Check for updates

Special issue article

APMJ

Asian and Pacific Migration Journal
2020, Vol. 29(2) 227–253
© Scalabrini Migration Center 2020
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/0117196820935995
journals.sagepub.com/home/amj
SAGE

Conceptualizing virtual transnational diaspora: Returning to the 'return' of Chinese transnational academics

Ling Lei and Shibao Guo
University of Calgary

Abstract

Transnational migration brings to the fore the various social and professional connections migrants maintain with their home and sojourn countries. Drawing on a qualitative case study with 12 Chinese transnational academics in the field of the social sciences and humanities in three higher education institutions in Beijing, China, this article explores their transnational ways of being and belonging. Informed by the theoretical lens of transnational diaspora, our study indicates that the concept of "returnee" is too restricted to capture the transnational work and learning practices and the self-identification of Chinese transnational academics. Our analysis reveals that the study-abroad experience as a PhD student shapes the multiple and simultaneous ways of being and ways of belonging of the transnational academics in relation to China, the host countries where they pursued doctoral studies and, increasingly, de-territorialized transnational academic communities. Mobilizing digital communication technologies, they create spaces to negotiate their identities as researchers, ethnic Chinese and members of transnational academic communities. Their work and learning in transnational spaces have contributed to the formation of virtual transnational diaspora characterized by the inter-dependence of academics across borders.

1-2
2 notes:

Corresponding author:
Shibao Guo, PhD, Professor, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary AB, T2N 1N4, Canada.
Email: guos@ucalgary.ca

Keywords
transnational diaspora, virtual diaspora, ways of being, ways of belonging, returnee, transnational migration, Chinese academic mobility

Introduction

The scholarship on transnationalism and diaspora has offered a useful lens for examining cross-border migration. It is believed that contemporary society has been characterized by transnational networks of connections and cross-border mobility (Faist et al., 2013). Such sustained social ties and movements across borders have challenged the conceptions of allegiance, integration and identity of transmigrants in the immigration countries. However, the extensively explored transnational phenomena in the immigration countries stood in marked contrast with the relatively sidelined research on the transnational experiences of "returned" migrants, who re-migrated to their original home countries. This was possibly owing to the fact that, as Faist (2010) pointed out, researchers of transnational migration studies are predominantly based in immigration countries. It may also be attributed to the prevailing social and political discourse promoting the connotation of "return" as the end of one's migration cycle or membership in the diaspora.

Recently, with the shifting economic power in the global economy, some previously developing countries like China are gaining a more competitive edge and are also experiencing an increasing trend of transnational migration. Those transnational migrants, or so-called *haigui* (returnees who settle) in the Chinese context, refer most commonly to internationally educated and highly skilled migrants. In general, they have been depicted in government policies and by news media as key players in China's economic revitalization and social development (Wang, 2019). Despite the growing scale and importance of transnational migrants in China, their lived experiences and identity change after return have not received research attention in transnational migration and diaspora studies. To date, their experiences and perceptions have been examined mostly through an intercultural or socio-psychological lens, mostly probing reverse culture shock (Ai and Wang, 2017). However, an intercultural perspective in the Chinese transnational migration context implies a normative culture in China that returnee migrants must adapt to, and also a closure to alternative ways of being and belonging. In the context of intensified transnational connections and movements, return migration does not preclude continued transnational connections. Correspondingly, returnee migrants' identities cannot be captured by fixed categories, but by fluid social practices and activities developed and situated in "historically

contingent, socially enacted, [and] culturally constructed 'worlds'" (Holland et al., 1998: 7).

Against this backdrop, this article revisits the phenomenon of return migration by linking it to the transnational diaspora experience. Our study was guided by two research questions: How did Chinese transnational academics maintain transnational academic connections? Why did Chinese transnational academics maintain transnational academic connections? Here, transnational academics refer specifically to those who completed their PhD studies overseas and are now working as researchers in universities in China. In this article, we first review the history and trend of Chinese academic mobility to delineate the Chinese academic diaspora population. We also demonstrate how the notions of "return" and "returnee" are constructed in the Chinese context. Next, we present our conceptual framework of transnational diaspora. We then introduce our case study of Chinese transnational academics based on data collected between 2017 and 2018. Finally, we discuss how our findings on Chinese transnational academics lead toward the conceptualization of the virtual transnational diaspora.

Literature review

Chinese academic mobility, knowledge diaspora and transnational collaboration

Our study focuses on Chinese transnational academics pursuing an academic career in China, and it is necessary to situate our study in its particular historical and social context. Chinese academic mobility has been characterized by the outflow of students pursuing education abroad and the inflow of overseas-trained "returnees." Both trends have been growing since 2000. From 1978 to 2018, a total of 5.8 million Chinese went abroad for educational purposes (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2019). According to MOE statistics, the percentage of self-funded international students from China has remained at over 90 percent. Compared to study-abroad students before the 1980s, who were almost entirely funded by the Chinese government, the privatization of source of funding has changed students' motives from public interest to private needs (Liu and Liu, 2016). Regarding the level of study, in 2016, over 35 percent of students went abroad for master's and PhD studies (MOE, 2017a). Government funding mainly supported research students and advanced academics, of which 34.6 percent were PhD students (MOE, 2017b). In terms of discipline or field of study, in the 1980s, the focus was on the natural sciences and engineering but later, the fields of study diversified to business-related fields, social sciences, arts and humanities (Liu and Liu, 2016). In terms of destinations for overseas studies, the top ten destinations account for over 90 percent of Chinese international students, with the US as the primary

receiving country in 2016 (Dong, 2017). According to the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2019), China has been the top origin country of international students in the US for nine consecutive years; in 2018, 363,341 students, or 33 percent of its total international student enrollment, were from China.

The number of returned transnational students has been rising steadily since 2000. The latest statistics showed that, in 2018, a total of 519,400 students returned to China, and the gap between the outbound and inbound flows of talents has been narrowing (MOE, 2019). From 2013 to 2018, the ratio of returnees to emigrants stayed at about 80 percent, revealing a fair balance between the outflow and inflow of talents. According to a 2016 report, the majority, or 81 percent of the returnees, obtained a master's degree, followed by 11 percent with PhD degrees and 7 percent with undergraduate or college study experience. Compared to 2015, the 2016 figures represented an increase in PhD degree holders, from 9.5 percent, but a decrease in undergraduate and college students, from 9.8 percent. The top 10 countries/regions from which PhD degree holders were returning were the United States (29 percent), Japan (13 percent), the United Kingdom (9 percent), Hong Kong (8 percent), Germany (7 percent), Korea (5 percent), France (5 percent), Singapore (5 percent), Australia (4 percent) and Canada (3 percent). The preferred employers for these PhD returnees were universities, colleges and national government organizations. Geographically, 35 percent of returnees intended to work in the most economically prosperous cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou or Shenzhen. Most PhD returnees who could secure a job in higher education in Beijing, the capital city and cultural center with the most universities in China, worked in the disciplines of science (12 percent), engineering (12 percent) and economics (6 percent) (Chen and Wu, 2017; *China Daily*, 2017; NIES, 2016).

These data demonstrate that there is a huge and ever-growing population of Chinese academic migrants with transnational migration and education experiences. However, despite the growing number of returnees, China is still considered as experiencing the loss of high-end talents, or internationally educated doctorate-qualified academics and researchers (Cao, 2008). Cao indicated that there were some 62,500 Chinese PhD-level academics in sciences and engineering (S&E) in the US. Moguérou (2006) reported that 70 percent of Chinese S&E doctoral students accepted offers for employment in the US in 2001 and this pattern has been relatively constant over the years. Another research indicated that 92 percent of China-born, US-educated PhD graduates in S&E still remained in the US five years after graduation (Zweig and Wang, 2013). While those who remain overseas after completion of their studies are identified as members of the Chinese knowledge diaspora (Yang and Welch, 2010), those who migrated back to China are called *haigui* academics in public discourse. The latter are often expected to settle permanently, or literally, to

"strike out roots" (*luodi shenggen*) in China (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China (MOHRSS), 2017). The national and local governments and universities have been emphasizing cultural re-assimilation, patriotic sentiments and their Chinese nationality in these academics' transition-to-work process (Renmin University of China (RUC), 2016). Although both groups are considered as significant players for China's development (Wang and Zweig, 2010), there has been less transnationally oriented research on long-term returnee academics compared with research on those based overseas (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015). The research on the overseas Chinese knowledge diaspora has examined their transnational academic engagement in China and how overseas Chinese academics' sense of belonging transcends the boundaries of their countries of residence (Chen and Koyama, 2013; Ip, 2006; Yang and Welch, 2010). Meanwhile, an emerging body of research has begun to explore the homecoming experiences of transmigrant academics and framing these as opportunities for change and academic impact rather than as posing problems and challenges for the migrants (Hao et al., 2017). Recent studies have explored themes, such as transmigrants' identity transformation, given their newly developed transcultural values and intercultural identities (Gill, 2016; Gu and Schweisforth, 2015) and their contributions to international research collaboration (Cai, 2012). However, public discourse on "return" and "returnee" continues to shape homecoming academic transmigrants' experiences. The following review of government policies and media reports illustrate how "return" and "returnee" are premised on immobility and expectations of returnees' national allegiance and commitment to national development.

Government policies and public discourse on "return"

Even though the act of "return" or "homecoming," as it is termed in diaspora studies, has been mostly a voluntary decision on the part of the individual, in China, the meaning of "return" has also been mediated by the government's incentive policies to entice return. Since the early 1990s, the Chinese central government and local governments, as well as government-supported intermediary organizations, have formulated and implemented incentive programs to encourage internationally educated and highly skilled expatriates to return to China. Such programs are mostly targeted at S&E researchers and high-tech entrepreneurs (Jonkers, 2010), offering financial incentives, such as research funds, research and academic job placements, competitive salaries, housing subsidies, education for returnees' children and long-term residency permits for foreign passport holders, among others (Zweig, 2006). The long-standing policy preference for S&E talents has its origin in the country's urgent need to catch up with Western countries in scientific and technological development after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

In 1978, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping also expressed his support for overseas-bound students to focus on the natural sciences (Liu and Liu, 2016). The same emphasis is continued in the selection of awardees in current government-funded scholarship programs (MOE, 2017b), as well as in high-profile talent repatriation incentive schemes (Welch and Hao, 2013). These funding programs have also been setting increasingly higher qualifying criteria targeting researchers who are already well-established in foreign research institutions or universities. As a result, new PhD graduates and those in their early academic careers have been left out and have been rendered as "middling" transmigrants (Conradson and Latham, 2005). Meanwhile, there is a strong emphasis on physical return—awardees of Chinese government scholarships administered by the China Scholarship Council, or CSC, are required to return and serve the country for a minimum of two years. Similarly, awardees of government-run incentive programs, such as the 1,000 Talents Program, must physically return and work in China. Such focus on physical return and settlement illustrates China's adoption of a "short-distance" diaspora policy[1] (Lum, 2015) and the importance China places on attracting and retaining highly educated international talents as a national strategy in the global talent war (Harvey, 2014).

The media have been mobilized to support the state's policies to attract and retain talents by cultivating a sense of patriotic responsibility, ethnic and moral duty and deepening a sense of national belonging or emotional citizenship (Lum, 2015; Nyíri, 2001). Those who have shown commitment to China's development have been praised and recognized publicly in media (Cheng, 2001). Recently, on 22 December 2018, in commemoration of 40 years of China's reform and opening, the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), China Global Talent Society and the Association for Chinese Scholarly Exchange Services, jointly released a list of top 40 returnees (CCG, 2018). According to CCG's report, this was the fourth consecutive year for the think tank organizations to issue an authoritative list of overseas returnees who are pioneers and leaders in their respective fields as a tribute to the returnees' contributions to China's development (CCG, 2018). Such spotlight on successful returnees in China throws light on "model returnees," whose lives, careers and aspirations are invested in China. This also builds on stories of Chinese academic returnees who were part of the early cohorts of government-funded scholars who pursued further studies overseas. These academic elites include prominent scientists, such as Qian Xuesen, Qian Sanqiang and Yang Zhenning, who are held up for their significant personal sacrifice to return to a modest lifestyle in China for the great cause of China's

[1]It is a policy that focuses on the physical return and settlement in the country of returning talents. In contrast, "long -distance" diaspora policy, such as the one adopted by India, aims at facilitating travel that would encourage frequent visits by the diaspora (Lum, 2015).

development. This contrasts with contemporary academic migrants, who are mostly self-funded and have different motivations for migration. With easier travel and communication, it has become more common for the *haigui*, literally meaning "sea turtles" (returnees who settle) to become a *hai'ou*, meaning "seagull," who can easily migrate between China and other countries. Meanwhile, for those returnees who are relatively immobile, it has also become quite common to maintain various social connections overseas. Thus, old notions of "return" signifying the severing of overseas connections and permanent belonging to the motherland can no longer reflect the lived experiences of *multiple embeddedness* for contemporary returnees. What seems lacking are studies on "how returnees manage and balance the complexity of 'multiple embeddedness'" (Darieva et al., 2012: 16). Migration studies need to re-examine return migration beyond "economic, human capital and nationalistic framings" (Chen and Koyama, 2013: 26). In the following section, we introduce transnational diaspora as a conceptual framework in an attempt to make sense of transnational professional lives and negotiation of multiple belongings of Chinese transnational academics.

Conceptual framework: Transnational diaspora

According to Castles (2007: 352), "migration research in the era of globalization is a transnational undertaking, which requires theoretical frameworks and analytical tools that transcend the nation-state." In the context of intense transnational migration (Mau, 2010; Ong, 1999), the return experience of transnational academics should also be re-conceptualized in the broader background of the transnationalization of societies (Faist, 2000). This broader viewpoint requires a reconceptualization of "return" as part of an ever-evolving transnational experience. Accordingly, concepts of diaspora, returning diaspora or post-diaspora can be invoked to better grasp the lived, continuing and evolving experiences of mobility than the presumed immobile "returnee." Here, the concept of transnational diaspora, which combines insights from transnationalism and diaspora, serves as a useful framework. The early articulation of this term can be traced to Lie (1995), who highlighted the salience of premigration social connections, cultures, different types of capital and return migration as a sojourn within a circular lifelong travel rather than a final great journey. Key aspects of transnational diaspora, as pointed out by Lie, are "multifarious trajectories," "sustained diverse networks," "di[illegible]ity of migrant identities" and a "multitude of migration experiences." Following Lie's conceptions, Guo (2016) has proposed the notion of double diaspora based on the transnational migration experiences of Chinese Canadians living in Beijing, which challenged the notion of return to the homeland as a final or unidirectional journey. Oh's (2012) ethnographic study of Korean Japanese, including those who returned to South Korea and

3-4
2 notes:

North Korea, revealed identity transformation from a passive nationalistic diaspora to an active transnational diaspora. The insights of transnational diaspora as an analytic tool derive from transnationalism (Faist et al., 2013; Vertovec, 2009) and diaspora (Dufoix, 2011; Faist, 2010). Particularly, we draw upon several related analytical concepts, including transnational social field (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004), transnational habitus (Guarnizo, 1997; Nedelcu, 2012) and mixed embeddedness (Glick Schiller and Çaglar, 2013), that broadly fall under the transnational paradigm. Together they reflect the transnationalization of social lives and foreground identification with transnational social relations forged through past experiences and ongoing participation in transnational practices. We also draw upon the concept of digital diaspora (Nedelcu, 2019), an emerging form of diaspora that recognizes the transformative impact of Internet-based communication technology in creating virtual spaces for migrants to maintain diasporic engagement, express diasporic consciousness and re-imagine multiple homes and origins in the new transnational age. As Clifford (1994) pointed out, diaspora as an analytic discourse is not limited to one historical experience. Instead, it is always inviting new theorizing as it is embedded in new socio-historical and geographical contexts.

Transnational perspectives in diaspora studies suggest that social identity formation and social life are not necessarily anchored to a territorialized society, and that analysis of cultural and social belonging issues for migrants have expanded beyond ethnicity. Transnational diaspora re-emphasizes diaspora "as an unending sojourn across different lands [that] captures the emerging reality of transnational networks and communities than the language of immigration and assimilation" (Lie, 1995: 304). It shifts focus on migrants' identity construction to "non-nation-based solidarities in the contemporary period" and "transnational and dynamic processes, relating to ethnic commonalities, which can recognize difference and diversity" (Anthias, 1998: 557–558). Thus, the transnational diaspora approach lends itself to identifying contemporary manifestations of new diaspora communities. In the following sections, we introduce our study and draw on the theoretical insights we demonstrate above to discuss the experiences of Chinese transnational academics.

Methodology

Data collection for this case study was conducted between 2017 and 2018 in Beijing, China. As the capital city, cultural center and a city where most of China's universities are located, Beijing attracts many internationally educated academics to move and work there (*China Daily*, 2017). As mentioned earlier, this study focuses on academics and researchers in the social sciences and humanities, whose experiences have been less studied by existing

research, which tend to highlight the return of academics in S&E. In recent years, there has been a growing number of Chinese students pursuing further studies in the social sciences and humanities and it is likely that there will be more such academics in these fields in the future.

The delimitation of the research location and participants' educational background was also influenced by our own positionalities. Both researchers were trained in the social sciences and humanities, had transnational educational experiences and had conducted research on Chinese transnational migration. The first author had spent ten years living in Beijing and obtained her bachelor's and master's degrees in Beijing before migrating to Canada for further studies. The second author had obtained his degrees in China, the UK and Canada and had extensive experiences in transnational research collaboration. Our positionalities as ethnic Chinese and our study-abroad experiences in particular, were instrumental in building trust with participants and facilitating our interpretation of participants' perspectives and experiences. Almost every participant mentioned the shared overseas study experience as a PhD student to seek the interviewer's better understanding in the interview.

We selected participants based on their transnational doctoral education background, research in the area of social sciences and humanities, employment as full-time faculty members in a research university, and prospects of sustained transnational academic connections (i.e., English publications after year of employment and publications co-authored with international collaborators). We approached potential participants through purposive and snowball sampling techniques (Cohen et al, 2018). Initially, the researchers approached associates in their networks for recommendations. Potential participants' academic profiles were checked through their respective university websites and those whose international publication histories suggested active transnational academic connectivity were contacted through email to explore their interest to participate. Interviewees were later asked to recommend colleagues with a similar profile. We also took into consideration a diversity of disciplines and host countries where the participants did their doctoral studies to gain insight into the phenomenon of transnational academic connectivity from individual academics' perspectives. Despite considerable efforts to recruit more senior academics, we were unable to include full professors as participants.

The participants consisted of 12 academics from three universities in Beijing which have strong programs in the social sciences and humanities. Among the three, University A, a research-intensive university, enjoys the highest prestige as a top 300 university by Quacquarelli Symonds' QS rankings in 2018 and one of the 42 universities that China designated to develop into world-class universities (MOE, 2017c). This university boasts of a high ratio of returnee academics. University B, also a premier university in China, conducts extensive research in the social sciences and humanities. The three

participants from University B, however, are the only researchers with an overseas doctorate in their department. In contrast, University C has several disciplines recognized as top-ranked in China (MOE, 2017c), but none of the researchers in this study worked in those disciplines. All participants had spent at least three years of doctoral studies overseas. Some of them started studying abroad at the bachelor's and master's level (like participants Nick, Grace, Liangna, Clara and Andy). Four female professors (Stella, Barbara, Clara and Liangna), completed their doctoral studies with Chinese government funding through the CSC, which required them to return to work in China upon graduation. The participants' transnational education and current employment profile are presented in Table 1. All names here and in the Table are pseudonyms chosen by participants themselves. It is worth noting that although participants were all highly educated overseas-trained doctorates, upon their return to China, they represented a group of "middling" return migrants who were not entitled to generous financial support provided by the Chinese central government's incentive schemes.

Data for our study were primarily collected through personal interviews and were complemented by other sources of data, including field observations of participants' offices and international academic exchange activities, participants' academic curriculum vitae (CV) (both found on the participants' university website and those provided by participants themselves), universities' institutional documents on publication requirements and university news on topics of transnational academics and research collaboration. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and transcripts were emailed to participants for transcript review. With the assistance of NVivo program, data were analyzed through thematic analysis, which considered the codes or themes from the interviews together with codes from our theoretical framework. We adopted Stake's (1995) validation strategies for *methodological triangulation* where multiple sources of data were juxtaposed to offer a collective portrayal of data through multiple perspectives (Casey and Murphy, 2009; Shih, 1998).

Transnationally connected academic life

Ways of being

Participation in virtual transnational communities. Most participants' research and professional learning practices were closely connected to their transnational academic communities. While they went about their daily work routines of teaching, research and academic services in Beijing, they maintained active and simultaneous engagement in research collaboration and collective learning transnationally with their former supervisors and colleagues in the foreign countries where they completed their doctoral studies. Such transnational engagements were largely enabled and fulfilled through virtual means

Table 1. Participants' profile.

Name	Gender	Employment institution	Designation	Field of study	Country/ region of study	Funding for study[2]	Year of return
Nick	Female	A	Associate Professor	Education	Belgium	Self-funded	2011
Grace	Female	A	Associate Professor	Education	UK	Self-funded (with EU and UK university scholarship)	2012
Stella	Female	A	Lecturer	Education	Australia	CSC	2012
Barbara	Female	B	Assistant Professor	Journalism	UK	CSC	2014
GZ	Male	B	Assistant Professor	Journalism	The Netherlands	Self-funded (with EU funding)	2013
Sophie	Female	B	Assistant Professor	Journalism	Hong Kong	Self-funded (with university scholarship)	2017
Clara	Female	C	Lecturer	Finance	US	CSC	2015
Tim	Male	C	Associate Professor	Finance	US	Self-funded (with university scholarship)	2013
Rick	Male	C	Associate Professor	Economics	US	Self-funded (with university scholarship)	2013
Liangna	Female	C	Lecturer	French	France	CSC	2016
Jasmine	Female	C	Associate Professor	English	Canada	Self-funded	2009
Andy	Male	C	Associate Professor	English	Japan	Self-funded	2006

rather than physical mobility. Time constraints, the cumbersome process of obtaining approval for international travel and conflicting schedules with overseas research partners discouraged short-term international travel for academic purposes. Online communication, in contrast, was easier to arrange, although not without obstacles. Tim and Sophie, for instance, both mentioned that online communication and collaboration with research partners abroad was made difficult since the government blocked access to some overseas websites and digital applications. As Tim mentioned:

> Many times, emails [from overseas] are not received. They are blocked by the firewall. This is annoying because you will have to climb over the firewall. When

[2]Those with EU or university scholarships are considered self-funded in the Chinese context. In Chinese official statistics, those who do not hold CSC (China Scholarship Council) scholarships or funding from their sending institutions in China are considered as self-funded.

> I was in the US, my supervisor and I set up a shared online folder, but now that I am in China, this folder is not allowed to be used. I had to ask my supervisor to try changing to another online drive. I'll have to find a proxy service to climb over the firewall. This is annoying. It restrains us. Of course, you will find a way to climb over the firewall in the end, but it still feels restricted and inconvenient.

The participants engaged in transnational ways of being using various means. Sophie, for example, kept attending weekly reading clubs and other regular learning sessions organized by her PhD supervisor, through Skype. These learning communities comprised her PhD supervisor's current and former students. WeChat groups were also mentioned as transnational spaces for connecting with scholars of similar research interests and for sharing learning resources. Jasmine, for example, noted that she was introduced by the supervisor of her visiting scholar program to a WeChat group of well-known academics in her research field both in China and other countries, as well as many journal editors. "If not for my supervisor, I would not have known this resource," she said. Similarly, Sophie was introduced to a WeChat group called "Survive the PhD" where group members were all internationally educated Chinese PhD graduates like her. Group members would maintain fairly active communication, help each other sustain transnational academic ties by sharing information and resources, such as conference information and scholarship programs, which related to their professional learning and research practices. Sophie recounted how a group member helped her gain a scholarship and training opportunity in the US:

> A *haigui* colleague [in the WeChat group] shared with me information about a scholarship program in the US and encouraged me to apply. She said this scholarship is right for me because she knows that I am doing relevant research ... Without this connection, I would have never known about this opportunity.

Sophie eventually gained this scholarship with the support of what she called "members of her overseas community." She received recommendation letters from her PhD supervisor in Hong Kong, another supervisor from Oxford University where she was a visiting student during her PhD program and the editor-in-chief of an international journal where she published.

In addition, all participants engaged in research collaboration on publications and research projects with their PhD supervisors and former colleagues overseas. As is already widely used, emails facilitated frequent exchange of information. Participants used emails to get feedback from their PhD supervisors on their research ideas and develop co-authored manuscripts. They also communicated via email to get updates on each other's work and general wellbeing, and also to share information on other common interests like music, literature and arts. As many participants pointed out, such online

communication helped them maintain a close-knit working relationship and friendship with their supervisors and colleagues overseas. Some participants, including Jasmine, Grace and Rick, explicitly mentioned the importance of keeping abreast with the recent trends in their research fields by checking out their supervisors' most recent works on websites such as Academia.edu and Researchgate.net.

Some participants held affiliation with overseas institutions and conducted their work primarily online. For instance, GZ secured a job to teach an online course in the US. He also maintained affiliation with his alma mater in Holland as a research fellow. Grace and Jasmine mentioned that they worked as editors or reviewers for international academic journals. However, online work is not without obstacles. GZ, for example, mentioned that even though he secured a teaching job, the course did not push through because of the time difference between China and the US. The US institution was not able to work out a plan that would suit the schedule of GZ and the students.

Recurring transnational migration. Meanwhile, physical migration, albeit short-term, complemented everyday online transnationality to maintain a transnationally active academic life. Conferences were a commonly mentioned space to maintain transnational academic connections and to sustain one's visibility as a researcher in international academia. However, as institutional funding from Chinese universities for scholars to attend international conferences was very limited, transnational academics in the study would resort more often to virtual means of communication and connection. As an alternative to traveling outbound for conferences, participants invited inbound travels for overseas academics to deliver lectures and keynote speeches in China. Such occasions, however, were rather sporadic and one-off. They were employed, in most cases, out of reciprocity for the invited academic and with goodwill to enhance international academic communication within the academic returnee's workplace in China. Tim constantly noted how the lack of funding limited his ability to invite his overseas colleagues to China. As a workaround strategy, he would invite those overseas academics who happened to be in China for family visits or who were invited by other institutions. The same strategy was mentioned by Clara. For international conferences, the participants tend to continue attending conferences they joined when they were PhD students, usually the most important in their field, to have the best chances of connecting with former colleagues and the most prominent scholars. The participants' choice of conferences also depended on institutional approval: "suppose I am allowed to attend one or two international conferences each year, I would choose the most influential one to reach out to the most scholars," commented Jasmine. Engaging with their transnational research community stood out as a significant motivation for attending international conferences. Sophie pointed out that in

order for her research community members to be able to attend the same conference together, she would often take the lead to organize a conference panel and call on members to share their papers. In addition to conferences, other short-term learning communities overseas were also mentioned. Barbara, for instance, noted that she was able to participate in a roundtable workshop in Macau and in an exchange program in Taiwan. She acknowledged that these opportunities were offered by her PhD supervisor, who also participated in these learning programs. Return visits to their host countries of doctoral studies for conferences were quite common, especially for participants educated in the US. Meanwhile, many participants educated in other countries had also been to or expressed interest in visiting the US. Stella, who was trained in qualitative research methodologies in Australia, for example, mentioned that she would like to build connections with academics in the US where they are strong in quantitative methodologies, which would be useful in her work.

Local participation and professional connections in China. In contrast to active engagement transnationally, participants' engagement in their local institutions in China appeared to be rather passive as a response to institutionally imposed work requirements. For GZ, Barbara and Sophie, their faculty has imposed an annual evaluation system in favor of Chinese publications, so the three participants started to write manuscripts in Chinese for publication to accommodate themselves to this evaluation system, even though they were trained to convey academic thoughts in English. As Barbara noted:

> As a native Chinese, it would definitely take me a considerably longer time to write a paper in English than in Chinese. Under our evaluation system [where English publications do not count], I would try to write and publish more in Chinese to increase my annual publications.

The participants, thus, experience internationalization in China in various ways, depending on their universities and disciplines. In University B, there was a generally acknowledged high emphasis on Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) journals, but for Nick, who had to transfer her research focus from Mathematics education to Chinese education when she got employed by her department in University A, it was hard at first for her to maintain much transnational connection for research with her PhD supervisor and colleagues. Despite a huge disciplinary divergence between her PhD research and her current work, her methodological expertise was much needed in her department. She admitted that it took her a long time to manage such a change and re-establish herself through publications on a different subject matter and through forming new transnational academic connections. Grace also admitted that there is a discrepancy between her own research focus and the focus

of her department. This discrepancy necessitated her building new transnational academic connections:

> When I invited scholars to come for academic exchange, I must consider the needs of my department, not just my individual needs. This [department] community is paramount over individual members. The invited scholars were not my personal academic connections.

It appeared that local *guanxi* was a key factor shaping participants' employment and post-return work experience. All three participants from University A are alumnae of this university and they all admitted that this connection played a part in their employment choice and arrangement. Yet, for Grace, who had stayed abroad for over six years before re-migrating to China, the "parenting style administration," as she termed it, is a nuisance. Meanwhile, Liangna, Andy, Jasmine and Rick from University C seemed to perceive the lack of *guanxi* support in China as a significant barrier. Liangna found it hard to get published in China because she felt a lack of a community of senior colleagues and former supervisors in Beijing to guide her through publication and project funding application in China. Andy believed that it was hard for him to form a strong community for mutual support in China because very few people shared his research interest. Jasmine compared her workplace with her alma mater in Canada in terms of academic atmosphere and various research practices, recounting how she learned, by herself, about the different perceptions of the significance of research between the two countries when she tried to apply for project funding in China. Rick admitted that since his return to China, he had been only collaborating with his former colleagues and supervisor in the US as he found it hard to find a compatible research partner in China. Examination of Rick's academic CV confirmed his claim. Rick believed that domestic academics are more concerned about "their own families" while his colleagues in the US are more "focused on research." He pointed out that in the US, there is adequate funding for academic exchange, professors enjoy higher income, the cost of living is relatively lower, while requirements on publication are less stringent. Indeed, academics in our study seemed to work under considerable work pressure. Participants, in general, indicated a heavy workload for teaching. An examination of institutional documents on publication evaluation revealed a strict regulation of academics' publications against a list of academic journals graded in A, B and C levels as recognized by respective universities. Therefore, even though participants were employed and were physically present in China most of the time, their local academic engagement seemed rather mandatory and under many administrative restrictions.

Ways of belonging

Participants expressed changing ways of belonging that manifest in their self-recognition and feelings toward particular places, experiences and people because of their transnational academic engagements.

Self-worth associated with connections in host countries. In this study, Chinese transnational academics did not regard themselves valued as much by their knowledge gained internationally as their close connections to international scholars in Western universities. Thus, they placed their pride in their ability to contribute to their universities' internationalization agenda, as Sophie articulated:

> Many academics in China, especially those who have no study-abroad experience, are actually eager to make connections with overseas counterparts, like my colleagues in Hong Kong, and become affiliated with overseas academic institutions. With my connections, therefore, I can serve as a bridge and build a network for scholars in Mainland China and Hong Kong ... It makes me feel that I'm not a stranger here and that at least I'm not without any good.

The metaphor of a "bridge" stood out in the study as it was mentioned by a number of participants. Such perceptions reflect participants' heightened awareness of their role as a broker whose "value" lies in a status of active in-betweenness rather than static being in a single space.

Memories associated with host countries. In this study, there was a predominant preference for the US as the destination for their future scholarly visits. Despite participants' host countries of doctoral studies, almost all participants considered the US as the leader in research. Some mentioned that the US universities enjoy the highest recognition worldwide, some admitted that the US has the best scholars in their fields, some believed that quantitative methodologies, the more dominant methodology in China, are best learned in the US, others commented that the majority of the most prestigious academic journals are from the US. However, many participants still felt connected to their host countries of doctoral studies through the memories they had during their PhD studies there. As Jasmine put it:

> Actually, I would like to go back to Canada if opportunity permits because I have a Canada complex. Although academics in Canada are not as prolific as those in the US, they work conscientiously with pace. Therefore, I'm willing to go back to visit Canada and maintain connections with academics there.

Like Jasmine, Barbara was deeply impressed by the richness and vigor of the UK's culture and the popularity of cultural studies. GZ talked enthusiastically about his academic life in the Netherlands where he was able to travel

easily to various prestigious universities to attend academic events. After returning to China, GZ was asked by officials in his university in China to support the building of institutional partnerships with universities in the Netherlands and he also accompanied the officials on a trip to the Netherlands for this purpose.

Academic roots and routes. The metaphors of roots and routes were salient in this study as participants made meaning of their sense of self as a researcher in relation to their academic traditions. As Andy explicated:

> Why would you not keep these connections? On top of it all, your academic route is already like this. It is probably all set and you are rooted to this route. For example, your research interests and research directions are probably all set and you just need to move forward along this line.

Rick's experience resonated with Andy's articulation. After returning to China, Rick continued to follow the same route as he did when he was studying in the US. As GZ illuminated in the interview, the academic roots and routes are the academic practices that shape a researcher, including dimensions, such as schools of thought, theoretical emphases, research paradigms, foci, methodologies, writing styles and ways of contextualizing research topics for particular readers. Sophie pointed out that she had difficulty trying to express her thoughts in Chinese and that was one of the reasons why she kept writing manuscripts in English despite her university's priority on Chinese publications. As participants had spent at least three years in their host countries for their PhD training, their academic practices seemed to have been influenced by the academic traditions of the universities or countries where they pursued their studies.

Sense of identity in relation to people within a transnational academic community. Participants expressed a sense of connectedness to people in their respective transnational academic communities, particularly their former supervisors and colleagues. These people not only influenced how participants would conduct research, but also became key contacts for professional and emotional support. As Liangna demonstrated:

> In France, however, my supervisor would help me. He has research projects in France. He thought of me and recommended me into his team . . . It's relatively easy in France . . . In China, I didn't do my master's program in Beijing and I should be the second graduate with a PhD degree from my alma mater in China. Therefore, I don't have a community from the same supervisor or university to rely on, I don't.

Many participants considered their PhD supervisors as role models and participants constructed their imagined self-identity as a more experienced

academic and also a teacher based on their observations of their supervisors. As Sophie pointed out, the way her supervisor cared about students would, to a large extent, influence how she would supervise her own students:

> The giving, care and generosity my supervisor gave students created a huge impact on me. She is an upright and kind person and she always thinks much of students. She is very supportive ... I have heartfelt admiration for her. Such admiration will influence my attitude toward my students.

A growing sense of self in relation to an academic community was further strengthened by a sense of mutual recognition and appreciation. Participants commonly expressed the view that their academic pursuits were inspired by their supervisors' zest and scholarly spirit toward research. Some of the transnational academics also shared interests with their supervisors in art and music, leading to solid friendship beyond academic needs. Both Grace and Liangna, for example, indicated that as they and their supervisors mutually appreciated each other, their supervisors continued to approach them when they have good opportunities for research and publication. This made them feel that they belonged to a transnational academic community.

The sense of trust and reverence for their supervisors helped sustain an identity as being part of a collective. Some participants considered their supervisors as a node of connection between them, particularly early-career academics, and more experienced researchers in their fields. Liangna, for example, explained that she would make new connections with established researchers through her supervisor and she believed that if those well-known researchers were interested in collaborating with her, they would get in touch with her through her supervisor as well. Therefore, academic returnees in the study were developing a sense of identity that signifies their membership in a particular academic community.

Envisioning future migration and career. Imagining the future is also an important means of learning and identity development (Jarvis, 2006). In this study, many Chinese transnational academics considered short-term scholarly visits to other countries. They were also generally open to the option of migrating to work and live in another country. Some of them seemed to have developed an orientation toward a cosmopolitan researcher lifestyle. Sophie, for example, mentioned that after studying in Hong Kong and traveling back to China, she considered Beijing and Hong Kong as each being just one place among many places in her consideration for work, learning and living. They are not either an origin or a destination. Rather, they are both a starting point from which she could explore other parts of the world. In a similar vein, physical location for GZ bears little significance as long as he is able to strategically seek opportunities in different countries. Tim and Clara also recognized that being physically in one place offered them an

opportunity for transnational collaboration since research partners could draw on each other's comparative advantage of being situated in a specific geographic location. Those who graduated from the US were realistic about securing a long-term faculty position in that country. Thus, they tended to visualize long-term settlement in China while envisaging that they would be proactive in establishing transnational academic connections. For some participants, staying in China was just a phase, given various conditions in their current stage of the life course. The decision to move to other countries would be contingent upon how they fare in China and available career opportunities in other countries. Andy, for example, gave himself a five-year period to see if he would be able to move to Japan. Still others made more intentional efforts in preparation for a likely move in the near future. Liangna's comments served a case in point:

> It's been one-and-a-half years [after return]. Yet, I have published nothing. This is my situation. I will continue to work for three more years and then it will be almost four-and-a-half years. At that time, I will consider if I will stay or leave. If you give me three more years and my effort will still turn out to have been in vain, it will not be my issue. My research was recognized in France, so I won't consider it a problem if I don't get published in China. [As a last resort,] I might have to explore changing my platform or my academic direction or career plan... I have gained my teacher qualification for teaching Chinese in France when I studied there, so I may consider this option.

Sense of belonging to the Chinese knowledge diaspora. If the migration decision is an individual choice, the actual migration trajectory may depend on an individual's relationships and ties in a particular country. In this case, the overseas Chinese knowledge diaspora seems to be a significant intermediary for transnational academics in China to find a place in another country. Stella, for example, envisaged that because she felt very comfortable collaborating with Chinese academics in the diaspora, she could get in touch with her former colleague, an immigrant Chinese teaching in the US, should she decide to travel abroad as a visiting scholar. In fact, almost all participants in our study had transnational connections with overseas Chinese academics as supervisors, colleagues or friends. Shared ethnic culture and the Chinese language, coupled with shared research interest may have facilitated a tendency for overseas and China-based Chinese academics to develop a close collaborative relationship. In addition, the Chinese knowledge diaspora seemed to comprise not only of overseas Chinese academics, but also China-based Chinese academics who shared with participants their study-abroad experience as PhD students. As indicated by both Clara and Tim, their local academic connections, or *xueshu gongtongti*, were significantly among *haigui* academics.

Discussion

It can be seen from the findings that the concept of "returnee" is very restricted in understanding the transnational work and learning practices and the self-identification of Chinese transnational academics. The experience of return denotes just a stopping point in migrants' circulatory and recurring transnational journey and their transnational practices after return should be captured by the broader concept of diaspora, which "confront nation-state projects that continue to demand exclusive forms of national loyalty [and] . . .critiques essentializing nature of culturally and ethno-religious-based paradigms" (Darieva et al., 2012: 3–4). As illustrated by the participants' experiences, Chinese transnational academics' ways of being and ways of belonging are not necessarily centered on and within the geographical boundary of China. In fact, many participants have manifested a diasporic consciousness marked by "dual or multiple identities" (Vertovec, 2009: 5) with their multiple attachments to China, their place of employment, their host countries where they completed their doctoral studies, the Chinese knowledge diaspora and transnational communities in their particular research fields. This echoes the argument of Bitran and Tan (2013) that migrants' transnational connections may be more significant than their citizenship or place of being in accounting for their senses of belonging. Participants' experiences also resonate with Rutherford's (2009) research on the typologies of diaspora groups, specifically, lived diaspora and returning diaspora. Participants can be considered as lived diaspora vis-a-vis the destination countries where they completed their doctoral studies because of their lived experience and continued connections with these countries. Meanwhile, they are definitely returning diaspora in view of their transnational migration experience from and back to China. However, reformulating return as a diaspora experience points out not only the importance of locality, but also the importance of ties, or connections attached to specific localities. As indicated by Dahinden's (2010) four ideal types of diaspora, participants' ways of belonging vary on a continuum based on different formations of transnational ties. Some may be considered as more localized diasporic academics, others as transnational mobile academics. Further to Dahinden's analysis of the relationship between mobility and locality, we draw on Faist's (2000) emphasis on transnational social ties to argue that the making of locality in the transnational space can also be deterritorialized. In our study, a sense of belonging based on membership in a transnational academic community, a Chinese knowledge diaspora community, or a Chinese returnee academic can be an example in point. The findings on academic returnees' active participation and sense of belonging to transnational communities speak to literature on the non-cooperative and non-supportive "invisible college" in Chinese academic culture, which contradicted academic returnees' academic belief (Hao et al., 2017; Cao, 2008).

The experiences of participants in our study demonstrate simultaneity (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004) and multiple embeddedness (Glick Schiller and Çaglar, 2013). Particularly, their transnational ways of being and belonging were simultaneously affected by a multitude of social relations and power structures situated in a transnational academic field (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004) and also sustained by transnational networks of academic institutions, funding agencies, and transnational online platforms, such as international academic journals and websites like Academia.edu. Their envisioning of future migration plans as well as their ways of research were shaped by an intricate web of government policies, career and professional development opportunities and regulations as well as internationalization discourses in different countries. Their ways of managing such simultaneity and multiple embeddedness illuminate a form of "flexible social capital" (Darieva et al., 2012: 7) or cosmopolitan competence (i.e., "becoming affiliated to multiple networks from monocultural roots") (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015: 951) that enables participants to virtually move between contexts. This is closely related to the development of transnational habitus (Guarnizo, 1997; Nedelcu, 2012), which can be a strategy of and propensity for openness to cope with the complexities of an academic life in the age of transnational migration. Participants tended to habitualize thinking, doing and moving beyond a single nation for resources, support and recognition. They were not only working with multiple points of reference in mind, but also mobilizing an expanded repertoire of resources and opportunities. Such a transnational habitus challenges the discourse of returnee in Chinese government policy, which assumes and expects returnees to habitualize themselves to a centered national culture, develop exclusive allegiance to the motherland and a fixed identity. As Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) pointed out, reaching the stage of willingly affiliating oneself with multiple networks and navigating between multiple cultures does not simply denote acquisition of skill sets and skill gains. Rather, it is fundamentally a manifestation of identity transformation. This study demonstrates that in Chinese transnational academics' actual socialization process, multiple forms of membership, such as ethnic membership, social membership and academic membership, due to participants' multiple identities, helped them develop transnational allegiances to make sense of the complicated dynamics surrounding their academic lives. It resonates with the call by transnational researchers to move beyond a single ethnic or nationalist lens in return migration studies (Glick Schiller and Çaglar, 2013).

This study also resonates with the findings of Nedelcu (2019) that digital communication technologies offer a new space for academics to form a transnationally connected research field and to actualize an imaginary of transnationally accessible career opportunities. This digital turn includes not only the actively mobile, but also the relatively immobile into the purview of transnational migration studies as the latter can be actively engaged in

transnationality in the virtual space. The ability for people to actually travel across borders reinforces the sense of being transnationally present in the virtual space. Social participation in the virtual space also offers opportunities and possibilities for transmigrant individuals to make choices in differentiation of individual identities and individual life courses (Hake, 1999). Due to many restrictions, such as limited funding for travel and the bureaucratic reporting process for the use of their service passports, virtual means and platforms enabled transnational academics based in China to practice everyday transnationalism. Such practices helped sustain transnational academics' intentions for future relocation and a desire to maintain transnational ties, thus strengthening their diasporic consciousness and transnational habitus. Our study demonstrates that transnationalism and diaspora become mutually sustaining conditions and processes, particularly through the aid of digital communication (Saxenian, 2006). This mutually constitutive process lends itself to the formation of transnational diasporas, a type of transnational community where there is not only exchange and circulation of knowledge, but also a sense of shared values, mobilization of symbolic ties, such as ethnicity and *haigui* academic experience, and subjectivity expressed in some sort of collective identity—participants' academic community or *xueshu gongtongti*.

Conclusion

From our analysis, we conclude that the study-abroad experience as a PhD student shapes Chinese transnational academics as transnational knowledge diaspora for their multiple and simultaneous ways of being and ways of belonging related to the motherland of China, their host countries where they completed their doctoral studies, and increasingly as part of deterritorialized transnational academic communities. They mobilize their identities as researchers, ethnic Chinese and transnational academics strategically to identify with different communities for membership, opportunities and recognition. In the digital age, virtual spaces have enabled these transnational connections and diasporic belongings on a daily basis, thus contributing to the formation of a virtual transnational academic diaspora with the increasing inter-dependence of academics across borders.

This study has theoretical significance for both diaspora and transnational studies. On the one hand, the reformulation of returnee identity as diaspora counters the instrumentalization trend of diaspora studies. Other than a policy tool for engaging a nation's overseas nationals for the nation's economic development, diaspora can also be employed as a useful concept to understand the socialization experiences and identity development of contemporary migrants. Virtual transnational diaspora sheds light on the growing population of digital migrants, who received relatively less attention in transnational migration studies. On the other hand, the incorporation of the

concept of diaspora to transnational studies lends to extending the academic discussions on the relationship between the two fields of study to recognize that diaspora and transnationalism are not just "two awkward dance partners" (Faist, 2010: 9), but that they can also be mutually enabling concepts for analyzing increasingly complicated manifestations of being and belonging in the transnational space.

In terms of policy implications, the study demonstrates that diasporic consciousness and transnational ways of being, including recurring migration and possible relocation after return to China, will likely be a norm among transmigrant academics based in China. Thus, policies and institutional initiatives should aim at facilitating and promoting meaningful social connection experiences that respond to and expand transnational academics' multiple social and professional networks. Meanwhile, this study suggests that more policy support is needed to assist transnational academics, particularly non-elite, middling transnational academics in China in terms of research funding, professional development opportunities and access to transnational online platforms so that they are better enabled to contribute to research innovation in social sciences and humanities in China.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual diaspora has become a reality more than ever. The restrictions on cross-border travels and the imposition of border closures underscore the difficulty of maintaining transnational connections through physical migration and face-to-face communications on the one hand, and the growing trend of transnational academic collaboration through virtual means, on the other. We are seeing the increasing significance of existing and new online platforms in providing spaces for people to sustain transnational connectivity as many local issues now demand communication and collaboration at a transnational level. This was epitomized by this year's virtual G20 summit, as well as the many virtual conferences, seminars, workshops and classes held virtually through platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Team and Tencent Meeting. The rise of such transnational communication platforms has dramatically reconfigured people's lifeworld in a transnationalizing context, shaping emerging ways of belonging in a social imaginary of transnational connectivity. An area for future research is to explore how this trend may affect the Chinese government's restrictions on overseas online platforms and how this trend affects transmigrants' work, lives and identities.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this paper.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ORCID iDs

Ling Lei https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8179-783X
Shibao Guo https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6551-5468

References

Ai B and Wang L (2017) Homeland integration: An academic returnee's experiences in Chinese universities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16: 1–9.

Anthias F (1998) Evaluating "diaspora": Beyond ethnicity? *Sociology* 32(3): 557–580.

Bitran M and Tan S (2013) Diaspora nation: An inquiry into the economic potential of diaspora networks in Canada. Available at: https://munkschool.utoronto.ca/mowatcentre/wp-content/uploads/publications/72_diaspora_nation.pdf

Cai H (2012) Deploying the Chinese knowledge diaspora: A case study of Peking University. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 32(3): 367–379.

Cao C (2008) China's brain drain at the high end. *Asian Population Studies* 4(3): 331–345.

Casey D and Murphy K (2009) Issues in using methodological triangulation in research. *Nurse Researcher* 16(4): 40–55.

Castles S (2007) Twenty-first-century migration as a challenge to sociology. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33(3): 351–371.

Center for China and Globalization (CCG) (2018) The list of 40 returnees for 40 years of reform and opening up released: Long Yongtu, Wan Gang and Wang Shi on the list. *The Paper*, 22 December, 18. Available at: www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_2764408

Chen Q and Koyama JP (2013) Reconceptualising diasporic intellectual networks: Mobile scholars in transnational space. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 11(1): 23–38.

Chen S and Wu D (2017, March 17) Almost 15,000 internationally educated returnees obtained residency in Beijing in 2015. *Caixin*. Available at: http://china.caixin.com/2017-03-01/101060922.html

Cheng X (2001) Analysis of the returned outstanding overseas Chinese. *Overseas Chinese History Studies* 6(2): 22–31.

China Daily (2017) The Ministry of Education: Eighty percent of internationally educated returnee employees are master's degree holders. 6 March, 17. Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/micro-reading/2017-03/06/content_28449402.htm

Clifford J (1994) Diasporas. *Current Anthropology* 9(3): 302–338.

Cohen L, Manion L and Morrison K (2018) *Research Methods in Education*. New York: Routledge.

Conradson D and Latham A (2005) Transnational urbanism: Attending to everyday practices and mobilities. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31(2): 227–233.

Dahinden J (2010) The dynamics of migrants' transnational formations: Between mobility and locality. In: Bauböck R and Faist T (eds) *Diaspora and*

Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 51–72.
Darieva T, Glick Schiller N and Gruner-Domic S (2012) *Cosmopolitan Sociability: Locating Transnational Religious and Diasporic Networks*. New York: Routledge.
Dong L (2017) Over eighty percent of internationally educated students chose to return for personal development. *China Education Newspaper*. 1 March, 17. Available at: www.moe.edu.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5147/201703/t20170302_297870.html
Dufoix S (2011) From nationals abroad to "diaspora": The rise and progress of extra-territorial and over-state nations. *Diaspora Studies* 4(1): 1–20.
Faist T (2000) *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Faist T (2010) Diaspora and transnationalism: What kind of dance partners? In: Bauböck R and Faist T (eds) *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 9–34.
Faist T, Fauser M and Reisenauer E (2013) *Transnational Migration*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
Gill S (2016) The homecoming: An investigation into the effect of studying overseas on the returned Chinese postgraduates' life and work in China. In: Guo S and Guo Y (eds) *Spotlight on China: Chinese Education in the Globalized World*. Rotterdam: Sense, pp. 319–340.
Glick Schiller N and Caglar A (2013) Locating migrant pathways of economic emplacement: Thinking beyond the ethnic lens. *Ethnicities* 13(4): 494–514.
Gu Q and Schweisfurth M (2015) Transnational connections, competences and identities: Experiences of Chinese international students after their return "home." *British Educational Research Journal* 41(6): 947–970.
Guarnizo LE (1997) The emergence of a transnational social formation and the mirage of return among Dominican transmigrants. *Identities* 4: 281–322.
Guo S (2016) From international migration to transnational diaspora: Theorizing "double diaspora" from the experience of Chinese Canadians in Beijing. *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 17(1): 153–171.
Hake BJ (1999) Lifelong learning in late modernity: The challenges to society, organizations, and individuals. *Adult Education Quarterly* 49(2): 79–90.
Hao X, Yan K, Guo S and Wang M (2017) Chinese returnees' motivation, post-return status and impact of return: A systematic review. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 26(1): 143–157.
Harvey WS (2014) Winning the global talent war: A policy perspective. *Journal of Chinese Human Resource Management* 5(1): 62–74.
Holland D, Lachicotte W Jr, Skinner D and Cain C (1998) *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Institute of International Education (IIE) (2019) 2019 Fast facts. Report. Available at: https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Fact-Sheets-and-Infographics/Fast-Facts
Ip M (2006) Returnees and transnationals: Evolving identities of Chinese (PRC) immigrants in New Zealand. *Journal of Population Studies* 33: 61–102.
Jarvis P (2006) *Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Human Learning: Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society*. London: Routledge.

Jonkers K (2010) *Mobility, Migration and the Chinese Scientific Research System*. London: Routledge.

Levitt P and Glick Schiller N (2004) Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society. *The International Migration Review* 38(3): 1002–1039.

Lie J (1995) From international migration to transnational diaspora. *Contemporary Sociology* 24(4): 303–306.

Liu B and Liu Q (2016) Internationalization of Chinese higher education in the era of globalization: Student mobility between China and the globalized world. In: Guo S and Guo Y (eds) *Spotlight on China: Chinese Education in the Globalized World*. Rotterdam: Sense, pp. 85–106.

Lum K (2015) Operationalizing the highly skilled diasporic transnational family: China and India's transnational governance strategies. *Diaspora Studies* 8(1): 51–65.

Mau S (2010) *Social Transnationalism*. New York: Routledge.

Ministry of Education (MOE) (2017a) Introduction to work on study abroad since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Available at: www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_fbh/moe_2069/xwfbh_2017n/xwfb_170301/170301_sfcl/201703/t20170301_297675.html

Ministry of Education (MOE) (2017b) Report on Chinese government-sponsored study abroad. Available at: www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_fbh/moe_2069/xwfbh_2017n/xwfb_170301/170301_sfcl/201703/t20170301_297674.html

Ministry of Education (MOE) (2017c) Announcement of the list of universities for building world-class universities and the list of universities for building world-class disciplines. Available at: www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A22/moe_843/201709/t20170921_314942.html

Ministry of Education (MOE) (2019) 2018 Chinese study-abroad students statistics. Available at: www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201903/t20190327_375704.html

Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China (MOHRSS) (2017) Joint inter-ministerial meeting discusses plans to tackle six difficult problems facing internationally educated returnees in starting up businesses and undertaking innovation in China. Available at: www.mohrss.gov.cn/SYrlzyhshbzb/dongtaixinwen/buneiyaowen/201704/t20170411_269335.html

Moguérou P (2006) The brain drain of PhDs from Europe to the United States: What we know and what we would like to know. RSCAS Report no. 11. Fiesole: European University Institute.

National Institute of Educational Sciences (NIES) (2016) Striving to develop world-class modern education with Chinese characteristics. *China Education Newspaper*. 21 April, 16. Available at: www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5147/201604/t20160421_239406.html

Nedelcu M (2012) Migrants' new transnational habitus: Rethinking migration through a cosmopolitan lens in the digital age. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38(9): 1339–1356.

Nedelcu M (2019) Digital diasporas. In: Cohen R and Fischer C (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies*. New York: Routledge, pp. 241–250.

Nyíri P (2001) Expatriating is patriotic? The discourse on "new migrants" in the People's Republic of China and identity construction among recent migrants from the PRC. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27(4): 635–653.

Oh I (2012) From nationalistic diaspora to transnational diaspora: The evolution of identity crisis among the Korean-Japanese. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38(4): 651–669.

Ong A (1999) *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Renmin University of China (RUC) (2016) Renmin University of China initiates internationally educated Chinese returnee teachers' China affairs education scheme: Vice president Xiaoqiu Wu presents the first lecture. *News of RUC*. 30 November, 16. Available at: http://news.ruc.edu.cn/archives/154465

Rutherford A (2009) Engaging the Scottish diaspora: Rationale, benefits and challenges. Report for the Scottish Government Social Research. *Report*, 28 July. Available at: www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20170107012339/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/07/28161043/10

Saxenian A (2006) *The New Argonauts: Regional Advantage in a Global Economy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Shih FJ (1998) Triangulation in nursing research: Issues of conceptual clarity and purpose. *JAN* 28(3): 631–641.

Stake RE (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Vertovec S (2009) *Transnationalism*. London: Routledge.

Wang H (2019) Returnees help voice of China to be heard. *Chinadaily*, 10 October, 19. Available at: www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201910/10/WS5d9e844ca310cf3e3556f931.html

Wang H and Zweig D (2010) China's diaspora and returnees: The influence on China's globalization process. In: Yao S, Wu B, Morgan SL and Sutherland D (eds) *Routledge Studies on the Chinese Economy*. New York: Routledge, pp. 124–144.

Welch AR and Hao J (2013) Returnees and diaspora as source of innovation in Chinese higher education. *Frontiers of Education in China* 8(2): 214–238.

Yang R and Welch AR (2010) Globalisation and Chinese knowledge diaspora: An Australian case study. *Australian Educational Researcher* 37(3): 19–37.

Zweig D (2006) Competing for talents: China's strategies to reverse the brain drain. *International Labour Review* 145(1–2): 65–90.

Zweig D and Wang H (2013) Can China bring back the best? The Communist Party organizes China's search for talent. *The China Quarterly* 215: 590–615.

Conceptualizing virtual transnational diaspora: Returning to the ‘return’ of Chinese transnational academics

Lei, Ling; Guo, Shibao

01 d l Page 1

23/9/2021 7:32

theoretical lens of transnational dias- pora, our

02 d l Page 1

23/9/2021 7:32

03 d l Page 7

23/9/2021 7:33

"double diaspora"

Following Lie’s conceptions, Guo (2016) has proposed the notion of double diaspora based on the transnational migration experiences of Chinese Canadians living in Beijing, which challenged the notion of return to the homeland as a final or unidirectional journey.

04 d l Page 7

23/9/2021 7:32