the grammar, how to write the sentence in sometimes, but uhh if we make the mistake we just ignore it, sometimes because we are not pay so many attention on it because we have the essay test and writing test and vocabulary test in high school, so we will pay more attention about that, and we don't have the good grammar. (Excerpt 6.10 - Second Interview, 14:14, Jan. 31, 2019)

Students often ignored any mistakes they made in writing and paid more attention to what would be tested. Zhao's comments are an example of how BCOS students were socialized into certain writing practices that were valued by the BC teachers who may have been hired more on their subject expertise rather than language teaching. Duan's earlier description of being taught language by a science teacher and Bai's description of grade 10 as having a light workload connect with Zhao's neglect of grammar accuracy.

Students from CPS were in her university ESL classes and she divulged some envy about how they are able to produce grammar knowledge innately. Zhao described their skills, "for example like past participle, like this kind of words, they already memorize in their mind, they can just say it fluently for example like 'be, was, were' like 'been', they don't need to think." Zhao explained how other students are able to recite the three verb forms which she never had to memorize in her BCOS. She considered the strong memorization skills of Chinese school graduates as impressive by then saying, "sometimes I really, really think that maybe is a good thing, because they already memorized in their mind, not like me." Zhao placed herself in a deficit position because she had not learned enough grammar systemically. Since she was in a bridging ESL course at university, there is likely a stronger emphasis on systematic grammar

learning and practice compared to her BCOS where the emphasis is on literature, essays, and projects. She does consider her writing as an advantage.

Zhao: I think that is helpful, but because some other student like in the language [ESL] class in [university] mm they may not know this, but I know so it maybe easy for me to write.
Ian: But your weakness is what?
Zhao: It's the detail maybe use the uh use the wrong sentence to explain what, explain the thing or you didn't use the good (.) transition word. (Excerpt 6.11 - Second Interview, 15:12, Jan. 31, 2019)

In addition to better organized writing, Zhao said that she felt like she is more familiar with the school system and knows more about what Canadian teachers are looking for.

Ian: Do you think you have any skills that are stronger?
Zhao: Nnn: maybe the logic thinking?, because I have the teacher who come from Canadian, I know what they're ah like school system (.) for example like yeah in class we need to do so many activities, not like in not like the Chinese public school they didn't do it they just maybe a teacher speak teaching and student just do their works. (Excerpt 6.12 - Second Interview, 33:00, Jan. 31, 2019)

From these excerpts, Zhao describes a way that her BCOS socialized her into greater familiarity with Canadian educational norms and behaviours. Zhao believes that experience doing activities and projects in a Canadian school will be helpful, especially when she compares to the lecture and work style of classes in CPS. Her preparation is limited since her negative experience in Social Science may mean that she was not ready for less structured lecture courses. Her description of university Math in chapter five shows familiarity with the courses that are structured like her BCOS course. Zhao's self-assessment has parallels to Bai's consideration of her strengths and weaknesses.

Bai had feelings of English deficiencies that were similar to Zhao. Chapter four includes Bai's explanations that she would have preferred to have had more language training in grade 10 instead of trying to read a novel that was beyond her level. While most of the other subject content was easy, Bai felt that learning more of the fundamentals of English grammar would have helped her grade 12 workload. Bai explained that learning how to lead presentations was one of the most important skills she learned in her BCOS, especially in comparison to CPS which she claimed did not teach presentations.

Bai provided the example of the Harvard Summit for Young Leaders in China, which she attended after a rigorous application process. This annual Harvard College sponsored summit "brings the liberal arts experience to Chinese high school students of all backgrounds" (HSYLC, 2019) and has sessions that replicate undergraduate university courses. Bai explained that only some of the best students from the most elite schools in China attend and that she was "lucky to be one of them" and high level of English was a prerequisite. During the classes, Bai was surprised to discover that some of the Chinese students did not know the meaning of a *presentation*. They did not know the word even though Bai recognized they were top students at top schools:

> Bai: And like we also have to write the personal statement for apply for the summit. And I was lucky, I was very lucky to be one of them and like, they also have some public Chinese students also was from Chinese public schools like when we do class together they don't even know the words they don't even know what's the presentation mean? You know they don't know this word. (Excerpt 6.13 - Second Interview, 53:22, Jan. 18, 2019)

I had to ask for clarification on this anecdote and Bai implied that because they did not recognize the word *presentation*, they were confused about what it was or what they had to do. It seems that it was at this event where Bai realized the significance of her BCOS education. It included a greater variety of activities and assessments than just lectures and tests. Bai had no intention of denigrating CPS students and often said that they were very smart, but her use of this example and explaining how both she, before starting grade 10, (Excerpt 4.4) and these other students did not know the word *presentation* is her way of highlighting the importance of her BCOS education and how it prepared her for university. At the Harvard Summit she said that, "because we have English class together, we will have class in English, so like when we studied together, they are very confused even though they are from very, their high school (.) are not bad." This may mean that Bai was curious about why other students were "confused" about presentations and how they got accepted to this summit.

Bai noted that she felt prepared for university. Her A average and ease of communication with a variety of peers corroborates her self-evaluation. Early in the first interview, Bai stated that her BCOS education helped her "transition" to university.

> Bai: I think it's like, this school is like very good experience for students to um familiar with how like foreign curriculum like and maybe can like, for us it transfer easily to join another like foreign school.
> Ian: Transfer easily (.) You transferred easily to here?
> Bai: Like if I was studying Chinese school, like high school in China, like I think it would be much harder than (.) for now like experiences in for example in [university]. I have the experiences in [BCOS], so I think it's much more easier like, than public school student. (Excerpt 6.14 - First Interview, 3:30, Sept. 14, 2018)

At the end of the second interview, Bai continued to firmly express that studying in her BCOS helped her saying, “I think it [studying in BCOS] helps me a lot. If I study, like in public Chinese high school and after that I go abroad I don’t think I can fit in this community.” Bai was quick to add that “many [CPS] students, who always very good at English” were capable of success at university. Studying at BCOS was beneficial for herself and could not speak for others.

Bai then added that her high marks are enough evidence to show that her BCOS prepared her for university. Her transition was “not very hard” even though the “knowledge we learn are much harder […] I still got A in finals so I think that’s just fine.” Overall, Bai compared herself with CPS students who were less experienced with presentations. Zhao made similar comparisons regarding her familiarity with the Canadian school system. Bai explained that she felt some deficiencies with her English fundamentals, especially in reading Philosophy texts, but through translation to L1 and discussions with professors, was able to achieve A grades.

Duan never detailed any ways that her BCOS prepared her for university. In the first interview, she said that the classes in university “are pretty similar” as most of the differences were outside the classroom. In the second interview, Duan said the she thinks most of the skills she learned in BCOS will come to fruition in the next semester and upper year courses. While her English Language Arts courses emphasized creative writing and she grew to have a high appreciation for literature, her foundational academic English course was “more formal” and there was no literature or poetry. Despite not particularly enjoying it, she was looking forward to an English Literature course in the upcoming semester. Even though she had trouble with her essay writing, she was pleased with her average mark and knew that the foundational course would be helpful for upcoming courses. In addition, many of her friends were international

students from various other countries so her socialization into that community benefitted from her developed English ability. Since English is the *lingua franca*, socializing into the multicultural community would further help develop her English.

Table 6.3: *Summary of participants' perspective of how their BCOS prepared them or not*

	Prepared	Unprepared
Zhao	• essay writing organization • presentations and projects	• systematic grammar • lecture listening
Bai	• presentations and projects • fitting in with university community	• English reading and vocabulary
Chan	• lecture listening • some citation knowledge	• proper citations and referencing • discussion with native English speakers
Duan	• essay writing basics • some citation knowledge	• learn more about Western culture • managing free time
Fei	• citation knowledge • conversation with others	• learn more about Western culture • managing free time

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter responded to the third and most important research question which enquired into the ways that participants thought their BCOS prepared them for university. All participants stated that learning research skills and writing essays with citations was a key advantage that BCOS graduates possessed and that their CPS peers lacked. The section on academic research notes that some students only learned the basics of citing sources and could have been better prepared for university with more rigorous standards. Bai discussed the importance of avoiding plagiarism in academic writing and Chan mentioned it as well.

Participants also reported other ways that studying at their BCOS helped prepare them for university. Mostly they contrasted with CPS like when Bai described how those students at the Harvard Summit did not learn presentations in their schools. Chan said something similar when she said there are never projects in CPS and she never learned the word until coming to her BCOS. Zhao explained that she had a better understanding of the school system and expectations of Canadian educators than those students from CPS. Some participants were comfortable with essay writing, lecture listening, presentations, and interactive learning activities in class although these are not generalizable across this case study. The final chapter has a discussion about the findings from the three research questions.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter discusses the relevance of significant findings from each chapter and how they address the research questions, theoretical framings, and previous studies. Then I will reflect on my study and note some qualities and limitations before concluding. Whereas the three findings chapters separately responded to each research question by weaving through the participants' voices, this discussion will synthesize the questions through the themes of school, peers, and self.

7.1 School

School was important in the lives of these participants. Four of these students lived in dormitories on campus and spent time in classrooms in the morning, afternoon, and evening. They were all registered in both Chinese and BC schools yet there was variation in the type and amount of Chinese curriculum time. Almost all of the students in their school were bound for post-secondary institutions abroad so they had some goals in common. The participants experienced the disruption of situational change when they commenced their BCOS education and socialized into their new surroundings. They had made transnational transitions as they moved from lecture and test-driven Chinese schools to a somewhat more participatory form of learning in their BCOS. Participants had changed their language of learning in addition to their style and context of learning. Three similarities between school and university are that they wrote research papers, learned essay organization, and many of their course assessments were projects.

Each student had the opportunity to write an academic research paper at their BCOS and they reported that this experience was beneficial and provided an advantage over CPS students

when commencing university. However, some of their experiences learning this type of writing were not ideal. Chan had difficulty in university because she may have been overconfident and put faith in a faulty citation generator for an assignment (Excerpt 6.5). Duan reported that the academic writing she learned in her BCOS was rudimentary and not very formal compared to expectations in her foundational academic writing course at university (Excerpt 5.8). These participants may have come to university with more academic confidence than the Chinese international students that were studied by Heng (2018) and Zhang and Zhou (2010). The participants' awareness of plagiarism supports the proposition that a BCOS education prepares them for university. This correlates with Hu and Lei (2015) who found that extended experience with English academic writing led Chinese students to have greater knowledge of and stronger stances against plagiarism. This study has not revealed detailed perspectives of how participants differentiated between unacknowledged copying and unattributed paraphrasing, which could be the focus of a further study with offshore students. The participants' awareness and partial experience with research and writing is a way that BCOS students may have been socialized into an academic discourse community and practices that resemble Canadian high schools and universities.

Some participants also stated that they had developed essay organization and writing skills in their BCOS which has made their transition to university better. Duan received an average grade in her foundational academic writing course. She had difficulty with the formal academic writing and vocabulary in university (Excerpt 5.9) because she found it quite different than her BCOS English which included more creative writing and literature. She said she learned about citation formats in History class but it was unclear to what extent. Zhao also began

university with a chance to relearn English foundations because her ESL courses emphasized systematic grammar instruction. Zhao said she mostly learned essay structure in her English courses and sentence-level grammar was less emphasized (Excerpt 6.10). On the other hand, Chan, Bai, and Fei reported few problems when they brought their writing skills to Commerce, Philosophy, and English Literature courses. Therefore, they may have been prepared for these for-credit subject/content courses which were similar to BCOS courses. Fei described her English literature course at university as similar in structure and content to her grade 12 course; an example that her BCOS helped socialize her into a similar academic context in her Canadian university. Zhao and Duan took foundational English courses so they returned to a more foundational type of English class that they had been socialized out of at their BCOS. Additional studies that focus on English acquisition, essay writing, and systematic grammar learning in BCOS and university courses would be a further avenue of research.

All participants experienced at least three years of instruction through the English language in their BCOS courses. Most participants seemed comfortable and capable learning in university lectures. Chan said that lectures were her preferred way of learning but others preferred more interaction and attention from professors. Bai attended but did not enjoy the large lectures for mandatory first-year courses but succeeded through group learning with Chinese friends and classmates. Bai explained that enjoyed her classes that did not have Chinese classmates because Public Speaking was interactive and assessed on presentations and peer-feedback. The Philosophy content was very difficult especially since she lacked knowledge about European history but she often attended drop-in hours to discuss the topics. Duan said her lectures in Music History were boring and the book was dry so she wished for more projects and

class discussion. If a teacher without my positionality had read the transcripts, it would seem that BCOS classes were full of participation, group discussions, projects, and presentations. Participants tended to describe their BCOS in comparison to CPS where these characteristics are noticeable. Observations of teaching in a BCOS in China confirms there was a balance of lectures with the use of visuals, video, textbooks, and tests in addition to interactive learning activities. The irony, perhaps, is that while BCOS were attempting to emphasize project-based assessments and interactive activities to prepare students for university, many university courses (especially first year courses) were based around large lectures, textbook readings, and test-based assessments – indeed, features that are more common in Chinese public schools than BCOS. The guidelines in the new BC curriculum further emphasize inquiry and projects but are first year university courses transitioning to inquiry and project-based learning? That said, participants stated that the university classes were not like Chinese classes and therefore the lectures and activities in the university classes resemble BCOS classes overall.

7.2 Peers

In both BCOS and university, participants engaged in communities of peers. Bai described how she felt like students in her BCOS were learning cooperatively. Students in similar classes with similar goals and struggling with learning in English made her learning easier through to grade 12 as her community coalesced. Duan and Fei were in a more structured school as they had the same cohort in every class and these extended into the Chinese courses in the evenings. Bai was able to build new social capital after saying in the first interview that the problem of every classmate having various schedules was a bit unsettling (Excerpt 5.1). Duan

commented on her increase in free time and was able to find community in her smaller and more united Music Department. Fei experienced an excess of freedom at university and missed early morning classes and needed help from her mother to get up in the morning. Only Chan, who went to the BCOS with the most free time, was able to comfortably adapt to the free time in university life. Since all the students in a BCOS intended to go to university abroad, then the similar goals may have helped students form community with peers. Each participant appeared to rebuild their social capital after arriving at university but in different ways and at different rates. Since all BCOS students were learning in their L2, they also formed community as they coped with learning in English. University courses were in their second language so some of their learning strategies transferred to university which led to Chinese language study groups and tutorials.

One binding trait of a community is language use. All participants grew up speaking Mandarin Chinese and went to high schools where the vast majority of students were Chinese L1 speakers. Participants described Chinese being used extensively in both academic and social activities in their offshore schools. Little changed upon moving to university except for an increasing need to speak English with non-Chinese people. Bai and Fei said that they were able to comfortably speak with Canadian students but Duan and Chan were more comfortable with Chinese or other international students. Duan explained that she was attracted to other non-Canadians as friends because they "look different" and can empathize with each other better. Similar findings state that the "same foreigner status makes them share similar challenges" (Zhou & Zhang, 2014, p. 12). Montgomery and McDowell (2009) found that international students from various countries formed a community of practice. In BCOS-1, Zhao

and Bai characterized English as a workplace language that was only used in the classroom and mostly when the teacher was within earshot. Participants reported that BC teachers encouraged the use of English with "English-only rules" and participation grades. Zhao and Bai differed in explaining if students were punished for speaking Chinese (Excerpt 4.26) or whether students were commended for speaking more English than usual.

BC offshore schools must teach both English language acquisition and curriculum content in an environment where almost all students have the same L1. The BCOS inspection reports require schools to have plans that outline "English language assessment and acquisition" (Government of British Columbia, 2019a, Section 4.2) and all participants went to schools with diagnostic testing for potential grade 10s and the two larger schools, BCOS-1 and BCOS-2, have English foundations and bridging programs for potential students to learn English before beginning full credit courses. The inspection report for BCOS-3 indicates that, as a smaller and more selective school inside a large hosting school, they are able to recruit new students from a large pool who have taken additional English classes on weekends.

Enforcing language use is contentious in education; schools must consider reasons for language use policies. From the participants' perspective, it seems that teachers encouraged English use in the classrooms but were unable or unwilling to enforce English use in other parts of the school. Students considered speaking English to each other as "weird" or "showing off" so there was peer pressure to use Chinese outside of the bounds of the BC curriculum. In addition to these sentiments of external socialization within the community of students, there could also be internal or self-socialization occurring (Anderson, 2017; Duff & Doherty, 2015; Lee & Bucholtz, 2015), because of an unseen surveilling "gaze" (Anderson, 2017) among the students who may

prefer or (strategically) choose to use their L1 (with other L1 peers) despite the "English-only rules" for the BCOS classroom. Among the participants in this study, self-socialization exemplifies learners' agency where they purposefully and strategically (self) socialize into discourse/language practices and communit(ies) by not speaking English. By contravening the school's rules or participation mark criteria, students may align with their peers by not speaking English in social settings. Students who may wish to follow the guidelines and speak English could perceive that there is risk of social ostracism for socializing into the teachers' language (authoritative power) instead of using Chinese that all peers understand, and maintain inclusion in their (L1) communities. In this way, self-socialization into their L1 communities (and away from perceived or potential exclusion as a legitimate member of these communities) may impede further development of English and socialization into new English-medium communities. Accounting for self-socialization, "enables consideration of the omnipresent sociocultural factors influencing and mediating newcomers' integration and negotiation into their language practices and communities" (Anderson, 2017, p. 2). Whether the peer pressure is external or internally constructed, and if this type of language socialization is present in all BCOS, is worthy of additional study.

These participants portray BCOS as avoiding assimilationist language policies that are criticized by Carder (2018) who promotes a model of international schools being "international space[s] … where English as an international language is but one part of their language repertoires, their mother tongue(s) maintaining a prominent position in their identities" (p. 18). Carder's (2018) stance refers to expatriate international schools where multiple languages exist so English usually becomes the *lingua franca* of the community. In such cases, children in

smaller minorities have tragically lost their mother tongues (Carder, 2018, p. 18) which is not a threat in BCOS because of entry in adolescence as well as the immersion in L1 outside the BC classroom and campus. The negotiated use of Chinese and English in BCOS's exemplifies the transnational nature of these schools and would benefit from a more focused study with school observations and bilingual interviews with both students and teachers.

7.3 Self

Since the focus of this study is the participants' perspectives and experiences in offshore schools and university, they also discussed their own development as transnational students who were socializing into new educational worlds. A key area of divergence was between Chan, Zhao, and Bai who went to schools that allowed students to have more self-study time, and Duan and Fei who went to a school with a full schedule throughout the day. Bai explained that learning to study on her own led her to become a more independent and self-regulated learner (Excerpt 4.10). The absence of a watchful Chinese teacher providing constant attention and coaching for the *gaokao* may have assisted Bai in developing into an inquiring learner. The absence of BC teachers after school hours led to Bai and her peers making study groups and learning in a way that more closely resembles her university experience. These are examples of how BCOS educators help students prepare for university by creating opportunities for students to prepare themselves both as individuals or socialized into communities of practice. Zhao explained (Excerpt 4.11) this difference between Chinese and Canadian teachers as deriving from the need to prepare for exams like the *gaokao* which is crucial for student success and the reputation of the school (Liu & Dunne, 2009). Chan also learned to self-study with the freeing of her daily

schedule after she cancelled her Chinese courses in the evenings. While she took a more apathetic approach to her BC courses in grade 10, she socialized into a university-bound student later in high school.

Duan's and Fei's schedule at BCOS-3 was described as "very full" since there were no exemptions from the Chinese program at their school. This lack of free time may have hindered their readiness for university. They had Chinese homeroom teachers assigned to their classes who also worked as IELTS tutors and university advisors. While Duan was in the upper class with no complaints about her Chinese teachers, Fei was scornful of her homeroom teacher because of her condescending attitude toward the students. Fei suggested that her self-control in university was weak and was a skill she was trying to improve. Perhaps the interventions of Chinese teachers and Fei's inexperience with free time at BCOS-3 was a hinderance on Fei's preparation for university. A more focused study that compares the variations in BCOS and the effects on self-regulated learning and project-based assessments is warranted, especially as these are key traits in the new BC curriculum.

7.4 Qualities and Limitations

This case study has narrow boundaries that have ensured that the five participants had similar experiences and perspectives. Even by narrowing the age, gender, curriculum, and university, the semi-structured interviews produced a wide range of themes about various aspects of education. While broad in topics and themes, this case study was narrow in other areas. Further studies can adjust these boundaries to focus on critical topics in education, including research skills, academic writing, self-regulated learning, and/or English language acquisition.

Extended studies in schools with teacher or professor perspectives would yield additional knowledge. Participatory action research or longitudinal studies could also address research gaps into the dynamic changes in transnational education. Since this university had a small population of BCOS alumni, there was a limited number of potential participants. Because the researcher was monolingual then all of the volunteers had to be comfortable with an extended interview and willing to express their perspectives and experiences in their second language. This may have limited the study to participants who are proficient in English, and possibly higher achieving than the other BCOS graduates.

Most of the data represented in the findings are from the two interviews. While there are a number of perspectives and experiences, all of these are filtered through the participants' reflections and memories of those prior experiences, sometimes going back three years and maybe longer if their descriptions of Chinese public schools are from their own middle school years. The few journal entries from their first few months at university have enhanced some of the interview data but they are brief since the participants may have found them time consuming. To alleviate this, a survey of a few Likert scale questions or one-word responses may have illustrated the participants' university experiences and trends better than qualitative narratives alone. Another way to enhance this study would be research observations of first year university courses or interviews with course instructors. Only two participants provided rubrics, quizzes, and course outlines from high school courses so most of the data about their courses and assignments is through the interview descriptions. Nevertheless, the analysis of the publicly available provincial rubrics, exams, curriculum outlines, and inspection reports provide ample

insight into the material the participants learned. Analyzing the university course outlines and assignments have also been helpful in triangulating the rich data collected from the interviews.

7.5 Conclusion

This thesis presented the perspectives and experiences of five Chinese international students as they reflected upon their British Columbia offshore school experience at the onset of their university education at a Canadian university. The introductory chapter introduced the phenomenon under investigation, the conceptual framework, and a description of the role of offshore schools in Chinese education. Chapter two outlined the theoretical framings which helped inform the design of this case study, followed by a review of literature relevant to the study and research questions. The third chapter explained the case study approach and a discussion of the researcher's positionality as well as an overview of data collection and thematic analysis. Findings from this were described in chapters four, five, and six guided by each research question. The closing chapter discussed the findings of the study and this part concludes the thesis.

This study is the culmination of my personal and professional inquiry into the ways that Chinese international students perceived their BCOS education. As a teacher who has helped a number of students from high school in one country to university in another country, the findings in this thesis are of great personal and professional interest to me. This project originated in casual and collegial conversations with colleagues in China and eventually took this shape with the guidance of my supervisor, professors, and classmates in my Master's program. My goal has been to gain a more thorough understanding of the context of the student experience and the

ways that a BCOS education prepared them for university. This goal has been achieved and has opened possibilities for more thorough, more longitudinal, or more focused research questions.

Three research questions enabled this case study to cover significant topics in education from the perspective of the participants. The Chinese students who are engaged in transnational and international education are diverse and they constitute multiple categories; BCOS students could therefore constitute a (sub)category. These participants perceived their first semester of university in different ways, but while admitting to some weaknesses and having challenges, they felt confident in the community and were academically and socially successful. The findings suggest that these participants perceived themselves and many of their schoolmates to be well-prepared for successful experiences in university.

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Appendix A - Recruitment Poster

公告 - 致中国留学生大一新生
Chinese International Students in First-Year

Welcome to the University of Victoria! You are invited to **participate in a study** investigating how Chinese international students have prepared academically and socially for university in Canada. We are particularly interested in students who attended **Canadian curriculum offshore schools in China** and are just now beginning their first year of undergraduate study at the University of Victoria. This study is being conducted by Ian Alexander (Principal Investigator) under the supervision of Dr. Tim Anderson (Thesis Supervisor) as part of Ian Alexander's Master's Thesis research. The study is expected to last from September 2018 to January 2019.

The results of this research will be used to explore and understand how Canadian offshore schools have helped Chinese international students prepare for university. This knowledge will help students, teachers, schools, and universities better understand the cross-cultural adaptations and accommodations that Chinese students make when moving abroad.

Participants who complete all parts of this study will be thanked with a **$50 gift card** for the UVic Bookstore.

Please contact Ian at **ianfalexander@uvic.ca** or by WeChat ID at **ianfalexander** to find out more about this study.

欢迎来到维多利亚大学！我们诚挚邀请您参加一项关于中国留学生如何在学业和社交上为留加大学生活做准备的研究。我们尤其对那些在中国曾接受过加拿大海外课程教育且今年刚开始就读维多利亚大学的本科大一新生感兴趣。本研究由Ian Alexander（首席研究员)在Tim Anderson博士（论文导师)的指导下进行，将作为Ian Alexander硕士论文研究的一部分。该研究预计将从2018年9月持续到2019年1月。

这项研究的结果将被用来探索和理解加拿大海外学校是如何帮助中国留学生提前准备大学的，并且协助学生们、老师们、以及各所学校和大学更进一步了解中国学生为出国留学所做的跨文化适应和调节。

完整参与这项研究的参与者将会收到一张价值加币**50**元的维多利亚大学书店礼品卡，以表感谢。

欲了解更多关於此研究的细节，请通过邮箱ianfalexander@uvic.ca 或微信号ianfalexander来联系**Ian**究。

Appendix B - Participant Informed Consent Form (4 pages)

Participant Informed Consent Form

Project Title:
Chinese International Student Perspectives of their Canadian Offshore School Experience

Researcher: Ian Alexander, Faculty of Education, Graduate Student, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria, 778-533-8041, ianfalexander@uvic.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Tim Anderson, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, 250-472-4290, timanderson@uvic.ca

Purpose and Objectives of the Research:
This multiple case study will investigate what ways Canadian offshore schools prepare Chinese international students for university in Canada. This study will explore both academic preparation and socialization into university.

This Research is Important Because:
The results of this study will provide universities, offshore schools, teachers, and students with information and insight into the perspectives of Chinese international students who have attended Canadian offshore schools. Preparation for university is difficult for all students and might be additionally difficult for students transitioning into another country, culture, and language. The policies and methods of foreign offshore schools have not been deeply analysed and the perspectives of students will provide valuable data to the field of research.

Participation:
You have been selected to participate because you are a first-year international student from China who has attended a Canadian offshore school. Your perspectives of your high school education and your present transition to a Canadian university is information worth researching. This is a multiple case study and there are up to eight others participating in this study.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary:
You are a voluntary participant in this study and you may refuse to participate in this project. You may also choose to withdraw from the project at any time without any consequence to your position as a student even after signing this consent form. Refusing to participate or withdrawal will not jeopardize your position as a student in any way.

Procedures:
This study is expected to last five months in duration from September 2018 to January 2019. Participation in this study will take a total of about four to five hours of your time during the semester.

Before participating in this study, please thoroughly read this consent form over the next few days. If you consent to participate in the study, please sign it and arrange a time to meet with me at the McPherson Library. Then we can arrange a time for the first interview.

During this period, the participant will be asked to join two audio-recorded face-to-face interviews in both September and January. Each interview will be around one hour long and will be conducted in a study room in the McPherson Library or in my supervisor, Dr. Tim Anderson's office in the MacLauren Building. These interviews will involve questions that inquire into your academic and extra-curricular experiences in high school and your feelings and reactions to this education now that you are beyond the high school stage of your education.

After the first interview, participants will be asked to write a short response to journal questions. There will be a total of five responses spaced two weeks apart. These will be about your experiences navigating your first academic courses at university or about how your high school assignments related to university assignments. I will use email to ask questions to help you generate writing.

Finally, I will ask you to share some documents from both your offshore high school and your current university courses. Samples you may wish to share are course outlines, syllabi, project instructions, and project rubrics. Being able to compare these documents from your two different schools will help the researcher understand the whole data set.

Compensation:
All participants who complete the interviews and journals will be compensated with a $50 gift card to the university bookstore in appreciation for their time spent in the interviews and writing the journal entries. If a participant withdraws before completion of the study, they will be awarded a $25 gift card in appreciation of their time spent up to that point.

Benefits:
To the Participants:
Participating in the interviews and journal writing will provide you with the opportunity to reflect on what you have learned in high school and how that knowledge and those skills can be used for your benefit at university and beyond. This is also a useful opportunity to further develop your English language skills and possibly explain some feelings about education that you may have wanted the convey for a while.

Benefits to Society:
Canadian, Chinese, and other societies are interconnecting and internationalizing with each other. Education is a significant part of society and it is internationalizing quickly. The internationalization of high school education (in the form of offshore schools using BC curricula) is a vastly under-researched line of inquiry and stakeholders in Canada and China will benefit from additional knowledge and information in order to make more informed decisions around international education policy.

Benefits to the State of Knowledge:
The changing student populations of universities is a major contributing factor to this internationalization. The perspectives of students, particularly students from BC offshore schools, would add to the overall state of knowledge in the field of international education.

Risks:
There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants:
The researcher may have a relationship with participants if I was one of the teachers in your school between 2015 and 2017. There is no need to participate in the study even though I was previously in a professional power-over relationship.

Withdrawal of Participation:
You may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence. You may withdraw even after signing this form and after the interview. Should you withdraw, your data will be removed from the study and the data will be digitally deleted and paper copies will be destroyed.

On-going Consent:
This is a five-month study so the researcher will ask for your on-going consent throughout the process. If you no longer wish to give consent at any time through the semester, you may do so without having to provide explanation. There are no consequences for withdrawing from the study. This study may be extended into a longitudinal study and the researcher will ask for your consent to contact you for an extension of the study in the future.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:
The identity of all participants will remain confidential throughout the whole process. Participants' real names will not be used and students will be asked to choose a pseudonym to be used in interview transcripts and written documents related to this study. All information which might directly or indirectly reveal the participants' identities will be deleted or altered and will not be released or published.

Research Results may be Used and Disseminated in the Following Ways:
The primary use of this data will be for the researcher's Master's Thesis which will be published on the University of Victoria's D-Space website. Data analysis and research findings will be shared with my supervisor Dr. Tim Anderson. Data analysis and research findings may also be presented at academic conferences and may be published as scholarly work. All digital data will be encrypted and stored in a safe and secure place for at least five years and up to a maximum of ten years after Thesis dissemination. If I would like to use the data for another project, then I will contact the participant for consent if they agree that I can retain contact information in a confidential way.

Disposal of Data:
Data from this study will be stored for at least five years after Thesis dissemination and disposed of within ten years. The University of Victoria has safe and secure data storage for research purposes. Digital data will be deleted from UVic's digital storage after ten years. Any paper copies of data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home for up to one year after Thesis dissemination.

Questions or Concerns:
Contact the researcher at the information at the top of page 1.
Contact the Human Research Ethics Board, University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 ethics@uvic.ca

Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Please sign each form by printing your legal name in Pinyin and also signing your name in Chinese characters. Please write the date as well. When you have signed the forms, please return one copy to me as soon as possible.

_____	_____	_____
Printed Legal Name of Student in Pinyin	Signature of Student in Chinese Characters	Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Future Use of Data:

I consent to the use of my data in future research: ___ (Participant initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: ___ (Participant initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____ (Participant initials)

Thank you very much for your participation in this study.

Ian Alexander, BA, B.Ed
MA Candidate
Faculty of Education
Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Tim Anderson, BA, B.Ed, MA, PhD
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Education
Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction

Appendix C: Sample Interview Questions

First Interview:

What was your high school like? Describe your school.

What was a typical or normal day in school like?

How did the courses progress from grade 10 to 12?

How you changed or adapted.

Contrast self in 10 vs 12 vs now.

What ways did your ways of learning change between grade 10 and 12?

In what ways did your teachers help you learn the Canadian learning styles and expectations?

Did you learn research and academic writing?

What is different/similar between university and high school classes?

What has been the most difficult/easy thing about your new classes?

Second Interview:

What were your courses like last semester?

What kind of learning activities did you do in the classes?

Was it easier/harder than you expected?

Did anything surprise you about university life or classes?

What language did you speak most of the time?

How did you find interacting and discussing in English

How do you learn content vocabulary in university?

Have you learned APA or MLA citation in university?

Were your more busy than in high school?

How much do you participate in class discussions?

Could you understand the professor's lectures and the speed and clarity?

Did you make any support groups or networks that have helped you succeed?

Appendix D: Sample Journal Prompts

As a community of almost all Chinese-speakers, how did you (or as a group) decide when to use English and when to use Chinese. Did it depend on when you talked about school work or about daily life? Did it matter when you were in the school or in the classroom? Did it matter when the teacher was nearby or not? What encouraged you to use English in school? What encouraged you to use Chinese in school and the classroom? Was there peer pressure to use a certain language?

In what ways are your UVic classes different or similar to your BC offshore school classes?

You may have already had some mid-terms at UVic. Can you describe how you prepare for these exams? (Maybe study alone, in small groups, tutorials, textbook, lecture notes, memorizing, not studied).

What is your mood (or the general mood around campus) now that we are in the middle part of the semester and you have passed Thanksgiving, your first holiday in Canada?

Do you have opportunities to participate in discussions in your university classes. This is either whole class or small group discussions. If you don't participate much then why is that? Does not participating impact your overall academic mark?

Have you joined any non-academic activities, societies, or clubs at UVic? What did you join and how have they been?

Appendix E: Transcription Conventions Used in this Thesis

(20:19)	Time of excerpt in interview
[word]	Clarifies meaning or indicate laughter, body language, or tone.
(.)	Pause of one second or more
.hh	Inhaled breath
hh.	Exhaled breath
:	Elongated word
,	Short pause or added for clarity of reading
.	End of a sentence
?	Raised tone or question
[…]	Text removed because irrelevant
[BCOS]	BC offshore school name used in audio
[university]	University name used in audio