

**Cultural Identity and Cultural Capital: An
Exploration of Chinese-Canadian Immigrant
Families' Reading Practices and Chinese Literature**

by

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Abstract

This paper explores Chinese immigrants' reading practices of Chinese literature and relies on the concepts of cultural identity and cultural capital to consider how families in Vancouver read Chinese literature. This case study consists of interviews that I conducted with fourteen participants from twelve Chinese immigrant families in Vancouver, B.C, Canada in 2017. This research shows that within immigrant families, active readers of Chinese literature tend to be mainly immigrants who emigrated as adult and youth. And their reading practices indicates how Chinese immigrants deal with their Chinese cultural identities and the cultural capital that Chinese literature carries in the context of immigration.

Keywords: Chinese immigrants; Reading practices; Chinese literature; Cultural identity; Cultural capital

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This paper intends to explore Chinese immigrants' reading practices of Chinese literature.¹ Specifically, I rely on the concepts of cultural identity and cultural capital to consider how families in Vancouver read Chinese literature. My case studies consist of interviews that I conducted with fourteen participants from twelve Chinese immigrant families in Vancouver, B.C, Canada. This study shows that within immigrant families, active readers of Chinese literature tend to be mainly immigrants who emigrated as adult and youth. These reading practices are important because they provide insight into how Chinese immigrants engage with their Chinese cultural identities, the kind of cultural capital Chinese culture and language carry, and how these families negotiate the process of immigration.

1.1 Rationale of the study

1.1.1 Personal link to my study

Born, raised, and educated in China, I have been acquainted with Chinese literature from an early age. I also completed a BA in Chinese Literature in the Chinese educational system. As a literary person and an academic reader, I am interested in investigating Chinese immigrants as readers of Chinese literature as the overseas dissemination and acceptance of Chinese literature, contributes to the examination of the influence and value of Chinese literature, and the promotion of literary exchanges between countries.

¹ Note: The term 'Chinese literature (中国汉语言文学)' used here refers to literature from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. This literature is written in Chinese and some of these texts have been translated into other languages.

1.1.2 Literature gap

Literary exchanges between China and Canada have a long history. Early Chinese immigrants came to Canada in the 1850s and over the past two hundred years, Chinese Canadians have played an important role in the literary exchanges between China and Canada. For example, they created Chinese-Canadian literature with texts such as *Disappearing Moon Cafe* by Qunying Li and *Daughters of Red Land* by Yan Li, founded Chinese newspapers like *Daily News* (日新报) in 1903 and the *Chinese Times* (大汉公报) in 1907, and also started associations of Chinese-Canadian writers such as the Chinese Canadian Writers' Association. There are also several Canadian universities like the University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, and University of Toronto with departments of Asian studies, that offer majors in Chinese literature, and hold collections of Chinese literature in university libraries. Many of the faculty and graduate students that study Chinese literature are Chinese Canadian (Qian & Zhou,2015). These individuals study, translate, and teach Chinese literature. In doing so, they have helped to introduce valuable Chinese literary texts to Canada. We can see that many Chinese Canadians show interest in the literature from their home country and that Chinese immigrant writers and scholars often act as a bridge between China and Canada.

While scholarly attention has been paid to immigrant writers and scholars who study Chinese literature, there has been less research undertaken on the reading practices of everyday readers of Chinese literature from the Chinese immigrant community. I examine this gap by turning to immigrant readership in order to examine Chinese Canadian reading practices. I focus on Chinese Canadians because they are more likely to either have Chinese language ability and tend to be more connected culturally to China than non-Chinese Canadians. Exploring overseas reading practices will lay a foundation for further studies on the role that Chinese Canadians play in the literary exchanges between China and Canada.

1.1.3 My preliminary investigation

The population and density of Chinese immigrants have increased to a large number in major cities of Canada with the rise of China as an economic power and under the immigrant policy “point system” and the policy of “multiculturalism”.

Vancouver is a typical case. Many Chinese people from the mainland, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan have emigrated to Vancouver with family members or started families here.

These Chinese immigrants in Vancouver have access to many Chinese literary resources at present. Public libraries have collections of Chinese literature (and some Chinese literature translated into English) which Vancouver residents can borrow for free. Local Chinese brick-and-mortar bookstores like Beijing Bookstore, SUP Bookstore, and Harmony Books and Video store sell different kinds of Chinese language books as well as Chinese literature. Online book-sellers like Amazon.ca, Indigo.ca, Dangdang.com, Chinesebookcity.com. and Huawenbookshop.com have various Chinese literary books on sale and they ship to Vancouver. Also, there are other potential channels to acquire Chinese literary books, like searching for reading materials online and privately bringing books to Canada through other channels. These available resources and channels provide Chinese Canadian immigrants in Vancouver with ample opportunities to read and promote Chinese literature.

Due to the policies that protect reader information in public libraries and commercial institutions, it is difficult to use quantitative methods to figure out how exactly people in each household read Chinese literature, what Chinese literature they read, and how they choose Chinese literature, what their reading experiences are, or how they communicate in their daily lives.

This paper uses qualitative research methods. For my case study, I found and selected a small group of Chinese Canadian families who read Chinese literature and

conducted in-depth interviews. During these interviews, I was able to get more details from people about their reading practices.

1.2 Overview of Chapters

This paper has six chapters in total.

The first chapter describes the overall research idea which is to explore how Chinese immigrant families' read Chinese literature. For this project, I conducted fieldwork in Vancouver which involved interviewing people about their reading experiences and used the concepts of cultural identity and cultural capital to understand their reading practices. This first chapter also introduces the rationale for this study which includes my personal interest in Chinese literature and the promotion of national literature. I also identify the existing gap in the current literature on immigrant readerships of Chinese literature, and my preliminary investigation into Vancouver's Chinese resources.

The second chapter presents the literature review which includes four main aspects: 1) an overview of Chinese literature; 2) current studies on the transnational acceptance of Chinese literature, 3) current studies on immigrants' reading practices, and 4) theoretical concepts of cultural capital and cultural identity. This part will provide the micro-background and theoretical foundation of my study and outline my study's value.

The third chapter introduces the methodology I used during my research interviews. In this part, I explain how I recruited participants through interpersonal networks and advertisements, introduce my study participants, explain the collected information, and the difficulties of finding participants.

The fourth chapter reports the findings. I present four key findings: 1) first-generation readers read more Chinese literature due to their Chinese cultural identities and original class habitus; 2) immigrant families tend to have limited

interactions with respect to reading classics and popular Chinese literature, which is close related to displaying, maintaining, strengthening or passing on their Chinese cultural identities while fewer interactions also imply the decline of Chinese literature as cultural capitals in host country; family relationship to China also provides sources of cultural capitals, which slightly influence immigrant readers' habitus; 3) political conditions in China affect people's attitudes and decision to read contemporary literature, which indicates their complex understanding about Chinese cultural identities; and 4) the problems in the use of local Chinese literature resources indicates that the cultural capital that Chinese literature wields is weak within dominant Canadian culture and mass consumer culture.

The final chapter contains a summary of my findings, the implications and the limitations of my study. As for the summary, my study suggests that immigrants' reading practices of Chinese literature indicates how they deal with their Chinese cultural identities and the cultural capitals that Chinese literature carries. As for the implications, my study has research implications for analyzing the overseas acceptance of Chinese literature and immigrants' reading practices. It also provides reference for Chinese-Canadian families to reconsider their position between home culture and host culture, their cultural identities and cultural capital from home country and their reading situations. About the limitations, I state the problem of data and the limitations of the interviews.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter is composed of four parts: an overview of Chinese literature; studies on the transnational dissemination and acceptance of Chinese literature; studies on immigrants' reading practices; and the theoretical concepts of cultural identity and cultural capital.

2.1 Overview of “Chinese Literature”

“Chinese literature” might be unfamiliar to non-Chinese publics who lack knowledge about Chinese history and culture. Such international readers may also be unfamiliar with the canon of Chinese “literature”. Here, I provide an overview of “Chinese literature” to give a basic understanding of the shape of Chinese literature.

Chinese literature is a significant part of Chinese culture with a history that spans thousands of years. In general, it has two broad categories: 1) ancient Chinese literature; 2) modern and contemporary Chinese literature. Ancient Chinese literature refers to the literature from Remote Times (before Xia Dynasty) to China's last feudal dynasty, Qing Dynasty. In general, the periodization of ancient Chinese literature is mainly in line with the periodization of ancient Chinese history. And different historical periods (dynasties) have representative literary forms such as the Chinese mythologies of remote times, prose of philosophers of Pre-Qin Period, poems and odes (Cifu), Yuefu songs, historical prose of Han Dynasty, Tang poems/ Song poems, Yuan opera, and Ming-qing fictions.

Modern literature refers to the literature from 1917 (New Culture Movement) to 1949, and contemporary literature refers to the literature written after 1949 (the establishment of the People's Republic of China). Scholars hold different opinions about 1917 and 1949 as temporal markers. Some claim that modern literature should conclude with the late Qing dynasty because it contains the factors of modernity

(Wang, 2009). Others question the division between modern and contemporary literature with some scholars claiming that it should be titled twentieth-century literature because the term modern and contemporary are ambiguous and unnecessary (Yan, 2010).

China entered the modern age in the early twentieth century as the fall of the last feudal dynasty and the invasion of foreign imperialism to China. For national salvation, Chinese people started to carry out reforms and revolutions in each area. Chinese intellectuals started the New Culture movement and started to write in the vernacular language (Baihua) which displaced ancient writings. And modern literature was created during that period through the efforts of excellent writers. Significant writers from that period include Xu Lu, Congwen Shen, Moruo Guo, Lao She, Ba Jin, Yu Cao, Mao Dun, Ailing Zhang, Zhimo Xu, Yiduo Wen, and Zhongshu Qian.

After 1949, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China, China entered a new era. But from the 1950s to the 1980s, especially during the Cultural Revolution between 1966-1976, because of China's political environment, many writers were persecuted or imprisoned or killed and Chinese literature lost its vitality and variety. And the representative literature in this period was mainly cultural revolution literature available to mass such as *The Golden Road* by Ran Hao and underground literature (manuscripts) which was circulating amongst the folk. After the end of cultural revolution, the environment for free writing turned to be better and the development of literature returned to normal gradually despite the cultural censorship of the government. Main contemporary writers are Yan Mo, Anyi Wang, Hua Yu, Pingwa Jia, Lianke Yan, Louis Cha, Chiung Yao, and Yingtai Long.

Besides, the current rise of Chinese Internet literature² is worth noting. Its barbaric growth (massive production and huge profits) has attracted huge attention from the public and scholars. According to a report in *China Daily*³ from March, 2017,

² It refers to literature, especially fictions, produced online for economic profit by writers through different online platforms, especially literary websites (which are their main platforms).

³ <http://news.sohu.com/20170329/n485313935.shtml>

45% of netizens are users of Internet literature and its market value exceeded 500 billion RMB in 2016. And some researchers in Chinese university such as Youyuan Ouyang have paid much attention to the development of internet literature and done many studies on it in recent years. But, commercial value is not equivalent to literary value. Regardless of its popularity and scholarly attention, the evaluation system of Internet literature has not been matured yet and “there is gap between internet literature and the current evaluation system of literature, which also limits its development” (Luo, 2016).

Besides, based on the current evaluation system of literature in Chinese literary criticism, the status of ancient and modern classic Chinese literature is considered to be higher than contemporary literature, as the contemporary literature was produced in the present and its value and importance have not been studied and tested to the extent that ancient and modern classic Chinese literature have. But due to the operation of mass market, the importance of literature is not necessary related to its popularity. And sometimes, it can be the total opposite. For example, according data statistics⁴ on the export of Chinese books, in 2015, the output of contemporary Chinese literature is more than ancient Chinese literature.

2.2 Studies on the transnational dissemination and acceptance of Chinese literature

Little research about the transnational dissemination and acceptance of Chinese literature has been done by overseas scholars. Most research on this topic has been carried out by scholars in China and have been written in Chinese with the underlying intention of promoting Chinese literature as world literature and within the global context. These studies focus on Chinese literature in translation, Western academic

⁴ <http://www.bisenet.com/article/201602/156736.htm>

studies of Chinese literature, and also the communication factors. On the whole, they show that the literary exchanges between China and the West is imbalanced and non-equivalent (less Chinese literature translated and disseminated in the world compared to western literature translated and introduced to China in the international literary exchanges) and “China has been a culture-importing country in the sense of literary exchanges in the past one century” (Yang, 2014, p 7). And these studies tend to focus on the dissemination and acceptance of representative works in Chinese literature such as the classic fiction *A Dream of Red Mansions* and other typical works that have received international attention, either critically or commercially such as Mo Yan’s *Red Sorghum Family*. And main perspectives they focus on are the translation skills, theories or strategies, mechanism of transmission, the role of cultural agencies like overseas educational institution, translators, publishers, and problems that affect the dissemination such as the international relationship, ideologies and cultural differences.

The current research also outlines the history of Chinese literature as it has been circulated abroad. The world “found” Chinese literature in the early nineteenth century before Chinese literature “found” the world. Originally, overseas scholars like Goethe started to be in touch with Chinese literature and started to theorize “world literature” (Yang, 2014). Early overseas scholars and Western missionaries started to translate ancient classic Chinese literature and gain insights from the literary texts created by ancient Chinese civilizations. In “Studies on the Overseas Translation and Dissemination of Yuefu Songs,” Z. Li and X. Jia claim that Yuefu Songs’ overseas translation began in the late 1900s in the UK and then Yuefu Songs were translated in America and other countries. And these translators helped Yuefu Songs be included within the category of world literature and the translation and their insights gained from Yuefu Songs also had an influence on the development of British and American new poetry.

At the end of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, China started to open itself to the world and Chinese people gained more mobility and were able to move outside China. Chinese intellectuals, especially early overseas students, started to introduce ancient and modern classic Chinese literary texts to other countries. And from late 1940s to late 1970s, in the context of Cold War and political blockade, Chinese literature is mainly used as an ideological tool, and its translation and export are binding with external propaganda of Chinese government. A lot of literature with themes of revolutionary war are translated and exported organizationally as part of output of ideologies.

After the end of the Cultural Revolution (late 1970s) and with the normalization of diplomatic relations since 1970s and 1980s, China continued to export more Chinese literature in an effort to integrate itself with the rest of the world. Other countries continued to study and translate representative Chinese literature in the age of globalization out of a sense of curiosity about China. Cao (2015) states in “The Dissemination, Acceptance of Chinese classical fiction *A Dream of Red Mansions* in France”, that Chinese translator Li Zhihua translated this classical fiction into French in the 1980s. This promoted the text to French readers and provided new perspectives in overseas studies in the development of overseas Redology.⁵ Another essay titled “The Dissemination of Xu Lun’s Works in the World in the Past Century” shows that studies on Xu Lun’s work have been undertaken in different countries, and that Xu Lun’s works are translated and studied around the world. His works are considered to be important for understanding the modern history of China (Wang, 2009). Both examples above are manifestations of constant practices and efforts China and other countries have conducted and made to introduce important Chinese literature to the world and enhance communications among countries.

On the other hand, in the environment of market economy and consumerism, the

⁵ Note: Redology(红学) refers to the academic study of *A Dream of Red Mansion*, one of Four Great Novels of China.

relationship between literature and capital has become important. The production, circulation, and consumption of literature also influences the overseas acceptance of Chinese literature (Yang, 2014). There are many examples of classical or typical Chinese literature being consumed by overseas readers as Chinese literature is made part of global consumer culture.

For instance, X. Ma and S. Zhang (2010) discussed the popularity of classical Chinese literature such as *Chinese Four Masterpieces* against the background of consumer culture and globalization and points out that these novels are popular in different countries and are represented through animation production, film and television adaptation, and Internet games. And the representative contemporary literary texts such as *Red Sorghum Family* also have achieved huge success in overseas sales and reputation through excellent translations by overseas scholar Howard Goldblatt and his effective overseas cultural agent mechanism (eg, the co-operation of overseas translator and literary agent, publishing broker). (Lu, 2014). And according to Guo (2017), the popular Chinese internet literature also used the trans-border advantage of internet and met with consumer culture and created overseas market value successfully in recent years.

Furthermore, the current studies on translated Chinese literature also imply that works that were translated and spread are mainly classical or typical Chinese literature that has high literary value or market value. And as for works that were not translated, they either stay in native Chinese market and remain largely unknown by international readers or spread by native Chinese media or through overseas Chinese individuals.

2.3 Studies on Immigrants' Reading Practices and Ethnic Readers

In current studies on immigrants' reading practices, the question of how immigrants read national literature is under researched. Instead, many studies focus on immigrant students or children's reading and literacy, reading comprehension, or second-language learning which are situated in the fields of linguistics and pedagogy⁶ which are less related to my research topic.

Though there is little literature directly related to my topic, there are a few studies that focus on the reading practices of immigrant readers and its relevance to immigrants' adjustment/acclulturation or identity, which provide me with an inspiration on how I consider my research question.

These studies on the one hand show that "reading is a contextually dependent experience" (Dali, 2012, p.197) and that acculturation or adjustment after immigration has an influence on people's reading practices, or in other words, immigrants' reading practices could reflect the situation of their acculturation. And these studies, on the other hand, suggest that book-reading plays certain role in peoples' negotiation with their immigration and the formation, maintenance, reinforcement, and weakening of original identity and the construction of new or hybrid identities in the host culture.

Dali Keren is an early researcher who started to focus on the immigrant reader stories. As he states, in current academic literature, there is a lack of adequate studies about ethnic readership and immigrant readers (2012) and a "lack of solid theoretical base related to reading behaviors and habits of immigrants" (2010, p.32). Since 2004, he has conducted a series of questionnaire surveys and interviews on

⁶ Please see, for instance, "Phonological awareness and reading acquisition in English- and Punjabi-speaking Canadian children," "The reading strategies of bilingual Latina/o students who are successful English readers: Opportunities and obstacles" and "The Intersection of Cognitive and Sociocultural Factors in the Development of Reading Comprehension among Immigrant Students."

Russian-speaking readers in Toronto. His research results are mainly reflected in his published paper such as “Reading by Russian-speaking immigrants in Toronto: use of public libraries, bookstores, and home book collections” (2004), “The Psychosocial Portrait of Immigration through the Medium of Reading: Leisure Reading and Its Role in the Lives of Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Toronto” (2010), “Reading their way through immigration: The leisure reading practices of Russian-speaking immigrants in Canada” (2012). And his main contribution is building the connection between immigrants’ reading practices and acculturation by claiming “leisure reading can be a more sensitive indicator of acculturation” (Dali, 2010, p.1). And Dali (2010) also notes in his study that through these immigrants’ reading practices, they “reevaluate the national cultural heritage, and stabilize identity” (p. 2), which points out how identity is related to their reading practices. But the sample for these researches only include first-generation adult immigrant readers in Toronto who speak Russian as first language and are self-identified as regular/avid readers.

Similarly, a few studies such as “People of the FSU immigrant adolescent in Israel” (Elias & Khvorostianov, 2010) have been done on immigrant youngsters’ reading practices and their adaptation after immigration. But it mainly explores the roles or the therapeutic function of books in the adaptation process of young immigrant readers. In Elias and Khvorostianov’s study (2010), they collected data from interviews which were conducted in 2005 and the sample is composed of immigrant adolescents (12-18 years old) from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) who are “recent immigrants who had lived in Israel for between 6 months to 5 years” (p.317). And it’s uncertain if it can be applied to other immigrant groups in other places and people who have lived for a longer period in host countries.

Furthermore, a few studies⁷ specifically discuss the cultural function of certain genres of books such as cookbook, wordless books and children’s literature with

⁷ Please see for examples: Epp M. (2015). Eating across borders: reading immigrant cookbooks. *Histoire sociale/Social history*, 47(96), 45-65; Giorgia G. & Marcella T. (2014). Migrant readers and

regard to building, maintaining, or reinforcing certain identity including ethnic identity or new identity in multi-cultural environment. But other studies such as “East is east, west is west: home literary” (Li, 2012) also imply the loss of ethnic identity due to the literacy and cultural practices in the dominant culture. That how immigrant read books and engage with their identities through their reading is a complex and contextually dependent issue.

For my research question of how Chinese immigrants read Chinese literature, I need to think about the roles and function of Chinese literature and adjustment/adaptation/acclimation or identities of Chinese immigrant individuals in host countries.

2.4 Theoretical Concepts of Cultural Identity and Cultural Capital

To explore how Chinese immigrants read Chinese literature, I seek the theoretical tools via an iterative process as I reviewed the current literature and analyzed my interview data from immigrants’ readers. I find the concept of cultural identity is useful for me to understand Chinese immigrants’ reading practices of Chinese literature which carries national language and culture.

Many scholars have discussed the concept of cultural identity in relation to diaspora or immigrants. As Hall (1997) states, one of ways of thinking about cultural identity is to “define it in terms of oneness, a sort of collective one true self, which corresponds to Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ that ideologically unifies people into one cultural identity, a national identity” (cited in Jiang, 2013, p.14-15). And within this definition, “cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provides us as ‘one people’” (Hall, 1990, p. 223).

wordless books: visual narratives’ inclusive experience. *Encyclopaedia*, 18(38), 67-90. Tami C, Katherine T. (2008), Building Arab Americans’ Cultural Identity and Acceptance with Children’s Literature, *International Reading Association. The Reading Teacher*, 62(3), pp. 210–219;

Other scholars have similar statements. According to Jensen (2003), Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero (1999), cultural identity refers to “a sense of solidarity with the ideals of a given cultural group and to the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors manifested toward one’s own (and other) cultural groups as a result of this solidarity” (as cited in Schwartz et al., 2006, p.6). Schwartz et al. (2006) and Yasui, Dorham and Dishion (2004) claim that cultural identity “reflects an individual’s self-perception as a member of a cultural group, that is, a group of individuals characterized by a shared cultural heritage” and Phinney (1990) notes that “immigrants’ cultural identity pertains to one’s affiliation with a particular ethnic group and with a nation” (as cited in Ngo & Li, 2016, p. 734).

From these statements, we can see that cultural identity can be defined in the way being unified as oneness as the given cultural groups can be unified by nation or ethnicity which shares certain common culture. Besides, in scholarly discussions, we can find common elements which are used to define cultural identities: shared language, national histories, traditions and rituals, norms, values and beliefs, a sense of belonging, shared cultural heritage. And as for Chinese literature as national literature, it carries Chinese language and Chinese culture, which exactly contains such rich resources as written language (characters, vocabularies, rhetoric), national histories, traditions, norms, values and beliefs, which can be tracked in expression of such culture identities. So, in this sense, this concept of cultural identity is helpful for me to consider Chinese immigrants’ reading practices of Chinese literature and their Chinese cultural identities.

However, Padilla, Perez (2003) and Phinney et al.(2001) note that “cultural identity is a special case of social identity” and as Bhatia and Ram (2001) state, cultural identity “is defined as the interface between the person and the cultural context” (as cited in as cited in Ngo& Li, 2016, p.734). That is to say, the definition of cultural identity can be understood from another dimension as it is also contextually dependent and overlaps with social identity.

I agree with Norton's understanding of social identity and cultural identity as she distinguishes between these concepts by claiming that "social identity is the relationship between the individual and the larger social environment mediated through institutions like schools, families, and workplaces," while cultural identity "refers to the relationship between individuals and members of a community that have commonalities in history, language, and ways of understanding the world" (as cited in Jiang, 2013, p.14). This distinction makes the concept of cultural identity useful as an analytic tool for understanding Chinese immigrant groups in relation to Chinese culture.

To complement this concept of cultural identity, I introduce Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as another conceptual tool to analyze my interview data. To examine the cultural resources that immigrant readers have, I analyze immigrants' reading habitus within their home and host countries, and the cultural capital of Chinese literature in the host country.

As Bourdieu (1986) states, there are three types of capitals: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital. About cultural capital, he notes,

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.(1986, p.243)

Bonnewitz (2002) explained that "the embodied state among these three forms of cultural capital is closely related to habitus, a durably installed set of dispositions that are acquired and socially constituted by all different forms of capital" (as cited in Yoon, Kim & Eom, 2011, p.418). And this habitus is "a structured structure: the

principle of decision into logical classes which organizes the perception into social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.174). That is to say, the habitus, the embodied state of cultural capital, makes a distinction between different social classes or positions in a stratified society.

According to Bourdieu (1979), “habitus consists of physical *hexis* as embodied disposition and *ethos* as practical rule/value, can be inherited by individuals’ family members (i.e. primitive habitus) and constituted by socialization, mainly in the school (i.e. secondary habitus). Thus, habitus is a set of permanent, but alterable dispositions, and an individual is a variation of class habitus (or group habitus, in the broader context)” (as cited in Yoon, Kim & Eom, 2011, p.418). As for the other two forms, Bourdieu notes that cultural capital is “convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.242). In my study, Chinese Immigrants’ habitus is reflected in their reading practices. I discuss this in terms of social stratification, within the context of families and school in China or Canada, and Chinese literature as cultural capital.

In conclusion, both theoretical concepts of cultural identity and cultural capital are useful conceptual tools for me to dissect my research question of how Chinese immigrants read Chinese literature, analyze interview data of immigrant readers’ reading experiences, and understand the theoretical dimensions of Chinese immigrants’ reading practices.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Interview

My research requires that I learn about the detailed experiences of readers. As I mentioned in my introduction, there are many difficulties and limitations to using the quantitative method to approach my research questions. So, I decide to use the qualitative method and to do specific, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a small number of Chinese Canadian potential readers in Vancouver.

The weakness of the interview is that it is limited to a small number of participants. The findings from these interviews only reflect the stories of a small group of people, and they reveal a certain social cultural reality. But the interview is, nonetheless, a flexible method that enabled me to gain qualitative detailed information from people about their reading experiences, feelings and attitudes, which can best meet the needs of my research project.

3.2 Study Participants

My participants are Vancouver-based Chinese-Canadian immigrant families who read Chinese literature (including different generations, and who vary in terms of their educational backgrounds, occupations, and periods of immigration). Sampling is based on the accessibility of participants and the synthetic factors above.

I recruited potential participants by relying on interpersonal networks (including local residents' introductions) and advertisements in bookstores and libraries (distributing flyers to readers and trying to find people through local book clubs).

The local residents mentioned here include my department colleagues, professors, and other acquaintances like friends, co-workers in previous work places, landlords, and neighbors. Their relationships to potential participants are the

relationships between colleagues, friends, family members, neighbors, and other acquaintances. I asked these residents to give potential participants an information letter that asked them to contact me or allow me to contact them if they were interested in participating.

I found twelve Chinese Canadian immigrant families in Vancouver and received the consent of 14 participants from these 12 families to participate in interviews. Of these 12 families, 3 of them were recruited from book clubs, 2 of them from public libraries, 2 of them from bookstores, and 5 of them from inter-personal networks.

In each family, there were two or three generations of readers. They came from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Participants were male and female, ages ranged from 19 to 70 years old, periods of immigration ranged from the 1970s to now, educational backgrounds ranged from college diplomas to PhDs, and occupations included doctor, businessman, teacher, student, lawyer, editor, nurse, administrator and retired.

Here are the profiles of the 12 families from my sample.

A's family

69-year-old A was born 1938 in mainland China, immigrated to Taiwan in 1949, and came to Canada in 1963 when he was 25 years old. He did a MA and PhD in Canada and became a Canadian citizen in 1975. He started his family in Canada and now has one adult daughter and two adult sons who were born in Canada and worked either in Canada or in America. And his daughter has a 7-year-old boy who was born in the US.

B's family

B emigrated to Canada in 1980s with her three sons. When she emigrated to Canada, she was 37 years old and three children from China came to Canada four

years later when they were 10 to 15 years old. She was an editor before her immigration but chose to work in the hospital to make a living when she came to Canada and now she has been retired and is enjoying her life. This year she is almost 70 years old. Her three children are grown up and work in other cities in Canada or America.

C's family

C came to study for her Master's degree in her twenties in Canada in the 1980s and after she graduated, she worked in Toronto, New York, and then worked in China for a few years. Afterwards, she moved back to Canada and settled in Vancouver. She met her husband while studying in Canada and had one daughter who was Canadian-born but moved with her to Canada, America, China and back to Canada. And now her daughter works in Canada.

D's family

D also did a MA in Canada in 1985 when she was in her twenties and afterwards worked in a local university. She started a family here and had two Canadian-born daughters who are now adults.

E's family

E was born in Canada in 1987. He has two brothers, one who also lived in Vancouver and the other in America. His parents came to study in Canada from Hong Kong in their twenties and then settled down in Vancouver in 1980s.

F's family

F emigrated to Canada in 1999 when he was six years old with his father and his mother FQ. Her mother FQ worked in a tourism company. F is planning to find work

opportunities in China in the future.

G's family

G emigrated to Canada with her parents from Hong Kong in 1992 when she was 15 years old. She went to high school and university in Canada and then began working here. She has two Canadian-born children, one 7-year-old daughter and one 5-year-old son.

H's family:

H is a Canadian-born graduate from a Chinese-Canadian immigrant family and his parents came to Vancouver in the 1990s from Hong Kong. He works in Vancouver. His aunt also lives in Vancouver and she operates a Chinese bookstore. H also holds a part-time job in her bookstore during his free time.

J's family

J emigrated to Canada with his parents in 2007 when he was 15 years old and afterwards, his mother came back to China to work. He went to high school and then entered university in Canada. After graduation, he found a job in Vancouver and now works here.

K's family

K emigrated to Canada with his parents in 2005 when he was 15 years old. His parents came to work and he went to school. After graduating from college, he worked in Vancouver.

L's family

L emigrated to Canada in 2005 with her husband when she was 55 years old.

Their adult son had emigrated to Canada in the early 1990s and started a family in Canada. L and her husband came to Canada to reunite their family and are now enjoying their retirement.

M's family

M came to study for Bachelors' degree in Canada in 2010 when she was 19 years old. She worked and started her family in Vancouver after her graduation from university. She has a one-year old daughter.

Here are the immigrant patterns and family structure of my sample:

No.	Family structure			immigration period
	Adults*	Chinese-born children	Canadian-born children	
1	A	/	Children/grandchildren	1970s
2	B	B's children	Grandchildren	1980s
3	C	/	CQ	
4	D	/	Children/grandchildren	
5	E's parents	/	E	
6	FQ	F	/	1990s
7	G's parents	G	Children	
8	H's parents	/	H	
9	J's parents	J	/	2000s
10	K's parents	K	/	
11	L/L's son		L's grandchildren	
12	M	/	Children	

Note: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J, K, L, FQ, CQ are the interviewees in my study. F and FQ are mother and son, C and CQ are mother and daughter. Interviewees are over 19 years old. "Adults" refers to people who were adults when they emigrated. "Chinese-born children" refers to people who were underage when they emigrated.

About these immigrant patterns, I have some supplemental explanation:

When People Emigrated--Before the 1970s

By reviewing the history of Chinese immigration in Canada, we see that the early

Chinese immigrants came to Canada for the Gold Rush and the construction of the railroad at the end of nineteenth century. Afterwards, Canada began to “restrict the number of Chinese immigrants allowed to gain entry into the country by imposing a head tax on Chinese immigrants” (Iris, 2002, p.3). And in 1923, “the Federal Government passed the restrictive Chinese Immigration Act, which virtually prohibited all Chinese immigration into Canada until it was repealed in 1947” (Guo & Don, 2005, p.4).

And according to Knowles (1997), from Confederation in 1867 to the 1960s, the selection of immigrants was based on their racial background. The British and Western Europeans were the most “desirable” citizens, and the Asians were “undesirable” (as cited in Guo & Don, 2005, p.4). According to Whitaker (1991), in 1967, a “point system” was introduced by the Liberal government, which based the selection of immigrants on their “education, skills and resources” rather than their racial and religious backgrounds (as cited in Guo & Don, 2005, p.4). In 1971, the policy of “multiculturalism” was adopted by Canada, which improved the immigration environment for Chinese. China did not establish diplomatic relations with Canada until 1970 and was closed to the world during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 and 1976. So, there were not as many Chinese immigrants from China in Canada before the 1970s as there have been since the 1970s.

It is likely that there was little access to Chinese literature in this discriminatory environment. Also, as there was a large proportion of poorly educated Chinese workers within these early immigrants, it is possible that many may not have read much or any Chinese literature. Consequently, it may be difficult for their descendants who have now been assimilated into Canadian society to develop an interest in Chinese literature.

In the process of finding participants, I tried to contact people who are from early immigrant families but they responded that they could not read Chinese at all and did

not read Chinese literature in translation. While there may be Chinese Canadian families who emigrated before 1970s who read Chinese literature, I failed to find any of them because of my limitations in terms of time, energy and channels. These early immigrant families could be further investigated in a future study.

For this paper, I use the data I collected from the 12 families who emigrated from the 1970s to the 2000s.

Age When People Emigrated

Each of these 12 families in China is composed of two or three generations that emigrated to Canada. Each family has adult immigrants, 5 families have immigrants under age, and 9 families have a Canadian-born generation. But only 14 of them joined my interview. And among my interviewees, 7 people were adults when their families emigrated to Canada, 4 people were under age, and 3 people were born in Canada. The information about other family members that I collected mainly comes from these 14 participants, which might be limited or missing for different kinds of reasons.

3.3 The Difficulties of Finding Participants

In the process of recruiting participants, I encountered many difficulties. On the one hand, it seems that the proportion of literature readers itself is not large in the public apart from professional readers. On the other hand, there were difficulties in getting more participants from each family. There were only two families in which more than one family member agreed to be interviewed. There were various reasons for this. Some claimed that their parents do not read or are too old to be interviewees as they were ill or had poor hearing. Some said that their adult children are not in Vancouver, because they either study in America, or work in other cities and countries and were unwilling to trouble them; some felt uncomfortable getting their family members involved because of privacy considerations or their family

relationships or other personal reasons; and some people showed no interest in sharing reading experience or were not good at or disliked expressing themselves because of their personalities. Also, in other cases, their family members are not qualified to be interviewees because they are under age or do not read Chinese or Chinese literature.

On the whole, the size of my sample is not large, but I conducted longer (one hour or so) interviews with fewer participants. During the conversation, besides inquiring about their reading experiences, I also asked for more detailed information about their family members' reading experience based on my participants' memories. And I also kept a close connection with some participants after the interviews so my participants could talk with me if they have more details to share if they thought of them.

3.4 Participant Confidentiality Measures

There are several measures that have been taken to ensure participant confidentiality.

Firstly, no one except my supervisor, Christine Kim, and I have been allowed to see or hear any of the answers to the interviews. Participants were given the choice to allow their interviews to be audio recorded or not. Only three of my participants allowed me to record their interviews. The audio recordings were destroyed when the interview scripts were completed.

Secondly, the participants' names are labeled with a participant ID. In this paper, the 14 participants are respectively labelled by letters A, B, C, CQ, D, E, F, FQ, G, H, J, K, L, M. Among them, C and CQ are from the same family, and F and FQ are from the same family.

Thirdly, the interview transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher Sijia Liu and her supervisor Christine Kim. These transcripts will be

destroyed once the electronic data is complete. The electronic data is to be uploaded to an online repository but these files will be stripped of any information that could identify participants (e.g., names, email addresses) and the signed consent forms will be destroyed.

3.5 Data analysis

This is a case study from the micro perspective of families and the research data collected comes from small-scale ethnological interviews. The data analysis is qualitative rather than quantitative. I use the method of discourse analysis to deal with the information I collect. I analyze the contents that my participants provide directly in the interview, and also the attitudes or emotions of my participants during the interview. I also analyze the historical and cultural contexts like the background of the times they lived, social changes, their lived experience and their relationships with the times. The theoretical concepts of “cultural identity” and “cultural capital” are also used as tools to analyze these findings.

Chapter 4 Analysis and Findings

4.1 Who Are the Active Readers?

Through my interviews, I found that there is an obvious distinction between readers who were first-generation immigrants, regardless of whether they emigrated as adults or youth and the Canadian-born generations in my sample immigrant families. In these immigrant families, the readers of Chinese literature tended to be those who emigrated as adults and youth. The Canadian-born generations within the family tended to have much less experience in reading and appreciating Chinese literature.

Of the Canadian-born generation, most parents and grandparents who emigrated from the 1970s until the present who were interviewed reflected that their adult Canadian-born kids seldom read in Chinese or read Chinese literature in translation. Some of these children attended Chinese school on weekends during their childhood but others did not. Even for those who learned to read in Chinese, they still prefer to read in English. Some parents felt that in addition to the difficulty of language, their children found reading Chinese literature challenging because they do not understand the cultural references. One interviewee told me that:

I have even tried to show my kid a Chinese tale book when she was young but it is too hard for her to understand the texts, because there are some terms like “dou di zhu” (fighting with landlord) which were used widely in the period of land reform and cultural revolution in China. But everyone in China knows. They can learn it from teachers in school, from newspaper, from people’s conversation in daily life, even from card games...But my daughter didn’t know. It is troublesome to explain everything to her from me. Let alone she has no interests. After all she has never lived there. And in Canada there were so many other interesting

English books related closely to her. (Said by D whose daughter was born in 1980s in Canada).

Of the three Canadian-born people that I interviewed, Mrs. CQ and Mr. E were born in 1980s and Mr. H in the 1990s. CQ's situation is different. She came back to China to study in the 2000s for a few years and she can read Chinese well. And she has a friend circle in China. She says, "I read Internet fictions quite a lot in Qidian Chinese website, which are very popular among my friends in China."

But for E and H, reading in Chinese is not their first choice. The Chinese texts they have been exposed to are mainly from once-a-week Chinese class in Chinese school. And they learned a few literary texts there. And there were also a few Chinese literary books bought by their parents when they were young. But they said that they didn't read any Chinese literary books when they grew up. E and H state:

"It is so difficult to learn Chinese characters and grammar. Reading in Chinese is very different from speaking. But English is much easier. And I also spend more time learning English through the whole education," said by E.

"I have ever read some martial art fictions by Louis Cha that my father kept at home when I was young, but just a few. I prefer reading English fictions when it comes to literature. Reading in English is faster and more comfortable." Said by H.

Following their response, I asked E and H if they considered reading Chinese literature translated to English, they said that didn't have a try, and explained that they normally choose books based on best-seller list and recommendation in Canadian media and book-selling websites or bookstores rather than select books specially related to China. And it seems that through these channels, they are more likely to be acquainted with more North-American fictions than other literary works.

For Mr. E and H, since they were born and educated in Canada, both of them feel there is sense of distance from Chinese language especially written language and Chinese culture. Compared to Chinese-born Children, they identify themselves as Canadian very naturally. Reading in English and reading English fictions are their

regular practices rather than reading Chinese books including Chinese literature. Their connections to Chinese culture or China is mainly built by their parents or families.

The first-generation immigrant parents can influence their children to read Chinese literature but this influence is minimal. It may involve sending their children to Chinese school, buying books for them, asking them to read some classical texts, or keeping Chinese literary books at home. But regardless of age, the language challenge and cultural distance seem to be barriers for Canadian-born generations in developing aesthetic interests in Chinese literature.

Chinese-born children (6-15 years old when they immigrated in my example) can be very different. They had been cultivated in a Chinese cultural environment before they emigrated. Most of them attended secondary school in China and were exposed to Chinese literature more naturally in their Chinese educations and their Chinese families in China compared to Canadian-born children. For example, Mr. J and K who emigrated to Canada when they were 15 years old attended elementary and middle school in China before they came to Canada. They can read well in both English and Chinese but prefer to read Chinese language books. And they also continue to read some works of the writers they knew when they were in China or some new works from China after they moved to Canada.

The active readers of Chinese literature that are included in my samples are mainly these first-generation immigrant readers. For leisure reading, these immigrant readers tend to read classic Chinese literary works they knew from school or their families in China or works by certain writers that were popular and famous when they were growing up in their home countries. For example, A who emigrated in 1970s from Taiwan, prefer to read late Qing fiction and listen to Beijing Opera; H's parents who emigrated from HK in 1990s, prefer to read romance fiction by Chiung Yao and martial arts fiction by Louis Cha. FQ who emigrated from mainland in 1999, she likes reading modern classics such as *Home Time* by Bai Jin and *Tea house* by Lao She,

and she also reads popular literature like fictions by Chiung Yao and online Chinese literature after she moved to Canada.

And the most active readers in my sample are Mrs. C who emigrated as an adult and Mr. K who emigrated as youth. Both of them are users of local public libraries and members of Chinese book clubs. They prefer to read in Chinese and have a strong sense of belonging to China. Mrs. C misses home a lot and reading Chinese literature makes her feel at home. Mr. K feels that Canada is just a place to live. And they still remain tied to Chinese society and culture even after immigrating.

Their reading practices of Chinese literature indicate their language preference on mother language, a sense of belonging to home culture, and nostalgia for home country, which are closely related to their original cultural identities. For them, their perceptions of their original cultural identities are mainly unified by their original nation and ethnicity, as Chinese cultural identities. And they can never erase or cross out their Chinese cultural identities having had been formed in their home culture regardless of how they engage with new identities in host country. For active readers like Mrs. C, her perception of original identity is even clearer after her immigration. As she states, "I feel I am always Chinese and North America is home to the White. And the White will always see you as Chinese when they see your color." She sees herself through the mirror of the other in the situation of immigration and becomes more certain about her Chinese cultural identity as something inside her for all her life.

And on the other hand, their reading practices of Chinese literature also indicate the class tastes or habitus as a physical embodiment of their cultural capitals, formed in their home country through their families and schools in China (including mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan). In my sample, my study participants are from well-educated families in China. Among their parents or grandparents, most of them played a role in their cultural accumulations or the formation of literary interests. For instance, Mrs.

FQ mentioned that her mother read *Thunderstorm* by Cao Yu to her at home when she was young; Mr. K recalled his memories in the interview about her mother's literary interests in Chinese poems, and his literary enlightenment given by her mother through her rich collections of Chinese literary works at home and her reading habitus in his early age.

And almost all readers who emigrated as adults all graduated from universities with Bachelors' degree and they either studied further in Canada or came to work in Canada directly. And readers who emigrated as youth all graduated from middle school in China and studies further in Canada receiving college diplomas or universities' degrees finally in Canada. Almost all of these first-generation readers have received relatively complete literary education in Chinese educational system.

Through their families and schools, they gained acquaintance with Chinese literature, learned the way to reading and appreciating Chinese literature and formed certain habitus in relation to Chinese literature. And most of them remained their habitus to different degrees after their immigrating to Canada. Of course, for some people, this habitus might change in some way because of the new surroundings. For example, according to K, his mother who was a literary person when she was in China but spent much time adjusting to new environment, became very busy with her new work after she came to Canada and therefore didn't have much time to read Chinese literature anymore since she emigrated to Canada in 2007.

However, in some other cases, it shows that the original habitus is strong enough to resurface in post-immigration period. Mrs. B who has been in Canada for more than thirty years, for instance, was a Chinese senior editor when she was in China but to make a living, she changed her career and turned to be a nurse in Canada. She faced the change of class status caused by immigration and read little Chinese literature during her career in Canada. But after retirement, she began to read plenty of Chinese literary works and returned to her original habitus. These

readers of Chinese literature are active in the way they choose to represent their cultural stratum within original country or cultural groups of original, consciously or unconsciously.

All in all, from above discussions, we can see that their original cultural identities and cultural capitals in relation to China or Chinese culture are reflected on these active immigrant readers' reading practices of Chinese literature.

4.2 Family Interactions on Reading Classic and Popular Chinese Literature

According to my study participants, they had few family interactions on reading Chinese literature. But there were still a few aspects of these interactions worth noting.

4.2.1 Home literature education Of Classical literature

In immigrant families, I find that some first-generation parents tend to use classic Chinese literature as a tool to pass their original cultural identities to the next generation or maintain the Chinese cultural identities of their children. They would give their children a few classic literary books to read or at least let them have some knowledge of these Chinese classics and hope they could maintain their roots this way. This strategy was not necessarily successful as their children might not accept this knowledge or might not necessarily develop an interest in reading Chinese literature, especially for Canadian-born generation. But in order to preserve their cultural heritage, many first-generation parents tried this strategy.

Books that people mentioned most in their family reading lists are *Romance of Three Kingdoms* and *The Dream of Red Mansions*, both of which are famous classic

Chinese fictions in China, (two novels of The Four Great Classical Novels⁸).

Romance of Three Kingdoms tells a historical war story between the Kingdoms Wei, Shu and Wu during the period of The Three Kingdoms in Chinese history. And *The Dream of Red Mansions* tells a story of large and wealthy families in the Qing Dynasty. These works are considered to be great literature and to represent Chinese culture. Every Chinese person is encouraged to read them or at least have some knowledge of them because they learn Chinese history, beliefs, values and rituals from these classics and their characters and heroes.

Mr. J talked about his experience of reading *Romance of Three Kingdoms* during his interview. He emigrated to Canada with his parents when he was 15 years old, and now he has been in Canada for more than ten years. At first his parents did not allow him to read Chinese literature because they wanted him to adjust to the host country, but a few years later, his father brought him this book to keep him connected to China.

When I asked him how he liked this fiction, he answered,

“I like reading this book...the story is nice and I learned the history of Three Kingdoms from this novel, and I find it interesting to recognize the geographic names in today’s China based on the sites in this book.”

Then I continued to ask about his favorite characters in the fictions, he said,

“My favorite characters are Zhu Geliang and Zhao Yun. Zhu Geliang is extremely smart, intelligent and resourceful. Zhao Yun is brave and skillful in battle. And they are extremely loyal and faithful to their lord Liu Bei. Especially, Zhu Geliang is so faithful to Liu, bending his back to the task until his dying day. It is very touching. They are heroes and models to me.”

⁸ The Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature : the four novels that are regarded to be the greatest and most influential of pre-modern Chinese fiction by Chinese literary criticism. Besides *Romance of Three Kingdoms* and *The Dream of Red Mansions*, the other two are *The Journey to The West*; *Water Margin*.

And he continued by saying, “and there are the intrigues and war strategies inside where I also learned a lot. It makes me think about how to live...and how to be a decent person in this complex and tricky world... I feel that Chinese classics are full of Chinese wisdom and it is helpful and enlightening.”

Through reading Chinese classics, immigrant readers like Mr. J gain closeness to Chinese culture, and also to some extent, strengthen their Chinese cultural identities which had been weakened after years' of being in Canada.

4.2.2 Home Collections of Classic and Popular Chinese Literature

Compared to home literature education, the sharing of home collections is more common in my study participants. Almost every family member has had the experience of looking through the books in their bookshelves at home, either in China or Canada.

In their Canadian home collections, these immigrant families often keep some ancient and modern classical literary books. These are often valuable hardcover books. And some of them also bought a few literary books of their favorite that were popular and representative at the time when they were in China and brought them to Canada to keep in their bookshelves.

Identity is revealed in self-representation. From their family collections, we can see that how immigrant families represent themselves. They display their original cultural identities through these Chinese classics and non-classics. Their children may also have an impression of what Chinese literature is through their collections at home, regardless of whether they show an interest or not in this literature. A few interviewees said that they had never looked through their parents' books from China in their home bookshelves but that they were connected to China in some way through their home settings.

These collections of books at home also imply their original cultural class in their home country. But some families I interviewed left most of their books in China when they emigrated to Canada. Although they started to collect books again at home in Canada, the number is much smaller than their original home in China. For them, in Canada, these books are not that useful for promoting their and their next generations' cultural and social class. As H, a Canadian-born interviewee, says, "I read a few Chinese literary texts, just a few. Not many people read and talk about it in our daily life here."

We can see among immigrant readers, there is an awareness of maintaining or displaying original cultural identities and also a decline in reading Chinese literature or acquiring cultural knowledge of Chinese literature as a form of accumulating cultural capitals in host country.

4.2.3 Family Relationship to China and Books in Suitcase

Immigration often results in family separation. For some immigrant families, some family members are left in China when others immigrate. Other individuals return to China to work and live after immigration to Canada. They may experience transnationalism more strongly. And due to this transnational family relationship, books from China sometimes are carried across border by the family members in two countries through suitcase. These books in suitcase create important cultural meanings beyond books themselves.

Take Mr. J for example, who emigrated to Canada with his parents when he was 15 years old. His mother later returned to China to work and live. J's father goes to China quite frequently for work or for other affairs but lives in Canada now. J has lived in Canada since immigration. He lives separately with his mother who lives in China and also doesn't live with father who lives in Canada due to some reason.

His experience is transnational: "I feel I live between Canada and China." He has fewer opportunities to share home books with her mother since they do not live

together: “We don’t live together, don’t share a home bookshelf in a same place, and we don’t get a chance to share each other’s books in the shelf and talk about what we read because it won’t happen naturally when you don’t live together.” There is only one time that her mother asked a friend who went to Vancouver to bring classic modern fiction to J. She sent *Red Rose and White Rose* and *Love in a Fallen City* written by famous writer Ailing Zhang from China to him. For him, this classic Chinese literature is more than the sharing of interests. It means a connection between him and China, as well as him and his mother. Reading this Chinese literature reinforces his original cultural identity.

For some other immigrant families, they still have older generations of family members or other relatives left in China and they often return to China to visit them and other friends. They were very curious about what Chinese people read or Chinese children learn in China so sometimes would observe and ask their friends or relatives what they read and what their kids read in China. These individuals would also shop in bookstores in China and bring some books from China to Canada when they came back. One participant notes that,

When I come back to China, sometimes my families and I shopped in the bookstore to buy some current interesting and famous books. And I bought Mo Yan’s fictions before. My grandpa in China was editor before and I often heard he talked about Mo Yan’s fictions. I was curious, so I also read one of his fictions, *Red Forest*. (Said by Mr. F, who emigrated with his parents when he was six years old and his parents bring him back to China each year to visit his grandparents).

Or their family members and friends from China (Hong Kong) come to Canada to visit them. Some interviewees such as Mrs. G even ask their family members and friends who would visit Vancouver to bring Chinese textbooks to them to provide their children with extra reading texts. “I sent my children to Chinese school on Weekends in Vancouver, but it is not enough and what they learn is less than and different from

what children learn and read in China.” Said by G, a mother who emigrated as youth and has two kids under age now. She wants her children to learn Chinese and Chinese culture as much as possible not only for cultural heritage as an ethnic Chinese but also for potential practical use since their home country China has become more important with its rising as a powerful economic power.

From above examples, we can see that these immigrant readers have a closer relationship to China due to their family relationships to China and this is reflected on their reading practices and these books in suitcase carried cross borders. Besides, families and school education in China still have a slight influence on immigrant readers’ choices on Chinese literary books or texts through this kind of family relationship to China, which also provides potential sources of enhancing their Chinese cultural identities, accumulating cultural capitals from China and cultivating their reading habitus in host country.

To conclude, extracting from above three parts of analysis on family interactions on reading Chinese literature, there are four main aspects: 1) classical Chinese literature is used in home literary education to pass on Chinese cultural identity to next generation; 2) through home collections of Chinese language literary books, immigrant families are displaying, maintaining or passing on Chinese cultural identities; 3) fewer collections and fewer communication after immigration imply a decline in reading Chinese literature or acquiring cultural knowledge of Chinese literature as a form of accumulating cultural capitals in host country; 4) In a few cases, reading decisions on Chinese literature are influenced by their family relationship to China, helping with enhancing their Chinese cultural identities and accumulating the cultural capitals Chinese language and culture carry and having to do with the formation of their reading habitus in host country.

4.3 Political Conditions in China and Reading Contemporary

Chinese Literature

Another finding has to do with the connection between the political conditions in China and people's reading of contemporary Chinese literature. I find that people who emigrated when conditions in China were too political show different reading preferences and attitudes towards literature.

Take Mrs. B, C and D, for example. They left China in the 1980s, a few years after the end of the Cultural Revolution and they either have a negative or critical attitude towards contemporary Chinese literature or are very interested in the banned literature (anti-CCP, or erotic novels) or underground literature.

A case of B, C and D:

B, C and D were born in the 1940s or 1950s, grew up during the period of the Cultural Revolution, entered university after the end of the Cultural Revolution and left China in the 1980s to study further or work in Canada. The 1980s was when China ended the totalitarian era and people started to condemn the Cultural Revolution and appealed to the independence of thoughts. It was also the period in which China reopened itself to the world after being closed off for ten years and was eager to reconnect with the West and learn from the West.

B worked in China in the 1980s and then came to Canada. In the first twenty years, she was busy with work and did not have much reading time. She had more free time after her retirement, and started to read a lot about modern and contemporary Chinese literature but with an extremely critical attitude.

From my conversation with her, I can feel that she cares very much about the relationship between literature and politics. She appreciates several contemporary writers with independent spirits like Fangfang and hates some writers in the system who cater to political power and write for the party. "Some writers don't have

backbone at all that I really despise and they just serve the time. But Fangfang is quite great. I think she is rare one in Chinese writers who has the independent spirit. Her work like *Soft Berried* is very profound and critical.” She draws a clear demarcation between whom or what to hate or love.

As for C and D, they did their B.A. in China and came to study further in Canada in the 1980s. When C came to Canada, she found there were many Chinese reading resources in Western universities which she had no access to in China such as underground literature from the Cultural Revolution or literary magazines like *This Generation* which were banned in China. She told me that “I read a lot when I came to Canada and I felt so excited. It was totally impossible for me to see these literary texts in China because of the political environment” and “the only way to understand one thing is to know most about it.” She considers it important for her to understand the complete history of that period that she experienced and to understand how things took place.

Unlike C, D prefers reading more Western literature and had the impression that Chinese literature was too political: “In the literary texts that I learned in the period of Chinese cultural revolution, I can’t see anything related to humanity, especially compared with the Western literature I read since 1980s. Maybe because of that, I didn’t read too many Chinese literary books.”

But there are also a few works of fiction which she feels are good and were popular in the 1980s: “*Chess King* by A Cheng is great. I brought this fiction to Canada and it is still on my home’s bookshelf. It’s not political even its background is cultural revolution. It describes that an intellectual youth was addicted to Chinese chess and he looked for competitors persistently to play chess regardless of the environments. The story is very interesting and it shows the story of a cute person, a real person, a miraculous person. He had a pure interest though it was not useful at the age. I can feel his passion and the ancient wisdom created by China through his

passion and understanding on Chinese chess. But anyway, works like this are not many, I think.”

From above cases, we can see that the political conditions in China affect these readers' attitudes and relations to contemporary Chinese literature. This indicates their complex attitudes towards China and their understandings of their home cultural identities. For them, when it comes to Chinese literature or culture, they all agree with that Chinese classics have priority beyond contemporary literature in the sense of positioning or defining themselves as members of Chinese cultural group. Their imagination of their original cultural identities tends to be based on the cultural heritage of classics rather than a close relationship to the culture in China at this moment. And meanwhile, we can see that being banned also becomes the main value of certain literary texts for immigrant readers.

4.4 Use of Local Chinese Literature Resources

The resources of Chinese literature in Vancouver are relatively rich. Ethnic bookstores sell Chinese language books, local public libraries have collections of Chinese literature and Chinese book clubs promote the reading of Chinese books. But based on interviews and observations, I find there are still many problems with local resources and how readers use these resources. And these problems indicate the weak degree of cultural capital that Chinese literature wields within dominant Canadian culture and mass consumer culture.

Firstly, about ethnic bookstores, there are three Chinese bookstores in Vancouver (including Richmond): Beijing bookstore, SUP bookstore and Harmony Books & Videos. Among immigrant families I interviewed, several readers said they had visited these bookstores but these bookstores were also unknown to many other readers in my sample. Compared to Canadian bookstores like Indigo Chapters, the space of these Chinese bookstores is rather small. There is no reading area inside.

Chinese literature is a small portion of the various kinds of books they carry and the classification on the genres of Chinese literature is rather poor and rough.

Beijing bookstore and SUP bookstore are chain bookstores from mainland China and Hong Kong. I have visited these bookstores and I find that in the small area titled as Chinese literature, there are a few high-brow classics. In an untitled open area, there are some low-brow or popular works of Chinese literature on sale. Harmony Books & Videos is an independent bookstore that holds more classics. But according to one bookstore staff in Harmony Books & Videos, these Chinese classics do not sell well and only older generations show interest in them. More parents come to buy Chinese calligraphy brush pens for their children.

Secondly, I learned that local public libraries serve the local Chinese community by purchasing Chinese language books from China based on the mass market in China. Sometimes their collections are also acquired from donations made by the local Chinese community. There is an obvious decline of literature quality in the collections due to its market-oriented channels. A few participants like Mrs. C said that the Chinese collections in the libraries are composed of more popular books and do not have many high-brow literary books: "I feel the quality of collections is not good enough. I need more than that. But perhaps I am just minority. More people read for entertainment or practical use." And sometimes readers in the libraries just pick up books to read to kill time but do not pay much attention to the titles: "Those are not serious books. It is not worth mentioning," said by Mr. A, a retired man. He showed a little shame when mentioning those popular books he read randomly, and preferred to talk about a few classics and serious books he has read.

There are also Chinese book clubs in Vancouver. These book clubs are either programs of local public libraries or branches of book club from China such as Fan Deng reading club (non-profit organization) from China. These book clubs aim to promote reading in Chinese community. They have gatherings at fixed times. They share their reading experiences and recommend books to people. Some people also

bring their children to attend the Chinese reading book clubs. And I also noticed there are also WeChat reading groups established by these reading clubs, where readers share and recommend articles on a daily basis. There are three interviewees who are members of these book clubs. But according to them, Chinese literature also just takes up a small portion of these clubs. Members in book clubs are interested in different genres of books. And, they also read a few literary books (not necessarily Chinese) in Chinese (e.g. European or Japanese literature in Chinese translation), reading more other kinds of books that are not literary (i.e. non-fiction) or more entertaining or practical rather than literary.

Their book-reading practices or activities could help with accumulating cultural knowledge and promote their cultural class in the stratified society but on the whole, in the field of host country and the context of mass consumer culture, there seems to be less possibility that accumulating cultural knowledge of Chinese literature would confer social status upon immigrant readers.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Content and Findings

This paper has explored Chinese immigrant families' reading practices of Chinese literature and used the theoretical concepts of cultural identity and cultural capital to analyze their reading practices.

By doing a case study on twelve immigrant families, this research finds that active readers of Chinese literature are mainly readers who emigrated as adult and youth due to their language preference, sense of belonging, nostalgia, which are closely related to their cultural identities and their class taste or habitus formed in through their families and schools in home countries. And Canadian-born generations have much less experience of reading and appreciating Chinese literature due to language challenges and cultural distance.

Among these immigrant families, immigrant parents may use classical Chinese literature as a tool to maintain their children's original cultural identities or pass on the identities to their next generation. Immigrant families are displaying, maintaining or passing on Chinese cultural identities through home collections of Chinese language literary books but fewer collections and fewer communication after immigration also imply a decline in reading Chinese literature or acquiring cultural knowledge of Chinese literature as a form of accumulating cultural capitals in host country; reading decisions on Chinese literature are influenced by their family relationship to China, which is also related to enhancement of their Chinese cultural identities, accumulation of the cultural capital that Chinese language and culture carry, and the formation of their reading habitus in their host country.

The political condition in China affects these readers' attitudes towards contemporary Chinese literature and it indicates their complex attitudes towards

China and their understanding of their home cultural identities. And being banned gives certain literary texts value for immigrant readers.

The problems in the use of local Chinese literature resources indicates that in the field of host country and mass market, Chinese literature occupies a weak position in cultural capitals and to great extent, immigrant readers are unlikely to promote their social status through accumulating cultural knowledge of Chinese literature.

On the whole, we can conclude that reading of Chinese literature is still limited in immigrant groups by looking at their reading practices and their limited practices of reading classic and current literature indicates how they deal with their Chinese cultural identities and the cultural capital that Chinese literature carries in the context of immigration.

5.2 The Implication of this Study

5.2.1 Implications for Research

My study is a case study of Vancouver Chinese-Canadian immigrant families. It supplements to the project “overseas acceptance of Chinese literature” as it reveals the different acceptance of Chinese literature between readers who emigrated as adult and youth and readers who were born in Canada and it also suggests the different reading motivations and decisions on reading classic Chinese literature and contemporary Chinese literature among Chinese immigrant readers.

And on the other hand, my study is also a supplement to immigrants’ reading practices. My study provides new findings about how Chinese literature is used in Chinese immigrant families to display or maintain their cultural identities from their home country. It also indicates the decline of Chinese literature as a valued form of cultural capital from China.

5.2.2 Implications for Chinese-Canadian family

My study also provides Chinese-Canadian families a reference to review their situation, to position themselves between China and Canada, to rethink what literature means to them in their life, what they bring to Canada after they emigrated and how much they contribute to the cultural exchanges between China and Canada.

As for the Chinese-born or Canadian-born children in the Chinese-Canadian families, they can also reconsider how they are positioned between two or more cultures and languages and the benefits and drawbacks of this positioning. They can also consider what their reading practices mean to them as well as what their parents' reading preferences, cultural identities and cultural capital mean to them.

5.3 The limitations of this study

During the collection of data, I experienced many difficulties while trying to find more participants. On the one hand, probably the proportion of literature readers itself is not large aside from professional readers. On the other hand, there are difficulties in getting more participants from each family. So, this limits the completeness of my information.

And I investigated 12 families' reading experience within limited time and interpreted the dialogue subjectively. The collected data is very complex. My analysis was only able to consider it on a surface level given the limitations of this paper but there is more information that can be taken from my data.

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