

6-20-2011

An Exploration of the Identities of Asian Graduate Student Mothers in the United States

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE IDENTITIES OF ASIAN GRADUATE
STUDENT MOTHERS IN THE UNITED STATES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2011

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Title: An Exploration of the Identities of Asian Graduate Student Mothers in the United States

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This study examines what characterizes the experiences of being an Asian graduate student mother in the United States pertaining to their race, gender, class, and culture, in particular, (a) the common identities and experiences of the women; (b) the way they juggle different roles and identities in everyday life; and (c) the marginalization and privilege associated with the women's experiences.

The researcher collected data from a range of postmodern methodologies including postmodern interview, personal journal writing, and researcher's notes over a two-year period and chose eight women to participate in the study. Findings indicate that numerically there is a wide range of similar identities underlying the women's experiences pertaining to their race, gender, class, and culture, which are socially, culturally, economically, politically, and linguistically constructed. Some external factors which differentiate the women's experiences include the degrees they sought, research fields, and the phase of their graduate life experience. Based on different contexts some identities appear more plural, some are played more frequently than the others. The most frequently played identities across the study participants are professional identities, professional and mother identities, reversed gender role identities, and good mother identities. Qualitatively, each woman has a unique personal history about their past, present, and future as an Asian, an ESL graduate student, a mother, a wife, and many other hidden and overt roles they play in their everyday lives.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I get lost in the list of those who participated in bringing this project to fruition.

My deepest appreciation goes to the women who have been co-researching, co-performing, and co-writing with me throughout the research process. Not only did they share their Asian Graduate Student Mother experiences, they were witnesses and fellow-travelers of my AGSM life in the United States. My appreciation also goes to all the children and husbands of the participants in this study.

I am grateful to Dr. David I. Hanauer, my dissertation advisor, for his rigorous and compassionate guidance, for his intellectual and personal support, and for his faith and patience in my ability. I am grateful to Dr. Lingyan Yang, my committee member, for cutting through my confusion and fear of theory and caring support outside my study. I am grateful to Dr. Gloria Park, another committee member, for reading both my writing and my mind and giving me support the first time.

I thank Dr. Michael M. Williamson, for great help with my IRB. I thank Dr. Jerry Gebhard, Dr. Jianhui Wang, and Dr. Sharon Deckert, for insightful suggestions and helpful resources for my project. I also thank Cathy Renwick, Michele, Jessica, and Tracy for their great help and information.

My gratitude goes to Dr. Bonny Norton and Dr. Barbara Johnstone for their constructive advice and sincere encouragement in conference and through email.

I am greatly thankful to Beatrice Ntube Ekinde-Epwene, for her intense editing and the generosity of both her and her husband. I am equally thankful to Rick Bavera, for his persistent support and initial editing.

Thank you to Mai Amin Hassan, Basmah Alzamil, and Wafa Shaheen, for their great help and sincere understanding behind the curtain. Thank you to Chenchen Shi, Irene Pannatier, Bonnie Rong, Dan Sui, and Willa Wu for helping me enter the research orbit. Thank you to Rebecca Todd Garvin, Adcharawan Buripakdi, Shu-Chuan Wang, Hae Jeong Yu, Lan Wang, Monica Lei, Shu-Fen Cheng, and Susan Yeh for ABD-hood.

I am greatly indebted to my good friend, Wei Sun, for taking the lead ahead of me throughout the bumpy journey and nudging me to put the final full stop at the end of my project. I am greatly indebted to Yuxin Jiang and Na Luo, for giving me brother-and-sisterhood rather than cousinship and offering me the shelter from my tiring studies.

I am grateful to my siblings and in-laws for their unfailing support. I am grateful to my American families in Indiana, Connie Shertzer, Tom and Kathy Trevorrow, Debbie Floyd, Peggy Kane, Robert Carson, the Hans, the Chens, Kejing Liu, Mavis, Hua Yu, and the International Student Fellowship on campus. I am also grateful to the chapters and sisters of P.E.O. International Peace Scholarship in the United States.

Without the unconditional love of my family, I could not have completed this work. Thanks to my dear son, Tyler, who grew up with me in the US and always shared with me what his eyes saw and what his feet touched.

I especially appreciate my husband, Guishan, who quit his prosperous career at home to where I could get my doctorate in America and who contained my various feelings at various stages yet never stopped loving me.

Finally, I dedicate this writing to my beloved parents, Qingxiang and Xiaoqing Zhang, whose love, support, and role model crossed oceans and never failed over the past six years.

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CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Insider Outsider Researcher

I left my home for the capital city in No. 54 train at 21:25. Many relatives, friends, and colleagues saw me off at the station. We ate dumplings. We took pictures and hugged goodbye ... Son didn't yet understand everything. – August 22, 2003 Friday

My son went to elementary school since I left China and had been a model student there. He came to the US with his dad in December 2004. After a week of jet lag he was enrolled in a local school, where he was the only Chinese in his class. Soon his cultural shock started and became serious after his dad returned to China. The phase did not stop until three months later. – Abstract of a 2005 Course Paper

At Thanksgiving table, we counted blessings for the whole year. “I am really grateful that my waiver was done.” I started. “I am really thankful I have a new friend!” my son continued, shining-eyed. “How about you, hubby?” “I am just thankful I came to join my wife and son.” The man said, with little smile. – November 21, 2007 Wednesday

This is where my research interest originates from: I am an Asian woman graduate student with my family as my dependents in the US. Although no story can fully represent my particular identity because identity is dynamic and multiple (Norton, 2000), the three excerpts selected above give a glimpse of the pain and gain of my life experience as an Asian graduate student mother (AGSM) in an alien land. As “deep probes into the human soul” is “researcher, know thyself” (Douglas, 1985), I believe that knowing myself, exemplifying analysis of my own experiences is the most appropriate

approach to start my research about an important yet still underrepresented group of women and co-voice as an insider-outsider what these Asian student mothers have undergone in the United States.

My initial purpose of coming to the US to get a doctoral degree was to make myself more of a native English speaker so that I could take the lead among my colleagues. Actually, coming to America was not only a golden opportunity for my professional development but an honor to me, my family, and my friends and relatives in the context where I came from. This was related to the fact that in China there were many constraints about going abroad to study. Those who could make it must be affluent financially, affiliated with foreign resources, and able to excel in English (Xu, 2002).

Although an English learner for over 20 years, my first impression about America came mainly from texts and hearsay: I had never been to America myself. The United States to me was an imperialist country in Big-character Posters in the Great Cultural Revolution, democracy and liberty in college literature texts, and cowboy romances and peaceful churches in plays and movies. The actual impression about the authentic US came literally from the way Chinese people treated American teachers and experts. When an expatriate teacher was invited to my university she was accommodated in what she called “a gorgeous palace” to transfer her flight in the capital city. When I picked her up on behalf of my university and walked into the “palace” for the first time in my life I couldn’t help wondering why she should be treated like a queen. Ironically, when it was my turn to come to the US as an exchange scholar I was lodged and shared a bedroom with an undergraduate student. The American teacher, my friend by then, brought me the first set of bowls and basins. I figured out later that her honor came not from what she did

but from her privileged American identity. The sheer fact that she came from America as a native English speaker and I came from China as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), already decided that we would be treated differently.

Against this social background, my going to the US soon became a topic among the people related to me in my native country. All of us could faintly predict how my graduate degree to be earned in the US would increase my social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1977) when I returned to China. The hegemony of English, however, blinded us all from foreseeing what in reality was waiting ahead of me in the distant continent. It was hard to imagine at that time that I was already on a one-way street to a sharply different country the moment I boarded the United Airlines. It was even harder to foretell how challenging it would be to take care of my son on my own and take care of my family as the breadwinner later while I was a full-time graduate student.

It is known to all that the Sino-American relationship was not normalized until 1979 (MacFarquhar & Fairbank, 1991). Due to the continuing subtle disagreements between the two countries, Chinese students were issued visas with very limited entries in comparison with students from other countries. In my case as an exchange university scholar, I was permitted two entries within six months, which meant if I went home after the two limited entries I would have to reapply for a new visa and risk being rejected by the American consulate in my city. Trapped in an either-or situation between my family and my professional development, I stayed in the US alone for a whole year until my family came to visit. Unfortunately, the either-or dilemma did not stop because with limited proficiency of English as a foreign language, my husband could neither work nor study but stay at home in the US. After lots of struggling, pondering, and negotiating, my

husband had to decide to fly back home alone, supporting my son and me in the host country with the money he earned in our home country. The new separation started. After so much work, so much waiting, so many American dreams, I was suddenly brought to the reality that I became a single-parent in a foreign land, where no one offered me “multiple parenting” (Ambert, 1994) as I could easily access in my homeland!

With hindsight, those painstaking experiences have become a kind of honor and asset that symbolize my ability to handle, to adjust, to negotiate, and to be independent of outside help and support and added to the uniqueness in defining and redefining myself as an Asian graduate student mother in the US. Navigating through my multiple identities as an Asian, spouse, mother, and female professional in and out of the United States (Park, 2009), I further realized how precious my stories were and how my life closely paralleled the life of the AGSM community when my stories touched another Asian woman student so much. As an insider researcher, I desire to discover how other women in the same situation dealt, are dealing, and will deal with their situations. As an outsider researcher, I take it as my responsibility to make those women’s voices heard by presenting, interpreting, and deconstructing their stories and exploring how the social, political, and economic motors push behind them.

Problem Statement

Seemingly a minority of the minority, the group of international graduate student mothers is not small in number. Based on an informal survey in early 2005 in the university where I conducted this research, the population was about 1% out of the regular international student total. A formal statistic in 2009 showed there were a total of 16 international graduate student mothers in the university, all non-dependent visa

holders, indicating the same percentage of the population. The current literature, however, offers little about the roles and identities of this group of women. There are studies on international female students (Cao, 1997; Frank, 2000), women with immigrant status (Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995), nonimmigrant dependent mothers (Bae, 2003), and student mothers in their native countries (Johnson, 2005; Sears, 2001; Williams, 2007), but cross-studies on international, particularly Asian, non-dependent graduate student mothers are relatively few. As Chae (2008) noted, with drastic demographic change, most Asian professionals (76.8%) were no longer US-born but immigrated “from abroad, primarily from the Philippines, India, Mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea” (p. 28). It is the women in these non-immigrant groups that the current study focuses on. This study examined eight Asian graduate student mothers’ lived experiences so as to promote the understanding of the group of women and get better insights into the complexities of the female English as a Second Language (ESL) users both inside and outside the graduate classrooms.

As a departure point, I consider this: since the women participants come to the US by way of education and their husbands may not, the women as I-visa holders have more potential than the men whose English language competence level is comparatively lower in the English-speaking context. Furthermore, as a result of the change of the roles of family members, a new power relationship or power shift may emerge. As the weakest group yet the hope of the family based on traditional Asian cultures, the children have the most potential among the family members and may become the final force in deciding whether to return home or to stay in the US. Thus, it is significant to examine an

AGSM's reconceptualization of her family members and family relationships as presented in her written and oral discourses.

Due to the complexity of the women's identities in this study, a single theory or discipline is not adequate to define the problem. As such, a cross-disciplinary study is employed incorporating TESOL, sociolinguistics, women's study, and narrative study. The subsequent chapters elaborate each of the disciplines and the way they are connected to the core of my study, i.e. how each disciplinary field adds to the conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and the applicability of the study. Along this line the poststructuralist theory is combined with immigration issues and policies in order to accurately present the complex power position where the Asian graduate student mothers find themselves in the study.

Research Questions

The main research question for this study is: What characterizes the experiences of being an Asian graduate student mother in the United States in relation to their race, gender, class, and culture? Based on that, my sub-research questions include: (1) What are the common experiences across Asian graduate student mothers in the US? (2) How do AGSMs juggle different roles and identities in their everyday lives? (3) What characterizes the co-existence of marginalization and privilege associated with their AGSM experiences?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to promote further understanding of the group of Asian graduate student mothers in the US to stir the institutional discourses for appropriate social change. In particular, it intends to (1) explore the roles, identities,

thoughts and feelings associated with the AGSM experiences in relation to their race, gender, class, and culture; (2) get insights into the women' experiences, such as professional ambition, child rearing, gender performance, racial discrimination, cultural preservation, religious practice, and settlement choice, in comparison with my own as an insider outsider researcher; and (3) uncover the complexities of women ESL professionals and enrich TESOL, women study, narrative study, and sociolinguistic field.

Background of the Study

English language teaching (ELT) in China is a complex phenomenon due to its connection to politics, culture, gender, social class, native speakerism, race, etc. Before the 1970s English was not welcome and even forbidden in the socialist People's Republic of China. Starting with the Great Cultural Revolution (Lu, 2004), China had suffered the withdrawal of Soviet Union experts and the great threat from American imperialism. According to Amin (2004), one of the five American global strategies is to "dismantle China, ensure the subordination of other large states (India, Brazil) and prevent the formation of regional blocs which would be able to negotiate the terms of globalization" (p. 76). That was how and why English learning became a risky craft for suspicion of spying overnight throughout China. During the 10-year (1966-1976) Great Cultural Revolution (Lu, 2004) the nation of China was politicized and its entire population engaged in "massive destruction of traditional Chinese culture and ideological battles" (p. 5). The 10 years of "domestic chaos and diplomatic isolation" (Liu, 2000) destroyed the traditional Chinese values of harmony and stability (Lu, 2004). In the meantime it also constructed "a new Chinese culture characterized by conflicts and instability" (p. 7). It is

the new construction that later helped to admit the previously rejected Western ideology into the isolated land of China.

With more and more communication with the developed countries in the world, China increasingly realized the importance of English as a lingua franca and made it a required skill at all levels of education. English gained its solid position as the most popular foreign language in China since the enforcement of Reform and Open Policies in the late 1970s (Xu, 2002). Gradually, people with good English skills became more valued than their counterparts with limited or no skills thus they could access “better jobs, more opportunities, and a wider world” (p. 226).

Parallel to the historical timeline of China, the US was undergoing great changes in immigration policy of Asian immigrants. As Considine (1972) recorded, President Nixon’s visit to China in 1972 “opened wide the Bamboo Curtain” and ended the Cold War between the “enemies of the past twenty-three years” though the curtain parting was “reluctant and seemingly begrudging” (p. 25). According to Chae (2008), before the Immigration Act of 1965 Asian immigrants were mostly unskilled laborers. After the 1965 immigration policy the immigration quotas were given mostly to “skilled laborers (professionals) or people who have capital to invest in the United States” (p. 24). Asian immigrants from India, China, Japan, and Korea since the 1970s were mostly middle-class professionals, students, or investors (Chan, 1991), who formed a different class among Asian Americans. The changes in US immigration policies were, according to Chae (2008), “the consequence of the U.S. involvement in Asian wars and development of the capitalism of Asian countries ... as well as the emergence of transnational capitalism” (p. 27). To compete with the Soviet Union for the superpower of the world

the US strove to attract the flow of capital, technology, and people from the Asian continent so that from 1965 to 1981 Asian immigration increased “almost ten-fold” (p. 26).

The evolvement of American immigration policies opened the eyes of China’s professionals and students to the outside world yet it also stratified teachers of English into two dichotomous groups: native and non-native. As a result of the distinction English language competency empowered people in social status and economic future (Xu, 2002), which made it easier to understand why the aforementioned expatriate American teacher worked the same hours and taught the same courses but got paid several times more than her Chinese peers in our university. When I took the American teacher to shop in a local market, the thrifty seller would give her items for free and I was a beneficiary too! Similarly, returnees from developed countries, particularly from the United States, were considered more capable and knowledgeable hence enjoyed privileged policies and higher social positions than their counterparts with no oversea study experiences. More notably, women with graduate degrees from the US can be more privileged than men with no socioeconomic advantage because they do not have degrees from the US. As such, the linguistic phenomenon of learning English led to the socioeconomic and cultural reconstructs as well as power redistribution in China.

An overview of the *Open Doors 2007* by the Institute of International Education reported there were 582,984 international students studying in the United States in 2006-2007. This authoritative overview was charted and graphed with different categories of international students but international female students with children remained invisible on it. It indicates to a certain extent that international student mothers, including Asians,

are not an important population in this kind of statistics. Research on Asian graduate student mothers in sociolinguistics and feminist study is just as limited. It is true that related studies on international graduate students (Gonzalez, 2004), international women graduate students (Qin, 2000), American single student mothers (Hayes, 1994), mixed group of East Asian women professionals (Park, 2006), and Asian American and postcolonial Asian diasporic women intellectuals (Yang, 2002) do shed light on the current study yet empirical research both Asian-specific and student-mother-specific have been unexceptionally scarce in the aforementioned fields. One of the most recent studies on graduate student mothers was done by Shirlan A. Williams. Based on discourse analysis, interview, and focus group study, Williams (2007) explored American women graduate student mothers' negotiation of academia and family life and concluded that the untenable and irreconcilable positions of the women were created in discourse, enacted in institutional policies, and lived by the participants. This is enlightening work for the study of graduate student mothers yet it still lacks in the discussion of international and Asian contexts.

Indeed, graduate study in the USA is never easy for anyone (Gonzalez, 2004; Qin, 2000). There are many types of difficulties that graduate students have to deal with regarding their individual resources, social resources, and social contexts (Perrucci & Hu, 1993) regardless of their age, gender, class, and culture. Graduate students in other groups might suffer differently, a bit less or a bit more, but generally everybody suffers. In order to succeed academically at higher education, for example, international women students had to struggle about their cultural shock, stress, time, and pressure for program requirements (Faid-Douglas, 2000). They also had to cope with their mothering roles,

relationship with husbands, relationships with professors, American peers, religious beliefs, and money discrimination.

Most Asian international students at the graduate level are considered to be mature individuals who “bring extensive topic prior knowledge in related disciplines” (Gonzalez, 2004, p. 31). However, these Asian and Middle East students lack “an adequate English proficiency level and knowledge of the mainstream American culture, which would permit them to successfully communicate with faculty and students from the host country, or even with other international students” (p. 32). Many students have undergone language anxiety and cultural adjustment while studying in an American university both inside and outside of the graduate classroom (Huang, 2009). They have to adjust to class formats, American students' speech rate, and perceived attitudes of local people. The younger graduate students, particularly those in natural science, are further challenged to the academic issues related to difficulties of integrating into the university community (Jiang, 2010). These challenges include finding motivation for graduate study, becoming an independent learner, and building a close relationship with faculty.

In fact, graduate study is also a big challenge for many American students, such as the African-American students. Nettles and Millett (2006) details in their longitudinal study the experiences of more than 9,000 graduate students enrolled at 21 top research universities. They found that figuring out the type of funding available is a chief obstacle facing most African-American graduate students, who are significantly less likely to obtain research and teaching assistantships, especially in math and science.

In comparison, nontraditional students struggle in different ways in their graduate study when they go back to college after years of change. Nontraditional adult students

have to attend college while managing responsibilities unrelated to academia (Uyder, 2008). They have to sacrifice on many levels and adapt to a new life style and study habit, leaving behind family, friends, home, and salary. They cannot compete with college students whose parents will send them a generous allowance every now and then. Many returning graduate students enroll in degree programs for second career preparation following life events such as corporate restructuring, early retirement, or a change in the family structure. In fact, not only need the nontraditional graduate students adjust to the overall academic experience and make the transition from professionals to graduate students but the student mother's returning to graduate studies affects each member in the family directly and indirectly (Weinstein, 2009). It causes interparental conflict and influences spousal relationship, sibling relationship, and parent-child relationship. As Weinstein (2009) discussed, on one hand the nontraditional female graduate students need to return to school for further study, on the other hand their study indicates a great variety of difficulties, need for support, and importance of insuring low disruption of family. In addition, most children voiced some kind of negative consequence of their mother returning to graduate studies (Weinstein, 2009).

With the above brief contextualization I acknowledge that graduate study in the US is never easy for anyone, old or young, traditional or nontraditional, Americans or internationals, at master level or doctoral level. There is always the contradiction between graduate study and the elite and intellectual quest that graduate students at all ages and in all groups of disciplines have to go through. In the current study, however, I focus on the Asian graduate student mothers because they are underresearched and underrepresented and for all reasons, they may just have to struggle a few times harder while taking care of

both their study and their family in the US. Their individual life, stories, and struggles are worth significantly valued.

What needs to be highlighted here is that the women participants in this study come to the US not as dependents but as pioneers of their families. They are distinct in many aspects from those women who come to the US as dependents to join their husbands and/or children or who get to the US with immigrant status in hand. These women need a more focused study not because they are essential or privileged in status but because their differences have not yet been addressed enough. They have remained an under-researched and under-represented group in both theory and empirical research. For this reason, I do not extend my attention to other groups of women though fully aware that their experiences are as enticing as the women in this study. Seen from this perspective, the findings from this study of Asian graduate student mothers will add much to the understanding of student mothers as a whole by closing the circle drawn by previous researchers.

Poststructuralist Argument about Identity

The theoretical framework of my study of identity is grounded in poststructuralist arguments that knowledge is the medium of power and a product of social discourses. According to Foucault (1972), when people attempt to establish the scientificity of a system they are not demonstrating that the system has “a rational structure” but are investing the discourses of the system and those “who uphold them with the effects of a power” (p. 85). Due to the power of discourse to shape reality, our knowledge about the world and ourselves is always limited and even disinterested at any given moment. In his work to define “literature,” Eagleton (1983) also argues that neither knowledge nor

literature is value-free. On the contrary, their values are alterable or unstable. The same is true with ideology, the ways in which we say and believe “connects with the power-structure and power-relations of the society we live in” (p. 14).

Poststructuralism opposes the theory of “binary opposition,” which is associated with structuralism and represented in such binary pairs as male/female, speech/writing, rational/emotional, and signifier/signified. Instead, poststructuralism highlights two things compared with structuralism: the decentering of the subject and the importance of the reader. Since meaning is always slipping and unstable the construction of meaning differs from moment to moment and from reader to reader. Thus poststructuralist theories empower language learners to view their identities as multiple and ever-changing rather than a stable and unified subject in the contexts of language learning (Giampapa, 2004; Kubota, 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006). Since the subject cannot exist prior to representation (Butler, 1990) it can be hard for the privileged class to represent the underprivileged class accurately and authentically, as shown in the relational pairs of men/women (Butler, 1990), author/reader (Foucault, 1977), or researcher/researched (Riessman, 1993).

There have been various attempts to define identity in sociology and linguistics. According to social identity researchers, society plays a key role in constructing one’s identity. Social identity theorists argue that people are embedded in multiple role relationships in multiple groups in the society. These multiple identities often do not reinforce but impede one another (Reitzes & Mutran 1995; Stryker, 2000; Wiley 1991). When multiple identities impede with each other, they introduce identity competition or conflicts (Stryker, 2000; Stryker & Burke, 2000). According to Tajfel (1978), people

enforce boundaries with outgroup while identifying group membership in ingroups where they get both identity and self-esteem. More recent sociolinguistic research has revealed an underlying link between language and identity and their interrelationship with such factors as culture, race, gender, class, ethnicity, and religion (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Johnstone, 2005; Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006; Michael-Luna, 2008; Morita, 2004; Norton, 2000; Wallace, 2008). Specifically, Heller and Lévy (1992), Pao and Teuben-Rowe (1997), Schecter and Bayley (1997) researched on women immigrants and found that their social identities were both contradictory and contextually bound. Norton (2000) further demonstrates that language use plays a vital role in the formation of ethnic identity in the way that it constrains access to participation in activities and formation of social relationships.

When it comes to women immigrants, studies have shown that language learning can be strongly affected by the gendered practices of immigrant communities and the economic opportunities available to newcomers at a particular moment in history (Menard-Warwick, 2005). Gender, however, is not the single constraint of women's opportunities to language development and social interaction (Simon-Maeda, 2004). The sociopolitical constraints also work against the language and literacy development and social interaction of women immigrants. Sociolinguistic approach to social identity research has revealed that identity has different facets and dimensions and is influenced by different layers of contexts (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Recently, study of gendered identities has shifted its direction from viewing gender as essentialist and generalized toward viewing gender as socially and discursively constructed (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004; Domosh, 2003; Park, 2006; Vitanova, 2004).

In her study of little children with autism, Ochs (2002) argues that novice learners become acquainted with activities “not only from their own and others’ attempts to define what transpires in an activity, but also from how those participating in the activity respond to them” (p. 107). When newcomers participate in social interactions, Lave and Wenger (1991) observed, they learned from “old-timers” to acquire certain beliefs and behaviors in a “community of practice.” As newcomers moved from the periphery to the center of the community, they became more active and experienced participants with stronger expertise in the performance of community activities. Lave and Wenger named this “situated learning.” As a general theory of knowledge learning and acquisition, situated learning is an important theory for analysis and understanding of how identities may be constructed, reconstructed, and negotiated by the female professionals in this study, to whom I am intimately connected.

Relating to ESL professionals in the United States, research has shown that their top challenge is being non-native (Canagarajah, 1999; Lin et al., 2002; Phillipson, 1992; Simon-Maeda 2004). Women graduate students, in particular, in order to participate in second language academic communities, have to negotiate their competence, identities, and power relations and attempt to shape their own learning and participation by exercising their personal agency and negotiating their positionalities (Morita, 2004). Apparently, language is not just a set of linguistic signs and symbols but a complex social practice besides other things (Norton & Toohy, 2002) and language learning engages the identities of learners.

Second language acquisition (SLA) theorists, such as Gao, Zhao, Cheng, and Zhou (2007), Pavlenko (2008), Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), and Peirce (1995), have

strenuously explored the inequitable relations of power in second language (L2) learning. They conclude that the complex nature of social identity is a “site of struggle,” which is embedded within power relations and subject to change (Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995). In her study of identity of women immigrants and language learners, Peirce (1995) argues that learners “invest in a second language” to acquire “symbolic and material resources,” which in turn “increase the value of their cultural capital” (p. 17). McKay and Wong (1996) argue from another perspective and suggest that there are “multiple identities” in “multiple discourses.” Omoniyi and White (2006) take a further step by exploring “identity options” of ESL speakers and conclude that understanding of the dynamics of identities is vital to a complete analysis of research subjects.

The concept of “multiple identities” has evolved greatly over the past four decades. Sociological researchers used to hold that people present different social selves for the roles they play in different situations hence the self consists of a set of hierarchical ranking identities (Nuttbrock, 1986; Stryker, 1968). These identities are ranked more or less important to us with regard to our feeling or affect associated with them. These theories indicate that the concept of identity is a static thing, or at most there are many static identities about a person. What is neglected in these theories is that “the human ways of being in the world are transitory and unpredictable” (Simon-Maeda, 2004, p. 410). This nature of being “transitory and unpredictable” makes identity not ranked and static, but dynamic and changing over time and place. It is just that at different times different identities are performed in different discourses. In this sense, the modernist concept of “place” is not enough to define the identity in the globalized economy; rather,

a postmodernist concept of “non-places” is a better term which catches the transitory, ahistorical, and dynamic meaning of identity (Hanauer, 2008).

Despite the existent attempts of identity researchers, the complexities about how the inequitable power relations limit the opportunities of L2 learners to practice the target language outside the classroom (Pavlenko, 2008; Peirce, 1995) are still in need of more adequate study. The power issue concerning international, particularly Asian, women graduate students with children in the United States waits for more examination. As such, the native construct and the assumed link between language expertise and identity-affecting factors should not just be called into question but call for more actions.

Different Faces of Motherhood

A salient feature of the participants in this study is that they are mothers. Based on Beverley et.al (1988), motherhood has “different faces.” The experience of being a mother is affected not just “by a woman’s personal history, by the position she holds in her society, and by the social and economic forces operating in her culture,” but also “by the mother’s health and present circumstances, by the quality of her relationships with family and friends, and, not least important, by the unique characteristics of her children” (p. 1). “Motherwork,” in Collins’s (1998) term, goes beyond simply ensuring the survival of family members. Instead, it recognizes that “individual survival, empowerment, and identity require group survival, empowerment, and identity” (p. 289).

The “mommy myth” (Douglas & Michaels, 2004) has been passed on from generation to generation and mother’s experience has been “relentlessly, and romantically, mythologized” (Hulbert, 2005). The criteria of good motherhood exert pressure on mothers and result in the disproportional distribution of housework between

two parents in the family (Lazar, 2005). Many professional women thus are haunted with the sense of guilt when they cannot fulfill both roles of good mothers and good scholars (Cook, 2002; Elrena & Grant, 2008; Ruddick, 1980; Tucker, 2004; Williams, 2002).

In comparison with children studies, literature does not offer much about mother studies (Beverley et.al, 1988). In addition, much knowledge about mothering has often relied on “an unexamined link between biology and social responsibility” (Griffiths & Smith, 1987, p. 87). How the social organization “underpins and gives shape to our experience” and our knowledge of it (p. 87) has yet rarely been investigated. Concerning the women in this study, how international student motherhood in the US occurs in “specific historical contexts framed by interlocking structures of race, class, and gender” (p. 287) has not been studied beyond routine feminist theorizing (Collins, 1998). It is thus safely predicted that “if issues of race and class generally, and understanding racial ethnic women’s motherwork specifically, became central to feminist theorizing about motherhood” (p. 289), different themes will emerge from the analysis of the women’s experiences. Along this line, in the current study of the Asian graduate student mothers, there is another layer of subjugation involved – ethnic epistemology (e.g., Ladson-Billing, 2000), which brings triple subjugation to the participants due to their linguistic and cultural identities integrated into the women’s experiences (Belenky, Clinchy, Golberger, & Tarule, 1986). As Ladson-Billing (2000) argues, race continues to “be salient in U.S. society” (p. 265) and what all minority groups have in common is “the experience of a racialized identity” (p. 262). Thus, it is significant to explore the racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies in order to “challenge the hegemonic structures (and symbols) that keep injustice and inequity in place” (p. 271).

Asian Americans and Social Class

Most Asian American professionals come to this “land of opportunity” aspiring to make it into America’s middle and property class (Kwong, 1995). Their identities are fluid and migratory. Attached to their elite membership back in their home countries where they enjoyed “political stability and better utilization of their skills” (p. 76) most Asian professionals cannot adapt to the status of America’s average middle class and aspire to move upward to activate their native social status some day. Those Asian immigrants who have no opportunities to move up for themselves would strive to sacrifice their lives and create favorable conditions for the education of their offspring (Chae, 2008; Kwong, 1995).

Kwong (1995) further observed that there was a bipolarization in Asian American groups as a result of the selection process in the immigration law. One was the “Uptown Asians” and the other was the “Downtown Asians,” as accurately defined here:

“Uptown Asians” – is the professional middle class, whose members are well educated and financially secure though they experienced the “glass ceiling.” They tend to live in the suburbs and invest heavily in their children’s education. The young Asians getting scholastic awards and attending Ivy League universities tend to be the offspring of this first group.

And then there is the other group, the working-class Asians, who live in concentrated ethnic ghettos, are paid low wages, have been neglected by American authorities, and suffer from all types of social problems. I called them the “Downtown Asians.” (p. 77)

Obvious from Kwong's (1995) definitions, the two groups of Asians differ greatly in their experiences, aspirations, financial situations, and expectations of their children. In relation to the current study it is necessary to ask where the Asian graduate student mothers belong to: Uptown or Downtown. Or is there a group of Middletown Asians in Asian Americans?

Due to the focus on race and gender, the social class of Asian Americans is not studied enough in literature (Kwong, 1995). Although legal discrimination in the host country (Chae, 2008; Chan, 1991) and witness of colonial oppression in their homelands (Kwong, 1995) aroused the racial and national consciousness of Asian Americans, their class consciousness was not completely acquired. Take the working class of Chinese laborers as an example. They suffer both racial/ethnic discrimination and class stratification, "double layer of oppression," as Chae (2008) sharply elaborates here:

Antagonism of the domestic working class toward racial/ethnic minorities increased to violence. Given this double layer of oppression, the options of Chinese laborers were severely limited. They were forced to turn inward to their own communities, and they found themselves segregated and excluded from white mainstream society. (p. 78)

Postmodern Interview

An Asian graduate student mother is more than the sum of an Asian, a student, and a mother. The woman needs to play multiple roles and identities in multiple discourses (McKay & Wong, 1996) associated with their race, gender, class, and culture. This fact induces me to believe that one case study of the participant here may equal double or multiple case studies of a participant in another group. The qualitative nature of

the study explains partly why I didn't choose a big sample – thinking that the deeper study could trade off the smaller population of the participants. Actually, employing a qualitative technique here is not because I take it for granted that qualitative data is necessarily more authentic than quantitative data (Ladson-Billings, 2000), but because many issues in this study cannot be grappled in a quantitative approach and bring me good and holistic data. The interrelated issues involved in my qualitative study particularly focus on: how different positioning of the researcher affects data collection and interpretation (Knight, 2000; Toma, 2000), how the relationship, closeness and trust between the researcher and the researched improve qualitative data (Magolda, 2000; Toma, 2000), how to interpret the unsayable in the data (Rogers, 1999), how to play the roles of insider/outsider researcher (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000), how to understand the richness and complexity of studying one's own kind (Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006; Mehra, 2001), and how to deal with multiculturalism (Knight, 2000) and reflexivity of the researcher (Kleinsasser, 2000). The complex background of my study indicates that traditional norms and quantitative methods are insufficient for this postmodern investigation.

According to identity psychologists, if we want to know the identities of our subjects we first have to know their stories (Crewe & Maruna, 2006). Interview researchers contend about the function of stories in identity exploration and suggest that interview is a particularly useful method of systematic social inquiry (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a; Silverman, 1993). It is true that the stories in this study are stories of individual Asian graduate student mothers but they become a window into understanding the stories of women who have and come from similar backgrounds.

Interview researchers with postmodern perspectives believe that interview is not a unidirectional process; instead, it is an interactive and collaborative process of meaning production. Respondents are not passive vessels of information but “collaborative constructors of knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a). Both the researcher and the researched contribute to the process of knowledge construction and both share a “reciprocal desire to disclose” (Ellis & Berger, 2003). In postmodern interview, the content is not confined by the researcher’s predetermined agendas; instead, it is also defined by the research topic and the ongoing responses. Therefore, understanding *how* to conduct the interview is as crucial as understanding *what* to ask and to convey in postmodern interviews. This perspective of postmodern interview resonates with the arguments of poststructuralism, feminism, and ethnomethodological research.

Situating the researcher is an essential issue in interview research, thus an essential question being addressed in this study. Many researchers have noted that their class, sexuality, ethnicity, and race have impact on the interpretation and writing of the participants’ experiences (Ramanathan, 2005). They argue that it is important to understand how researchers situate themselves and deal with research dilemma, questions, and ethics, and “how writing constitutes the subject” (Pennycook, 2005, p. 302). Researchers further point out that there can be more dilemma, questions, and ethic issues in interviewing one’s peers (Platt, 1981) and studying one’s own kind (Mehra, 2001). Lee and Simon-Maeda (2006) build on this point by specifying how professionals of Japanese decent deal with their racialized research identities associated with the relationship with their same race participants. They agree with prior researchers that the insider/outsider

identities and positionalities are both relational and situational (Ballagher, 2000; Enos, 2001; Kim, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Twine, 2000).

According to Platt (1981), the interview relationship in interviewing one's peers is very different from that in interviewing other groups of people thus the backgrounds of the interviewees should be fully considered in research. Based on postmodern perspective, however, it is not even enough only to address the backgrounds of the interviewees. Since interview is a reciprocal process and positioning of the researcher can color his/her interpretation and writing of the interview information thus both the interviewee and the interviewer's backgrounds should be taken into account. Another issue related to interview is women interviewing women, which was raised by Riessman (1993). Riessman (1987) cautioned us that "gender is not enough" when women interview women due to the background gaps between the interviewer and the interviewee. Obviously, postmodern interview allows me not only to make a two-way interaction but get close to my participants and ultimately extend who I am.

Journal Research

Diary is defined by sociologist, Alaszewski (2007) as "a record of activities and/or events" or "a personal commentary reflecting on roles, activities and relationships and even exploring personal feelings" (p. 2). Diary writing has been used as an established research technique in social science for several decades. Diary or journal study used in applied linguistics and TESOL, however, is rather recent and dates back to the 1970s and 1980s (Bailey, 1983; Schmidt & Fronta, 1986). Since the 1990s researchers have increasingly used personal diaries as data for language learning research and teacher education (Bailey, 1990; Numbrich, 1996), for both pedagogic and research

purposes. One of the main findings from journal study was that it helped to increase the diarists' self-awareness and learner autonomy by way of personal reflection and self-regulation (Burton & Carroll, 2001). As Burton and Carroll (2001) summarized, journal writing fosters "informal speculation about personal beliefs and attitudes that affect learning" (p. 2). In the current TESOL and applied linguistic literature the difference between the two terms, diary and journal, is indeed more and more blurred (Burton & Carroll, 2001; Numbrich, 1996). Based on the purpose of my current study as well as the characteristics of the women participants, "journal" is used here as the umbrella term throughout the presentation of the study.

Since social identity is dynamic and context dependent, identity researchers believe that onetime research such as interview, questionnaires, or observations yields only one view of a complex phenomenon thus is not adequate to its study. It is suggested that a methodology employed should be dynamic in both philosophy and practice (Hansen & Liu, 1997). Additionally, the perceptions of the journal writer and the interpreter as well as their ability to articulate these perceptions should all be considered for fruitful and localized approaches to the data (Hall, 2008).

Journal writing has been extensively used in psychotherapy and feminist study for many years. Based on reflections on his personal experiences and his observations, Progoff (1992) suggested that an indirect strategy to encounter a problem in our life was to "move inward." He thus invented the Intensive Journal Method and used it effectively in his psychotherapeutic study. Feminist researchers have used journal writing as "creative midwife" (Thomas, 1996) to explore women's life experiences and women's culture. In her doctoral study on American women diarists Daele (1990) found that

journal writing cross-linked the women's past, present, and future and played a key role in the women's self-construction.

Journal writing is not only a habit in people's lives (Schiwy, 1996) but also a "recognized form of social activity," according to Alaszewski (2006). As an essential research method journal study can be used on its own and in combination with other methods. A prominent feature of journal research is that it provides a means of "accessing hard-to-reach groups or activities" (p. 43). In the last two decades learners' journals and diaries have become a popular methodology in applied linguistics and TESOL contexts. To study immigrant women in Canada, Norton (2000) and Peirce (1995) used journal writing in combination with observation and interview methods for data collection. Their findings showed that diaries helped the women participants not only examine their communicative breakdowns but give their voices that they could not otherwise. Burton and Carroll (2001) used case studies to examine the function of journal writing in TESOL contexts and found that journal writing helped language students and teacher learners learn through reflection, demonstrating the power of journal writing as a lifelong resource for language teaching and learning.

It is known, however, that the subjective nature of journal writing can partly block the researchers' access to observing and recording relevant data collected from the diarists (Alaszewski, 2006). Consequently, analyzing and interpreting self-reported data can become really complex and difficult (Hall, 2008; Pavlenko, 2007). To overcome this seeming weakness, journal researchers have suggested cross-checking or triangulating the information recorded in diaries in combination with other sources of data. With respect to the specificity of my research context, I used personal journal writing in combination

with postmodern interview and the researcher's notes so as to cross-check the diary information with the other data.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative became an important approach of inquiry in the late 1980s and has been extensively used in social science research. Riessman (1993) summarized narrative genres and came up with four major categories of narrative: stories, habitual narratives, hypothetical narratives, and topic-centered narratives. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) further pointed out that “by studying and interpreting self-narratives, the researcher can access not only the individual identity and its systems of meaning but also the teller's culture and social world” (p. 9). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further discussed that a close connection existed in personal narratives between the past, the present, and the future – in that an individual's past experiences contributed to the present and future experiences.

In comparison with other research approaches, the power of narratives is demonstrated at least in the following aspects: narrative is the central means by which individuals construct their lives (Pavlenko, 2002; Riessman, 1993); it reveals some of the hidden construction and thinking (Schaafsma, 2008) as well as the excluded experiences (Bell, 2002; Ogulnick 1999; Pavlenko 2007; Simon-Maeda 2004); it serves to elevate single, discrete, exclusive, normative truths to multiple, inclusive, holistic, and interactive truths (Hargreaves, 2006; Personal Narratives Group, 1989); it values both narratives about others and narratives about oneself (Miller, 1994); and most notably, narratives give voice to members in marked, marginalized, or previously silenced and invisible groups thus providing opportunities for the members to participate in knowledge

construction (Bell, 2002; Hargreaves, 2006; Menard-Warwick, 2005; Mishler, 1986; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko 2001, 2002, 2007; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Riessman, 1993; Simon-Maeda, 2004). Through giving prominence to human agency and imagination (Riessman, 1993), personal narratives provide a crucial tool to the study of identities (Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Pavlenko, 2003; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Simon-Maeda, 2004), particularly the identities of immigrants (Pavlenko, 2007), women, and second language learners.

Despite its prominent strengths narrative inquiry also has the following drawbacks such as restricted number of participants, requirement of close collaboration with participants, ethical issues, interpretation of personal stories (Bell, 2002), issue of representation (Riessman, 1993), and data sources in autobiographies (Pavlenko, 2007). I join the aforementioned scholars in our belief and awareness that narrative inquiry is a double-edged research approach. However, I oppose the idea that narrative is weak and feminine while argument is strong and powerful because narratives are not about arguments but about exploration (Schaafsma, 2008). In narrative research we don't take a stand but talk against the stand (Schaafsma, 2008). This idea is consistent with postmodern discussions of fluidity, uncertainty, meaning, and emotion.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Deeming feminism as a politics, Weedon (1987) argued that the starting point for feminists was “the *patriarchal* structure of society.” To Weedon, feminism was “a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society” (p. 2). To Lazar (2005), feminism questioned the “systemic arrangements in society” that maintained a “hierarchically dichotomous gender order” (p. 159). Based on Weedon's

(1987) observation, although women were included in education, public life, and the job market they were still “unfettered by ties of motherhood, childcare and domestic labour” and had to “negotiate the conflicting demands made upon them by their dual role as best they could on an individual basis” (p. 2). According to Weedon (1987), it is not that women are not as important and valuable as men but that they are “*naturally* equipped to fulfil different social functions, primarily those of wife and mother” (p. 2). The roles of wife and mother, additionally, were always associated with the qualities of “patience, emotion and self-sacrifice” (p. 3). Thus Weedon (1987) argued that the social institutions “pre-exist” women. Poststructuralist feminist, Judith Butler (1990) further investigated gender trouble by elaborating “what configuration of power constructs the subject and the Other, that binary relation between ‘men’ and ‘women,’ and the internal stability of those terms” (p. xxx) as well as “how gender fables establish and circulate the misnomer of natural facts” (p. xxxiv). Butler concluded that “The complexity of gender requires an interdisciplinary and postdisciplinary set of discourses” (p. xxxiv). Based on feminism and poststructuralism, Lazar (2005) explicated the dual discourses of state fatherhood in Singapore and suggested three key points concerning feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA): (1) representations are recontextualizations of social practices (cited van Leeuwen, 1993) and choices are politicalized; (2) analysis of representational practices and interrogation of power dynamic is “in a particular social-historical moment”; and (3) gender relations and identities in representations and interactions are “institutionally” embedded and framed (p. 141).

As Okihiro (1995) discussed white men privileges were “accorded by the positions of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and place” and they were

“affirmatively admitted by virtue of their raced and gendered position” (p. 3). Okihiro further argued that certain sites “confer” privileges which created “the ranks of the subjugated, the exploited, the subaltern” (p. 3). Due to the features of the participants in this study who confronted subjugation not only from their native cultures but from the privilege of white men in the US, triple subjugation or racial epistemology (Ladson-Billings, 2000) was incorporated in feminist critical discourse analysis of the collected data. Built on the poststructuralist argument and FCDA framework in combination with critical race theory, this study was designed to problematize the positionalities and privileges and to challenge the hegemonic patriarchal discourses. The study inquired why men were not tied definitely to their identity as fathers in the same way mothers were in a family. To further the interrogation, sharedness in parenthood and distribution of parental labor were closely examined to show how these notions failed to ask what the sharing entailed for fathers and for mothers in families.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF IDENTITY, MOTHERHOOD, AND MIGRATION

How does the identity of an Asian graduate student mother in the US evolve as reflected in her written and spoken discourses? To connect my study with current findings in literature, I first presented a brief review of the related literature. Based on my poststructuralist argument and feminist critical discourse analysis, I provided a theoretical framework of the research and explored the interaction between identity, migration, race, culture, class, language, gender, and mothering by resorting to applied linguistics, sociology, and women study. In the following sections, I explore each strand of inquiry in relation to my research work.

In the first part of this review I make a poststructuralist argument about my study on the identity of international student mothers in the US through my self-positioning in the research. The second section presents an overview of identity theory, focusing on the study of those researchers who have explored the relationship between identity and language socialization concerning international, particularly Asian women students and mothers. The third section focuses on research findings about different faces of motherhood and how academic mothers juggle mothering and professional life.

Conceptualizing Identity, Migration, and Language

Identity researcher Henri Tajfel (1974) examined the individual and the social processes in the psychology of intergroup behavior and found that “[when] self-other decisions came before the other-other decisions, acting in terms of self became the focus of the subject’s decisions ... When however, the other-other decisions preceded the self-other decisions, the latter were affect by the salience of group membership” (p. 88). He

thus concluded that “passing from one group to another” is either impossible or of “serious difficulty” (p. 88) unless there is a clear cognitive structure of “us” and “them” (p. 89). Recent social identity researchers Stryker and Burke (2000) further pointed out that the “language of ‘identity’ is ubiquitous in contemporary social science, cutting across psychoanalysis, psychology, political science, sociology, and history” (p. 284). To further this statement, we need to incorporate linguistics in the research. Identity has become an indispensable conception in linguistic study, in particular, during the last two decades. From a poststructuralist perspective, identity is discursive construct which is socially, culturally, politically, and economically situated. It is nonlinear, flexible, volatile, and ever-changing across time and contexts (Giampapa, 2004; Kubota, 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006). To discuss identity without considering the influence of the society is almost impossible in today’s diverse and complex world.

Applied linguists have shown great interest in the connection between an individual's identity formation, social interaction, and language use (Heller, 2003; Norton, 2000; Ochs, 1993; Peirce, 1995; Simon-Maeda, 2004a; Simon-Maeda 2004b). According to Heller (2003), identity, either ethnic, gender, racial, or cultural, is a social construct. For Norton (2000), identity is multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change. For Ochs (1993) and Simon-Maeda (2004a), an individual’s social identity must be co-constructed by others who interact with the individual hence identity emerges from an individual’s various relationships with others. Therefore, the contextual dimension of social identity is not unitary but consists of a whole range of “social personae, including, for example, social roles, statuses, and relationships, as well as community, institutional, ethnic, socio-economic, gender, and other group identities”(Ochs, 2002, p. 109).

Research has shown that language socialization and identity formation are directly related to each other. According to Ochs (2002), language socialization is based on the notion that “the process of acquiring a language is part of a much larger process of becoming a person in society” (p.106). In her study of little children with autism, Ochs argued that novices become familiar with activities from both “their own and others’ attempts to define what transpires in an activity” and “how those participating in the activity respond to them” (p. 107). In their study on mixed-heritage individuals, Pao, Wong, and Teuben-Rowe (1997) found that language was an individual’s passport into a culture and bilingualism gives their participants a choice to identify themselves. The bilingual participants in the study believed that the ability to speak the languages of both their heritages was fundamental to their identity. Schecter and Bayley (1997) explored the relationship between language and cultural identity as manifested in the language socialization practices of four Mexican-decent families and found that parents in all of the four families considered Spanish an important part of their cultural identity and speaking Spanish was also situational and relational to certain familial positioning.

When it comes to women immigrants, studies have demonstrated that language learning can be strongly affected by the gendered practices of immigrant communities and the economic opportunities available to newcomers at a particular moment in history (Menard-Warwick, 2005). The studies have shown that sociopolitical constraints worked against women immigrants’ language and literacy development and their social interaction. For example, Rockhill (1993) found that Latina women in Los Angeles could not study English due to family problems. Goldstein (1997) studied Portuguese women and found that they had no opportunities to acquire English compared with their male

counterparts. Menard-Warwick's (2005) study of Latina immigrant women and families further demonstrated that women immigrants were constrained to get opportunities to develop their language and literacy both socially and politically.

In exploring the identities of adult immigrant women in North America, Norton (2000) and Peirce (1995) used "investment" as a substitute of "motivation" to depict how language learners are situated in complex, historical, and multidimensional contexts, where relations of power affect their social interaction. Norton (2000) debated that language learning opportunities are greatly affected by their social roles and their willingness to take up the available roles. She demonstrated that the women immigrants' investment in English and their opportunities to practice English were limited by ethnocentric social practices in their new country, where they are short of supportive interaction and the basic level of communicative competence in English.

Studies by applied linguists demonstrated that gender is not the single constraint of women's opportunities to language development and social interaction. It was best articulated by Simon-Maeda (2004a) that each woman's "particular experiences of oppression" intersect with other categories such as her "class, ethnicity, nationalities, and innumerable other variables" (p. 410). Most immigrant women, very often female professionals, are frequently challenged by the notions of the "legitimate speaker" (Bourdieu, 1997), the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992), "Center and Periphery speakers of English" (Canagarajah, 1999), native speaker's "master's voice" (Lin et al., 2002), and the "native speaker superiority and Whiteness" (Simon-Maeda, 2004a).

Bourdieu's (1997) theory of social capital suggested that "speech presupposes a legitimate transmitter addressing a legitimate receiver, one who is recognized and

recognizing” (p. 649). Thus discourse must fulfill these characteristics to make it legitimate: “it is uttered by a legitimate speaker, i.e. by the appropriate person ... in a legitimate situation ... and addressed to legitimate receiver” (p. 650)

Projected in English language teaching, a legitimate speaker distinguishes the legitimacy of native speaker and non-native speaker. In discussing the structure and tenets of ELT, Phillipson (1992) criticized the pervasive tenet that “the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker” (p. 193) and labeled the notion “native speaker fallacy” (p. 199). He argued that the native speaker fallacy “has served the interests of the Center, while blinding both its representatives and their collaborators in the Periphery to its ideological and structural consequences” (p. 199). Additionally overreliance on the native speaker is also structural, “with economic consequences” (p. 199). According to Canagarajah (1999), Center refers to the “industrially/economically advanced communities of the West” and Periphery refers to the “less-developed communities” which are sustained by the Center’s “ideological hegemony” in Periphery status (p. 79).

Debunking the misconception that the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker of that language, Canagarajah (1999) differentiated the notions of Center speakers of English and Periphery speakers of English based on the problematic labels of Center and Periphery. Center speakers of English are defined as English users in the Center nations, comprising “North America, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, which claim ownership over English” (p. 79). In contrast, Periphery speakers of English are defined as “historically recent users of this language, many of whom would display sound multilingual competence in many codes” (p. 79). There are more versions of native speaker fallacy reflected in the notions of “master’s voice” (Lin et al., 2002), “native

speaker superiority and Whiteness” (Simon-Maeda, 2004a), and so on. Despite the difference in labels, their underlying ideas and motivations are similar. According to Canagarajah (1999), there are various “hidden economic, ideological, and political motivations” behind the terminology (p. 78). The commonality among these misconceptions is that native speakers of English are considered to be “the sacred dispensers of standard English” (Simon-Maeda, 2004a, p. 422) and speakers and teachers of center-based Englishes are privileged. They fail to recognize that more often than not, language learners cannot choose the conditions under which they can interact with members of the target language community, just because of the unequal power structure. Lin et al. (2002) explained that in the most accurate way:

... they fail to recognize that although a nonnative speaker might construct an identity as a competent speaker of English through a variety of channels, the native speaker may still position her as “an inferior copy of the ‘master’s voice’”. (p. 306)

Other language researchers problematize the traditional notion of SLA theories as well as expand to include identities and social communities as part of SLA framework. Cook (1999) argues that the notion of the “native speaker” in language teaching “has obscured the distinctive nature of the successful L2 user and created an unattainable goal for L2 learners” (p. 185). On the contrary, the conception of “going beyond the native speaker” helps L2 users to be viewed as “multicompetent language users” rather than “deficient native speakers” or “approximation to monolingual native speakers” (p. 185). Firth and Wagner (1997) studied the discourse and communication in SLA research and claimed that some of its fundamental concepts are “applied and understood in an

oversimplified manner, leading, among other things, to an analytic mindset that elevates an idealized ‘native’ speaker above a stereotypicalized ‘nonnative,’ while viewing the latter as a defective communicator” (p. 285). They proposed reconceptualization of SLA by adopting a holistic approach, which is more connected to the “wider, interdisciplinary study of language, discourse, and social interaction” and has the potential to make more contributions to “a wider range of research issues conventionally seen to reside outside its boundaries” (p. 296). Set in the schooling sector in England, Leung, Harris, & Rampton (1997) added more to SLA research through analyzing “the idealized native speaker,” “reified ethnicities,” and “classroom realities.” They argued that demographic and social changes over the last several decades have proven that there is not necessarily “a neat one-on-one correspondence between ethnicity and language” (p. 543), particularly in the context of diverse urban classrooms. They thus predicted that “[a] period of open analysis, critical questioning, and working with new ideas in the classroom,” rather than “the binary native-speaker-versus-other” may lead to “more responsive pedagogies” (p. 557).

Despite the bulk of studies briefly reviewed above as well as others not elaborated here (e.g., Hawkins, 2005; Kanno, 2000; Kouritzan, 2000; Lantolf, 1996; Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, & Medhi Riasi, 2002; Ogulnick, 2000; Schecter & Bayley, 1997), SLA theorists have not adequately explored how inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities L2 learners have to practice the target language outside the classroom (Peirce, 1995). SLA theory needs to incorporate the conception that the language learners’ complex social identity “must be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction” (p. 13). Moreover, language should not be considered “a neutral medium of communication”

but must be understood with reference to its social meaning, through which language learners get access to social activities (Heller, 1987).

Sociological researchers argue that status, respect, and esteem are symbolic resources (Stryker & Burke, 2000), which are “potentially available for successful accomplishment of the task and thus for self-verification” (p. 292). They found that there was mutual aid in self-verification among people. People who receive status, respect, and esteem from others will “themselves be aided in the self-verification process”, and in turn, they are likely to “accord status, respect, and esteem to others who help in their own self-verification” (p. 292). Sociologists conclude that “[m]anipulation of symbols and resources in order to obtain goals is an important function of identities” (p. 292).

Theory of Capital

An important theory that constructs the framework of this study is Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), capital is not necessarily economic but can present itself in two other “immaterial forms of cultural capital or social capital” (p.46). Here is how he defines the three forms of capital. Economic capital is the capital “which is immediately and directly converted into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights” (p. 47). Cultural capital is the capital “which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications” (p. 47). Social capital is the capital “made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility” (p. 47). In relation to the current study, that children have “unequal scholastic achievement” from different social and family backgrounds (p. 47) partly lies in that “the

scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family” (p. 48). The volume of an agent’s social capital depends on “the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected” (p. 51). It is important to note that the profits of membership comprise not only “material profits” but also “symbolic profits,” which can include “obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights)” (p. 52). Bourdieu’s work sheds much light on the social, economic, and cultural capital that the women in this study possess and they will possess upon completing their degree programs in the US. It also explains how and why the capital possession by their husbands and their children has changed since they came to the US thus the settlement choice and gender role reversal between the couples.

Peirce (1995) applied the concepts of “symbolic and material resources” of Bourdieu (1986) to studying identity of women immigrants and language learners. She argued that learners invest in a second language to “acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources... in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (p. 17). Here is the way Norton (2000) defined the two concepts of symbolic and material resources:

By symbolic resources I refer to such sources as language, education and friendship, while I use the term material resources to include capital goods, real estate and money ... (P)ower is neither monolithic nor invariant; it is not simply something that can be physically possessed, but a relation which always implies social exchange on a particular set of terms ... (and) that is constantly being renegotiated ... (P)ower does not operate only at

the macro level of powerful institutions ... but also at the micro level of everyday social encounters ... that are inevitably produced within language. (p. 7)

Norton's (2000) construct of "motivational investment" in combination with theories of power, opportunities, and symbolic and material resources are the theories upon which my theoretical framework is built to explore the identity of the international student mothers. Considering the conflicts between their own idiosyncratic backgrounds and local conditions (Simon-Maeda, 2004a), I would like to investigate "Under what conditions do these women speak?" and "Whether the women learners go to the society or the society comes to them, and how?" I also want to further study where the sources of their investments come from in general (Menard-Warwick, 2005).

To sum up this section, a poststructuralist perspective maintains that identity is social-culturally situated and constructed. Identity is flexible and volatile rather than unitary and fixed. It is changing across time and contexts. Applied linguists have studied the connection between an individual's identity formation, social interaction, and language use and found that they are directly related to each other. They argued that language learners are situated in complex, historical, and multidimensional contexts, where relations of power affect their social interaction. Studies on women immigrants have further demonstrated that language learning can be strongly affected by the gendered practices of immigrant communities and the economic opportunities available to the newcomers. A word of caution, however, that gender is not the single factor in studying the constraint of women immigrants' opportunities to language development and social interaction. Both applied linguistics and SLA have shown that there is not

enough research about how inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities for L2 learners to practice the target language outside the classroom.

Multiple, Relational Identities

The past four decades have witnessed the conceptualization and reconceptualization of “multiple identities” in both sociological and sociolinguistic studies. Sociologists believe that society plays a key role in constructing one’s identity. People present different identities in different contexts in the society. These multiple identities can either reinforce or impede one another (Reitzes & Mutran, 1995; Stryker, 2000; Wiley, 1991). When multiple identities impede with each other, they introduce identity competition or conflicts (Stryker, 2000; Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Meanwhile, these sociologists also argued that there was “a hierarchical ranking of identities” (Nuttbrock, 1986). Some of them are ranked more important to us than others with regard to our feeling or affect associated with them (Nuttbrock, 1986; Stryker 1968). They further believed that an individual’s identities depend on the identities of other people, that is, on how the others respond to his/her identity claims. Thus, identities may or may not be confirmed in situationally based interactions. If the identity confirmation process is successful, the salience of the identity will be reinforced; otherwise, it will diminish (Riley & Burke, 1995; Stryker & Burke, 2000). These identity theories have two pitfalls. Firstly, they fail to realize that identity is not a static entity or a set of ranked entities. It is just that at different times different identities are performed in different discourses. Secondly, the identity confirmation process is not universally true when we take other categorizations into account such as our background and the specific time and place.

Research to date has a lot of discussion about negotiation of multiple identities of international women professionals. In exploring the complex construction of professional identities of female EFL educators in Japan, Simon-Maeda (2004a) observed that the participants' stories involved different conflicts between their professional and personal lives thus presented their "multifaceted identities." Li and Beckett (2006) studied how Asian women scholars in higher education worked against their "stranger" identities in the academy by telling their own stories. Lin, Grant, Kubota, Motha, Sachs, Vandrick, and Wong (2004) theorized their own lived experiences as women faculty of color in performing TESOL. Park (2006) portrayed five East Asian women and revealed the interconnectedness between language, race, gender, and social class which were all deeply embedded in their educational journeys. Yang's (2002) feminist article on Asian American and postcolonial Asian diasporic women intellectuals compared and connected the texts and thoughts of selected contemporary women intellectuals in the field of Asian American studies and postcolonial studies. These works pave the way for my study on international women students but are still insufficient to investigate the experiences of Asian graduate student mothers specific to this study.

Non-Place Identity

Researching on professional identities of female EFL educators in Japan, Simon-Maeda (2004a) argued that "human ways of being in the world are transitory and unpredictable" (p. 410). This shift between identities has been heatedly discussed on the issue of migration (*Mehra, 2003*). When examining migrant voices and identity in Britain, Hanauer (2008) contended that the mobile and inter-connective feature of the globalized economy has led to "the spaces which are radically different from the modernist concept

of place” (p. 14). Airports, train stations, McDonald, and shopping malls are “transitory and ahistorical” places that have lost their specific features within national boundaries and have their “own autonomous identity.” These are not “places” but “non-places” which do not require any “depth of identification.” The non-place, according to Hanauer (2008), like the migrant, is “beyond the time and place of the physical site” (p. 14). The “anonymity, ahistorical presence and non-intrusiveness” of these non-places also make them “a comforting zone” to stay (p. 14). The Non-place identity is an important theory that helps explain the transitional contexts where Asian graduate student mothers in this study position themselves in the US: they are physically in the US but simultaneously belong to at least two different cultures.

With their dual linguistic identity (Park, 2006) the study participants negotiate the multiple worlds by navigating through multiple cultural groups and occupy a non-place, a hybrid space (Iyall Smith & Leavy, 2008). Although hybridity was initially understood as “an outcome of oppression” (Iyall Smith, 2008) the in-between position helps the women “cross arbitrary institutionalized categories of identity” (p. 10) and benefit from “having an understanding of both local knowledge and global cosmopolitanism” (p. 5). In relation to gender, the Asian student mothers present “a hybrid form of gendered identity that occupies both maleness and femaleness” (p. 7). The range of gender identities challenge the traditional and false dichotomous definition and suggest that maleness and femaleness “are not expressed in the same ways in all societies” (p.7).

Gender Identities

Although gendered discrepancies are visible in many societies (Gordon, 1990; Norton, 2000), gender is only “one of several dynamics” in constructing the female

identities (Simon-Maeda, 2004a, p. 411). Norton's (2000) study on women immigrants in Canada demonstrated that the gendered identities as mothers and wives influenced the immigrant women's investment in English and their opportunities to practice English. She noted that investment and opportunities were rather influenced by the disjuncture between the symbolic resources they acquired in their home countries and the resources valued in the host country, Canada.

In most Asian countries, such as China, Japan, and Korea, sociocultural priority is given to "male professionals who are expected to be the main breadwinners with supportive wives" (Simon-Maeda, 2004a, p. 415). As a result, the supportive wives usually "adhere to a 'good wife, wise mother' norm at the expense of their careers or juggling career and domestic duties" (p. 415). When the norm is broken, the entailed gender shift can bring to the women both sense of control and sense of frustration depending on the individual backgrounds.

Investigating the interplay between gender identity shifts and second language socialization, Gordon (2004) documented the process by which working-class Lao women and men redefined their gender identities after they came to the United States. Gordon argued that gender identity shifts between Lao men and women were impacted by the access to second language resources in the US. Lao women had more opportunities "for enacting their gender identities through expanded leadership roles and wage labor" (p. 437), which they can access in the host country. In comparison, Lao men had fewer opportunities "because they have lost access to traditional sources of power" (p. 437), which they possessed in the home country. The new gender ideals of personal autonomy, self-definition, and egalitarianism that many immigrant women developed

through their experiences in the US was in sharp contrast with the gender ideal that they acquired through socialization in their traditional, gender-specific cultures (Suh, 2007).

Due to varying internalization of their gender roles different women may feel differently about their reversed gender role identity, which is well illustrated on the two participants in Simon-Maeda's (2004a) study. Julia was a professional Japanese EFL teacher with an unemployed husband, who had to choose working to support her family. The work-over-family choice, however, caused her a lot of frustration due to the discrepancy between her "ideal" married life and the reality. In contrast, Celine was also the breadwinner of her family but she enjoyed her work because by becoming the "man" in her marriage Celine got more power in her family so that they must live by her standard. The difference between the two women in terms of being the breadwinners of their families may come from many sources yet internalization of their gender roles, their internationalized gender ideals in the family, must have had great impact on their responses to their gender identity shift.

ESL Learner Identities

The big challenge that most international professionals encounter in the US is being non-native (Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006; Lin et al., 2002; Simon-Maeda 2004a). In order to participate in second language academic communities, ESL/EFL professionals have to negotiate competence, identities, power relations, and positionalities (Morita, 2004). This accords with the argument made by Norton and Toohey (2002) that language is not just a set of linguistic symbols and signs and language learning engages the identities of learners. It is usually a long journey to travel "between the worlds" (Guo, 2006) from self-doubt to self-confidence, from seeing one's otherness as a liability to

seeing it as an asset (Guo, 2006; Kubota, 2002), and from being excluded from the “linguistic territory” to claiming the “ownership” of English as an international language (Widdowson, 1994).

Exploration on the inequitable relations of power in L2 learning (Gao, Zhao, Cheng, & Zhou, 2007; Mariana, 2009, Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2008; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Peirce, 1995) proved that the complex nature of social identity is a “site of struggle”, embedded within power relations, and subject to change. EFL/ESL researchers further explored “identity options” of ESL speakers and writers and proposed that understanding the dynamics of identities is vital to a complete analysis of research subjects and to better assist ESL learners’ needs (Omoniyi & White, 2006).

Despite the existent attempts of identity researchers, the complexities about how the inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities of L2 learners to practice the target language outside the classroom (Pavlenko, 2008; Peirce, 1995) are still in need of more adequate study. Systematic study on the power issue concerning international female students with children in the United States is even more needed. The native construct and the assumed link between language expertise and identity-affecting factors should not just be called into question but call for more actions.

Notably enough, the Asian women pertaining to this project need not only think about their own education experiences as international graduate students, but should also keep in mind that their children’s education is being influenced by the very nature of being immersed in the US at a very young age. So, what does this mean to have these children “maintain” their home language and cultures? How would this be implemented

within the US? And when they do return to their home countries, how would they be perceived by their classmates as well as their teachers?

Some research has been done related to the above-mentioned questions. Park (2006) recalled autobiographically her childhood when she first emigrated from Korea to the US with her family and how aloneness in the English-speaking world turned many of her hopes into dilemmas. In particular, she illustrated how at home her parents tried to provide her with an abundant amount of cultural and linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), yet at school she had the least capital as “the only visible minority who could not understand the English language” (Park, 2006, p. 52) thus was unable to fight back the verbal racialized treatment from her peers.

The theory of literacy and identity by James Paul Gee (1996) states that “Language and literacy are elements in larger wholes: elements in multiple and socioculturally diverse ‘ways of being in the world’” (p. 122). Gee considers these “ways of being in the world” as discourses, which comprise primary discourses (within their family) and secondary discourses (such as schools, churches, and workplaces). Based on this theory, children with good schooling at home have more cultural capital than their counterparts without the advantage. However, there can also be contradictions between primary and secondary discourses (Gee, 1996), which was well exemplified in Park’s (2006) bilingual literacy autobiography, “Because my Korean literacy was not completely developed at the time of my family’s immigration to the US, my parents required us to not only use the Korean language at home, but they also sent us to a special Saturday school” (p. 53). Although native language and culture were greatly emphasized at home Park was pushed into a “sink-or-swim” situation at school and learned every

subject in English. The contradiction between the home discourses and school discourse actually made her adaptation to English speaking “more difficult” (p. 53).

From a sociocultural perspective, children learn language “through participating in the practices or activities of their everyday lives” (Dyson, 1999, p. 328). They can even acquire “minimal literacy skills” from their friends by playing games or watching movies (Farr, 1994, p. 46). Thus literacy is not only more than reading and writing but oral communication can improve literacy skills just as effectively (Belcher & Hirvela, 2008). For young immigrants to the US, the process of their ESL literacy development can be influenced by all such factors as family background, L1 literacy, friend circle, parents’ literacy knowledge and orientation (Ling, 2007; Park, 2006; Zhang, 2006), and culture shock (Kohls, 2001).

Another important concept related to literacy development is the difference between academic and conversational language. According to Freeman and Freeman (2001), conversational language is “the language we use to carry out activities that are rich in context, such as shopping, asking for and giving directions, or playing games” (p. 156). Academic language refers to the language we use to “attend college classes, or take notes or tests or write essays” or carry out other activities. Usually, it takes about “two years for a new immigrant to acquire conversational language” (p. 157) and six or seven years “to develop academic language proficiency” (p. 158). Thus it is possible that an English learner can “do math computations, which were less language dependent”, “memorize spelling words he did not have to really understand or doing anything with” (p. 157), “speak English, often without an accent,” but he may not do well in “academic school tasks that have little context” (p. 156) or compete with his peers in “challenging

content-area activities” (p. 157). Unfortunately, this contrast can lead to the assumption that “the student is lazy, when in fact the student simply needs more time to acquire academic English” (p. 156). Pertaining to this study, it is important to ask (1) whether K-12 schools have implemented these theories in their teaching practices and holistically facilitated the immigrant student’s needs; (2) if not, do the student mothers as education professionals have the literacy knowledge about their children; and (3) how do female professionals deal with their children’s situations differently from other mothers.

To sum up, identity is a relational concept situated and constructed in social and cultural contexts. It should not be considered as homogenous, static, and monolithic, but should be understood as hybrid, dynamic, and multiple. For the study of women immigrants with children, it is vital to understand that other identity categories are just as important as the category of female (Simon-Maeda, 2004a). Theories of identity should help to explore how international student mothers in the US negotiate their new and old identities and how ethnicity, race, culture, religion, age, social class, and gender intersect with student motherhood identities.

Marginalization-Privilege Coexistence and Teacher Education

Lots of research has been done on the marginalization of women immigrants pertaining to their language learning, gender, and ethnicity (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). The privileges that White native English speaking teachers (NESTs) possess have left their nonnative counterparts illegitimate as English language users (Canagarajah, 1999; Guo, 2006; Kubota & Lin, 2006). For non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs), Park (2006) summarizes that marginalization may

be attributed to (1) their native language being other than English; (2) how the English language is situated in local and global contexts; and (3) their visible minority race.

However, in her study of Asian Women professionals in US TESOL programs Park (2006) discovered that privilege and marginalization are coexistent in the East Asian women's educational experiences. The different forms of capital they brought were gained throughout their lives in their native countries (Bourdieu, 1986) and were realized "through education, study abroad programs, parental financial support, and admission into U.S. TESOL teacher education programs" (p. 189). It is contended that the educational attainment of privileged international students enrolled in US universities may be a product of their privileged class (Park, 2006; Vandrick, 1995, Wildman, 2000), as rightly stated by Park (2006) here, pertaining to the East Asian women students:

As for the women in the study, their upper-middle to upper-class status in their native countries gave them opportunities to learn other languages, study and live in foreign countries, and ultimately, gain admission into TESOL programs in the United States. (p. 33)

Additionally, they came with economic resources that would sustain them until the completion of their degree programs. These women came to an English speaking country with a set of beliefs and knowledge, identities, and dispositions characterized by this privilege. (p. 32)

Actually, the privileged backgrounds and vast amounts of educational experiences provide the privileged Asian female students with different forms of capital to sustain them "until and beyond" the completion of their degree programs (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2004; Park, 2006). After they entered the American educational systems, however, the

women confronted varying degrees of marginalization as articulated in their graduate study experiences, specifically due to how they positioned themselves and were positioned in relation to the English language learning and teaching enterprise (Park, 2006) Their privileged backgrounds were often seen as stigma or overlooked so that the Asian women had to negotiate their bilingual or multilingual identities as legitimate members of the US graduate education community (Park, 2006; Pavlenko, 2003; Thomas, 1999).

To better facilitate international students' needs in TESOL graduate programs, researchers propose theorizing language teacher identity (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005; Park, 2006), understanding pre-service teachers holistically (Simon-Maeda, 2004a) by incorporating "the theoretical, professional, and personal" (Park, 2006, p. 225); evaluating "programmatic studies: issues of knowledge, pedagogy, and mentoring" (p. 235); and reexamining assistantships and qualifications of graduate students in the programs (Park, 2006). In the current study, it is also vital to examine how the women professionals are affected by the environment outside the graduate classroom, which is mostly invisible to the program but shadowing the women in their everyday lives.

Academic Mothers

Myth of Good Mother

A good mother does not simply exist. Badinter (1980) examined the history of "mother love" and found that the term was a "new cultural invention." It did not exist before the 18th century, the period of the Enlightenment. The absence of "mother love"

back then had nothing to do with the mother's economic status but just a social product.

It was documented in Birns and Hay (1988) in this way:

... in early centuries infant mortality was not just a product of poverty.

Even rich women sent their children out to wet nurses for their early years, the mothers being aware that few of their babies would survive. It was only during the period of the Enlightenment that the survival of children came to be seen as important and mothers were urged to take care of their own children. (p. 4)

Birns and Hay (1988) debated that the historical forces operating in a society influenced the social context, which in turn shaped mother's lives. They argued that "good mothers" are myths formalized by society and history.

Mothering behavior is the product of many variables (Nuttbrock & Freudiger, 1991). In the process of mothering, both public and private discourses have constrained mothers' choices (Miriam, Davies, Edwards, & Standing, 1997). The constraints range from available resources to negotiations about relationships and expectations about the nature of family life, employment, and their children's place in the future. Miriam, Davies, Edwards, and Standing (1997) thus conclude in their study that mothers' experiences of the processes of bringing up and educating their children are not in harmony with the contradictory, public policy discourse, but are limited by structural and moral possibilities in a patriarchal and racist society.

For many years, however, mother's experience has not been portrayed in a real way. It has been "relentlessly, and romantically, mythologized" (Hulbert, 2005). The mess and chaos, misery and anxiety that haunt maternity in our society have been ignored

and neglected. The stereotype of a good mother is always expected to be nurturing, kind, and selfless (Badinter, 1980; Birns & Hay, 1988). In contrast, a bad mother always fails to follow these criteria and is “typified by the image of the wicked stepmother” (Birns & Hay, 1988, p. 3). These myths have become the basis for “formal” advice about motherhood so that when the mother cannot conform to the criteria, she will feel anxiety, guilt, and despair. As Birth and Hay (1988) argued:

These myths become formalized in academic theories about motherhood, which in turn stimulate the empirical research that becomes translated into the advice experts give to women about how to mother. The result is a peculiar cycle of events; the myth and theories themselves do not accurately reflect the realities of motherhood, but they have the power to affect women’s lives. (p. 3)

This “mommy myth” (Douglas & Michaels, 2004), as rightly pointed out by Andrea O’Reilly, Director of the Centre for Research on Mothering at York University in Toronto, is not because “children have needs” but because “we, as a culture, dictate that only the biological mother is capable of fulfilling them, that children’s needs must always come before those of the mother” (Tucker, 2004, p. 4). Obviously, the criteria of good motherhood serve not the mothers but the people who have the power to set the rules.

Career and Family Jugglers

In exploring the identity of professional Singapore women, Lazar (2005) illustrated that these women faced the difficulty in having to “juggle a career and family responsibilities alone” (p. 142). In a society where childcare and housework have been traditionally considered women’s work, Singaporean men, even better-educated men, are

unwilling to become equal partners (Lazar, 1993; Lazar, 2005). Lazar (2005) further demonstrated that although the government intended that well-educated women find suitable partners in a relationship of parity, state public policies have continued to “hold sacrosanct traditional Confucian-Asian values” that prioritize for women their “‘natural’ reproductive and nurturing roles as mothers” (p. 143). This discrepancy between the ideal spouse and the real man made some women unwilling to negotiate (Gordon, 1990) thus they chose to remain single or separate from their partners.

Lazar’s (1993, 2005) illustration presented a scenario about why representation is so important in feminist study (Mohanty, 1991). It resonated with Simone de Beauvoir’s (1972) statement that “One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one” and Simon-Maeda’s (2004a) statement that “There is not such a thing as being a woman.” Lazar’s (2005) exploration on Singaporean women provided evidence for Butler’s (1990) gender trouble and demonstrated that gender is performative. It proved that a stable and unitary conception of women is false. It should not be the basis of feminist politics because the notion of the universal identity of women excludes experiences of different histories, races, classes, and ethnicities.

The good mother myth always left maternal scholars (Tucker, 2004) shuttling between work and family if they wish to have an identity beyond motherhood (Cook, 2002; Gordon, 1990; Swanson & Johnston, 2002, Tucker, 2004). While maternal scholars are expected to be good mothers at home, they are expected to be overachievers at work too, as shown by Land (1989):

Teaching loads are higher, the pressure to publish and establish a reputation by attending and giving papers at conferences (preferably

abroad) are very great. With half of all women in academic posts now being on fixed-term contracts (twice the proportion of men), being considered ‘unproductive’ for even a short time can, quite literally, cost you your job. (p. 90)

The incompatibility between motherhood and academia is, at its core, really a gender issue. Based on the “confession” of Haynie (2008), academia has contributed to encouraging women to delay having children and by doing so, “it discourages us all, parents and nonparents alike, from integrating our personal and professional lives” (p. 56). Raising children is traditionally seen as mother’s work but not father’s work; there is maternal leave (Elrena & Grant, 2008) but no concept of paternal leave. Cognard-Black (2008) depicted her college like this after she became an academic mother: “it offers no campus child care; there is an explicit policy that states faculty are not supposed to hire students to take care of their children on campus grounds” (p. 131). She thus argued that by doing so the college was assuming that “a faculty member has someone at home to take care of any dependents” and that “faculty are men with wives to rear their kids” (p. 131). In a similar way Hudock (2008) describes her first day of school after two years of maternity leave: “I kept my eyes down, looking at each brick as I passed over it, trying to keep from crying. Their deep earth color ... honored a new separation: returning to an academic career after being with my daughter full time since her birth” (p. 63). The ivory tower has no room for children except when they are sick the children sometimes have to come to class with their academic mothers (Hudock, 2008).

As seen above, the “myth of motherhood” (Douglas & Meredith, 2004; Hulbert, 2005) and “chilly climate in academe” (Williams, 2002) work together to make maternal

mothers filled with either a sense of failure or a sense of guilt or both (Cook, 2002; Elrena & Grant, 2008; Tucker, 2004; Williams, 2002). The result is that the powerful set the criteria and rules and the powerless deal with the consequences. Mothers are victims of good mother stereotypes. Based on the previous discussions, certain roles and identities are discursively constructed as feminized or masculinized so that K-12 teaching is seen as feminized/women's work while higher education teaching/professorship is seen as masculinized. Why isn't the society taking women in academia seriously or how women are perceived in our society – this is a question winding through the current study.

Maternal Guilt

As shown in the literature above, motherhood and academia are often incompatible (Cook, 2002; Elrena & Grant, 2008; Tucker, 2004; Williams, 2002). Torn apart between good mother myth and academic accomplishments, maternal scholars always have the sense of guilt and failure. Women's sense of guilt had been acrimoniously discussed long before by French feminist Cixous (1991). According to Cixous, women had been forbidden to write throughout history since writing had been marked by “a libidinal and cultural/political and masculine economy” (p. 337). Consequently, for the woman, it is “never her turn to speak” (p. 337) due to her sense of guilt and inadequacy. Cixous argued that in order to get back “her goods, her pleasure, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal” (p. 338), the woman needs to write. Writing will free the woman from being guilty of everything and paving her way to “entry into history” (p. 338).

It has been over three decades since Cixous (1991) made the former comments yet the same sense of guilt has been haunting maternal scholars. Women are still “being

guilty of everything” in our society (Cook, 2002; Elrena & Grant, 2008; Ruddick, 2001; Tucker, 2004; Williams, 2002). As shown in the maternal scholar narratives in Elrena and Grant (2008), when the mother was with her kids, she felt she was not a good academic; when she buried herself in work, however, she felt she was not a good mom. To Cognard (2008), it is clear that “putting my family before my work is just lip service” (p. 130). To an extreme, an academic mother even felt that “my daughter has been orphaned by me – by my own choices” (p. 129).

Although pursuing “perfection” in both academic and maternal roles is not the ideal that professional mothers ask for themselves it has cornered the women so that they have limited choices. The professional mother is a socially constructed discourse where the women are defined, guided, as well as constrained. Since different societies define good mothers in different ways, it can be assumed that maternal scholars may experience different struggles and feelings of guilt across cultures. In the case of international student mothers in the US, the stories can be even more varied.

Involvement in Children’s Schooling

Men and women have different kinds of freedom about childcare, concluded Land (1989) from her study. The “*legitimate* structure that men create” gives them not only “that kind of freedom” but also “the excuse” from “the demands of childcare” (p. 92). More noticeably, not only men but also “women as wives and/or secretaries and so on” are helping them “create these structures and maintain the boundaries between their ‘work’ and their ‘family’” (p. 92).

Based on the criteria of stereotypical good mothers, professional women must combine their work and family “in a way that does not harm their children” (p. 92) if they

are biological mothers (Tucker, 2004). Exploring literacy advice to parents in the contemporary United States, Smythe (1998) pointed out that there was a big reliance upon women's domestic literacy work to promote children's academic success nowadays and the reliance reproduced gender inequalities. Hornosty (1998) resonated the idea by further arguing that "women, not men, must continually strive to find ways of juggling home and work, of balancing the desire to nurture with the desire to achieve" (p. 180).

When it comes to parental involvement in children's schooling, particularly in the case where children are not doing well in school, the parents take even different portions of responsibilities, as Dudley-Marling (2001) discusses here:

As a policy goal, *parent involvement* includes the participation of both mothers and fathers in their children's schooling. In practice, as the domestic role of mothers has expanded to include responsibility for children's cognitive development and schooling (Baker & Stevenson, 1986), parent involvement refers more often to the work of women in support of their children's schooling (Griffith, 1996; Smith, 1987). The coordination and supervision of children's educational activities often demands a significant portion of mothers' waking hours, particularly in the case of mothers whose children do poorly in school (Lareau, 1989). (p. 184)

Feelings of distress over children's school troubles were common among the mothers Dudley-Marling (2001) interviewed. For these professional women, school troubles intruded on their life at work. Dudley-Marling (2001) noted that some fathers

also worried about school troubles but it was the mothers who often felt the burden of guilt – that they were personally responsible for their children’s struggle at school.

Dudley-Marling (2001) concluded that “if school troubles increase the domestic burdens of families, it is likely those burdens will fall most heavily on mothers” (p. 195).

In the case of the single mother, she has to take the responsibilities of both parents on her own shoulder (Houghton, 2002). She has to “shoulder the additional burdens imposed by *school troubles* alone” (Dudley-Marling, 2001, p. 189) thus feels even more inadequate as a parent. Almost all single mothers in Dudley-Marling’s (2001) study blamed themselves for their children’s school trouble, feeling that they did not raise their children properly. The difference in parental involvement in children’s schooling and the parental responses to their children’s school troubles are a reflection of the gender inequality not just in the family but in the larger social context. It shows that motherhood is not a woman’s personal choice (Cook, 2002) but a discourse reinforced by the society.

Pertaining to the Asian women in this study, motherwork has even more meanings. It is intertwined with all of their profession, class, religion, ethnicity, and their changed social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). As the ESL learners with the most English proficiency in their families, given that their husbands came not through education but as dependents, the student mothers naturally became the spokeswomen for most of their families’ language-related events, particularly their children’s education. Children’s education is greatly addressed among middle and upper classes in most Asian cultures (Ling, 2007). Based on this ethnic epistemology (Ladson-Billing, 2000), most women in the study were doing not only their own jobs, which were traditionally defined as motherwork, but also their husbands’ jobs, which were traditionally labeled as

fatherwork. Thus it is important to find out what social capital these women accumulate and could turn to in the host country? How being Asian women graduates help them locate their social capital successfully and unsuccessfully? What are the problems and successes pertaining to the Asian women's involvement in their children's schooling?

Student Mothers

Although Dudley-Marling (2001) presented enlightening narratives of mothers from different classes, ethnicities, economic statuses, and educational backgrounds, she did not include currently enrolled student mothers in her study. This gap was filled by the works of Sears (2001) and Williams (2007). In her dissertation about the experiences of doctoral student mothers living at the intersection of studenthood and motherhood, Sears (2001) investigated 17 mothers at various phases in their doctoral programs. Utilizing the concept of the public-private dichotomy and the notions of greedy institutions, Sears (2001) noted that (1) the women preferred to balance the two contradictory ideologies of being both a good student and a good mother; (2) almost all of them made their children their first priority; (3) they engaged in ideological work to support their alternative definition of the good mother and the good student, yet when unable to sustain it, they tended to revert to the dominant definition.

One of the most recent studies on student mothers was done by Williams (2007). Based on discourse analysis, interview, and focus group study, Williams' doctoral work explored how graduate student mothers balanced their academic and family life. She concluded that the untenable and irreconcilable positions of these women were created in discourse, enacted in institutional policies, and lived by the participants.

Noticeably, student mothers have attracted the attention of education, women study, and psychology, but not enough in sociolinguistics. Meanwhile, international student mothers were not included enough in the student mother group either. They remain underresearched and underrepresented. The existent research done on student mothers can provide some information in general to my study of international student mothers in the US, yet it is far from adequate pertaining to the specificities of their academic performance, family life, social communication, and identity.

In this section I have demonstrated the different faces of motherhood pertaining to professional women. It shows that motherhood is a discursive social construct. Our society creates ambivalence about a mother's individual rights and the work ethic by imposing "unrealistic obligations and commitments on mothering" (Hays, 1996). As a result, these cultural contradictions about motherhood often put women in dilemma:

If a woman voluntarily remains childless, some will say she is cold, heartless and unfulfilled as a woman. If she is a mother who works too hard at her job or career, some will accuse her of neglecting the kids. If she does not work hard enough, some will surely place her on the 'mommy track,' and her career advancement will be permanently slowed by the claim that her commitment to her children interferes with her workplace efficiency. If she stays at home with her children, some will call her unproductive and useless. A woman, in other words, can never fully do it right. (p. 11)

Although as a myth, the good mother stereotype has been affecting both men and women from generation to generation. The real chaos about motherhood, the messiness

of juggling family and work, and the isolation of academic mothers, has not yet attracted enough interest from academic and formal study or publishing world (Tucker, 2004). Even in women study, motherhood was negated or ignored (Evans & Grant, 2008; Williams, 2002). Mother's real stories have done "little to erode the power of those coercive myths of perfect motherhood – much less to shake up public policy, which resolutely ignores mothers' work" (Douglas & Michaels, 2004, p. 1).

Now that the false message of mommy myth "is not produced by a few bad actors who don't like women ... (but) stems from spontaneous and unexamined assumptions" (Williams, 2002, p. 2), it is necessary to get more people "genuinely" informed about contemporary family dilemmas (Cook, 2002). Until "the culture changes" will professional mothers be liberated from "oppressive external ideals" (Williams, 2002). In relation to international student mothers, it is necessary to further previous investigations on maternal scholars to find out how much scope ISMs have within societal structures and cultures, how they live according to values outside the mainstream of society, and what are their pleasures and gains to work out the ideal of 'public' motherhood in a capitalist, sexist, and racist society like America (Gordon, 1990).

In this chapter I have presented and discussed that the identity of an international student mother is a socially discursive construct. Meanwhile, it is also an ideological construct due to how women have been both privileged and marginalized. On a micro level, it is related to such factors as gender, family, children, marital status, and job. On a macro level, it is influenced by external factors such as economy, society, history, class, culture, and language. Most notably, I have realized from interacting with the Asian women participants in my study, who share similar backgrounds and experiences with me,

that motherhood is an ethnically situated discursive social construct that comes with being moms in their own contexts. To get a full picture about how their identities change during their study in the United States, researchers need to take a poststructuralist perspective to explore the dynamic interaction between identity, migration, race, culture, mothering, and language by cross-disciplinary study of sociolinguistics as well as other disciplines. To return to my research questions posed at the beginning of this project, my theoretical understanding of the identity pertaining to the women in this study focus on two points: their identity as English as a second language learners and users and their identity as Asian women and mothers.

As users of English as a second language, these women come mainly from Asian countries. When English language learning and use became big global business (Wang, L.-B., 2004), these women accumulated rich social, cultural, economic, and political capital (Bourdieu, 1986). With their symbolic capital of English language proficiencies they thus became part of the beneficiaries of the business and enjoyed privileged social class in their home lands. After coming to America, however, these professional women with high English proficiency are arbitrarily categorized and marginalized to the group of “non-native English speakers and users” and low-income working class mainly. The new environment deprives the capital that the women previously possessed in their native countries and compels them to reposition themselves in the new society. To a great extent, the women were both privileged in their homelands and marginalized in their host country due to their bilingual/multilingual backgrounds and non-place/hybrid/cross border identities.

Another focus about the group of women is their gender. As reviewed in the previous literature, women's gendered identities are discursively constructed. Different women have internalized different social assumptions in different ways about being a woman. Likewise, an academic mother and a good mother's identities are also discursive social, cultural, ethnic, and epistemological constructs. Both public and private discourses have constrained academic mothers' choices. Good mother myth drives academic mothers struggling between family and career because they want an identity beyond both motherhood and academic. Along this line, the contradictory ideologies of being both a good student and a good mother are a big challenge for student mothers. The untenable and irreconcilable positions are created in discourse, enacted in institutional policies, imposed by the society, and lived by the women. In other words, gender is not the single factor in studying the constraints of women immigrants' opportunities to language development and social interaction. Language learners are situated in complex, historical, and multidimensional contexts, where relations of power affect their social interaction. That explains why some ESL women professionals travel a long distance to eventually see their otherness not as a disadvantage but as an asset.

Through examining the women's experiences as Asian graduate student mothers in the US the study has shown that there is a close connection between an individual's identity formation, social interaction, and language use thus linguistic identity is inseparable from other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, culture, and history. It is thus essential to understand identities not as homogenous, static, and monolithic, but as nonlinear, hybrid, flexible, volatile, dynamic, which are changing across time and contexts and performed differently in different discourses.

CHAPTER 3
UNDERPINNING CONCEPTS OF
POSTMODERN RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, I will underpin some key concepts of postmodern research methodology and focus on the scholarship that addresses the design of my current research. Based on the poststructuralist argument and my self-positioning in the first two chapters, here is a theoretical framework of the research methodologically. The first section focuses on an overview of narrative inquiry to correspond to my poststructuralist argument. In the second section, I present a brief review of journal writing research in social science study. The third section provides an overview of discourse analysis. The final section demonstrates how postmodern interview informs the design of this research.

Postmodern Narrative Inquiry

Contemporary American theorist Fredric Jameson (1991) considered the weakening of historicity as a symptom of our age and postmodern theory as an attempt to refuse the traditional forms of understanding history and narrative. For postmodernists, there is no outside area of ideology or textuality; indeed, postmodern theory questions any claim to “truth” outside of culture. Since Michael Connelly made it an important approach of inquiry in the late 1980s, narrative has continued to be used in sociolinguistic explorations to contribute to social change (Schaafsma, 2008). Echoing Bruner (1990) and Ochs and Capps (1996), Menard-Warwick (2005) gave a good definition of narrative as “a traditional means across most human cultures for making sense of connections between events over time” (p.172).

A major member in narrative family is personal narrative, which Riessman (1993) refers to as “talk organized around consequential events” (p. 15). Riessman (1993) argues that in a personal narrative a teller “takes a listener into a past time or ‘world’ and recapitulates what happened then to make a point” (p. 15). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further point out that a close connection exists in personal narratives between the past, the present, and the future in that an individual’s past experiences contribute to the present and future experiences. According to Riessman (1993), there are four main varieties of narrative genres:

1. Stories – where we expect “protagonists,” “inciting conditions,” and “culminating events.”
2. Habitual narratives – where events happen over and over again and consequently there is no peak in the action.
3. Hypothetical narratives – where events depicted did not happen.
4. Topic-centered narratives – where snapshots of past events are linked thematically.

Compared with other research approaches, the power of narratives is presented, at a minimum, from the following aspects:

Firstly, life is about meaning making (Schaafsma, 2008) and narrative is the central means by which individuals construct their lives. It is a recapitulation of a moment or event that adds special meaning to their lives (Pavlenko, 2002; Riessman, 1993).

Next, narrative reveals some of the hidden construction and thinking (Schaafsma, 2008). Researchers in linguistics, sociology, and psychology have all agreed that narratives and stories do not exist in a vacuum but are discursively co-constructed

socially, culturally, and historically in relation to the content, context, and form (Bell, 2002; Hargreaves, 2006; Miller, 1994; Mishler, 1995; Pavlenko 2002, 2007; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Riessman, 1993). What enters into a narrative is not just the narrator himself/herself but other visible and invisible variables and communities. It would be impossible to interpret any narrative without reference to the larger contexts and discourses beyond the direct personal ones. Accordingly, language in contemporary ethnographies is no longer “a transparent medium” (Riessman, 1993), but dynamic, context-based, plural in meanings, and open to selective representation (Mishler, 1995). Therefore, narratives offer more insights into people’s personal and social worlds, which are inaccessible otherwise. Understandably, narratives allow researchers “to present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness” (Bell, 2002, p. 209).

Also, since narratives as discursive constructions are not facts or factual statements but imposed meaning on experience, they do not intend to find or distort “the truth”, rather, they intend to explore “truths of experiences” (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Narratives serve to elevate single, limited, discrete, exclusive, normative, and generalized truths to multiple, plural, holistic, inclusive, interactive, and specific truths. In talking about personal narratives, Personal Narratives Group (1989) made a good statement about “truths” in this way:

They aren’t the result of empirical research or the logic of mathematical deductions. Unlike the reassuring Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform

them. Sometimes the truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters “outside” the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them. (p. 261)

In addition, narrative, particularly, personal narrative is an exchange or dialogue between a narrator and an interpreter. This dynamic deconstructs “the authority of researcher” (Hargreaves, 2006) and incorporates the agendas of both researcher and participant into the arena (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Narrative in this way changes the conventional subject-object relationship into a subject-subject relationship and co-constructs symmetrical sharing of authority, power, and knowledge between “the two participants” (Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

Furthermore, narrative inquiry addresses the hidden link between people’s told stories and the excluded experiences (Bell, 2002; Ogulnick 1999; Pavlenko 2007; Simon-Maeda 2004a). As Bell (2002) pointed out, narrative involves “working with people’s consciously told stories, recognizing that these rest on deeper stories of which people are often unaware” (p. 209). For this reason, researchers encourage and are encouraged to consider what was explicitly articulated in the narratives as well as what was omitted and why (Ogulnick 1999; Pavlenko 2007).

Moreover, narratives, in particular, personal narratives, give prominence to human agency and imagination (Riessman, 1993) and thus provide a crucial tool for studies of identities (Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Pavlenko, 2003; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Simon-Maeda, 2004a). In psychology, many researchers view the construction of personal narratives as central to the development of identity (Mishler,

1995). In linguistics as well as in feminist research, personal narratives are also widely used as a well-suited approach to studies of identities (Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Riessman, 1993).

Narratives also help to study the identity of immigrants. Pavlenko (2007) examined memoirs of early 20th century immigrant writers and found that European immigrants used their narratives to present “the U. S. national identity” (p. 216) while immigrants from Asia, who were “ineligible for U. S. citizenship,” did not claim this identity because they “did not consider U. S. culture their own” (p. 216). Here again, what is excluded is as important as what is included in narratives because, according to Bell (2002), people can construct stories that “support their interpretation of themselves, excluding experiences and events that undermine the identities they currently claim” (p. 209). As “a window into people’s beliefs and experiences” (p. 209), personal narratives reflect how writers position themselves in terms of linguistic, national, gender, and class identities (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 170).

More importantly, legitimatization of narratives empowers members in marked, marginalized, or previously silenced and invisible categories and provides opportunities for the members to participate in knowledge construction (Bell, 2002; Hargreaves, 2006; Menard-Warwick, 2005; Mishler, 1986a; Mishler, 1986b; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko 2001, 2002, 2007; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Riessman, 1993; Simon-Maeda, 2004a). Narratives function against elitist scholarly discourses which marginalized such categories as immigrants, women, and often English as second language learners.

- Female - Narrative has been found to be a gendered performance by many researchers. Pavlenko (2001) studied language learning memoirs written by male and female

authors and noted a discrepancy in their references to gender. She found that “Women closely examined the impact of gender on their linguistic trajectories, men, on the other hand, did not discuss gender at all in relation to language learning” (p. 175). These differences suggested to the researcher that “membership in a privileged or unmarked category may make the category transparent, while marginalization may make the learners sensitive to the category that prevents them from equal access to linguistic resources” (p. 175). This view of narrative performance as gendered is particularly important for women language learners because for them “this connection is a dominant theme” (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 216). Even further, the view of narrative as gendered performance sends a message about “how to interpret the truths of women’s lives” (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p. 263) and how to make narratives work “on women, by women, for women” (Hargreaves, 2006).

- Immigrants - Historically, narratives have offered cues about how another unprivileged group, immigrants, positioned themselves differently in the US (Pavlenko, 2007). Studies showed that in the early 20th century, immigrant writers’ memoirs focused on “economic and employment concerns and cultural assimilation” instead of discussing “language issues” (p. 215). These narratives reflected ways in which “national identity at the turn of the last century was constructed through the mythology of individual achievement” (p. 215). Within the memoirs, however, as aforementioned, there was a different theme focus for different groups of immigrants. European immigrants’ memoirs consisted much of the US national identity narrative (Pavlenko, 2002) while in contrast, Asian immigrants “did not contribute to this genre” (p. 216).

- ESL learners - There is no doubt that recent development in narrative inquiry is extremely important for the TESOL field. It not only makes teachers' and learners' voices be heard "on a par with those of the researchers" but also offers researchers more insights into "learners' motivations, investments, struggles, losses, and gains as well as into language ideologies" (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 214). Diary writing, more specifically, helped ESL learners position and reposition themselves during their study abroad (Crawshaw et.al, 2001). Due to the fact that narrative is discursively constructed, narrative conventions vary from culture to culture (Riessman, 1993). Therefore, it is vital for researchers to caution about "master narrative" to prevent from making some stories culturally privileged over others (Mishler, 1995; Riessman, 1993).

Finally, narrative inquiry values both narratives about others and narratives about one's self (Miller, 1994) although it acknowledges the difference in between (Schaafsma, 2008). The "distributed nature" of the narrated self (Miller, 1994, p. 172) and the fact that "vicarious stories are as highly evaluated as personal stories" (p. 173) make personal story-telling "socially expansive" (p. 172).

The aforementioned features of narrative make it a useful means in the studies of women, immigrants, and second language learners. Very often, it is used in combination with diaries and interviews in research. Admittedly, there is not a perfect research method or a single best one that fits in all research studies. The same is true with narrative inquiry. According to Bell (2002), conducting narrative has these five pitfalls:

1. The required time commitment makes it unsuitable for work with a large number of participants.

2. It requires *close* collaboration with participants.
3. Ethical issues are some of the most serious ones to be addressed.
4. Since exchanging stories is often understood within a larger story of friendship, researchers may find it hard to disengage at the end of the study.
5. Researchers impose meaning on participants' lived experience so that the latter can never be quite free of the former's interpretation of their lives.

We can keep adding to this list – not much research is conducted on emotion in narrative research; there are limits of representation in narrative research; autobiographies can be dangerous data sources because researchers often disregard the line between life and textual reality (Pavlenko, 2007). The limits of representation have always been a thorny problem in narrative research, as Riessman (1993) has always emphasized. She used her trip to South India as an example to present and analyze five basic levels of kinds of representation in the research process: attending, telling, transcribing, analyzing, and reading, to illustrate that limited representation can occur at every juncture of the research process.

That narrative is weak and feminine while argument is strong and powerful is becoming an outdated discussion. We understand now that narratives are not about arguments but about exploration (Schaafsma, 2008). All these postmodern terms such as fluidity, uncertainty, meaning, and emotion are reminding us that in narrative research, we don't take a stand but talk against the stand (Schaafsma, 2008). That makes us able to dwell while using this double-edged sword of narrative.

Journal Writing Research

The origin of the journal is believed to come from East Asian cultures. The oldest extant diaries date back to pillows of Japanese court ladies (Shōnagon, 2006). Asian travel journals are believed to be some of the oldest surviving specimen of this genre of writing. Diary or journal writing has been employed as an established research technique in social science for several decades and the two terms are often used interchangeably. For the purpose of clarity I choose using “journal” in this study. Journal is considered by many people as an audience, a listener, a special friend, or even a weapon for fighting.

Journal and feminist study are directly connected. In the United States, women’s journals had their “own independent tradition throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries” (Rainer, 1978, p. 20). Expanding beyond the rigid calendar journal, Rainer (1978) debated about a “new diary,” a literary genre particularly popular among feminists for self-guidance and expanded creativity. Rainer articulated that the journal allowed writers to communicate deep and spiritual realizations, which was compatible with Ira Progoff’s (1992) use of diaries in psychotherapy. Reflecting on his personal experiences and observations, Progoff found it more effective to solve life’s problems by “reacting directly to the pressures they place upon us” (p. 9) thus he invented the Intensive Journal Method. Progoff suggested that an indirect strategy to encounter a problem was to “move away from the surface of things” (p. 13) and “move inward”:

[T]o discover within ourselves the resources we did not know we possessed. It is to enable people to draw the power of deep contact out of the actual experiences of their lives so that they can recognize their own identity and harmonize it with the larger identity of the universe as they

experience it. Where they had negated themselves, they can, by means of their Intensive Journal work, give their lives full value. (p. 9)

Progoff (1992) also suggested writing Dialogue with Society and addressed the question of race and national origin as one of the major subjects. He argued that “it was important for individuals to have a means of clarifying and maintaining a continuing relationship with their racial or national background, particularly for the minority groups or the socially weaker or less highly regarded groups” (p. 184). He pointed out that “Where a particular group is regarded as being weaker on the social scale, the individuals in that group often ascribe that stereotypes of inferiority to themselves personally, and the integrity of their individual development is thereby undermined”(p. 184).

The journal worked as “creative midwife” (Thomas, 1996) for many feminist researchers. In her doctoral thesis *Making words count: The experience and meaning of the diary in women’s lives*, Daele (1990) explored eleven American women’s life experiences through studying their journal entries they had intensively kept for a long period of time and found that journaling played a key role in the participants’ lives, as shown in the following four aspects:

- Journaling anchored the women in their past and present reality and allowed them to shape aspects of their future.
- Journaling was an act of self-construction over a long period of time. In the journal, a self may be constructed, observed, and nurtured.
- Journaling was a point of departure for a range of creative projects and activities. A woman typically rehearsed her own intellectual and creative powers in the journal.
- Journaling played a vital role in women’s culture.

Journal writing not only plays a part as a habit in people's lives (Schiwy, 1996), but is a useful method "when the researcher cannot undertake the observations and the diarist acts as the researcher's agent in observing and recording relevant data" (Alaszewski, 2006, p. 50). Based on this understanding, Alaszewski (2006) defined journals as "a way of accessing knowledge about individuals or cases with specific characteristics" and journal writers as "the medium through which the researcher can access this type of knowledge" (p. 56). This understanding of journal use is much in alignment with John Dewey's theory on education, which suggests that human beings are not passive receivers but active perceivers of stimuli thus human behavior cannot be reduced to a basic sensory-motor description.

Journal writing is especially a favorite method in studying the identity of women immigrants. In her study of immigrant women in Canada, Peirce (1995) used journals in combination with observations and interviews for collecting data and found that journaling helped learners develop their talents and gave them voices as writers by examining their communicative breakdowns in ways that they could not otherwise. Peirce (1995) also illustrated that "investment" was a more sufficient concept than "motivation" to signal "the socially and historically constructed relationship of the women to the target language" (p.17).

In addition to its essential part in feminist study, journal writing has proven to be an effective methodology in applied linguistics and TESOL research. To examine the use of journal writing in TESOL contexts Burton and Carroll (2001a) used case studies and discovered that journal writing helped language students and teacher learners learn through reflection. Specifically, through journal writing the study participants learned to

create and communicate, reflect and collaborate, thus they got more control over their own development and became more aware of how they learned. The study demonstrated the power of journal writing as a lifelong resource for language teaching and learning.

Over the last decade, learners' journals have become a popular means of data collection in applied linguistics. Due to the private nature of journal writing, researchers are usually inaccessible to observing and recording relevant data collected from journal writers. Consequently, analyzing and interpreting self-reported data becomes a problem (Hall, 2008; Pavlenko, 2007). Some analytical approaches such as content analysis and thematic analysis, however, are insensitive to the interpretive nature of self-report data (Pavlenko, 2007). This weakness of journal writing is also considered its uniqueness, from another perspective. According to Alaszewski (2006), the fact that a researcher cannot undertake the observations and has to have the journal writer act as the agent well illustrates that "a person's story is valued in its own right" (p. 57). In the meantime, to ensure the validity of collected data, journal writing should be used in combination with other sources of data so as to cross-check or triangulate the information recorded in journal entries.

Poststructuralist Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Feminist Chris Weedon (1987) argued that although women were as important as men they were "*naturally* equipped to fulfill different social functions, primarily those of wife and mother" (p. 2), the roles associated with the qualities of "patience, emotion and self-sacrifice" (p. 3) so that the social institutions women entered pre-existed them.

Poststructuralist theorist Judith Butler (1990) further investigated the power constructs of the subject and the Other hence the binary relation between "men" and "women" and

concluded that “The complexity of gender requires an interdisciplinary and postdisciplinary set of discourses” (p. xxxiv). Based on the interdisciplinary and feminist nature of my study, I used feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) in combination with narrative analysis to analyze my collected data to correspond to the poststructuralist argument and postmodern interview methodology.

Poststructuralism suggests that it is unrealistic to think that we can “locate and understand a unitary ‘self’ that is revealed transparently through the words we read and hear” (Domosh, 2003, p. 108). In other words, individual experiences are always socially, culturally, and historically constructed. Poststructuralism considers not just the author and the text, but also the reader and the reader’s reading (Barthes, 1987; Eagleton, 1983; Foucault in Gordon, 1980). Many modern terms, such as authorship, context, relationship between text and author, are all reconceptualized by poststructuralism. By acknowledging multiple faculty of human knowledge (Foucault in Gordon, 1980), representation has become a very tricky task in poststructuralist study. Through examining the famous picture of Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, poststructuralist Michel Foucault demonstrated that in such a great piece of work it was even impossible to find the pure activity of representation. Foucault discussed how discourses regulated what we said, thought, and considered true or correct, and decided that those who thought outside the discursive system would be disrespected. He thus argued that discourse was the medium of power, which shaped reality.

Based on the power analysis of discourses and acknowledgement of our limited knowledge about the world at given time and context, poststructuralists suggest “destabilizing” meaning and “decentering” author (Barthes, 1987; Eagleton, 1983;

Foucault, 1972) in text analysis by including other sources of reader, culture, and class instead of using the authoritative source of subject only. They suggest that a literary text has more than one meaning and different readers have different ways of meaning construction about the same text. The theory of binary opposition in structuralism, such as male and female, is no longer adequate for explanation of many phenomena in poststructuralist context. Thus poststructuralism rejects the notion of essentialism and suggests deconstruction of meaning, hence the destruction of the clear dividing lines between male and female, speech and writing, and rational and emotional. Similarly, knowledge is not about the discovery of truth but rather its construction thus meaning is constantly slipping from one sign to the next. In accordance with the poststructuralist note, this study made use of a variety of perspectives to create interpretations of the narrative accounts of the female participants to demonstrate the individual as well as the range of identities of the AGSMs in the US.

In relation to the poststructuralist ideas Orientalism (Said, 1978), the study of the Orient by academics of the West, is another fundamental theory of this study. Edward Said used poststructuralist ideas to analyze Orientalism and suggested that Orientalism was also a manifestation of power. It was a standardized discourse that was dominant in a variety of disciplines and institutions. The binary terms of East and West indicated that the latter had more value than the former, which were domesticated, feminized, assimilated (Okihiro, 1995). Said argued that when the Western academics constructed their study they had very little knowledge about the real East.

In poststructuralist study language is no longer lifeless and rigid, instead, the invisible becomes visible, the inaudible becomes audible, and everything becomes a kind

of dynamic and interrelated performance (Giampapa, 2004; Kubota, 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006). According to Gee (1996), discourse is “connected stretches of language which hang together so as to make sense to some community of people” (p. 90). Built on this definition, Gee (1996) argues that making sense is always dynamic and socially constructed:

... what makes sense to one community may not make sense to another.

Thus to understand sense making in language it is necessary to understand the ways in which language is embedded in society and social institutions (such as families and schools). (p. 90)

For this reason, discourse can always “integrate and sort people” (Gee, 1996, p. ix). In the case of the latter, conflicts can emerge between the discourses of the school and the home-based discourse of some minority children. The conflicting discourses can make the children either run the risk of “becoming complicit with values that denigrate and damage their home-based discourse and identity” (Gee, 1996, p. ix) or become a “stranger in a strange land” (p. 91), marginal to the “advantage discourse” (p. 191).

Obviously, individual behavior is always related to a “set of discourses” (Gee, 1996) or “diverse discourses” (Bridwell-Bowles, 1992) and a narrator’s voice is always related to the social world. According to Gee (1996), there is always a compromise and balance between a primary discourse and a secondary discourse, and other discourses. Interestingly, people try to be “in two or three discourses at the same time” (p. 167). Since the construction of discourse is like the construction of knowledge, which is dynamic not passive, a social construct not an individual choice, it is impossible to preserve a “solipsistic” (p. 177) or “pure” discourse (p. 160). Understood in this way, we

must “envision a socially and politically situated view of language” that takes into account a host of issues such as gender, race, and class in discussing discourses (Bridwell-Bowles, 1992, p. 294). As Gee (1996) puts it, exclusions of certain discourses are “cheats and damages to everyone” (p. 190) and inclusions of discourses are our moral obligation:

I also argued that each of us has a moral obligation to reflect consciously on these theories – to come to have meta-knowledge of them – when there is reason to believe that a Discourse of which we are a member advantages us or our group over other people or other groups. Such meta-knowledge is the core ability that schools ought to instill ... I, at least ... choose to be a Discoursing human at all. (p. 191)

In discussing race relations in multicultural discourses and curriculum reform, McCarthy (1994) argues that the three available types of multicultural discourses, respectively, discourses of cultural understanding, cultural competence, and models of cultural empowerment, do not provide adequate solutions to the problem of racial inequality in schooling because they “depend almost exclusively on the reversal of values, attitudes, and the human nature” (p. 87). He points out that schools are sites of power. At school “differential resources and capacities determine the maneuverability of competing racial groups” and “the differential structure of opportunities” helps to “define race relations” (p. 87). McCarthy (1994) thus offers a critical perspective which incorporates “the critique of the privileging of Westernness underwritten in the dominant curriculum” (p. 84).

Norton (2000) adds more discourse-based studies of actual encounters in the social construction of language learning, both within and outside classrooms. Johnstone (2002) further argues that not all linguistic communication is spoken or written thus analysts need to take into account other semiotic systems such as media as well. She differentiates between “discourse analysis” and “language analysis” and points out that we should not centrally focus on language as “abstract system”, instead, we need to be interested in “what happens when people draw on the knowledge they have about language, based on their memories of things” (p. 3). Knowing a language, therefore, for Johnstone (2002), means “not just knowing its grammar and vocabulary but also knowing how to structure paragraphs and arguments and participate in conversations the way speakers of the language do ... in social interaction” (p. 6).

Identity, just like voice in written discourse, is not exclusively tied to individualism (Matsuda, 2001). Through examining voice in Japanese written discourse, Matsuda discovers that the difficulties that Japanese students face in constructing voice in English written discourse are due not to its incompatibility with their cultural orientation but to the different ways in which voice is constructed in the two different languages. The findings implicate that we need to be sensitive to one’s culture when analyzing different discourses as well as the lack of familiarity with the strategies available in English.

In discussing the dual discourses of state fatherhood in Singapore, Lazar (2005) also points out that gender relations and identities in representations are institutionally embedded. She argues that feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) interrogates the power dynamic at work in a particular social-historical moment rather than providing an overgeneralization of universal women experience.

Postmodern Interviewing

The interview is considered a good method in all such fields as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. Identity psychologists, for example, agree that if we want to know the identities of our subjects, we first have to know their stories (Crewe & Maruna, 2006). Why is interview a useful mode of systematic social inquiry? According to Holstein and Gubrium (2003b), part of the answer lies in “the interview situation’s ability to incite the production of meanings that address issues relating to particular research concerns” (p. 75). Interview has evolved with the development of society and dynamic transformation of ideology. From conventional modern interviews to postmodern interviews, this popular approach has experienced all such changes in purpose, form, function, outcome, voice, subjectivity, the roles of interviewer and interviewee, as well as the relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

Interview Postmodernized

Resonating with what poststructuralists, postmodernists, constructionists, feminists, narrative researchers, diary researchers, and ethnomethodological researchers have suggested, postmodern interviewers believe that interview is an interactive process, a collaborative process of meaning/knowledge construction by both the interviewer and the interviewee, “a concerted project for producing meaning” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003b, p. 74). Postmodern interviewing, also understood as active interviewing by Holstein and Gubrium (2003b), is not searching for the best or most authentic answer from the subject. Instead, there is a dual aim in postmodern interview.

On the one hand, it is “to systematically activate applicable ways of knowing – the possible answers – that respondents can reveal, as diverse and contradictory as they

might be” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003b, p. 77). On the other hand, it is “to provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address relevant issues, and not be confined by predetermined agendas” (p. 75). The pertinence of what is discussed in an interview is, therefore, “partly defined by the research topic and partly by the substantive horizons of ongoing responses” (p. 77).

Interview as Performed Interaction

Due to the interactive nature of postmodern interview, it is “virtually impossible to free any interaction from those factors that could be construed as contaminants” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003b, p. 78). In Ellis and Berger’s (2003) words, interactive interviews serve as the opportunities “for self-conscious reflection by researchers as well as respondents” (p. 160). The respondent is no longer the person to be interrogated but a narrator who improvises stories in response to the questions and most of the time, the personal stories of the interviewer.

Researcher involvement is greatly encouraged and valued in interactive interviews (Ellis & Berger, 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a; Mishler 1986a; Mishler, 1986b; Riessman 1993). The researcher can and wants to be involved in the interview process and identifies with the participant by listening empathetically, showing respect for the participant, and participating equally in self-disclosure and emotionality. The interviewer no longer aims to search for or discover information directly and unidirectionally but promotes an ongoing dialogue for mutual understanding. Obviously, as Holstein and Gubrium (2003b) stated, “Understanding *how* the meaning-making process unfolds in the interview is as critical as apprehending *what* is substantively asked

and conveyed” (p. 68) and the *process* of meaning production is as important as the *meaning* that is produced.

Postmodern vs. Modern Interview

At the risk of overgeneralization, postmodern interview is different from modern method at least in these eight aspects:

1. Purpose

The interview does not aim to come up with conclusive answers but serves to “further the agenda for discussion” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a, p. 37).

2. Roles of interviewer and interviewee

The interviewer and the interviewee are both participants of the shared task, the interview enterprise, for the purpose of co-constructing knowledge in the production of meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a; Mishler, 1986a; Mishler, 1986b). This is the most important difference between modern and postmodern interview methods.

3. Symmetrical or equalized relationship

Postmodern interview encounter is a collaboration of the two people where “Topics, roles, and format are fashioned in the give and take of the interview” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a, p.75).

4. Form and Function

The interviewer is not the person to control the interview. The interviewee is not a vessel of answers but has rights to both answer and raise questions (Ellis & Berger 2003; Gubrium & Holstein 2003a).

5. Outcome

The interview is a team effort, not a division of labor (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a).

6. Corepresentative material

Postmodern interview uses material that represents the respondent's experience "more inventively and authentically", such as poetry rather than traditional prose writing, in case that the respondent's narratives be transformed into "something foreign to/digressed from their original sensibilities" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a, p. 38).

7. Subjectivity

Postmodern interview allows "shift of subjectivity" and "ongoing construction of subjectivity" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a, p. 40) throughout the interview encounter.

8. Voice

Postmodern interview allows both the subject voice of the interviewer and "the alternative voicing or variable voices from the respondent" (p. 40) be heard as the interview unfolds. It encourages the researchers to further examine whose voice they hear and from whose standpoint the respondents tell their stories.

Based on the discussion above, an interview is an arena consisting of both "suppression of discourse" and advantage of discourse (Mishler, 1986b). As Said (1978) discussed on Orientalism, interview is also "a manifestation of power". The key feature that distinguishes postmodern interview from modern interview is that it addresses "redistribution of power" and "redefinition of roles" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a; Mishler, 1986b).

Interview Problems

Since the research process is “part of the ideological configuration in which and through which people form their identities” (Domosh, 2003, p. 110), interviewers or/and researchers need to be aware that interview is a performance with “scripted agendas by both sides, scripts that have been formulated out of and in turn reshape particular historical conditions” and that “the processes and politics that are imbricated in identity formation are also at work in the interview” (p. 110). It is thus understandable, for example, that when women interview women, gender as the only variable will not be enough. Riessman (1987) discussed this question in contrasting two interviews, one with an Anglo woman and one with a Puerto Rican woman. She concludes that gender congruence does not help an Anglo interviewer make sense of the working-class, Hispanic woman's account of her marital separation although they share the same gender. Not just the interview encounter involves different social variables but also the process of transcription is socially constructed. In studying interview problems, Mishler (1986a) pointed out that at each stage of analysis and interpretation the researchers must be wary of “taking their own transcripts too seriously as *the* reality” (p. 48).

To sum up, I use interview as a postmodern and poststructuralist concept in this study. The following quote from Mishler (1986a) summarized a postmodern, interactive, and collaborative interview appropriately:

It should be a play performed collaboratively by both the interviewer and the respondent. It should be a dialogue, not a monologue. It is necessary to empower the respondent but it shouldn't be done at the cost of the interviewer's giving up all her floor. It is false empowerment and

attentiveness and belittlement, just as what a mother is pretending to listen to a child's story attentively – who knows whether her mind is with the child or not. That way can only let the conversation lose rapport soon. (p. 74)

Qualitative Data Analysis

Riessman (1991) advances five levels of representation in narrative research and transcribing is the third of them. Transcribing, like the levels of attending and telling, is “incomplete, partial, and selective” (p. 11). According to Riessman, there is “no one, true representation of spoken language” thus “transcribing discourse is ... an interpretative practice” (p. 13). Different transcription conventions “lead to and support different interpretations and ideological positions” and “ultimately create different worlds” (p. 13).

Transforming big piles of data into succinct and credible accounts is both exciting and challenging. According to LeCompte (2000), a first step in analyzing data to provide a complete picture of a project is “identifying sources of bias” (p. 146). Although selectivity cannot be eliminated researchers need to be aware of how it affects the presented result. Since qualitative data sets “are not always defined clearly and cannot always be measured with pre-existing instruments” researchers must “create a structure and impose it on the data” (p. 147). Based on Creswell and Miller's (2000) distinction between qualitative and quantitative studies qualitative inquirers bring to their studies “a different lens” or “viewpoint” for establishing validity of a study (p. 125). Specifically they use the views of people “who conduct, participate in, or read and review a study” (p. 125). This three-lens approach of data analysis aligns with my poststructuralist argument and postmodern data collection, where the participants and the researchers co-participate

in the process of knowledge construction and contribute as co-researchers. In addition to the three lenses I incorporate disproportionately the three paradigm assumptions labeled by Guba and Lincoln (1994), respectively postpositivist, constructivist, and critical, into my choice of validity procedures. However, this choice is not imposed on the procedure unreasonably but derives from the multiplicity of the women's backgrounds and experiences in this study.

LeCompte (2000) reduces the stage of data analysis to creating three different levels of abstraction: taxonomies, patterns, and structures. Specifically LeCompte suggests a five-step analysis of data in qualitative research: (1) tidying up – to make a preliminary assessment of the data set; (2) finding items – sifting data by repeated readings for frequency, omission, and declaration through field notes, interviews, and text to identify items relevant to the research questions; (3) constructing stable taxonomies or sets of items – organizing identified items into groups or categories by comparison and contrast, or mixing and matching; (4) creating patterns – reassembling identified taxonomies for a coherent explanation or description of the program, event, or phenomenon under study through looking for frequency of occurrence, omission, declaration, as well as similarity and analogy, co-occurrence, sequence, hypothesized reasonableness, and corroboration or triangulation; and (5) assembling structures – building an overall description of the program or problem being studied.

According to Creswell and Miller (2000), there is “a great consensus” that “qualitative inquires need to demonstrate that their studies are credible” in spite of the diverse typologies of validity (p. 124). Creswell and Miller define validity as “how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is

credible to them” (pp. 124-125). Now that validity is critical to the “goodness” of analyzed data the presented data must first make sense to the people under study and then their future readers. Thus researchers should solicit input from their participants first to make sure that “they have properly identified and classified items” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 152). Based on their two-dimensional framework of validity within lens and paradigms, Creswell and Miller (2000) identify nine types of validity procedures, including triangulation, disconfirming evidence, researcher reflexivity, member checking, prolonged engagement in the field, collaboration, audit trail, thick and rich description, and peer debriefing. Although it is often idealistic to include all types of procedures in one single research incorporation of multiple and effective procedures can always make analyzed data more credible.

Not only is the stage of data analysis subjective but also “textual staging” is never innocent, according to Richardson and St. Pierre (2005). Social scientific writing is “neither fixed nor neutral” but “a sociohistorical construction” (p. 960). This is in alignment with Riessman’s (1991) theory of representation that “all texts stand on moving ground” and “there is no master narrative” (p. 14) or universal truths.

In this chapter, I presented some important methods pertaining to social science research, such as journal writing, narrative inquiry, feminist critical discourse analysis, and postmodern interview. By underpinning these key notions of postmodern research methodology I built up the design of my research, which was corresponding to my poststructuralist argument of the study on Asian graduate student mothers in the United States. In the next chapter, I described in more detail the methods and procedures in which I collected and analyzed my data.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I describe the methods and procedures involved in the current research. Due to the focus on the individual experiences of Asian graduate student mothers, this research project is qualitative in orientation and involves the usage of a range of methodologies including postmodern interview and personal journal writing.

Research Site

This study took place in a public university in the east coast of the United States, where all the women participants matriculated and studied while taking care of their children. Founded over 100 years ago, the university claims to have a diverse community comprising both graduate and undergraduate programs, distinguished faculty members, and more than fourteen thousand students from across the nation and around the world. It is about an hour and a half's drive from the university to the nearest metropolitan city.

Recruitment of Participants

The participants were selected through purposive sampling, snowball sampling and personal contacts. To start, I asked my friends to locate potential Asian graduate student mothers to participate in my study by giving them a letter with my contact information if they were willing to participate. Secondly, I contacted the chairpersons and professor advisors of International Student Associations at the university and asked them to forward my recruitment email to all the international student mothers in their communities. Thirdly, I got the email list of all the international women students from the international office and emailed them the brief description of my study with my letter to

prospective participants. After the prospective participants contacted me we set up our first interview meetings.

At Front Porch of the Research Field

Eleven international student mothers responded actively and volunteered to participate in my study so that I could begin collecting my data immediately. The first prospective participant and I met in the university library and then switched to a local Starbucks. During our chat before the actual interview, however, I unexpectedly learned that she did not really belong to the group I intended to study. She came not as a pioneer of the family but as a dependent of her husband and became a student mother later. Obviously, her stories were not what I planned to hear for the current study. However, the connection that we had built as student mothers in our few-minute chat already aroused my curiosity about her experiences although she did not meet the inclusion criteria of my study. Also for courtesy reason, it would be too rude if I let her go when she had rescheduled so many things just to make time for our interview.

After struggling shortly I told her the truth. I apologized for my carelessness in phrasing the email to the prospective participants and I expressed my regret that she did not belong to the group of my study. I asked her if she wanted to continue the interview although the data might not be used in my study later. She assured me that she wanted to have the interview and added unexpectedly that she knew very well the differences between “her” and “us” because she had friends like “us.” I was overwhelmed and greatly inspired by her response and understanding though the subsequent interview further convinced me that she did not belong to the group of my study. Based on this

experience, I immediately sent a second email to all the prospective participants to double check their backgrounds, which anchored the nine participants in my study.

Description of the Participants

As previously discussed, the participants in my study were international women graduate students with children in the United States. Thus the international graduate student mothers whose children lived in their home countries were not included in this project. All the participants came to the US as pioneers of their families rather than as dependents of their husbands or children. They all matriculated in the university with non-dependent student status.

At the end of data collection, my transcription and analysis soon revealed that eight out of nine participants came from Asian countries and there was no drastic difference in themes emerging between the non-Asian and the Asian women narratives. To make the study more focused and the findings more valid I thus present the data analysis of the Asian women participants as a group but exclude the non-Asian participant from this writing. Here is the summary of the demographic information of the focus group of eight participants in this research (see below Table 1).

As shown in Table 1, the participants came from three different Asian areas: East, West, and South. All the participants came to the US with F-1 or J-1 visas. An F-1 visa is a non-immigrant, full-time, student visa that allows foreigners to pursue education in the United States; accordingly, an F-2 visa is a nonimmigrant visa that allows dependent spouses and children of F-1 student visa holders to enter and stay in the US. In comparison, a J-1 visa is a non-immigrant visa issued by the United States to exchange visitors participating in programs that promote cultural exchange; accordingly, a J-2 visa

Table 1 *Demographic Information of the AGSMs*

Name	Dorothy	Soo Jin	Jan	Helen	Anjum	Cathy	Yan	Ping
Item								
Home country	East Asia	East Asia	East Asia	West Asia	South Asia	East Asia	East Asia	East Asia
Age	37	41	39	28	35	39	54	42
Visa type	F1	F1	F1	F1	J1	F1	F1	F1
Marital status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Divorced	Divorced	Married	Married
With husband	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Job at home	Chemist	/	English teacher	English teacher	Teacher	Teacher	English Professor	University faculty
Major at home	Chemistry	English	English	English	English	French	English	English
No. of kids	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
Arriving in US	2005	2002	2004	2007	2007	2002	2004	2006
Program in US	Chemistry	Criminology	English	English	English	Criminology	English	Education
Seeking degree	MS	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD	Ed. D
Future plan	Stay in US	Stay in US	Go home	Go home	Go home	Go home	Go home	Undecided

is a non-immigrant visa issued by the United States for spouses and dependents of J-1 exchange visitors.

The duration of the participants' stay in the US ranged from 2 to 7 years. Their ages ranged from 27 to 54 years old. Out of the eight participants, six were married and two were divorced; yet five had their husbands' accompaniment in the US and three did not. The graduate degrees that the participants sought were mostly consistent with their professions in their home countries, seven for doctoral degrees and one for master degree. All the participants were studying with their children in the US when I conducted this study. As shown in Table 2, there were 11 children involved in the study, with age ranging from infancy to university junior. Out of the 11 children, 3 were born in the US, 8 were born in their home countries, 6 of whom came with the participants and 2 joined in later.

International Graduate Student Mothers in the University

Although it is not a big group yet the population of the international graduate student mothers has stayed stable in the university. Based on an informal survey in 2005 there were about 10 international graduate student mothers with children on the campus. In the year 2009, the total number was 16, including 12 F-1 and 4 J-1 visa holders, nearly 1% out of about 200 regular international student total. Considering the international graduate student mother total, the sample of Asian graduate student mothers this study chose to use was big enough, with 8 out of 16. More importantly, each woman was seen as an individual based on the qualitative nature of the study. Thus, although the stories here were individual stories of the female participants yet the stories of AGSMs become a window into understanding the stories of women who have and come from similar backgrounds.

Table 2 *Demographic Information of the AGSMs' Children*

Items Children	Birth order	Sex	Place of birth	School grade	Time joining mothers	Relationship
Dorothy's	1	Male	Home	Kindergarten	½ year later	Son
	2	Female	US	Babysitting	Since birth	Daughter
Soo Jin's	1	Female	Home	5th grade	Coming together	Daughter
	2	Female	US	1 st grade	Since birth	Daughter
	3	Female	US	Kindergarten	Since birth	Daughter
Jan's	1	Female	Home	6 th grade	Coming together	Daughter
Helen's	1	Female	Home	Preschool	4 days later	Daughter
Anjum's	1	Female	Home	Kindergarten	Coming together	Daughter
Cathy's	1	Female	Home	7 th grade	Coming together	Daughter
Yan's	1	Male	Home	Uni. Junior	Coming together	Son
Ping's	1	Male	Home	8 th grade	Coming together	Son

Data Collection

Postmodern Interview

As an insider outsider researcher (Harding, 1987; Haroian-Gurin, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Van Maanen, 1988) I believed that a single research method was not sufficient for this study (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). I found myself “questioning traditional methods, tools of analysis, and reports of the data” (p. 163). Now that my personal experience as an AGSM with a dual position of “insider/outsider” (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000) was so closely related to the research topic and the participant group, I relied mostly on a range of postmodern

methodological approaches, including postmodern interview, personal journal writing, and autoethnography.

To start collecting data, I conducted an in-depth individual interview with each participant. After I contacted a participant and she agreed to participate in the research, I scheduled the initial interview with her soon afterwards. I left the choice to each participant to decide on the meeting place where she felt both comfortable and convenient. Based on the choices of the participants, 5 interviews took place in the university library, 2 in the participants' homes, and 1 in the participant's office.

For each interview, I prepared two copies of the Informed Consent Form and a Demographic Information Form (see Appendix A). To start, we both signed the consent forms. One copy was returned to me and the other was kept by the participant for her personal record. About the demographic information form, the participant could decide either to fill it in on site or hand it in later. Right before the interview started, I asked each participant's permission to use an IC digital recorder or MP3 to audiotape the interview and to take notes in the meantime. Either at the beginning or at the end of the meeting, I gave each participant a \$15 personal check as a courtesy reward. As a full-time graduate student, I could not pay as much as a paid professional researcher but paying the participants a just fee for their time and unreserved support, I firmly believe, will make it easier for me to go back later (Bernard, 2002). For some interview meetings, I also brought bottled water for both the participant and myself. Every initial interview lasted more than an hour, ranging from 70 to 115 minutes. After each interview I gave the participant a brief guideline to personal journal writing for the second stage of data collection. The total of initial interviews spanned over a year's period of time. Here is a summary of the initial interviews as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 *Initial Interviews with the Participants*

Items Names	Time	Place	Instruments	Documents	Additional Document
Dorothy	5/20/2008 (83 minutes)	University library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview protocol • IC digital recorder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Forms • Demography form • Journal guidelines 	3 sample entries from my journal
Yan	5/4/2009 (115 minutes)	University library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview protocol • MP3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Forms • Demography form • Journal guidelines 	/
Cathy	5/8/2009 (83minutes)	University library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview protocol • MP3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Forms • Demography form • Journal guidelines 	/
Anjum	5/8/2009 (103 minutes)	Her house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview protocol • MP3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Forms • Demography form • Journal guidelines 	/
Soo Jin	5/9/2009 (70 minutes)	Her house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview protocol • MP3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Forms • Demography form • Journal guidelines 	/
Helen	5/12/2009 (96 minutes)	Her house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview protocol • MP3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Forms • Demography form • Journal guidelines 	/
Ping	5/16/2009 (110 minutes)	Her office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview protocol • MP3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Forms • Demography form • Journal guidelines 	/
Jan	6/29/2009 (25 minutes)	University library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview protocol • MP3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Forms • Demography form • Journal guidelines 	/
	7/8/2009 (67 minutes)				

Considering that my role as a woman with the same experience would help to close the hierarchical gap between the participants and me (Douglas, 1985; Ellis & Berger, 2003) and alleviating their fear to share information and stories, I chose using postmodern interview (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003a, 2003b) to start data collection for this ethnographic research. Postmodern interview method made me able to conduct my research *on, for, and with* my participants (Cameron *et al.*, 1992) and kept the interviews dynamic rather than a question-and-answer investigation. It enabled me to value my participants as co-researchers and co-

constructors of knowledge rather than sole containers where I just elicited information for my research.

My Initial Interview Protocol (see Appendix B) was also designed in accordance with the postmodern interview approach. This approach aimed to improve qualitative data through promoting relationship, closeness, and trust between the participants and the researcher (Magolda, 2000; Toma, 2000), understanding richness and complexity of studying one's own kind (Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006; *Mehra, 2001*), and *dealing with* multiculturalism (Knight, 2000) of both the participants and the researcher. Since knowing the participants' stories is the key to knowing their identities (Crewe & Maruna, 2006; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003a; Silverman, 1993) I initiated the interview by sharing my AGSM stories from an insider/outsider stance. By doing so I quickly crossed the bridge to reach the participants and meanwhile prepared them for subsequent sharing rather smoothly. Here are the main topics covered in my initial interview protocol. For example, what is the happy time and breakdown moment in your AGSM experience? How do you balance your own schedule and the schedules of your child (and husband)? Why did you invite/take your child(ren) to the US and why then? Who helped you take care of your child(ren) in both the US and in your home country? Why and why not you invited your husband? How the housework is distributed between you and your husband and why that way? Who communicates about your child(ren)'s schooling and why? Do you feel guilty for not being able to fulfill your duty as a good mother, student, and wife, and why? What does pursuing a graduate degree in the US mean to you, your family, and others? What are your English language learning experiences in the US? How would you describe your current program? What does native English speaker (NES) mean to you? What is your advantage and disadvantage as an AGSM in the US in comparison with other international students? What is your future plan?

Participants' Journal Writing

Since the interview method as one time research yielded only one view of a complex phenomenon (Hansen & Liu, 1997) it was inadequate to my study. Thus I used personal journal writing as another method to collect data for more fruitful and valid information and to cross-check the interview data. Thus at the end of each initial interview I gave the participant a Guideline for Personal Journal Writing (see Appendix C), which outlined my interest in and brief introduction to the project (Norton, 2000) as well as a brief list of instructions. I expected the participant to keep a journal for two to three months recording and reflecting on her roles, activities and relationships and even personal feelings (Alaszewski, 2007) as an Asian graduate student mother in the US. In consistency with my poststructuralist argument and postmodern interview, I gave full agency to my female participants in their journal writing. As such, I left the participants to choose whether they wanted to write a diary in a notebook, type in a word document, or keep an online blog. In cases where some participants even had difficulties in managing to keep a journal for several months, I provided them with alternatives such as sending emails, having small talks, chatting online, making phone calls, or I could simply go to observe their activities at different times.

I encouraged the women to cross-link their past, present, and future in their journal entries by examining their language learning and using experiences (Burton & Carroll, 2001a) as well as their communicative breakdowns (Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995). In cases where a participant cared too much about her language or grammar I assured her that the focus of my study was not on her writing skill but on how her journal entries presented the change of her identities as an AGSM in the US. Referencing my full schedule as an Asian graduate student mother, I did not require the participant to make entries every day or set limits of length for each

entry although she was encouraged to write as much as she could and arrange her entries by date. Frequent entries were believed to strengthen a participant's opportunity to reflect on her own experiences and identities as an Asian graduate student mother and enrich the data that I was collecting.

I made slight adjustments of the research instrument in the process of journal data collection. When the first participant started keeping a journal in 2008 I provided her three selected entries from my personal journal that I had kept during my five years of study as an Asian graduate student mother in the US. However, to minimize the possibility that my writing might "color" the participants' journal writing, I stopped providing my "sample" entries to the rest of the participants. Instead, I shifted to verbally sharing my stories at the beginning so as to give the participants some idea about what stories they might want to tell in the entries. This adjustment not only prevented the participants from disclosing too much and regretting afterwards but also developed the intimacy and trust between the participants and me (Magolda, 2000; Toma, 2000).

I collected the journal data over a year and a half's period of time from May 2008 to November 2009. After a participant emailed me her journal entries I would ask for clarification immediately if I had any questions about certain points. The entries were not submitted as regularly as I expected to. Out of the eight participants four kept their journal for over four months, one for a month, one for half a month, one made one entry, and one made none. All the participants chose freely their favorite forms of journal entry. Five chose writing in word documents, one in a notebook, one in a weblog, and one by email, as shown below in Table 4. Here, each entry was defined by the date marked by the individual participants.

Researcher's Journal

To make journal writing interaction more dynamic between the participants and me, I kept a research journal myself (Norton, 2000) in the course of data collection. In sum, I came up with 30 research journal entries and over 250 email exchanges with the participants about my study. These personal narratives offered insights into my private world inaccessible to experimental methodologies (Pavlenko, 2007) by recording my reflections on the study and providing endnotes about the participants' narrative accounts and their interactions with me.

Table 4 *Overview of the Participants' Journal Writing*

Items Names	Duration	Dates	No. of Entries	Form	Title
Yan	5/12/09- 11/8/09 (6- months)	5/12/09, 5/13/09, 5/27/09 (2), 6/4/09, 6/18/09, 7/1/09 (2), 7/10/09, 7/18/09, 7/28/09, 8/14/09, 8/23/09, 8/28/09 (2), 8/30/09, 9/13/09, 9/27/09, 10/7/09, 10/8/09, 10/19/09, 10/29/09, 11/3/09, 11/8/09	24 entries	Weblogs	Yes
Dorothy	5/20/08- 6/20/08 (1 month)	5/20/08, 5/21/08, 5/22/08, 5/23/08, 5/24/08, 5/25/08, 5/26/08, 5/27/08, 5/28/08, 5/29/08, 5/30/-6/6/08, 6/7-6/13/08, 6/14- 6/20/08	13 entries	Word documents	No
Ping	6/5/09- 11/3/09 (5 months)	6/5/09, 7/6/09, 8/26/09, 8/27/09, 9/9/09-11/2/09 (7), 10/30/09 (2)	13 entries	Word documents	Yes
Anjum	5/9/09- 10/8/09 (5 months)	5/9/09, 5/10/09, 5/14/09, 5/21/09, 5/23/09, 6/21/09, 8/20/09, 8/25/09, 9/15/09, 9/21/09, 10/6/09, 10/8/09	12 entries	Paper notebook	No
Helen	5/27/09- 10/11/09 (4.5 months)	5/27/09, 6/10/09, 6/15/09, 7/4/09, 7/10/09, 7/15/09, 8/15/09, 8/22/09, 10/11/09	9 entries	Word documents	No
Cathy	6/26/09- 7/12/09 (0.5 months)	6/26/09, 7/12/09 (2)	3 entries	Word documents	Yes
Jan	10/15/09	10-15-09	1 entry	Word document	No
Soo Jin	/	/	0 entry	/	/

My personal texts were “multiple reflections” (Ronai, 1995) constructed in and through the stories of others in social, political, and cultural life (Jones, 2005). They were also “invitations to hear the unspoken” and “unheard voices of the singer and myself” (p. 776). Here is how I reflected on the initial interview with Anjum:

I felt I have another community to belong to now. That made my trouble look smaller. I felt myself a more useful person by listening to the stories of the two single parent female participants. On the other hand, I felt I more valued my own life. (Researcher’s Journal, 5/8/2009)

As a single graduate student mother for two years in the US I deeply understood how challenging it was to take care of everything in life by myself. After my husband came, however, I had no time to appreciate his joining in but turned my focus immediately to the new problems and differences between us. Anjum’s stories came as a reminder about what a better situation I was in hence made me more satisfied with my situation.

Through literal and literary communication with my participants, I was so powerfully impacted by their stories that demanded my response and reaction (Jones, 2005) so that my pre-existing thinking shifted. I was enraged about the racialized occurrences that happened to my participants. I was saddened about the irretrievable incidents that happened to the children of these student mothers. I was also apologetic when something new in their journal caught my eyes that I had missed in our interviews and was experientially convinced that “gender is not enough” when women interview women due to the background gaps between the participants and me (Riessman, 1987). It is true that we had a lot of gains and pains in common yet very often the participants’ experiences were not identical to mine. There was no way to assume their positions and experiences as individuals different from myself. Thus the writing in my journal did not

come out of nowhere but was my attempt to document the beating of my participants' hearts (Jones, 2005). My autoethnographic texts "do not stand, speak, or act alone; are not texts alone; and do not want to be left alone" (p. 783). Here is another example where my participants and I co-performed our researcher-researched interaction in our initial interview:

Ping and I got to her office. It is very small but neat. I remembered my working place when I was a TA. The place was almost the same but mine was a cubicle in a big office, consisting of 6 cubicles altogether, one cubicle for a senior TA or shared by two new TAs.

As usual, I gave her the check first and she asked me the same question as Yan, "Do you have a grant? If not I won't accept it." My nose sour, I said "I haven't yet but I will apply later." She said she had the same question in her dissertation research. She would have about ten people to interview. I assured her that my case was a bit different from hers in that this group was not just of subjects but of sisterhood. I AM one of them. I loved to do so not just for research purpose but for their sincere understanding and support. (Researcher's Journal, 5/16/2009)

As shown, my autoethnographical texts recorded many rich and touchy moments about our researcher-researched interactions. However, writing about autoethnography is not only a "witnessing experience" (Jones, 2005) of my participants but a balancing act for me to decide how much of myself, my "physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual ... selves," do I "put in and leave out" in my writing (p. 770). As such, my account is "partial, fragmented, and situated in the texts and contexts of my own learning, interpretations, and practices" (p. 776).

Debriefing Interview

As part of debriefing I conducted a final individual interview with each participant when my first draft of writing was almost finished. I succeeded in reaching seven of the eight participants except one who had returned to her home country. I sent the relevant parts of my dissertation to each of the seven participants for review and feedback to insure confidentiality and checking the accuracy of my presentation of their experiences. Six of them gave me prompt feedback and answered the interview questions in ways comfortable to them; one gave me feedback but ignored the questions. Interview times were again set jointly with each participant. Two interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, two through email, one over the phone, and one in the university library.

My final debriefing interviews were also consistent with the poststructuralist argument and postmodern methodology in this study, aiming to ensure the well being of the research participants (Heiman, 1998; McAlpine, Weston, & Beauchamp, 2002). During the debriefing interactions I selectively discussed the experiences of other participants under study without identifying them. To learn from the experience for future research, I used a prepared protocol to document how and why the two research methods of interview and personal journal writing had impacted the participants' thinking differently, as shown in Debriefing Interview Protocol (see Appendix D).

Data Analysis

It is known to researchers that data analysis started with data transcription. Transcription, like the other levels of representation, is also incomplete, partial, and selective (Riessman, 1993). Since "there is no standard way to transcribe oral narratives" (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 173) I conducted verbatim transcription of my collected data in order to catch the rich moments and

postmodern interactions between the participants and me as the researcher. This transcription convention may not be the only choice to interpret the collected data but it led more directly to my poststructuralist ideological position and was able to better present the identities of both the researcher and the researched in the study. In dealing with the data in my native language, I did word for word translation and checked carefully with the participants for accuracy.

The collected data was analyzed using the feminist critical discourse analysis, based on the five steps of data analysis defined by LeCompte (2000). I first tidied up my data “to make a preliminary assessment of the data set” (p. 148) by putting all field notes and interviews into different folders based on the type of data; labeling all files and documents according to their content; reviewing research questions in comparison with the collected data; identifying missing data and checking with the participants to collect additional information (p. 148). Next, I repeatedly read the transcripts several times. I sifted through them to look at emerging trends and identified items relevant to the research questions for frequency, omission, and declaration (p. 148). I also refined my research questions during this process. After that, I organized the initial items into over 70 groups and categories. Following that, I reassembled the groups of items “in ways that begin to resemble a coherent explanation or description of the program” under study (p. 150) by looking for similarities and analogies, co-occurrences, sequences, and “hypothesized reasonableness or patterns I thought should exist” (p. 151). In the meantime, I compared the interviews and journal data to triangulate and crystallize (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2000) the data collected from different sources and decided how much data to include in the presentation. When a theme was emphasized frequently and across data sets I confirmed that it constituted a pattern in the study. I came up with 21 themes eventually. Lastly, I built an overall description of the project through grouping 10 common identities across all the participants.

Writing as a Method of Inquiry

Richardson and St. Pierre (2000) discussed that writing is a method of inquiry and that a qualitative researcher (rather than the survey, questionnaire, or the census tape) is the “instrument” (p. 960). They argued that poststructuralism links “language, subjectivity, social organization, and power,” where “the centerpiece” is language (p. 961). Here is the more specific way the two researchers put it, “Language is not the result of one’s individuality; rather, language constructs one’s subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific. What something means to individuals is dependent on the discourses available to them. (p. 961) This postmodernist understanding of the role of language in relation to subjectivity, social organization, and power raised great challenge to traditional qualitative writing conventions through claiming “that writing is always partial, local, and situational and that our selves are always present no matter how hard we try to suppress them” (p. 962). Based on this premise, there is no such thing as “getting it right,” only “getting it differently” (p. 962).

Richardson and St. Pierre (2000) questioned the traditional stage of triangulation and suggested crystallization instead. They argued that the notion of triangulation carried “the same domain assumption” that “there is a ‘fixed point’ or an ‘object’ that can be triangulated” (p. 963) while the notion of crystallization “deconstructs traditional idea of ‘validity’” on the basis of postmodern understanding of truths and decentering validation of literary texts. Thus writing for the two researchers is thinking, analysis, and a “seductive and tangled method of discovery” (p. 967). Richardson and St. Pierre’s (2000) elaboration of writing as a method of inquiry gave much insight to the interpretation and presentation of the women’s narrative accounts in this study. Thus while addressing the variety of inquiry methods for triangulation it also acknowledged the ethnographic project as “humanly situated, always filtered through human

eyes and human perceptions, and bearing both the limitations and the strengths of human feelings” (p. 964),

This chapter presented the postmodern interview and personal journal writing methods and procedures involved in the current study. I described my research site, sample of participants, and the population of Asian graduate student mothers at the study university. To address the narrative nature of my research data, I intentionally included part of the recruitment process in the presentation. The “front porch” of the research field and the adjustment of my research instrument in the process of data collection showed the gap between theoretical framework and actual field practice. In consistency with my poststructuralist argument, I particularly explicated the co-construction of the interview dialogue as well as the dynamic interaction of journal writing in my data collecting process. In the following chapter I demonstrate my thematic data analysis and decipher the social positioning and language use of the participants from their individual narrative accounts.

CHAPTER 5

AGSM GROUP TRENDS OF IDENTITIES

There was a wide range of identities emergent from the data analysis of the Asian graduate student mothers under study. Due to the differences between the individual participants, some women have more communicative identities to share with me what they have and some have less pronounced identities, but each woman possesses, embraces, or assigns to these complexities of identities. Now that individual identities are not what I aim for, this chapter will turn to differentiating some of the most common identity categories among the female participants.

The categorization of the women's identities is in alignment with my poststructuralist argument and postmodern methodology. Poststructuralism has taught us that individual experiences are always socially and contextually constructed. Identity is a discursive construct which is socially, culturally, politically, and economically situated. Since identity is dynamic, multiple-dimensional, and ever-changing across time and contexts (Giampapa, 2004; Hanauer, 2008; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Kubota, 2004; Lazar, 2005; Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006), the AGSM group trends of identities presented here represent my attempt to capture the fluidity of identity development of different student mothers at different times in the study. The categorization is an attempt to explicate what characterizes the experiences of being an Asian graduate student mother in the US, as having been stated in my research questions. It is intended to capture the essence of the core identity categories as well as the identity stories of the individual participants (Jones & McEwen, 2000). It is intended to

thematize and unpack each and single aspect of identity across the participants, who are diverse in race, culture, age, religious affiliation, academic majors, and seeking degrees.

The categorization of the women's identities is necessary because it provides an integrative presentation that tells the central story of the whole AGSM group under study. It presents how the same identity can be understood and experienced differently, to greater or lesser degrees, on different women of the student mother group. It suggests the importance of understanding the common needs and experiences among the female participants and reflects an acknowledgement that "different dimensions of identity will be more or less important for each individual given a range of contextual influences" (p. 170).

According to Domosh (2003), to interpret the women's words is "at the same time to interpret the social categories" (p. 108) through which the women have created their identities. The AGSMs' identities are very intersecting and multiple across gender, culture, and class. Thus my intent to categorize the AGSM group identities is not to overgeneralize the women's identities as practiced in the positivist methodology; rather, I am attempting to situate how the different identities are played out internally within each woman and how they are played out interpersonally in different contexts. In relation to identity salience, the comparison of individual AGSM identities gave important methodological insights into the study of hidden narratives – the experiences that the women implicitly articulated, omitted (Ogulnick 1999; Pavlenko 2007), and excluded (Bell, 2002; Ogulnick 1999; Pavlenko 2007; Simon-Maeda 2004a) in their narrative accounts. These hidden narratives were as important as the explicit ones in that they revealed some of the hidden construction and thinking of human beings (Schaafsma, 2008).

As such, in the following part I presented 10 identity categories emergent across all the participant experiences, respectively: professional identities, professional and mother identities,

reversed gender role identities, good mother identities, traditional female identities, professional and domestic identities, ethnic and mother identities, religious identities, cultural/ethnic identities, and professional and national identities. In the following part, I will present the group result of the 10 identities in a more quantitative way so as to show comparatively how they were played out in the narratives of the eight AGSMs in the study. I will first define each identity category to show what the identity means to the participants. Secondly, I will cite the related quotes from the participants and explicate them concisely. Finally I will graph the ten identities and highlight different salience across the study group.

The data showed that an AGSM's identity was a discursive construct which was socially, culturally, economically, and politically situated. It was multiple, flexible, and changing across time and contexts (Giampapa, 2004; Kubota, 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006). Data revealed that some identities appeared more unique and others more common but no identities were actually separable from the others in the study. All the categories of identities were intertwined with the women's complex backgrounds of studenthood, motherhood, race, class, gender, and culture.

The first finding is the commonality of professional identities across all the Asian female participants under study. Despite their strong and privileged social and linguistic backgrounds, the long-cherished dreams of most female professionals to seek graduate degrees in the United States, one of the most advanced and "standard" English speaking countries, revealed the pervasive notion of "native speaker" (Canagarajah, 1999; Lin et al., 2002; Phillipson, 1992) among most Asian EFL/ESL countries. Thus they all strived to excel in their academic work and longed to become more competitive in and better contribute to their future careers, hence the formation of their most salient identities, "professional identities," as a result of their social

interaction and language use (Heller, 2003; Norton, 2000; Ochs, 1993; Peirce, 1995; Simon-Maeda, 2004a) in their graduate study.

The second finding, which conformed to the conception of competitive identities (Reitzes & Mutran, 1995; Stryker, 2000; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Wiley, 1991), can be generally restated as follows. With dual roles of and dual aims at being both “good students” and “good mothers,” most women presented their “professional and mother identities” by having to negotiate their dual identities so as to survive the numerous reconcilable and irreconcilable situations (Evans & Grant, 2008). With their children studying with them in the US, on the one hand, most female professionals attempted to be “good mothers” by prioritizing their children’s welfare and education. Despite resistance from their children and restriction of limited resources on the alien land, most of the female professionals considered their native language and culture an important part of their cultural identity (Schechter & Bayley, 1997) thus they managed to provide a favorable learning environment for their children to maintain their native languages and core native cultures. On the other hand, the women had to make sufficient investment to their academic development in their graduate study. As one of the main identity categories that involved most negotiations of the women under study, their “professional and mother identities” were co-constructed by their children whom they could not and would not ignore in their everyday interactions (Ochs, 1993; Simon-Maeda, 2004a) in the English-speaking country.

The third finding of the study was the AGSMs’ “traditional female identities.” Most women came from traditional cultural backgrounds where gendered discrepancies were visible (Gordon, 1990; Norton, 2000) and females were supposed to adhere to a “good wife, wise mother” norm even at the expense of their careers (Simon-Maeda, 2004a). Projected on the women in this study, most female professionals were often haunted by their submissive roles and

domestic duties consistent with the gender norms in their home cultures although they were all full-time international graduate students. As such, the women often struggled to take care of their domestic jobs and fulfill their family responsibilities as both mothers and wives. When they failed in juggling their work-over-family choice often made them depressed and guilty (Cook, 2002; Elrena & Grant, 2008; Tucker, 2004; Williams, 2002), feeling that they did not spend enough time with their families and do not do a perfect job.

The fourth finding of the study was also a range of conflicting identities (Reitzes & Mutran, 1995; Stryker, 2000; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Wiley, 1991), namely, “reversed gender role identities,” which revealed the contradictory interconnection between gender and culture confronted by the female professionals and their husbands in the US. Although coming from traditional Asian cultures where women were mostly subjective to their husbands the participants came to America by way of education with strong linguistic proficiency but their husbands did not, as shown in Table 5 below.

The new English-speaking context not only freed the women from their previous oppression but elevated them to the positions “superior” to their husbands’ in the English-speaking country. In contrast, the insuperable language barriers confronted by their husbands resulted in that they had no “passports” into the dominant culture (Pao, Wong, & Teuben-Rowe, 1997) thus the women were driven to take the lead in their families. The “reversed gender role identities” were presented as a result of the power shift between the couples who had to switch to the opposite roles they had rarely played in their home cultures. By becoming heads of the houses most of the women under study switched to provide financial support and make critical decisions for their families while their husbands were left to oversee the childrearing and house chores. The AGSMs’ redefinition of their gender identities after coming to the US demonstrated

Table 5 *Demographic Information of the AGSMs' Husbands*

Name	Dorothy's	Soo Jin's	Jan's	Helen's	Yan's	Ping's	Anjum's	Cathy's
Item								
Presence in US	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA	NA
Age	35	41	46	31	54	43	NA	NA
Visa type	F2	B1	F2	F2	F2	F1	NA	NA
Yrs learning Eng	12 yrs	Junior high +	6 yrs	Since 5 th grade	2 or 3 yrs	30 yrs	NA	NA
Major at home	Navigation	Public administration	Government administration	NA	Chinese	International trade	NA	NA
Job at home	Management	Government employee	Self-employed business	NA	Administration	Businessman	NA	NA
Time joining AGSMs	For 2 yrs	NA	Coming together	4 days later	Dec 2004	Nov 2006	NA	NA
Visiting places in US & duration	San Jose, CA, 8 mons	NA	New York, 4 yrs	PA	None	CA, 1 month	NA	NA
Visiting countries & duration	None	None	None	Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia, 2-4 wks	None	None	NA	NA

the interplay between gender identity shifts and second language socialization (Gordon, 2004). Through “expanded leadership roles” the women developed their new gender ideals in the US, which contrasted sharply with the gender ideal that they acquired through socialization in their traditional, gender-specific cultures (Suh, 2007).

Different from previous discussions of gendered practices of language learning (Menard-Warwick, 2005), this study revealed that the female graduate students had more opportunities of literacy development and social interaction in comparison with their husbands, whose practice of English language was limited by ethnocentric social practices in their new country and short of supportive interaction and the basic level of communicative competence in English (Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995). This counter-gendered practice of language learning was due to the difference of English competency between the study participants and their husbands, which was related closely to the social, cultural, political, economic, and linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986) they possessed differently in the US and in their home countries. The AGSMs’ non-place (Hanauer, 2008), in-between, and hybrid gendered identities that occupied “both maleness and femaleness” (Iyall Smith, 2008) called in question the traditional dichotomous definition of gender and indicated that gendered identities were not “expressed in the same ways in all societies” (p. 7) but constructed contextually and discursively.

The fifth finding was that racial identities were the most important parameter which determined whether or not the participants felt respected and valued in the foreign social context. “Racial identities” is used here rather as a neutral term attempting to incorporate both the negative and positive connotations of race, culture, and ethnicity of the women under study. Presented in relation to race, ethnicity, and native culture, this identity reflected the female participants’ attempt to be accepted in the host culture. Categorized to the group of Other based

on their physical features (Kubota & Lin, 2006) and dresses, some participants underwent partial racial treatment from both local people and governmental institutions. This finding echoed what Motha (2006) rightly pointed out that identities of ESL users cannot be investigated “without an eye toward race.” In the meantime, it was significant to note that ethnicity was not perceived merely through negative experiences by the AGSMs in this study. Their positive ethnic experiences lived in the classroom and on the campus as a whole worked as affirmation that their ethnicity and native culture were valuable, fascinating, and respectable. This finding may provide us some pedagogical hint to the issue of race in TESOL field.

The sixth finding particular to the study group was their religious identities. It was not explicitly discussed by each individual participant but faith was inextricably intertwined with the women’s professional work and mother work on the alien land, which was particularly true with the single AGSMs in the group. Different from the evangelical Christians depicted in Varghese and Johnston (2007), the women under study came to the US for academic reasons. Thus their religious identities were presented mainly in their regular worship of God, volunteer commitment to the church, and preaching lessons to their children and ethnic community. Here a significant question open to dialogue is why going to church was the only social life for some AGSMs outside their academic circles in the United States?

The last and least presented identity was the women’s “professional and national identities” pertaining to their future plans to return home and contribute their knowledge to their countries. Only two out of the eight participants claimed these identities in the study. Although both participants were nonimmigrant Asians yet this finding conformed to Pavlenko’s (2007) examination of the Asian immigrants’ narratives in the early 20th century that they did not consider US culture their own. Instead, the two women loyally positioned themselves in terms of

their home country national identity while being physically in the host country. Most notably, both women were the only and same participants with racial experiences in their graduate study. This explicit or implicit connection between the women's negative racial experiences and their settlement choices begged further research in TESOL, sociolinguistics, and women study.

Clearly, each participant had to play all the above-mentioned identities as an Asian graduate student mother in the United States. The AGSM stories varied from one another and revealed different layers of the identities that each individual participant performed in their everyday life thus we could not generalize their situations. Meanwhile, however, most women underwent identical experience procedures of identical themes in their lives as AGSMs, which revealed some trend of identities of the particular group under study. In the following section, I define each of the 10 identities, explicate the definitions with related quotes from the participants, and finally chart the frequencies of identities in relation to the individual participants in the group.

Professional Identities

Professional identities were the identities presented in the female participants' narrative accounts showing that with strong ESL competence and long-cherished dreams, the women came to the US to study to both get their graduate degrees and improve their field knowledge in the advanced English-speaking country, specifically, to (1) become more competitive in their careers, among their peers, and in job markets; and (2) contribute more to the local and national teaching and research.

Most AGSMs came to the US to study under the umbrella of fulfilling their long-cherished ambitions of improving their English knowledge and field expertise. After getting married Helen made the first decision with her husband to postpone having children till they

heard from the university about her scholarship. The waiting turned out to be two and a half years. In comparison, Soo Jin spent more time persuading her husband about her study in the US. The participants' ambitions of seeking degrees in the US were directly related to the high status of English as a global business in many Asian countries (Wang, L.-B., 2004). According to Anjum, teachers of English are considered a kind of elitists due to the high status of English so that it has transcended class differences in Pakistan. The degrees earned in the US could get the participants better and stable jobs, as in the case of Cathy. For Soo Jin, earning a PhD degree in the US was a strategy to survive the challenge in the academic field of her home country, which was dominated by the scholars who got degrees in the United States. Similarly, when Yan came for her PhD degree there was probably only one faculty member with PhD degree in all the universities or even in her whole province, which stimulated Yan to think that returning home with an American degree would make her very much welcomed by all the universities. In relation to that, Yan wanted to use her new knowledge to contribute to the whole field of English teaching in China. However, there were a couple of cases where the participants' seeking degrees were not available in their own countries, such as Anjum and Cathy.

As discussed elsewhere, most AGSMs had successful and comfortable lives in their home countries. Jan, for instance, taught English in Korea for many years that English teaching was already a piece of cake for her. Dorothy's working environment was even more comfortable. In the lab where she worked there were no more than 5 people. As such, when there was nothing for them to do they would just have a chat. Despite the shining backgrounds in their home countries, most AGSMs determined to come to the US to study without expectation of the linguistic, cultural, and communicative struggles they would undergo in their study lives. The first problem they encountered was the different educational system in the US. To keep the flow of stories I

would exemplify some participants' narrative accounts in the form of passages, as shown in Helen's story here:

You know the first time when I was in the class, it was like hum, we had, you know, this circle and we were discussing different things. And, it was just discussion between the students and the professor kept silent all the lecture. And I was like, well, ok, I'm waiting for him to say something (smile) ... It's like, I'm waiting for the authority because we, in my home country, we depend more on the teacher. (Interview, 5/12/2009)

In Cathy's case, language barrier was a big problem that made her nervous in the class, "I'm always nervous ... Because in our department classroom, we have so many discussion ... But I can't get in (smile) ... because they're so fast ... So many times I'm frustrated ... because my English cannot catch up with my mind." (Interview, 5/8/2009) For a different reason, Soo Jin felt bad in the same way. Due to the emphasis on rote memory in Asian education, Soo Jin sometimes participated in class discussion with what she memorized from reading sources. The "awkward sentence" she used made her classmates "frown their faces much" and made herself frustrated hence her decision "I usually, um, didn't talk in the classroom." (Interview, 5/9/2009) Being a quiet student in Korea and a little introverted in personality Jan was even quieter in her classroom when she spoke English. The participants' decisions to stay silent rather than continue to assert their opinions in class represented "a marginal non-participatory practice" which resulted in their decreased involvement and being "silent" in the class (Norton, 2001; Park, 2006). Unfortunately, Anjum's decision to speak up did not help her to fit in the class either, as shown in the following excerpt:

When I came to America, I had this kind of hum, idea that in America, you can talk freely and you can express your ideas in the class freely ... And I have recently learned that this puts off people ... last semester I started to hear this kind of comments from even American friends that I'm disagreeable. And one of my Pakistanian class fellows even told me that 'When you talked you threatened me.' So I was really shocked at hearing that, that I threatened people by talking! ... And I was really depressed. (Interview, 5/8/2009)

The preceding contexts demonstrated that the ESL female participants were often forced to choose "between negatively sanctioned *outspokenness* and silence," the linguistic habitus of the working class where they could not manifest the ease given by self-assurance (Bourdieu, 1977).

However, privileged with strong foreign language learning and teaching expertise, all the participants endeavored to stand out in their academic performance. To do a good job in her doctoral dissertation Ping spent a long time designing her theoretical framework and eventually got very positive and inspirational feedback from her advisor, "I know how frustrated you are, ever since you started writing Chapter One. I also know how much time you have spent, thinking about the theoretical framework ... This part is really, really well-written." (Interview, 5/16/2009)

Dorothy also had an inspiring story not long after she came to the master program of the Chemistry Department, as she described in the following excerpt. ("P" stands for the participant and "I" for the interviewer throughout the dissertation.)

P: ... I had a course. The professor unexpectedly asked me, he said, "What is the meaning of 'significant figure'?" And you know I know how to describe it in Chinese, like "When you measure something, it should be accurate to centimeter, to the .01." But I don't know how to say that in English (giggle).

I: (smile)

P: And then my professor said, said, “This, this you think about after class. And I will ask you again.” ...

P: And after a while, I forgot about this. Since I made some efforts to remember the description at that time so after a couple months I still memorized it clearly ... And the professor asked me to go to the front to answer.

I: So you all go to the front to answer questions.

P: No. But he asked me, he asked me ... And the other students remained in their seats. And after I answered the question, all of them began to applaud (chuckle).

(Interview, 5/20/2008)

Helen took great pride in her Old English Language course because in that course she unexpectedly discovered that she could do as good a job and even a better job than her American peers, as she recalled here:

Sometimes we feel that we can't compete with them ... because of the language.

But I felt good you know, for that course. And when I heard you know, some compliments from my colleague later on, about translation for example, from Old English to Modern English or vice versa ... I, I heard a lot of compliments that, “Well, I took,” like an American friend may say, “It took me like seven hours to translate this poem.” And I said, “Well, it took me two or three hours.” ... He said, “Wow!” (Smile) ... Maybe I'm good at learning a new language because I already learnt ... a second language. (Interview, 5/12/2009)

Competing with American peers in the US class was both struggling and benefiting experiences for Helen. Experiencing marginalization in the above-mentioned contexts might have occurred as

a result of their native language being other than English (Amin, 2001; Braine, 1999; Park, 2006; Simon-Maeda, 2004a; Tang, 1997).

Six out of the eight participants were teachers of English in their home countries. The high status of English in the world, particularly in periphery countries such as China, Korea, and Pakistan earned the women comfortable and prestigious social positions in their home countries. However, to make life better and professional development they gave up what they used to possess and decided to come to the US to seek their degrees. Due to their long-cherished dreams and the gap between textbook knowledge and authentic experiences, few participants had foreseen the challenges they would confront in their future study. Different educational systems and language barriers marginalized them and often left them struggling about participation in the US class so that they felt mad, stressed, and frustrated – not who they used to be in their home countries. However, they managed to stand out in their academic performance with the capital they possessed yet waiting to uncover.

Professional and Mother Identities

Professional and mother identities were the identities that the Asian female participants presented in their negotiation of roles as both good mothers and good students in both reconcilable and irreconcilable situations with limited time and resources.

Professional and mother identities were one of the identities that involved most negotiations for the women under study. With dual roles yet restricted time schedules, most female professionals felt it hard to accept their roles at the beginning. Apparently, it was harder for the single student mothers. Cathy had a hard time handling her situation when she first came to the US and she cried so many times because she could not manage her life of being both a student and a mother – studying and raising kids were both so important for her and both took

time. Helen had her husband's help but she had a different problem of adjusting her studying habit:

I should get used to study when she [my daughter] was around ... I should get used when there was some noise, you know, from the toys, from TV, from computer ... whatever. But when I was, you know, studying for my Master's, I remember that I, I, had my own room ... It was quiet ... So, yeah. It was like I started changing my studying habits because of ... my baby, and my new role (smile). (Interview, 5/12/2009)

After resistance, struggle, and balancing, most female participants had to learn to face the realities and manage their time effectively, mostly with their child's welfare before their own.

Here is Cathy's typical daily schedule:

8:00 AM Come to the library when daughter goes to school

3:00 PM Go home when child's school is over

5:00 PM Take daughter back to the library after dinner

8:00 - 9:00 PM Leave the library and go home

9:00 – 11:00 PM Do housework after child goes to bed (Interview, 5/8/2009).

Comparing Anjum and Soo Jin's schedules with that of Cathy's we were shocked to find that they were so similar despite their cultural, geographical, and program differences except that Anjum had to leave her daughter to the babysitter when she had evening classes and Soo Jin had to transfer her daughter from the babysitting center to the computer lab or library. Although most student mothers tried their best to shuttle between their academic and mother roles, they still encountered irreconcilable and frustrating situations, particularly the children got sick when the mothers had classes or more arduous tasks, as in the cases of Soo Jin and Cathy.

Unaware of the difference between the American and their home social systems, most student mothers had a difficult time adjusting to the new system, particularly in babysitting and guardianship. Ping's son came at 11 and it never occurred to her that the boy should need a caregiver because "In China there was never such a situation. In the evening, you left him home alone." (Interview, 5/16/2009) However, she soon learned that it was illegal in the host country. Therefore, when Ping had evening classes and had to leave the boy alone she would tell him, "Don't turn on the big light. You play with mom's computer ... If you are scared, you turn on the messenger, the Skype." And she would contact her husband and tell him to "Go online for these two hours" (Interview, 5/16/2009). Thus Ping's husband had been helping to take care of the boy across oceans for three months.

Leaving children home alone was a common practice in Korea too, according to Cathy. For this reason Cathy also left her daughter home alone when she had evening classes and kept warning the girl "Don't open the door to anybody ... Keep quiet ... Watch TV." (Interview, 5/8/2009) Even so, Cathy's act was soon discovered and she got a call from her daughter's homeroom teacher, who gave her a strong warning "If you do it ... one more time, I call the police ... please ah, put her in the child care." (Interview, 5/8/2009) Cathy had no other choice but find a babysitter with her small savings.

While leaving children under 13 years of age home alone was illegal and paying for babysitting was beyond their financial ability, most participants had to take their children to classes sometimes. Cathy had to do so on the first day when she arrived in town, "my daughter at that time, she felt some kind of fear because it's a new town, new place ... So she doesn't want to stay home alone ... I have no choice but bring her to the classroom." (Interview, 5/8/2009) Anjum did the same thing at first because her daughter was too young and not ready to stay with

any stranger, “She wanted to cling to me. And my classes were usually, out of three, two were in the evening ... So I took her to the classes with me. A couple of times.” (Interview, 5/8/2009)

Soo Jin even had to take her sick daughter to her course counseling meeting with her professor.

Most professors, both male and female, showed great understanding to the AGSMs’ situations and did not mind the women taking their children to the classes; their fellow students were mostly nice to the children too, which was great comfort to the self-conscious and other-conscious AGSMs, as Anjum recollected in her initial interview:

I was, you know, kind of feeling I have my daughter with me and, how might the other people be feeling about it. I wouldn’t focus on what is going on ... A couple of our class fellows, American, they hum, they would try to make me feel better by talking about ‘Oh, how cute she is’ or ‘Look, how beautiful she is’ when she sleeps in class (chuckle) ... Those kind of things there help you feel better that they don’t feel anything negative about her being there. (Interview, 5/8/2009)

When I was a single parent for the first semester I even took my son to the TESOL conference with my fellow students. When they presented in their sessions my son stayed with me and read his books. When it was my turn of presentation my friends would take care of my son for me. Both my professors and classmates were so kind that the team leading professor even included my son in the collective picture we took.

Despite the previous friendly scenarios, it did happen sometimes that people had no tolerance about the AGSM situations by being too bureaucratic. I had a hurtful experience one summer when I was taking a course as a single mother. Having got the permission from my professor I took my son to the class where we were about to watch a movie produced in China and shown to the public a decade ago. A couple of minutes before the movie started, however, a

Caucasian male student came and said to me very “professionally” that this movie was not appropriate for children under 13 and asked me to take my son somewhere else. In the next 2 minutes I hurriedly took my son out of the classroom, set him in the library randomly, and came back to the class embarrassingly.

Unfortunately, I was not alone in sharing the experience of that kind. When Soo Jin was studying in a former university, she often went to the graduate research lab where she could find some material to take home to read. Since the caring center was closed after school Soo Jin had to take her daughter to the lab with her, where the girl would play on the computer quietly next to her. After Soo Jin did this several times, however, the lab put out a notice “No children.” While being speechless, Soo Jin had to leave her daughter outside waiting for her, which brought her another trouble:

P: (Smile) No children admitted.

I: Ok.

P: Oh, my God (chuckle) so!

I: Ok.

P: So, one day I just leave her outside waiting for me, then I’m working, one guard approached to me, “You shouldn't do that.” (Chuckle) “You should watch your children all the time.” “Oh, ok (chuckle).” (Interview, 5/9/2009)

The dilemma between the American system and the irreconcilable situations compelled the AGSMs to stand up to fight for their rights and benefits so that they could fulfill their various duties. When she first came to the metropolitan city Soo Jin had no access to either the public or university children’s center. Her only choice was private babysitting. When she tried the children’s center on the campus Soo Jin was told that it was only for the undergraduate student

mothers. After being told so Soo Jin contacted the program director and finally got her children admitted for two semesters.

Unstable situations and negotiations between academic and mother lives often filled AGSMs with guilt. Moving from place to place was one of the main problems. As reflected in her initial interview, Cathy felt bad about moving many times with her daughter before she settled down in the current university for her PhD degree:

P: That means that my daughter, she has to change her elementary school six times.

I: Oh, my goodness.

P: Yeah. So, finally at the seventh school, seventh elementary school, finally she graduate. And then recently we decide that I will go back to Korea because my mom was sick.

I: Oh.

P: So my daughter said that “You ruined my childhood.” (smile)

I: (laugh) Wow, yeah.

...

P: First, I feel guilty. Second, I have no choice. (Interview, 5/8/2009)

Anjum tended to start “feeling guilty very quickly” when “something goes wrong.” She would keep blaming herself, feeling that “I’m not giving enough time to my studies as well. I’m not giving enough time to my daughter. And I’m not managing things well,” and finally go into depression (Interview, 5/8/2009).

Despite the difficulties they faced, most female professionals attempted to set good examples for their children in their academic lives. For instance, Cathy thought that coming to

the library everyday helped her daughter not only “study a lot” but also “shape her study habit” (Interview, 5/8/2009). Jan felt the same way. She believed that part of the reason that her daughter loved reading was that “she always sees me study something” (Interview, 7/8/2009).

Most participants prioritized their children’s welfares when they made decisions or future plans. Soo Jin decided to stay in the US because first, her children loved to stay in America and second, the competition was very high in Korea. Dorothy made the same balance of the situation for her children when she applied for her doctoral degree, “I mean if I didn't think about my family at all, I would really choose that university ... But considering that the city is so big that it is not necessarily a good thing for the children.” (Interview, 5/20/2008)

Both studying and mothering were important to the Asian graduate student mothers in the study. What made the juggling so difficult was the disproportion between their limited resources and unlimited role and problems. As Helen said, “It’s not only to have a kid, it’s what’s after” (Interview, 5/12/2009). According to Cathy, any individual Asian graduate student mother could be the combination of at least a full-time student, a full-time mother, a part-time worker, and a newcomer in an alien land (Interview, 5/8/2009).

Reversed Gender Role Identities

Reversed gender role identities are the identities presented by the AGSMs when they changed their traditional gender roles that they used to play in their home countries so that the women became heads of the houses to provide financial support, make critical decisions, and set disciplines in their families. In contrast, if their husbands were here, they took care of childrearing and house chores.

Yan’s son went to university two years after they got to America. Although the boy excelled in high school he failed a course at the university because of inadequate professor

counseling. To keep the boy from feeling embarrassed, however, Yan had to hide these “unsatisfactory things” from her husband because he did not understand the educational system nor could he play a part in the process:

He did not WANT his dad to know ... So I had to help to keep the secret ... My main concern is the child’s self-esteem. So I didn’t tell him at the very moment. Later I didn’t tell him explicitly either, as I am telling you now. (Interview, 5/4/2009)

Ping could not rely much on her husband either, “I just feel that a father’s function ... but in my family there isn’t this part. So I feel very tired (smack lips) ... He even can’t check his homework.” (Interview, 5/16/2009) When Ping was away on business trip her son would save a whole pile of assignments, the additional work that Ping assigned him to do, for her to come back to check.

After staying in America for a while some participants’ husbands wanted to enroll in the graduate programs of the same university. In this case most women became volunteers working as mediators and academic advisors of their husbands, a role seldom presented in the traditional wife-husband pattern but usually presented in the parent-children relationship. After Ping’s husband started his master’s study Ping gave him a lot of help as a competent EFL/ESL professional in helping him with a research topic, reviewing related literature, and counseling in his interview research. The “hospitality” of the participants, however, sometimes made their husbands uncomfortable for various reasons. Dorothy’s husband had been taking care of the children for two years before he finally started preparing to take the TOEFL test. Dorothy was both happy and relieved thus passionately offered all her help and advice to her husband. To her surprise, her husband felt greatly hurt and eventually told her that “Actually, some of your

methods don't fit, fit in me at all.” (Interview, 5/20/2008) The reversal of gender role identities was also presented in the new distribution of housework and social communication between the female professionals and their husbands, as Ping described here:

P: Make phone calls ... Like Comcast, our contract will expire in June.

I: En.

P: What shall we do? He brought all the phone numbers and said to me, “Make the phone calls.”

I: En.

P: I will make the phone calls. When to make this call and when to make that call – it is all my job. If you ask him to call, it must be in Chinese. (Interview, 5/16/2009)

For some participants the distribution of work was not rigid but depended on who and what the priority was at the moment. Jan was so busy studying on week days and her husband would take care of most of the work at home. Therefore, Jan would set aside weekends specially for her family and cook and do some house chores.

Although different negotiations were involved in the redistribution of work between the participants and their husbands most women voluntarily worked as the social contacts of their families. The main reason, as mentioned by Ping, was the language barrier that her husband faced in the new environment, “English service he can't understand. So I didn't say anything. Ok. I took them ... There is no choice ... In China I haven't paid any bills ... Here, it is all done by me.” (Interview, 5/16/2009) Helen faced similar situations at first thus took care of everything in and out of her house as well. (Interview, 5/12/2009)

Most female participants became breadwinners of their families in the US. As early as she applied for doctoral study abroad, Ping had set two criteria: “First, I must be offered money before I can go. It doesn’t matter which country. Second, I must take my kid with me.” (Interview, 5/16/2009) To survive her graduate study in America as a single mother with a little daughter, Cathy had to take on various jobs, some legal and some “illegal” due to her visa status. Cathy’s first job was working in a shopping mall when she studied in her master program, where the owner was a Korean woman. Graduate scholarship did help Cathy a little bit but after the coursework was done the scholarship was not available any more. Later on, she had to work in the campus dining hall to earn meager salaries to cover part of her tuition. However, Cathy could not achieve economic stability even after many hours of hard work (Chae, 2008).

A typical feature common to most women in this study, including myself as presented at the beginning of this project, was that we were and were made overconfident about ourselves. Single mothers, in particular, had even stronger willpower as presented in Anjum’s comments, “I, actually overestimated myself that I have all the talents ... I can handle that.”(Interview, 5/8/2009) Ping did not invite her husband until the end of the first semester because based on her extensive communication with Americans in her home country, she was strongly confident that she could do a good job as an AGSM in the US, “I had had a lot of experiences about oversea life, for I had studied abroad ... I had had some communication with foreigners ... that had never stopped. Every year ... I spent considerable time working with them” (Interview, 5/16/2009)

While most of the female professionals identified themselves as tough, confident, and strong-willed troubleshooters their husbands were depicted as more emotional, isolated, and withdrawn in the host country. Back to the scenario of TOEFL preparation, Dorothy described the emotional change of her husband rather cautiously, which Dorothy never saw in China:

... if he hasn't, hasn't yet (clear throat), hasn't yet, I mean, got the offer ... and he, hum, sometimes feels he hasn't yet passed with a good grade ... so sometimes he must feel vexed, you know ... He would say to me, he would say "so and so." He also said he felt that, (long pause) hum, anyway, just presented the sort of, the sort of, sen-si-tive/sentimental mindset and the helpless mindset to me. (Interview, 5/20/2008)

The preceding excerpts from the participants revealed the AGSMs' new relationships with their husbands and their new roles and reconceptualization of their families in America. The inequality of language potentials between the women and their husbands resulted in the shift of power in their families so that most participants were overconfident that they had both the power and the talents to handle their situations. The women developed their new gender ideals in the US, which contrasted sharply with the gender ideal that they acquired through socialization in their traditional, gender-specific cultures (Suh, 2007). On the other hand, the husbands would not let go of their dominant positions and their longstanding middle class identities they had brought from their home countries. As a result, both had to adapt to their new roles and come to terms with reality. The AGSMs' non-place (Hanauer, 2008), in-between, and hybrid gendered identities that occupied "both maleness and femaleness" (Iyall Smith, 2008) demonstrated that gendered identities were constructed contextually and discursively.

Good Mother Identities

Good mother identities were the identities presented when the Asian graduate student mothers fulfilled their responsibilities as mothers by prioritizing their children's benefits and safety, working as their role models, and establishing and supporting the social communities of their children outside school settings.

Being or aiming to be good mothers was one of the most important identities of the women in the study. The identities were presented first of all in the various reasons given by the female participants about why they brought their children to the US to study with them. Back in the 1990s, Ping went to Singapore to study for a year and she left her son with her mother-in-law. When Ping planned to come to the US the boy insisted, “Mom this time if you leave, I must go with you even if I need to tie myself to the airplane tail – I won't let you leave me.”(Interview, 5/16/2009) Actually, taking the boy to a new environment was a main reason for Ping to come to the US to study:

Since the beginning of the 4th grade, all of a sudden he [my son] became very naughty, probably because he grew up... The awareness of, independence was stronger ... So I started thinking to myself whether I should take him to the US since his personality is more outgoing and liberal. Probably there will be more opportunities. For in China, you have to change your personality, a painful thing to experience. (Interview, 5/16/2009)

Yan brought her son to the US partly because the competition in the university entrance exam was too high, “think of the entrance examination in China to go to the higher institutions, so, go to universities. I could not leave him behind. And if he comes over here, he can have an American education, and that will probably benefit his future.” (Interview, 5/4/2009) Soo Jin had no concern about her daughter’s education but she needed to wait:

So after hum, she was born, I just started to prepare ... TOEFL and GRE tests. So, and also I was scared because she was so young. How I can take of her by myself? So I just wait. When she was hum, 40 months, three years and a half, then I just entered the United States. (Interview, 5/9/2009)

Being a single parent, Anjum considered bringing her daughter not only her duty but also her indispensable love for the little girl. Thus when she failed to do so she felt very frustrated:

I also had this consciousness that my child already doesn't have one parent. She already misses something in her life. So she does, she should not, and I should not be the cause of, she should not miss the other parent that she love and the affection from the other parent ... and the presence of the other parent. So I was really hum, concerned that I couldn't bring her here and I was really upset ... And when I came here, within two weeks, I was so upset, so depressed that I was just going back home. (Interview, 5/8/2009)

For mothers of younger children, babysitting was a big concern in their lives in America. Helen's daughter came at 8 months old, an age that definitely needed a babysitter. However, Helen did not get a babysitter at the beginning for fear that she did not yet know how to differentiate between good babysitters and bad babysitters. Even later she still tried to reduce her daughter's stay with the babysitter, "when I was so obliged, I didn't have any other choice, I knew about a lady here, hum, so I tried her for just about one hour, two hours ... just like I had an appointment with, with a professor" (Interview, 5/12/2009).

Most student mothers prioritized their children's schedules and prepared meals for them carefully, whether the children were younger or older, particularly in single mothers' cases. Anjum, for instance, always made sure that in normal semesters her daughter went to school on time. Yan, in another instance:

The child's schedule, you need to keep strictly to his schedule. Before he went to class I always needed to get up and cook for him. For lunch I needed to pack food

for him to take. For dinner either he would come home or I would take food to him. (Interview, 5/4/2009)

While taking charge of food, the student mothers also played essential roles in establishing and supporting their children's communities of friends and social activities. Jan moved to the university town with her family after staying in a metropolitan city for about four years. Her daughter was transferred in her fifth grade when other students had formed "their own groups of friends." This became "the most struggling thing for her." To help the girl socialize soon and well Jan attempted to arrange "some play dates for her" with her friends (Interview, 7/8/2009). Anjum invested even more in designing and establishing her daughter's social community:

I don't want her to grow up to be hum, a problematic kind of child because of, hum, hum because I want her to grow up to be a social person ... So if she didn't go out, she didn't meet people, if she didn't know how to talk to the people, if she didn't know how to, hum, you know, hum, behave, hum, outside home, hum, I would consider myself a failure ... And I would help, I would, would take her out. (Interview, 7/8/2009)

An important feature highlighted among the AGSMs in the study was that they often blamed themselves for their children's failure. When her son failed in the course, as previously mentioned, Yan felt very guilty and kept blaming herself, "Why did I fail to predict that in advance? Why should I think that my son was so strong that he could take 300 level courses?" (Interview, 5/4/2009) Ping regretted more when her son almost failed in the transition math class the first semester after he came to the US. The boy was enrolled in a local elementary school in August and he was recommended to go to transition math in junior high school in September.

Ping was doubtful about the acceleration because the boy had not even learned how to ask for food at school, “He just asked for whatever available and then waited . . . If the food was ok, he would eat some; if not, he would force himself to eat.” (Interview, 5/16/2009) Apparently, the boy had to deal with too many things at the same time, “He didn't have the [language] ability. He couldn't understand in class. He didn't understand a thing. He didn't know the homework assigned by the teachers.” Due to the stereotypes that “Chinese students had learned enough math,” however, both the teachers and Ping's boy assured her that elementary school math was “too easy” so that Ping agreed eventually and let her son go to Transition Math in junior high school. Only a quarter later, however, things changed drastically:

P: Until after Thanksgiving, the teacher in Transition Math told me, “If this continues, he will fail.” And I suddenly “Ah?!”

....

P: So there was no choice. After Thanksgiving, almost Christmas, I had him withdraw.

I: So I doubt the frustration you just said was mainly from Transition Math.

P: He didn't understand the language, you know? So when he went to learn it, Transition Math became NEW things to him, not something he had learned in China.

I: So it did not come from elementary school but from Transition Math.

P: But do you know, his math was not good, which terribly influenced other things.

I: Because this is his strength.

P: Right. He was extremely frustrated, you know? (Interview, 5/16/2009)

What should be a good opportunity now ended with a bad knock on the boy so that his confidence was gone. A perceived privilege now turns into a disenfranchisement. When he took courses later the boy “want to take lower level courses so I can get A. I don't take higher courses to struggle.” (Interview, 5/16/2009) This dramatic event affected Ping as badly as it did to her son so that Ping had “a good cry in private” and blamed herself “Why I didn't know that the kid had suffered so much?” (Interview, 5/16/2009)

Good mother identities were salient identities of almost all the AGSMs under study. Being good mothers meant, first of all, being considered as a package with their children in any context. This was clearly shown by the very fact that all the participants brought their children as soon as possible in their studies. It was also demonstrated in the guilt that haunted the student mothers when their children failed in their work. Being good mothers also meant prioritizing their children's benefits even at the cost of their own: keeping strict track of their children's schedules in eating, sleeping, and attending school. For mothers of younger children, safety came invariably before all other concerns. Some student mothers, mostly mothers of girls, attempted to work as role models for their children in their everyday lives. Many student mothers endeavored to help establish their children's communities and support their social activities outside school settings. Most notably, the differentiation between academic and conversational languages (Freeman & Freeman, 2001) should inform K-12 education that although ESL/EFL students may be able to “do math computations” but they could not handle those more “language dependent,” particularly when the children first arrived to the new land and needed “more time to acquire academic English” (p. 156).

Traditional Female Identities

Traditional female identities were the identities in accordance with the gender norms and related rules and customs in the traditional cultures and societies where most study participants came from.

While presenting reversed gender role identities, most female professionals retained their traditional female identities in one way or another. In cooking, for instance, most participants considered fast and preserved food not good to eat for long. Thus, they would rather spend time preparing homemade food, as Anjum said, “Because I want her [my daughter] to eat good food, fresh food. I would cook for her. She wants to eat Pakistanian food ... I would cook at home. That would take some of my time.” (Interview, 5/8/2009) Busy with their academic work, however, most female professionals could not cook quality food all the time. As Helen stated, “from my own culture we hum, we used to cook like big meals. And they take a lot of time to prepare.” Thus when she did not have enough time Helen would cook “something very fast,” just “something to eat,” such as “frying something, baking something” (Interview, 5/12/2009).

Another aspect of the AGSM traditional female identities was taking care of their house chores, such as cleaning the houses and doing laundry. Based on an alternate shift schedule, Jan usually did her housework on weekends:

P: And, I cook many times, on weekends.

I: What do you mean by “many times”? (chuckle)

P: I mean “breakfast, lunch, dinner.”

I: Ok, every meal,

P: Yeah.

I: is in your charge. Ah.

P: And I do laundry on weekends. And I do a lot of house chores ... (Interview, 7/8/2009)

The traditional female identities were also presented in the fact that the women reserved no efforts to support their husbands in seeking their graduate degrees. Most participants indicated that their spouses' academic abilities were stronger than theirs and they wished the men would get their degrees and jobs as soon as possible, as Dorothy told me in our initial interview, "he [my husband] is better than me in reading comprehension sometimes. His TOEFL score is higher than mine. My score is bad ... I feel, my IBT [Internet-based Testing] is not as good as his (smile)." She added in detail, "His reading is really very good. He got as high as 27 ... just a little bit to the full score" (Interview, 5/20/2008).

Helen's husband got a degree in Arabic in his home country, where Arabic was the major language in his program, as in many other programs in his country. He was very strong in Arabic literacies and was supposed to pursue his career in Arabic language. Here was how Helen elaborated on her husband's career background and the reasons behind his "incompetency" in English language in her home country:

My husband had a very prosperous you know, job back home. And he was very successful. He was known ... coming maybe from a village, away from the center of education, hum, students are suffering there because sometimes, maybe not, you know, qualified, teachers, hum, a lot of conditions, bad conditions, in the schools themselves. So, a lot of things may interfere. (Interview, 5/12/2009)

Since most female professionals came from Confucius or Muslim cultures, where gendered discrepancies were visible (Gordon, 1990; Norton, 2000) and females were supposed to adhere to a "good wife, wise mother" norm even at the expense of their careers (Simon-Maeda,

2004a), they had somewhat internalized their traditional female roles such as taking care of the housework, submitting to their husbands, and educating their children at home. Not surprisingly, none of the female professionals mentioned that their spouses had done house chores. Comparing the AGSMs' selected narrative quotes, we could see that most of them felt uneasy about the gender role reversal and emphasized explicitly or implicitly that their husbands had stronger aspects than themselves. In the cases where their husbands were seeking graduate degrees the women mostly wished that the men could find jobs soon – an ideal to return to the traditional positioning in their home cultures.

Professional and Domestic Identities

Professional and domestic identities were the identities that AGSMs presented when they had to negotiate their academic work and family responsibilities as both mothers and wives, and perhaps more, so that all the family members could stay harmoniously and benefit from their decision-making and future plans.

With tremendous academic workload the female professionals in the study felt both exhausted and guilty that they did not spend enough time with their families, as Helen said, “I feel bad because I keep saying, ‘Ok, ok, after I finish, this paper, and we’ll have a break. We’ll go together. I will cook.’” (Interview, 5/12/2009) Very often the multiple roles drove the women crazy that they could not control their temper to their family members, as Jan described, “I tended to get annoyed by many (smile) house chores, or some askings from my daughter or, from my husband. So I tended to um, speak bad things to them.” (Interview, 7/8/2009) To compensate for their “absence” and “rudeness” in language, the AGSMs would spend more time with their families during weekends and vacations and work hard as good mothers and wise wives.

In most situations the AGSMs tended to be other-centered in their families. This was consistently presented from their rationales of studying in the US to their future plans after graduation. In their decision-making they considered not only their own studies but the benefits of their core families and even extended families in both their home countries and the US. Ping had a two-fold reason for coming to the US to pursue her doctoral degree: one was her academic development and the other was “changing the environment” for her family. As mentioned elsewhere, Ping believed that her son’s personality may fit more to the US culture. Besides that, Ping had another concern about her husband. Ping’s husband worked in a private business, which began to decline at one point. This made the man very depressed so that he was not close to anybody and didn't like to talk. Every day he would take his dog to the park and jog. Ping hoped that the new environment in America may also change her husband’s situation to some extent.

Fulltime students as they were most participants had to balance the needs of all the family members and often prioritize others’ benefits before their own. Yan’s family used to have four computers, more than one for each family member. At one point, however, two computers were broken and Yan had to share a computer with her husband because her son’s computer was his “Personal” Computer. As a result, the doctoral student had to wait for her turn in using the computer every day:

I prefer writing in the morning. However, before he [my husband] went to work, before 10:00am, I couldn't use it ... I woke up at 7:00am yet I couldn't use the computer until 10:00am, then what was I going to do within the three hours? I couldn't write in my quality time and I had to give way to him. What can I do? ... By 10:00am and after 10:00pm, the computer was completely his. (Interview, 5/4/2009)

Driven by her dissertation timeline, Yan had to make some compromise by “Reading a couple articles every morning, sometimes two, sometimes one. After reading, I would organize and take notes. After taking notes, I could even write sometimes ... After he left I typed them in the computer.” (Interview, 5/4/2009) Yan chose to give way than to compete with her husband to keep the harmony of her family.

When it came to future plans, most participants considered their families as whole packages and placed their children first again. Cathy was even concerned about her extended family when she made her future plan, “I will go back to Korea because my mom was sick.” (Interview, 5/8/2009) With this decision, Cathy would have to take care of both her daughter and her mother after she returned to Korea:

P: But we made a deal. She will enter the international school in Korea.

I: Oh –, that’s a good choice.

P: It’s very expensive.

I: Wow.

P: Very expensive.

I: So you have to work hard.

P: Yeah, I need two jobs,

I: You need two jobs?

P: Yeah, to support her. (Interview, 5/8/2009)

Laden with tremendous academic workload, most AGSMs in the study felt that they did not spend enough time or were not patient enough with their families. To make up for their guilt, the female professionals would try to stay more with their families on weekends and on vacations. Their other-centeredness was presented in the fact that they always balanced the needs

of all the family members and prioritized others' welfare before their own. When they planned for the future, the female professionals considered not only their core family members but their extended families as well. The AGSMs' journeys seemed not to end after graduation whether they decided to return home or continued to work in the United States.

Racial Identities

Racial identities in this study refer to the identities that the participants presented in relation to their race, ethnicity, and native culture, in their attempt to be accepted in the dominant culture. "Racial identities" is used here in an extensive sense including both culture and ethnicity.

Racial identities seemed the most important parameter that made the participants feel respected or disrespected, valued or devalued in the dominant culture. As a doctoral student in education Ping felt both lucky and comfortable that her program "allowed" her to keep her identity, "They don't want you to change your identity but make you know that you are a resource, rather than an 'alien'." (Interview, 5/16/2009) According to Ping, most professors in her program respected and were fascinated by her ethnic culture:

I: So they're helping, you, preserve, your Chinese identity.

P: More than that, they "respect" – your identity.

I: Quite right, very important.

P: They appreciate and respect. Some of them are very interested in going to China. One professor told me, "Find me a chance to go to China." (Interview, 5/16/2009)

In comparison, Helen was not that lucky. Coming from the Arab world, the first thing that characterized Helen was her "Hijab," her head cover. In Helen's culture, all Muslim women wore hijab and "dress up in a modest way" when they "go outside or among men" (Journal,

8/15/2009). This symbol of modesty in Muslim culture, however, turned into a “stigma” (Goffman, 1963) on Helen when she came to the United States. She was always stared at in the streets, malls, and stores to the extent that she was terribly disturbed. At first she tried to understand it as something new to the local people but with more Muslim women coming to town the staring did not decrease. Helen could not stand it anymore. The conflict within Helen became so strong that by instinct she even wanted to stop every single person to tell them about herself and her country and to explain that “a lot of what you see and hear in the media is not true about me, my religion, and the part of the world from where I come” (Journal, 5/27/2009). With this internal conflict, Helen took every chance to say something about her culture in her class or as guest speaker on Muslim cultures, as she recorded in the following journal excerpt:

I was a guest speaker yesterday in an undergraduate class. The students were discussing an interesting article by writer Maysan Haydar about the Islamic veil or “Hijab.” I was invited as a person with a first-hand experience with the hijab. It was a great experience and the class was wonderful. There were a number of young students who want to know more about the choice of millions of Muslim women to wear the hijab worldwide. (Journal, 10/11/2009)

To resonate with Helen’s negative racial experience, Yan had an even explicit racist story about her car accident, which was “unjust because from the very beginning the police officer’s report had been in favor of the Caucasian,” as Yan recalled in our initial interview:

P: ... actually it was all her fault and I should get compensation. However, the police officer wrote a report in her favor.

I: So back then, your car was also bruised, right? You had to pay for your car ...

P: My car, I had to pay for.

I: But hers was covered by your company?

P: My company compensated.

I: Ok.

P: My company compensated for her 3,000, over \$3,000. On my part, I had had great hope that her company should have compensated for me. (Interview, 5/4/2009)

A month after the car accident Yan made a follow-up blog entry about her car insurance, in which she made the following observation and reflection:

... Previously I thought that racial discrimination was only written in books, or only Africans suffered from the treatments. When it actually happened to me this time, however, I took it too hard ... Frankly, the untrue police report has indeed influenced me very negatively, so that I have a bad feeling toward American police now. At the sight of police or police cars I will remember the police report. (Journal, 6/4/2009)

The car accident greatly “swerved” Yan’s impression on the USA, the country that used to be her “heaven” and “second home” when she first came ten years ago. Clearly from the preceding excerpts, most participants presented their ethnic identities saliently when they were specially valued or devalued in the dominant culture. It was agreed that no discrimination was existent in the classroom but outside that the participants did have racial confrontations subtly or explicitly. Most women had predetermined impressions about the US from their textbooks or short-term experiences with America; while on the part of the Americans, they had limited understanding about the Asian cultures based on the books and media produced from the biased perspectives of their native authors (Said, 1978). The racial collisions demystified what the

AGSMs had learned of “America” through the colonial education in their home countries (Chae, 2008) on the one hand, and on the other hand, inspired them to confirm their ethnic identities by representing their native cultures on every possible occasion.

Ethnic and Mother Identities

Ethnic and mother identities were the identities presented when the female professionals managed to provide favorable learning environment, despite the resistance from their children or other communities, so that their children could maintain their native languages and core native cultures both at home and in the larger communities.

Most participants insisted that their children maintain their core native cultures, particularly, speak their native languages at home. On the occasions where children were more comfortable with English, the women would reply in their native languages. Soo Jin’s first daughter preferred to use English when she had some “argument” with her. In that case Soo Jin would require her to use Korean because “I don't like, want to listen, you said, just call me ‘you.’ (smiling) I don't like that way. So ‘You just use Korean language.’” (Interview, 5/9/2009) According to Jan, her daughter preferred to talk to her husband in Korean and talked to her in mixed languages. In both cases Jan would respond in Korean. In Anjum’s house Urdu was the main language between her and her daughter and she tried her best to enforce the rule except when she was too hurried or stressed:

I speak with her in Urdu most of the times ... But she started to feel comfortable with English. So she would start to talk to me in English. And in a hurry I would reply in English ... And so I would lose focus on this particular rule even when we are at home ... But when I remember we are supposed to speak Urdu so I would insist she speak Urdu with me at home. (Interview, 5/8/2009)

Besides enforcing the use of the native language most participants insisted that their children maintain their native cultures both at home and in larger communities (Mucherah, 2008), including both their ethnic and American communities. Anjum made a lot of efforts to “train” her daughter about how to address older people in the US:

In my country you cannot just address ... an older person by her first name or his first name. And this started to appear when she started to interact with her babysitter. I would teach her to call the babysitter “Auntie V.” And when we go to her, when I was dropping her at her place, hum, I would remind her, “Say hi, say hi to Auntie V.” And she would say (imitating baby’s voice) “Hi, V.” ... later on she would come back home. I would say, “Why do you call her V?” “Because she said I should call her V.” And she called her V. (Interview, 5/8/2009)

Similarly, one thing that Soo Jin required her girls to maintain among Korean culture was respect, respect not only for their parents but for other people:

... say polite language to others. And even though you feel hum, theirs is not correct, you should follow, their instruction ... Usually, children obeyed their parents, so they, hum, listen to my words very well. But they don't want to listen to other parents’ saying, other my friends’ saying. But I all the time said, “You should respect.” (Interview, 5/9/2009)

Beyond language and communication, other core native cultures were also addressed in the female participants’ home education. For instance, Anjum was a neat person and always kept her house clean because she wanted her daughter to learn those kinds of things as a Pakistani girl.

Unfortunately, some participants learned sooner or later that they could not maintain their native cultures strictly on the alien land. This situation made the women feel both awkward and estranged. When Anjum went out of her way to train her daughter H to follow the Pakistani way of addressing elders she was both surprised and disappointed to find that other Pakistani families did not enforce the same rule on their children:

P: And I feel bad about that,

I: (chuckle)

P: honestly. Their kids call me “H’s mom.”

I: (laugh)

P: Although I’ve been so close to them. I visit them regularly. They know my name and they see H calling their mother “auntie.” (Interview, 5/8/2009)

In order to pass down their native languages and cultures to their children, most participants provided a favorable learning environment at home or even paid for the children’s tutoring. Cathy had been teaching her daughter Korean language by herself so that the girl was bilingually competent until they returned to Korea. Jan wanted her daughter not only to learn “basic everyday Korean,” but also “something like academic literacy.” (Interview, 7/8/2009) When she found that her husband could not teach the girl Jan paid a Korean student to tutor her daughter at home.

Religious Identities

Religious identities to the study participants meant worshipping god regularly, volunteering in mission trips, belonging to a religious community, teaching and sharing religious texts and principles, and passing faith down to the children.

Jan's religious identity was presented in her regular going to church with her family on weekends after a week's work. Cathy was not only a regular church member but seemed to get more involved in church activities. After our initial interview she told me happily that she would go on a mission trip the next day with her daughter. Meanwhile, going to church had another function in Cathy's life in the US, "my only ah, social life is going to church ... Yes, going to church. That's it. So I have, I don't have any friends. That is it." (Interview, 5/8/2009) Thus going to church was the only time that Cathy was willing to spare to socialize outside her tight schedule as an AGSM. Anjum came from a Muslim background. She told me that prioritizing her daughter's welfare before her own had to do with her religious belief:

So ... as a mother, well, I think it has something to do with my religious belief also, that parents' primary responsibility is to their kids. So anything that may affect their kids' future, their upbringing, their training, hum, to become good, hum, human beings, anything that affect that, parents should not do that, should not go for it, MUST not, I should say. (Interview, 5/8/2009)

Thus as a Muslim mother, Anjum considered her primary responsibility was toward her child and career came second. Anjum was not only a faithful believer but also tried to benefit her ethnic community by offering religious lessons to her daughter and her friends' children so as to foster religious beliefs in their offspring, as described in her first journal entry:

I have just finished helping some kids with their Quran lesson. They are my friend's kids and since they could not find anyone to tutor their kids for Quran I volunteered to do that for them. The parents themselves are Quran literate but somehow they could not do it on their own. As a mother I feel I have been facing the same problem ... For other kids, however, I have managed to do it and it has

been more than a year now. These kids have progressed greatly. (Journal, 5/9/2009)

Most student mothers in the study observed one religion or another although it was not explicitly discussed in the narratives of each individual participant. Faith was inextricably intertwined with the women's professional work and mother work on the alien land (Varghese & Johnston, 2007). By getting involved in religious activities, the participants got a sense of belonging, commitment, and the opportunity to socialize with people in the same communities. Fostering faith in the new generation also gave the female professionals a sense of accomplishment in their ethnic communities.

Professional and National Identities

Professional and national identities were the identities presented when the female professionals planned to return to their home countries to contribute their knowledge that they had learned from their graduate study in the US to their future jobs and fields.

Two AGSMs expressed their professional and national identities explicitly in their initial interviews. Yan was one of them. The original purpose of Yan's coming to the US to study was to contribute more to her home country after she returned with a PhD degree:

I did not really have a very hard time concerning teaching or making money in China, but I really wanted to develop myself intellectually so that I could do a better research to benefit the whole ... uh- teaching, English in China, to benefit the whole field of teaching. That's what I wanted. (Interview, 5/4/2009)

Helen had similar vision about her future when she finished her doctoral study in the US. She felt that students in her home country had "obstacles in learning English" as a foreign / second language and she could "do something back home" (Interview, 5/12/2009) and "help

them improve their ESL learning” (Interview, 6/1/2010). Thus Helen just wanted to go back to her country to teach there.

It was true that professional and national identities were not presented widely across the whole group but two participants from two different countries expressed them explicitly and consistently. These identities showed that some AGSMs did not consider US culture their own. Instead, they loyally positioned themselves in terms of their home country national identity while being physically in the host country (Pavlenko, 2007).

Summary of the AGSM Identities

The above presentation explicated the categorization of the ten identities common across the eight participants under study, as shown in Figure 1 here. Apparently, the AGSM stories varied from one another and revealed different layers of the identities that each individual participant performed in their everyday lives thus we could not generalize their situations. However, most women did undergo identical experience procedures of identical themes in their lives as AGSMs, which revealed some identity trends of the study group. In the following section, I provided some insights into the group trends by incorporating the individual experience of the participants in order to demonstrate the frequency and salience of identities distributed among the group.

As seen in Figure 1, the female participants had to play all the ten identities in their AGSM lives in the United States. Although some identities appeared more common and others did not, none of the identities were actually singular but all intertwined with the women’s race, gender, class, and culture (Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006; Morita, 2004; Norton, 2000; Wallace, 2008). The thickness of the ten identity taxonomies concretely demonstrated that “professional identities,” “professional and mother identities,” and “reversed gender role identities” were the

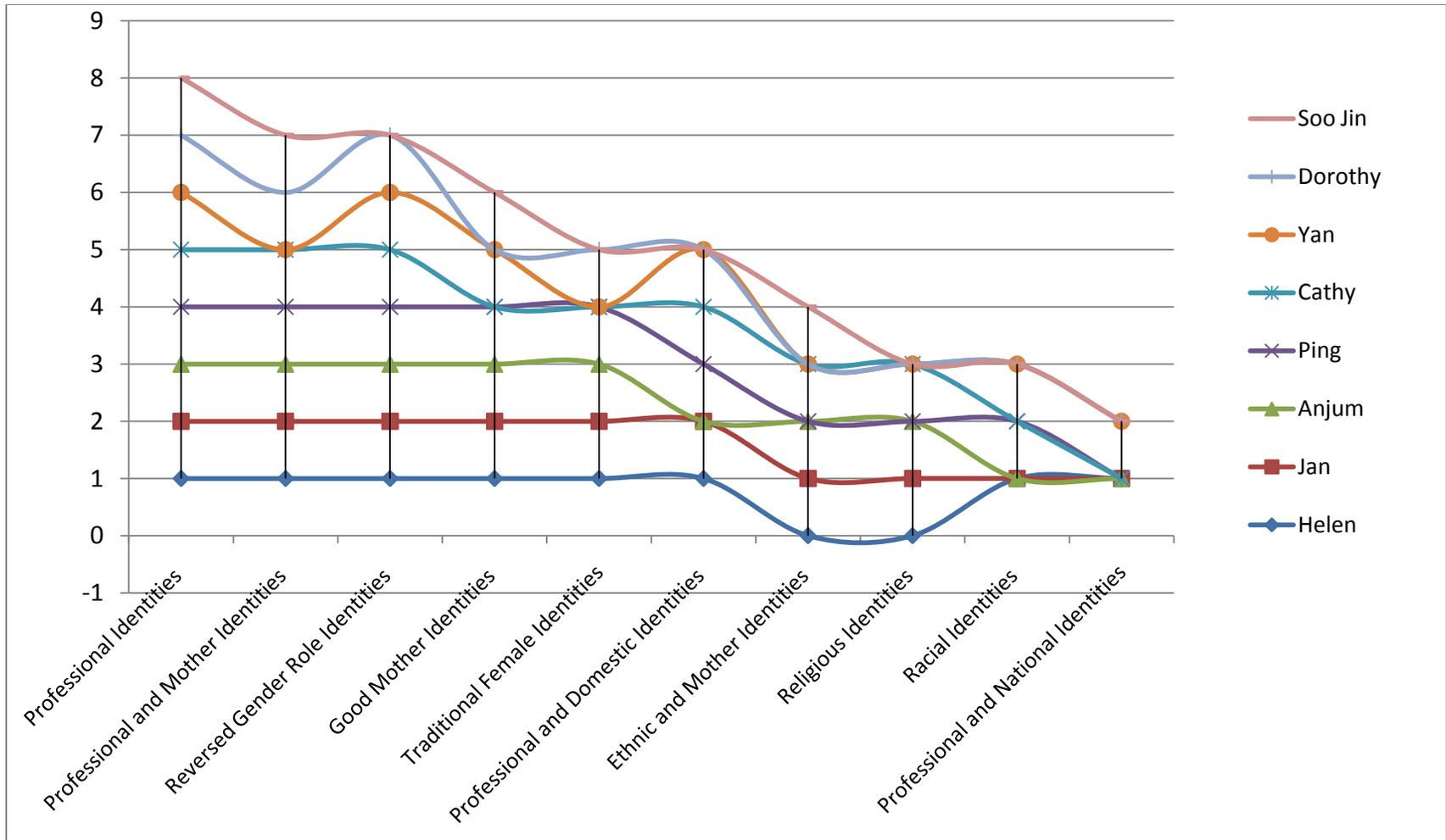


Figure 1 Summary of AGSM group identities.

three most salient identities common in the study group. All the participants (100%) invariably claimed their professional identities in their individual interviews and personal journal entries. All but one participant (88%) claimed the other two types of identities in the same way. Since each participant is a unique individual, we cannot overgeneralize their stories and experiences in relation to their identities. However, the numerical results from data analysis indicated that the identities pertaining to the women's professional roles, mother roles, and wife roles were of most salience in the AGSM group. With the increasing status of English as a global business (Wang, L.-B., 2004), most participants faced big challenges in their home countries to improve their professional knowledge as Periphery speakers of English (Canagarajah, 1999). Given that most women's primary purpose of coming to the US was to pursue their graduate degrees and improve their expertise, "a hardworking and intelligent graduate candidate" stood right in the forefront of all the identities that the women played in their everyday lives. However, since all the female participants studied with their children in the US they had to negotiate their dual roles as both mothers and students and attempted to fulfill both roles (Evans & Grant, 2008). Now that the pivotal role of English was already felt since elementary school in most Asian countries (e.g. Xu, 2002), providing a favorable environment for their children's education (Chae, 2008; Kwong, 1995) in the US was indeed a second goal of the degree-seeking Asian female professionals. Thus neither their professional career nor their children's education was more important than the other hence the salient dual identities of both female professionals and dedicated mothers.

Now that all the female participants came to the US by way of education and their husbands did not, the women possessed more linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) than their husbands in the English-speaking country and thus had more social and economic capital as well. While their husbands were restricted to enter the dominant culture (Pao, Wong, & Teuben-Rowe,

1997) with their limited linguistic capital the women were driven to take the lead in their families. The “reversed gender role identities” thus were presented as a result of the capital change and power shift between the women and their husbands. While the women became heads of the houses, providing financial support, making critical decisions, and disciplining the children, their husbands were left to undertake domestic work and take care of the children. Given the conservative gender-specific Asian cultures (Suh, 2007) where most of the women came from, gender role reversal was not an easy job for both their husbands and the women themselves. With the competition (Reitzes & Mutran, 1995; Stryker, 2000; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Wiley, 1991) between their newly adopted male identities and their internalized traditional female identities, the women had to frequently adjust their traditional and modernized, professional and domestic gender identities. The impact of Western ideology in the dominant culture was perhaps another factor for the salience of the women’s “reversed gender role identities” and the diminishing of their traditional, domestic identities.

Out of the eight AGSM participants only half claimed their “ethnic and mother identities,” which was unpredicted in the study design. The women presenting these identities hoped their children would be both bilingual and bicultural so as to increase the children’s cultural capital as a whole. There seemed to be three related factors for those not claiming their “ethnic and mother identities.” First, the university under study was located in a small town with a small Asian population so that the women’s children had no exposure to native media, attending native cultural events, interaction with many native speakers (Mucherah, 2008), or going to native language schools (Park, 2006). Thus both the women and their children were discouraged to preserve their ethnic identities, especially when the preservation did not add or reduce much of the AGSMs’ “good mother” credits in the dominant culture. Secondly, helping children to

become bilingual and bicultural was also educational ideology of some women, which was indicated in their hypothetical narratives (Riessman, 1993) about the future, not actual implementation at the current stage. Thirdly, those AGSMs with older children whose native language literacy was almost mature would focus more on their kids' ESL literacy development.

The least presented identities revealed from data analysis were the AGSM "religious identities," "racial identities," and "professional and national identities." Religious identities were not explicitly discussed by each individual participant but faith was inextricably intertwined with the AGSM's professional work (Varghese & Johnston, 2007) and mother work in the US, particularly with the single student moms in the group (2/3). A notable feature about these identities was that going to church was the only social life for some AGSMs outside their academic circles in the US. The next question would be why?

Although racial identities were indicated to be the most important parameter that determined whether or not the participants felt respected and valued in the dominant culture, only 38% AGSMs claimed these identities saliently. Given the student status of the female participants and their limited possession of different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), the AGSMs really had few opportunities to enter "contact zones" (Pickles & Rutherford, 2005) outside their school setting. The sharp contrast between the AGSM racial experiences on and off campus challenged further investigation of racial issues which demand institutional awareness and policy change as well as pedagogical and curricular reform.

Only two participants from the group claimed their "professional and national identities" pertaining to their future plans to return home and contribute their knowledge to their countries. Despite the difference of the participants' nonimmigrant status, this finding conformed to Pavlenko's (2007) examination of the Asian immigrants' narratives in the early 20th century that

they did not consider US culture their own. It is significant to note that both women salient with these identities were the only and same participants with negative racial experiences in their graduate study life. This connection between the women's negative racial experiences and their settlement choices begged further research in TESOL, sociolinguistics, and women study.

To sum up, each female participant had to play all the above-mentioned identities in their graduate study in the US although the frequency of identities varied from category to category and from individual to individual participant. When we switch the rows and columns in Figure 1, perspicuously, we will see the differences of individual AGSM identities presented in Figure 2 here. As shown, an AGSM had multiple identities of different layers (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Specifically, the women's identity categories ranged from 4 to 8, with Dorothy and Soo Jin at the bottom, and Helen, Jan, Anjum, and Ping at or near the top. Not any two participants claimed identical categories of identities. Since identities are fluid and sometimes hidden, it is impossible to produce an exhaustive list of the internal and external factors affecting the difference – although there is a subtle connection between the individual AGSM identities and their seeking degrees, academic majors, age, and study phases as well as their race, gender, class, and cultural background. Two Muslim participants appeared to claim more identities than their counterparts in this study. My hypothesis was that with different skin color, physical features, cultural dresses, and head covers, the two Muslim women might have more difficulties to pass in the dominant culture hence more roles to grapple with. This finding supported that race and ethnicity were essential components of individuals' larger social identities (Pao, Wong, & Teuben-Rowe, 1997). Race continued to be “salient” in the US society (Ladson-Billing, 2000), which demanded further exploration of the racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies pertaining to the AGSM group.

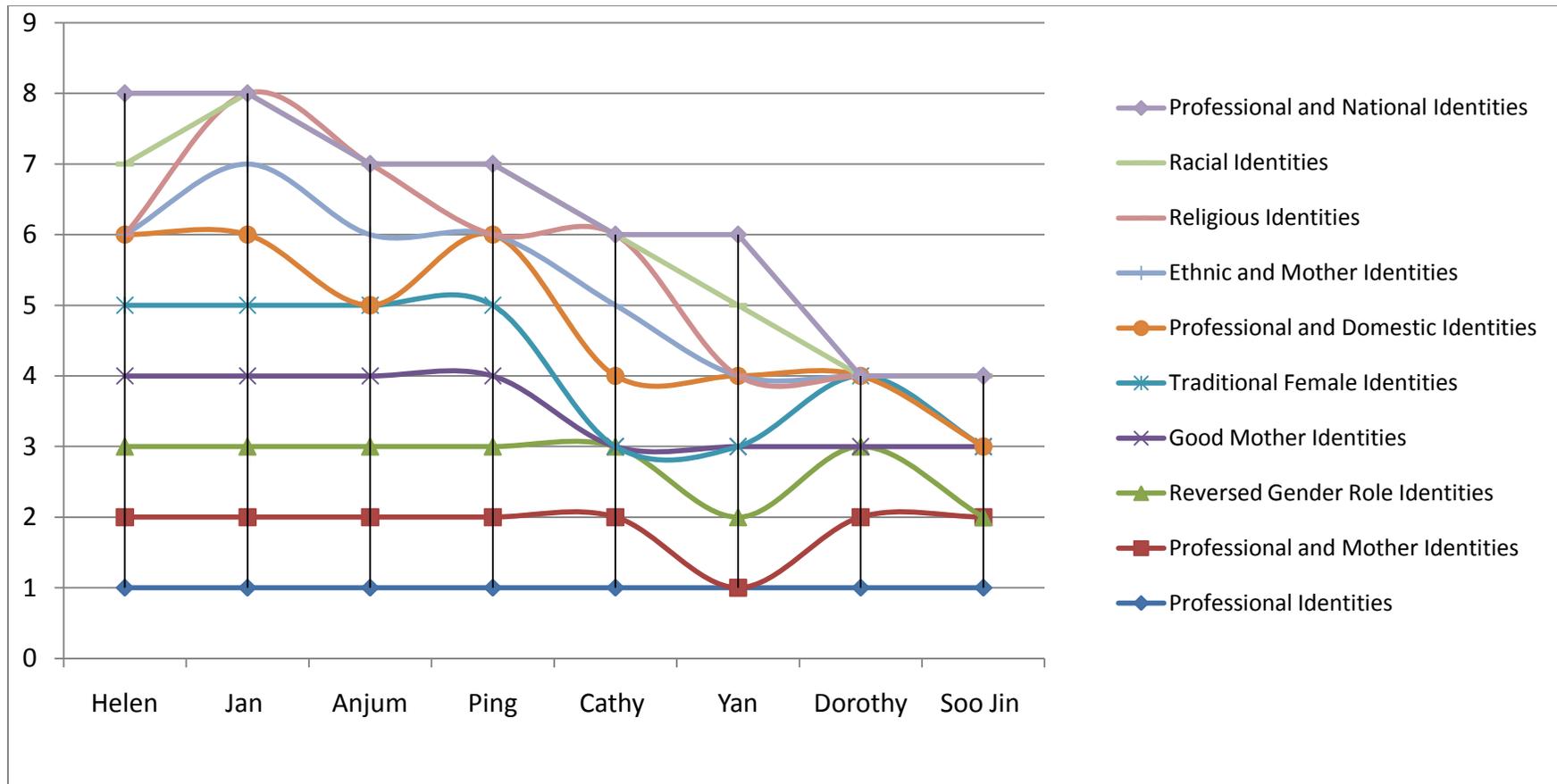


Figure 2 Comparison of individual AGSM identities.

The women's phase of graduate study and their seeking degrees seemed to be two main external factors that most influenced the number of identities claimed by the participants. Those at the early phase tended to claim more identities than those at the final stage. This continuum, not a dichotomy, of AGSM identities provided convincing evidence that identities are dynamic, transitory, and changing over time and context (Hanauer, 2008; Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995; Simon-Maeda, 2004a). Initial AGSM experiences tended to entail more and "fresh" identities compared with the old and retrospective AGSM experiences. When the women were finishing up their graduate study they were moving into a new life phase and their AGSM status is about to expire soon. Thus some of their AGSM components were fading away hence less dedication to the group identities. The seeking degrees seemed also related to the different AGSM experiences. Dorothy, a master's student in chemistry, presented fewer identities than most other students in doctoral programs. The reason may be that the master's program did not require as much work as did the doctoral programs. Or perhaps natural science students had not been trained to analyze their identities as had their counterparts in the humanities and social sciences.

While the number of identities was an important indicator of the individual AGSM experiences it may not accurately demonstrate the intensity or salience of those identities (Nuttbrock, 1986; Reitzes & Mutran, 1995). An AGSM who claimed many identities may have provided only a couple of "habitual narratives," (Riessman, 1993) where events happened over and over again yet there was no peak in the action. In contrast, another AGSM who did not claim many identities may have highlighted her identities with rather in-depth "stories," where "protagonists," "inciting conditions," and "culminating events" were all specifically elaborated (Riessman, 1993).

With that in mind, Soo Jin's identities were really controversial because as a "single" student mother of three young children in "commuter marriage" (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985), she claimed only four identities saliently but excluded her hidden "reversed gender role identities," "traditional female identities," "professional and women identities," and "religious identities (as a Christian)." A close interpretation of it may be that at the final phase of her doctoral study she already took the fading AGSM identities for granted.

As discussed in the previous sections, the narrative accounts of the study participants constructed their "individual, multifaceted identities" (Simon-Maeda, 2004a), which allowed no generalization by any means. The different identities of the female participants were interconnected with their race, class, gender, religion, age, and perhaps the age of their children, and so on. The findings demonstrated with both narrative excerpts and graphic analysis just why the female professionals were so stubborn to come to the US to get their graduate degrees? Seemingly as individual choices, the dreams of degree-seeking were closely connected with the bigger social discourses and the high status of English language on the globe (Tam & Weiss, 2004). Through years of intense English learning and training most participants had obtained strong linguistic competency and advantageous social positions in their home countries, where they had internalized the privileged status of English and that of the American culture and society. After years of weighing and negotiating they boldly came out of their comfort zones and travelled all the way from being successful professionals in their native countries to being humble students in an alien land. Not expecting that they needed to play so many roles in their graduate study, when the women actually came to the US they would always endeavor to work as good students, good mothers, good wives, good workers, and good ethnic women in the

meantime. As a result, they often got stuck in different roles and identities and felt frustrated about both themselves and their family members.

As the parents with more English proficiency in their families, the female professionals worked out of their way not only as mediators of their children's schooling but also designers of outside-school activities. To be good mothers, the female professionals attempted to prioritize and protect their children's benefits in every environment, working as their role models and helping with their social and personal growth, very often at the expense of their own time and energy. Despite the multiple roles they already played in the dominant culture, most women would not shrug off their ethnic, religious, and traditional female identities and whenever possible, they managed to take care of their housework and reinforce their native culture and values in their children.

What was salient in most participants was that the change of power relationship in the families reversed the traditional gender roles that the participants and their husbands used to play in their native cultures. Both the women and their husbands were greatly changed in terms of their traditional distribution of familial and social work. While most women became the breadwinners of their families by earning meager scholarships, the contact parents of their children's schooling, the academic advisors of their husbands, their husbands switched to the traditional wives' roles of cooking, babysitting, and child-caring at home. The loss of language and profession deprived their husbands of their sense of need both in the families and in the society. What complicated the issue was that most of the female professionals' husbands used to be equally or more successful professionals in their home countries in various fields and they were reluctant to give up their prosperous pasts to become unrecognized spouses of these international female graduate students in the host country. Consequently, this resulted in more

unequal distribution of work between the couples and lack of contribution on the men's part: while their original roles were gone they were not yet ready to adapt to the new roles demanded in the US. In this case, the female participants had no way to claim full power in their families and ask all the family members to completely obey them. Instead, they were made merely transitional or interim heads of the houses with limited powers and authority.

CHAPTER 6

AGSM EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCE

To thematize each and single aspect of identity across the participants, the previous chapter presented the commonality of AGSM identities in great detail. The findings demonstrated that professional identities, professional and mother identities, and reversed gender role identities were the most salient group identities among the female professionals. The findings indicated a connection between the individual AGSMs' identities and the women's race, gender, class, and cultural background as well as their age, academic field, seeking degree, and study phase. Based on the overview of the group identities, this chapter addressed the second and third sub-research questions of this study: How do AGSMs juggle different roles and identities in their everyday life? What characterizes the co-existence of marginalization and privilege associated with their AGSM experiences (Park, 2006)?

To answer the two questions, I turned to the AGSMs' narrative accounts focusing more on their daily struggles, reasons behind the struggles, and the women's solution to their problems. To contextualize the dynamics of the women's identities, a comparison was made between their social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in the US and that in their home countries. The comparison showed that the change of capital possession entailed the women's social class change hence the change of their privilege and marginalization in the host country. The end of this chapter presented Helen's individual story as an icon to the AGSM life histories in full view.

Social Network in Home Countries

Most participants had supportive social and familial networks in their home countries, where they were supported by both their extended families and relatives. It was easy to find

someone to help them out in almost all the situations. Like many privileged Chinese young couples, Dorothy and her husband both had very good jobs in China. Their apartment was only about 10 minutes walk from Dorothy's parents-in-law's, where the young couple had dinner every day. While the parents-in-law contributed greatly to Dorothy's financial resources in her home country her sister-in-law worked as her motivation to come to study in the US. Inspired by the good model of her sister-in-law, who lived a good life in American western coast, Dorothy prepared GRE for more than half a year and learned vocabulary by heart every day. Without the model of her sister-in-law, Dorothy would not think of coming to the US for her graduate study. Apparently, the privilege (Park, 2006) that Dorothy possessed in her home country not only added to her financial resources but transitioned her to the symbolic social resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Norton, 2000) of the host country, which her counterparts in neither country possessed.

Babysitting network was an important resource that most participants were greatly attached to in their home countries. For this reason, Cathy had a hard time managing her AGSM life as a single mom in the US at the beginning. Back in Korea, when she worked her mother or my mother-in-law could take care of her daughter, "So I don't have to take care of my daughter full-time. I was a part-time mother, and full-time worker." (Interview, 5/8/2009) The same was true with Anjum, in Pakistan she had "a very strong family ... that helps" (Interview, 5/8/2009). Sometimes parents' home was a place of retreat. Living in a city far from their parents on both sides, Helen happened to find her husband's sister-in-law in the same city. She thus asked her to help take care of her baby when her maternity leave was over. It gave Helen both help and relief leaving her daughter to her relative although as a mother she still had some concerns.

The preceding excerpts showed that while most participants possessed the privilege of social network in their home countries they could not find same resources available to them in

the US. The influence of the reduced social and familial network was magnified when the participants and their spouses needed somewhere to get rid of their stress and conflicts in the US. For instance, when Helen and her husband were stressed from work or life in their home country they would save their weekends and visited their parents on both sides individually. Understandably, visits to their respective parents worked to help both Helen and her husband to vent their stress of the whole week and help them to cool down after an argument (Interview, 5/12/2009).

Social Network in the US

The main supports that the AGSMs could obtain in the host country came from public facilities, professors and classmates, native communities, and international graduate student mother communities. Moreover, the support from their extended families and relatives in the US as well as that from their home countries were still an important part of their social network in the host country. Generally, however, the women had far less network to reach in the US.

When Cathy first came to the US she suddenly found that she needed to play three roles at the same time: study, working, and raising a child. In her words, she became “a full-time student,” “a full-time mother,” and “a part-time worker” (Interview, 5/8/2009). After just two weeks she was “lost” and “gave up” and had to call her brother in the US for help. Finally her brother and sister-in-law allowed her to leave daughter with them. After the first semester, Cathy’s brother called and asked her to take care of her daughter by herself. Although Cathy was a little bit mad because she had her study work she had to accept her duty as a mother and bring her daughter back and learned to better manage her time as a student mother. Fortunately, after coming to the current university Cathy befriended a group of Korean student mothers, who also “focus on study” and “have very strong ah, intention to make their kid better” (Interview,

5/8/2009). In this community not only could Cathy share her home culture in her native language but she could ask about AGSM experiences and got encouragement and practical support.

Parents' support sometimes could cross oceans. When Dorothy had her second baby her mother-in-law came all the way from the west coast to the east coast to help her. As Dorothy finished her master's study and was about to move to the new university for her doctoral degree her parents-in-law took the baby back to her home country and had her husband's cousin help babysit there. Two years later, when Dorothy finished her coursework in her doctoral program, her own mother brought her daughter back and continued to babysit for a while. Thus Dorothy said, "What is better for us now is that we, just like the younger students, we have our parents to support us. Some of our cost can be covered by them." (Interview, 5/20/2008)

The preceding stories of the AGSMs made it easy and interesting to understand that some participants might turn to their extended families in their home countries for advice and help when they got into trouble in the host country. As shown in her previous story, Helen and her husband both had their respective parents to stay with for the weekend in their home country. Unfortunately, this precious resource was not available in the host country anymore. When Helen had a hard time in redistributing her housework with her husband, she remembered her father in her home country:

[M]y father gave me advice and he said, 'Let him do something. You're killing yourself, you know, over your studies, your baby. You're killing yourself by doing all these things. But he can do that.' ... When I tried my husband for, like shopping, calling the TV cable company, calling the cell phone company ... When I tried him he did a great job and I was like killing myself doing all these things alone because of his language but he could do that. (Interview, 5/12/2009)

Talking with her dad not only helped Helen solve the problem but made her learn that language was not always the problem hence the redistribution of the parent work and housework in her family. Although without personal experience living in the host country, Helen's father succeeded in backing her up with his practical knowledge accumulated as a senior. The above instances showed that the AGSMs' network in the US was still connected to their extended families, who were either settled in the host country or came straight from their home countries. These material and symbolic resources gave tremendous help to the AGSMs thus buffered the women against the unfavorable situations, which their counterparts without the resources could not run away from in the US. From these resources the AGSMs obtained multiple parenting (Ambert, 1994), financial support, and strategic instructions on the alien land.

It was notable, however, that the support of their extended families and relatives was only transitional and not on a daily basis as in their home countries. With limited external support the female professionals had to manage different situations and multiple responsibilities on their own most of the time. However, the self-reliance on the alien land also helped the women and their husbands to understand, help, support and love each other more, for as Helen put it, her husband is the only person that she could complain to in this country, "And that's also the same for him." (Interview, 5/12/2009)

For AGSMs whose extended families could not help, their main support came from their native communities in the host country. Anjum got a lot of help from her native friends when she first came. Although their ethnic community was "very small" the people were very active socially and took good care of each other:

When I was moving to this apartment, they gave me such expensive presents that I, I cannot even think of having those that, like the sofa we are sitting on, and the

dining table, and the bookshelf that I have, a nice bookshelf. All this stuff came new. They were all presents. And even the DVD player came as present.

(Interview, 5/8/2009)

Anjum's ethnic community also gave her great help when she needed a ride to some place, for instance. Sometimes their kids came to play with Anjum's daughter and Anjum's daughter also went to stay at their places. All this helped make Anjum feel that she was taken very good care of and made her stay in the US much easier than otherwise.

The university or public facility was an impersonal resource that the AGSMs could turn to although it was not available all the time. Soo Jin's former university in the metropolitan city had child-care program and it was nice and not expensive. However, the center was "for undergraduate students" only. Studying as a woman in a commuter marriage, Soo Jin had to "beg" the director to let her daughter in even for a short while. Eventually, Soo Jin's daughter was admitted and stayed there for two semesters. However, Soo Jin's success was more an individual act than the implementation of an approved policy benefiting invariably all the international graduate student mothers in the university. Most graduate student mothers still had no equal access to the center in comparison with their undergraduate counterparts thus had to find their babysitters on their own.

Professors' Support

Professors' support was the most commonly discussed support across the female participants under study. This support provided both the endorsement to the women's personal merits and the authoritative compliments on the women's academic performance. As known, most graduate courses in the US were in the evening. As Anjum went to class her daughter often cried and clung to her so that occasionally Anjum had to take the girl to her class. Anjum was

“not normal” when the girl was in the class because she cared much about “how might the other people be feeling about it.” Fortunately, most professors were “really nice,” “understood my problem,” and “didn’t mind it” (Interview, 5/8/2009). The professors’ understanding implied not only the permission of the little girl in the class but the empathy of the AGSMs’ student mother roles and their irreconcilable situations in the US.

Soo Jin felt bad that she could not speak much in her graduate class because of the cultural and educational differences. When her professor told her later that, “I know you. You read all articles,” “You have very creative ideas on the research project” Soo Jin felt so much entrusted for the professor did see her potential and efforts behind the scene. (Interview, 5/9/2009). In fact, one of Soo Jin’s happiest moments in her graduate study was when she heard the professor’s high compliments such as “You’re the most reliable student I have ever met.” (Interview, 5/9/2009)

Dorothy had similar experiences with her professors in chemistry. There was one professor in particular, whose handwriting was hard to read and follow for Dorothy at the beginning. Very soon, however, every time before his class the professor would print out his lecture for Dorothy and check for her understanding. In another class, Dorothy had an even more unforgettable experience with a kind professor. One day, Dorothy heard that it was a classmate’s birthday the next Thursday:

And the next Thursday, it was exactly that professor’s class again. ... the professor held a box. At that time, there were only 9 students. So he prepared 9 cakes. Oh, perhaps more than 9. It seemed there were also candles. So he lighted the candles. And there was also music. The Happy Birthday music. He gave each

of us a cake and while we were eating he started the lecture. The classmate's birthday (giggle). (Interview, 5/20/2008)

It was not clear how the birthday student felt in the scene but Dorothy was greatly touched and impressed as an international student: is it real that a professor could organize the celebration of a student's birthday in his class! These experiences and observations worked to encourage Dorothy a lot so that she progressed faster and had no pressures. Obviously, both Soo Jin and Dorothy identified themselves as good students academically. The professors' acknowledgement helped to confirm their ability and endeavor hence their professional identities.

Some participants, such as Cathy, differentiated professors' support in terms of gender. She felt that although all the professors in her department were very nice and friendly the female professors understood her better because they had similar experiences. A female professor in her committee, for instance, cared not only about her but about her family. Whenever they met the professor would ask Cathy about daughter. What touched Cathy most was the way the female professor treated her as a graduate assistant, as shown here:

She always tell me that, "I know your situation. You're a student and you're a worker and you're a mother. So I know that you need much time to do that. So you don't have to come to my office (smile). (Interview, 5/8/2009)

While the reduction of the graduate assistant workload saved Cathy lots of time it enhanced her understanding of the professors' support in terms of gender. In contrast, Ping felt quite the opposite. Among all the participants under study Ping had the most professors' support in every aspect of her life so that 40% of her initial interview focused on her benefit from the professors' help and social network.

According to Ping, her department was a “nurturing” department because the professors were “open-minded” and willing to “lay down himself and listen to you” (Interview, 5/16/2009). As discussed elsewhere, the distance between Ping and her professors was initially closed with their “forcing” her to call their first names rather than Dr. or Prof. who and who, and her male professor must go first to open the door for her. Coming from a hierarchical and patriarchal culture, Ping was greatly amazed by the new way of addressing and interacting with an authority. This new understanding helped Ping reposition herself as a graduate student and redefine her relationship with the male professors in her program.

Ping’s professors cared about her academic progress in great detail. Coming back from students’ defenses, Ping’s advisor would always share with her “What is the dissertation about, what is the person, how good the dissertation is” so that Ping learned a lot indirectly (Interview, 5/16/2009). Based on the repositioning, Ping’s advisor would not always push her to speed up her dissertation but often remind her by joking. Through this kind of interaction, Ping learned “what is important to you, the priority, your priority, the focal job” (Interview, 5/16/2009). A special support that Ping got from her professors was their networks on and off campus, particularly her advisor. When Ping encountered a problem in her dissertation that her advisor could not best solve he would volunteer to contact other professors to help Ping. The friendly relationship with her professors tremendously enriched Ping’s social resources in her graduate study in the US, which was a privilege inaccessible to many other graduate students.

The professors’ support that Ping obtained extended to the outside school setting. When Ping first came to the current program a professor in her program drove to the airport to pick her up. After settling down, Ping’s family spent “every holiday” in the professor’s house, where the walls were decorated with photos of “children of all skin colors,” children of all the professor’s

former international students. (Interview, 5/16/2009) Based on this family-like relationship, Ping's son was treated as a grandchild of the professor and his wife. Whenever Ping was not home and her son encountered some problems at school Ping would ask the professor for help. Most of the time, it was the grandma who made things even!

At one point, the professor even helped Ping solve a legal issue of her son at school. Ping's son was waiting for the school bus the other day when his classmate slipped him a packet of cigarettes. Since "carrying cigarettes on school property will be punished," (Interview, 5/16/2009) the boy was scared to death and didn't know what to do thus he put the cigarettes in his pocket. Just then the principal came and asked the boy to take out the cigarettes. Ping learned that and got indignant. She trusted her son and would not accept the result. She instructed her son to clarify the incident with the principal the next morning. The boy followed her instruction and was finally understood by the principal. However, the clarification was late and the citation arrived to Ping. She did not know what to do but take the citation to her professor for help. After being advised by her professor, Ping pleaded not guilty and sent a check of \$50 to the magistrate's office. When Ping's family went to the hearing as scheduled the other party did not show up in court. As commented by Ping on the event, "So many things I don't know ... in this kind of things they also gave me great help" (Interview, 5/16/2009). Ping's experiences indicated that professors' support is not necessarily connected with their sex or gender. Rather, it depends on the positioning and repositioning of both the participant and her professor in the relationship.

Against the above professor-support themes, Yan's stories sounded a little out of tune. Yan did not really have complaints about her class and her graduate study was generally enjoyable on the campus. However, when she applied for the position of Teaching Associate in her program, Yan was rejected. As an ESL user, she "naturally" attributed her failure to her

English competency until later on she attended a department meeting and heard something unexpectedly:

... they said that “We had some thoughts. “We had many considerations” when they made the decision. “One of the criteria was that we didn't definitely hire the older and more experienced ones.” And they said, “We would consider leaving some opportunities to the younger ones because they had not yet started. For them this was a start.” (Interview, 5/4/2009)

Yan immediately caught the professors’ understatement and categorized herself to those whose career was coming to an end. She withdrew from the competition and did not apply for the position anymore. In reflection, Yan felt that “this event to my age, to my age –, I started to become very sensitive.” (Interview, 5/4/2009) The rejection and denial from the position left Yan feeling bitter about America and excluded from the society (Chae, 2008).

In sum, the AGSMs lost most of their networks after they came to the US. Given the traditional, patriarchal, and hierarchical cultures most participants came from, it was easy to understand why the female participants valued their professors’ backup most. The professors’ material and symbolic capital helped soothe the AGSMs’ academic concerns and pressures and make their living in the host country less struggling.

Financial Situation in the US

All the participants came to study at their own expenses, more or less. Besides that, most women got different forms of small salaries and assistantships on the campus, grant from supporting organizations, food stamps from the local community, and material or symbolic support from their extended families. For instance, Helen got three years’ scholarship from her doctoral study with the possibility of extending one or two years. The scholarship covered her

tuition and books, plus about \$1,000 monthly stipend. However, it was not quite enough if textbooks and house furniture were counted in. With her husband illegal to work as a dependent, Helen had to spend a lot of her personal savings. Ping's family also needed to spend some 10 thousand dollars each year out of their personal savings. Her husband worked three months to earn enough to cover his tuition in the language institute. Besides that, Ping's extended family was a good resource that assured her strong financial support. As described previously, Dorothy's situation was even better. She did not have any economic pressures because both her husband's and her extended families could help. As a result, according to Dorothy, the financial help from both families prevented the couple from many conflicts. In contrast, Jan got nothing from her parents or from the government. She paid everything of her doctoral study with her personal savings. Back in the former university Jan had some income from her on-campus work. After coming to the current program Jan had no assistantship because "there were so many applicants" (Interview, 7/8/2009). Jan got a little partial tuition waiver from the international office, for which she needed work certain hours.

Soo Jin did her doctoral study with the money her husband sent from Korea. With three children to bring up in the US the husband's salary was not enough so that they had to sell their house and got loans from the bank. Actually Soo Jin's husband made "pretty good money" in Korea (Interview, 5/9/2009). However, with one household in Korea and the other in the US they had a lot of extra expenses, particularly when Soo Jin was studying in the metropolitan city. Back then, she needed to pay over \$1,000 or \$1,500 a month for babysitting plus house rent \$1,000 per month. In comparison, Cathy's financial support mainly came from her mother who was in Korea. Her mother sent her money every month. Apart from that, Cathy took up several jobs on and off campus. Coming as a single mother, Cathy did not have financial support from

her husband because based on Korean system, “after the husband and wife divorced, it is hard to get child support.” (Interview, 5/8/2009)

Anjum brought all her savings when she resigned from her job and came as a Fulbright scholar. It was difficult for her because Fulbright paid allowance only enough for one adult but not for her daughter. Fulbright gave Anjum just one round-trip for once when she was coming here thus when she went home to pick up her daughter she had to use her own savings. Anjum chose her current apartment because the rent was affordable and she did not need to pay for utilities. As mentioned, Anjum got a lot of help from her ethnic community in the university town. Most of her furniture was given as gifts by her friends when she first moved in. Anjum also had food stamps from some organization, which was not much but enough to cover her daughter’s milk, cheese, juice, cereal, and eggs.

Yan’s family underwent many financial stresses during her doctoral study in the US, particularly at the beginning. When she was taking graduate courses, Yan got half or no assistantships most of the semesters. After finishing her coursework Yan got an on-campus job, which earned her about \$ 1000 a month. Later on, however, the office was closed and Yan had to switch to the dining hall and worked part time for \$200 a month. To support the family, Yan’s son also worked on campus so as to cover part of his tuition. Yan’s husband came to join her at the end of the first semester. To support the family, the man soon started to work in the local restaurants. Since he had “never done this in China” Yan’s husband “was driven home every couple of days” at the beginning (Interview, 5/4/2009). Frequent lay-off made the man feel terribly rejected (Chae, 2008) and hurt both physically and emotionally so that “his temper became worse” and “his problems increased” (Interview, 5/4/2009). He could not figure out “what is wrong with me ... How come I am useless?” thus always blamed himself (Interview,

5/4/2009). Eventually, Yan's husband got a "stable" job in a restaurant, which reduced a lot of conflicts and changed the economic status of the family.

Difficulties and Struggles in the US

AGSMs had many difficulties, struggles, and breakdowns in their graduate study in the US, as easily imagined. The first difficulty that most women encountered was time management. For instance, Soo Jin had no time to participate in departmental events; Helen had no time to socialize or have get-togethers; and Cathy even had no life "except working, studying, taking care of my daughter" (Interview, 5/8/2009). Most occasions that the women went were "mother and kid time" because they felt that the children needed their attention and they needed to spend as much time as they could. When they failed to do so, most women felt that they were not "good mothers" and began to blame themselves. Helen, for instance, felt both exhausted and guilty because with tremendous academic workload she kept breaking her promises of serving and accompanying her family members. Thus, finishing her coursework made her greatly relieved because she could "have more time," "invite friends more," "cook more," and "sit with my daughter more" (Interview, 5/12/2009). More importantly, she felt that she could leave her husband for his own study and his preparation for the exam. Apparently, the traditional cultures of the AGSMs had great influence on how they defined "good women" and "good mothers" hence their implementation in the real lives. Based on their internalized gender role division, most women felt a big relief finishing their academic work and being able to take over what a woman was supposed to do in their families.

Another frustrating moment for AGSMs was when the children got sick, particularly for single student moms. As mentioned elsewhere, Ping spent her first semester as a single mom and her son caught a cold several times. Once he even threw up in class so that Ping had to bring him

back after the nurse called. Another time the boy ran a high fever and it did not even work to take medicine thus Ping just threw him in the bathtub. Trapped in many irreconcilable situations, AGSMs' children often got sick at the "wrong" time, as experienced by Soo Jin, "Usually hum, they were sick when I have a, big exam, or I have a big project, or I have the, paper due ... Before that night, usually they start to sick, wow ... that was really hard time" (Interview, 5/9/2009). When the children got sick at the wrong time some AGSMs felt both frustrated and lonely. Sometimes they even could not help getting mad because could not quit any yet had no way to prioritize both, as happened to Cathy one day:

I was so mad because I was, I was so busy at that time due to the test. But I got a call from the school nurse. So when I pick her, pick my daughter ... I was mad. So my daughter, after that, my daughter ah, didn't go to the school nurse even though she is very sick. (Interview, 5/8/2009)

Transportation was still another difficulty for the AGSMs esp. at the beginning. When the women had evening classes and no one to take care of their children the situation became even worse, as described in Anjum's stories. It was the end of a freezing day and Anjum had to walk to school with her daughter. "I would take her to the stroller and I had to wrap her up so that she wouldn't get cold." Sometimes Anjum's friends would give her a ride but it "wasn't possible all the time" (Interview, 5/8/2009). Ping did not have a car either before her husband came. Although the school bus passed her apartment her son was "not eligible of riding the bus" (Interview, 5/16/2009). As such, early at 6:40am or 6:50 am Ping and her son had to leave home and "It took us 40 minutes to walk to the school every morning." (Interview, 5/16/2009) Ping felt sorry that she had to request moving out of the former apartment before her lease expired but the landlady was very understanding and let her go that very month.

Soo Jin's situation was no better when she studied in the metropolitan city. She usually had to take her 4-year-old daughter to school and came home together. The problem was that on the way home, usually at 9:00pm or 8:00 pm, the girl would fall asleep on subway. When it was time to get off the subway, Soo Jin had to shake her girl "wake up, wake up" but the girl would not. For that reason, Soo Jin always played with her daughter on the subway to keep the girl awake, which however, did not help much. After getting off the subway, Soo Jin and her daughter had to change buses, as described below:

I just hum, make her pick her bag, and I have, bring my backpack, and I was pregnant. (Laugh) So –, it was really horrible. So I just, um, go, run up all stairs (smile), you know the subway station, lots of stairs ... So I have to wait 15 or 20 minutes at the bus stop. Wow, that was really horrible. (Interview, 5/9/2009)

The above scenarios made it easier to understand why Soo Jin was so touched when one day a woman student helped to block other passengers in the subway and asked her to get on first, and why Ping felt so grateful when the landlady allowed her to move out without keeping a penny.

Still another difficulty for the AGSMs was their children's problems at school. Due to the different portions of responsibilities between parents, parent involvement traditionally means the work of mothers in support of their children's schooling, particularly in the case of mothers whose children do poorly in school (Dudley-Marling, 2001; Griffith, 1996; Lareau, 1989; Smith, 1987). Thus when Ping's son "violated a rule" or "spoke something" inappropriate the school would contact her right afterwards (Interview, 5/16/2009). If Ping had no idea how to deal with it she would have to turn to her professors for help, as shown in the incident of cigarettes.

Yan's son came as a senior high school student thus he had just a little basic education in the US. As such, although doing well at school the boy was not quite aware of the differences

between American and Chinese educational systems. After going to university Yan's son did very well and got straight A's so that when he was a sophomore he already finished taking all the 300 level courses. Thus his advising professor "probably also thought" this student was very strong and could handle even higher level courses (Interview, 5/4/2009) and had the boy register in a very tough course. When he took the course for the first time many students failed or dropped. The boy clung there to the last moment and had to withdraw as well. The boy insisted that "this professor taught well" and took the course for the second time in spite of Yan's objection. He ended up getting a grade "still not that high" (Interview, 5/4/2009). Yan felt very disturbed at the result and very politely emailed the professor asking why. The professor simply replied that "based on whichever policy he could not talk to the parents" and asked Yan's son to make an appointment to go to his office if he had any questions (Interview, 5/4/2009). Without other choices Yan clicked the "university policy" link that the professor sent her and learned that "He just asked us to appeal." When Yan's son took the course for the third time, the professor retired. The boy "tried all his efforts and got a 'C'" with the new professor (Interview, 5/4/2009).

As shown in the above scenario, the difference between American and Asian cultural and educational systems and the ways of participatory practice (Norton, 2001) both contributed to the suffering educational experiences of Yan's boy. Against Chinese educational system, attendance shows a learner's learning attitude. Final exam is everything and "Nothing else will be considered." (Interview, 5/4/2009) In America, however, attendance and final exam are only two parts of a multi-sectioned grading system. Yan's son did not do well in his course because he was unaware of the different educational systems first of all and the bad advice on the part of the key professor also added to the burden of the bilingual nonimmigrant boy. The advisor was to blame because he did not provide sufficient advising about the tough course so that a former top

student failed unnecessarily several times. More importantly, the AGSM's ESL/EFL expertise was rejected and not valued as an asset to the student's education.

In this section, I presented some outstanding practical difficulties that the AGSMs faced in their daily lives, including time management, transportation, and children's problems at school. None of these problems stood alone but were closely intertwined with the women's internalized conceptions of good mother, good student, and good women. On the other hand, the problems demonstrated the disjuncture between the symbolic resources (Norton, 2000) that the women possessed in their home countries and the resources valued in the host country.

Understanding the AGSM Experiences

In reflection, most participants felt that their AGSM experiences were challenging and tough but worthy and fruitful. In fact, all the AGSMs under study could have taken a safe course and their lives would be very comfortable. However, according to Jan, the safe and repetitive life was not "inspiring" or "make any constructive change in me" (Interview, 7/8/2009). Compared with other graduate students without families, Jan felt that she got "more" in both gains and pains. The biggest benefit was that "this is good for my daughter, because she always sees me study something" (Interview, 7/8/2009). For Cathy, the biggest benefit was that her daughter "can speak English so well ... she is bilingual" (Interview, 5/8/2009). For Soo Jin, one of the biggest benefits was that she established a strong relationship with her children while pursuing her graduate study.

Regardless of the difficulty, refusal, and embarrassment as graduate student mothers at the beginning, almost all the participants appreciated their AGSM experiences in the end, feeling that they learned a lot in the process. As summarized by Helen, the AGSM experiences helped her not only understand "other mothers more ... working mothers" but also "the meaning of

motherhood ... my mother, my husband's mother, my sister ... other mothers from any nationality" (Interview, 5/12/2009). While struggling for both their study and family lives as AGSMs, the women learned a lot about their "weaknesses" and a lot of "new skills" to overcome them, as elaborated by Anjum here:

[M]anaging a home on my own, managing hum my studies, and, and my responsibilities as a mother. I've not learned it yet because I hum, still ... stumble a lot. You know, fall over, then stand up, and, being hurt, try and then, you know, and then, try to go back to work again. But hum, I just hope maybe next one and a half years I'll be improved, really (chuckle). (Interview, 5/8/2009)

Most notably, with their AGSMs experiences the female participants changed their theoretical and superficial understanding about the host country and people. Yan, for instance, compared her AGSM experiences in the current university with her study experiences in the former university and was surprised at the long distance she had traveled. When she returned to China from the former university, she seemed to be a spokeswoman of the United States:

I gave lectures and all that I talked about was how the US was like the heaven. I am a spokesperson of the US. You know? Even though something happened, for instance, that -, that Gulf War - so many people were against the US, but I was still defending for the US. And my second older sister and my son criticized me "How alienated are you by the US!" and something like that. They said "It seems the US is your home!" (Interview, 5/4/2009)

Looking back, Yan felt that at that time she was like "a frog at the bottom of the well watching the sky: looking at the US as the heaven, one-sided" (Interview, 5/4/2009). After four years of study at the current university, however, Yan felt that "I can see both the positive and

negative sides.” (Interview, 5/4/2009) While still feeling grateful for the US policy “to invest in international students to study,” Yan also observed that “US is not so good to the extent that ... you won't be discriminated at all.” (Interview, 5/4/2009)

A Case Study of Helen as an AGSM

I chose Helen as a specific case of presentation here because she provided one of the richest data and claimed most identities in this study. By clicking the icon of Helen, I am not trying to generalize the experiences of AGSMs per se but elaborating what they had undergone in their everyday lives. Thus I presented a life history of Helen in relation to her past, present, and future experiences, based more on the 9 journal entries she had made over a period of four and a half months from May 27 to October 11, 2009. The integration of Helen's narrative accounts demonstrated meticulously how things developed throughout her graduate study in the US, which focused on two highlighted themes: a Muslim woman; and a graduate student mother. Specifically, Helen assigned 6 journal entries to focus on her racialized experiences, 4 on her daughter, and 8 on her desire for friendship.

Helen was a doctoral student in her late 20s studying in liberal arts from Western Asia. By the time of our initial interview, Helen had been here with her family for a year and a half and was just done with her coursework and preparing for her Comprehensive Exam. After I sent the email of recruitment to all the potential participants in the study university Helen replied soon and volunteered to participate in my study. I conducted the initial interview in her apartment on May 12, 2009. It was my first time to see her without the hijab. Her apartment was very clean and bright with lights on. She was home with her daughter while her husband was studying in the library to prepare for his forthcoming TOEFL test. The interview went on for 96 minutes. Right afterwards, Helen started keeping a personal journal to record her everyday life

experience as an AGSM in the US. We conducted our final debriefing interview on June 4 2010 in the university library, which continued for about 20 minutes.

Past

Although Helen had both an M.A. and a B.A. degree in her home country she never stopped dreaming of coming to the United States to get a PhD degree. Born into a science inclined family with all her siblings in the field of medicine, Helen had planned to complete “the hospital circle of her family” by becoming a dentist but ended with not being admitted because of her grade. Helen’s father, the authority in her family in the patriarchal society, did not blame her but unexpectedly gave her great support instead. As Helen recalled in her initial interview, her father advised her not “to have a degree in, in nursing and you’re not a good nurse” but to pursue a career where she could excel. Although Helen successfully got her B.A. degree she declined the M.A. scholarship offered by the university fearing that their conditions would restrict her from continuing her study. As such, Helen had cherished her ambition of getting a PhD degree in the US long before she got married and the first decision she made with her husband was to postpone having children till they heard from the university about her scholarship. Helen waited for two and a half years but did not have any opportunity.

When she finally got pregnant, however, Helen was called and went to the interview. Since motherhood came rather at an unexpected time in an “embarrassing” context (Evans & Grant, 2008), Helen’s first reaction was to try to hide her pregnancy and she was both happy and relieved that she passed as none-pregnant in the interview. Helen went on to apply for her husband’s and daughter’s visas from the American embassy in her country. The embassy, however, refused to issue a visa to her husband because they needed to do some research on him. They did not tell Helen anything about how long it would take to get him the visa. Since it was

very close to the beginning of school in the US, Helen had to leave without her family after waiting for a whole week. With her baby girl only 8 months old Helen had to suddenly stop breastfeeding in four days so that it was “like death” for the baby. Helen sounded guilty when she told this story because when other mothers stop nursing “they stay with the baby to, to, you know, to, to tell him that ‘I’m still with you.’ But I’m not breastfeeding. But I was not there for both.” (Interview, 5/12/2009).

Helen was not given any choice between being an academic woman and playing her mother role (Evans & Grant, 2008) when she could not bring her family along. Ironically, 4 DAYS after Helen left her beloved family in big gloom and hurry, her husband got his visa and came to join her with their baby daughter in the US. Helen emphasized that the four-day separation made both her baby and her husband suffer enough at home and on the plane. Coming from a culture where men were not responsible for child-care, Helen’s husband had a very tough time taking care of his baby singlehandedly as a novice babysitter all the way from his home country to the US. The young girl, on the other hand, had to depend on formula all the time on the international flight so that after she got here she had a problem with her stomach.

Present

Due to the delay of her husband’s F-2 visa issuance Helen arrived in the US really late, “I came here just a weekend before the first day of classes. I arrived here Saturday or Friday night and then Monday was the first day” (Interview, 5/12/2009). As a result, Helen had to stay in a hotel for the first two weeks, the first four days alone and the rest of the time with her family. Helen’s awkward situation was not caused by her ignorance of the host culture but by the formalities of the US embassy in her home country, as she recalled in the initial interview, “it

was till the last minute that they gave me the, the visa, so ... I was not sure if I'm coming. I couldn't like, rent any apartment here, because I didn't have my visa yet." (Interview, 5/12/2009)

Helen mentioned in her personal journal that back in her home country, she had very good experience, a kind of "love relationship" with English since elementary school. After coming to the US Helen's American friends also said that her language is "excellent." With a strong ESL background she did very well in her doctoral class and had little difficulty in her academic work. Helen never thought of her English as "an obstacle of understandability with the people" until she observed that some people "make a conversation as short as possible" when they heard her accent (Journal, 8/22/2009). Helen became aware that her English was not "standard" enough thus got haunted with the "native-speaker" fantasy (Canagarajah, 1999; Lin et al., 2002; Phillipson, 1992; Simon-Maeda, 2004a). This phenomenon aroused Helen's self-consciousness that "as other international students, I still have this different accent" (Journal, 8/22/2009). Helen blamed herself that HER accent blocked conversations and made her not understood by other people. This downgraded self-image stayed with Helen until she read an article discussing the efforts practiced from both the speaker and the listener of the language to reach a point of understandability. The article helped Helen reexamine her communication with the local people and realized that understandability is "a dual effort and not a single one in which the non-native speaker is struggling to be understood ... Therefore, even if the speaker's effort is there, a successful conversation couldn't be reached without an effort from the listener too." (Journal, 8/22/2009)

Helen identified herself as an "international Muslim student mother" since the beginning of this study and made detailed elaboration of these identities in her personal journal writing. The first thing that characterized Helen's racial identity was the "hijab," her head cover. In Arab

cultures, all Muslim women wear hijab and “dress up in a modest way” when they “go outside or among men” (Journal, 8/15/2009). This modest way of dressing is a key component of a Muslim woman’s identity, as Helen discussed here:

Muslim women enjoy showing their beauty and love taking care of themselves as other women. But modesty in clothes is a natural part of our lifestyles because we believe that any encounter between a man and a woman should be an equal one between a human being and a human being away from the sexual complexities that disturb the male/female relationship. And with a world that objectifies women and treats the female body as only a sexual object, Muslim women choose to bypass many obstacles that judge women according to their measurements without considering their minds. (Journal, 8/15/2009)

This symbol of modesty in Muslim culture, however, turned into a “stigma” (Goffman, 1963) on Helen when she came to the United States. Before she came Helen had assumed that American people “don’t stare at you” in public thus was really surprised that in fact “People stare everywhere because I cover my hair” (Journal, 8/27/2009). At first Helen understood it as something new to the local people and tried to ignore it. With more Muslim women coming to the university town, however, the staring did not stop. This “staring in the United States” disturbed Helen to the extent that she really wanted to stop every single person and tell him/her that “a lot of what you see and hear in the media is not true about me, my religion, and the part of the world from where I come” (Journal, 8/27/2009). This alienated experience brought Helen a number of questions about her racial and cultural identities. With the internal conflict Helen eventually had an opportunity to share something in her class, which was welcomed by most of her professors. Even so, Helen still felt “choked with many things” because outside school

setting some racial conflicts seemed just inevitable as depicted in this scenario of her journal entry:

My daughter was playing besides the slide in the park and she was trying to help another kid to get up the slide. So she held the kid's hand while trying to help. Suddenly, the kid's mother's voice came from behind shouting and cursing some bad words, (stupid ass and alike!) and telling her other daughter to tell me (didn't talk to me directly!) that there should be no touching!!!

I didn't say a word! and I left the park right away.

What was that? I started to ask myself. Is it such a crime that a child holds the hand of another child while playing? Is it a difference between two cultures or something else?

After thinking for a while, I found that it was just a racist behavior!!! (Journal, 7/4/2009)

Helen felt so hurt by the incident, particularly the “taboos of ordinary language” in the “symbolic power relations” (Bourdieu, 1977), because “coming from an Arab Muslim country I understand that we suffered from generalizations. ([S]ome stereotypes as Arabs/Muslims are terrorists, Muslim women are oppressed, and so on ...)” (Journal, 7/10/2009). Helen felt so insulted and indignant about her racial experience that she couldn't help sharing the story with some American friends. The latter's supportive response of being “shocked of the lady's behavior” gave Helen great relief hence further belief that “we should never generalize” (Journal, 7/10/2009). The story triggered “a complex series of questions” that Helen had had about “what Americans really know about the part of the world from where I come” thus turned her attention to the issue of media, as shown in the following entry:

A lot is going on in the Middle East including Iraq, Syria, Iran, and above all the Palestinian issue. But what is really shown about these countries and the conflicts there is so small as compared with other local news. Unfortunately, this small part is mostly distorted or shortened in a way that leaves the viewer with a confusing picture of the truth.

I can't ignore these things because they touch my everyday life and image while studying in the US I can't ignore the fact that so many is going out there but it is being used and distorted for political reasons and personal agendas. (Journal, 7/10/2009)

Turning to media, Helen furthered her observation in her journal entries about the hundreds of Hollywood movies always depicting Arabs as evil, corrupt, and terrorists, "NEVER a Muslim or an Arab is depicted in the US filmmaking as a doctor, teacher, scientist, engineer, or even a hardworking father or a loving mother." (Journal, 7/15/2009) Most notably, Helen argued, the two Hollywood movies "Black Sunday" and "True Lies," which were produced respectively in 1977 and 1994 and "depicted Arab men and women as terrorists who are in a constant war with the United States," were "frequently broadcasted on many of the local channels that every American has at home. Something like a pill that they should take or be reminded of at certain times due to the specific agendas of the people who govern the media industry in the US." These stereotypes about Arabs in American media reinforced Helen's struggles with her racial identity as presented in her question "How can I separate myself from all of this??" (Journal, 7/15/2009)

Suffering from racial encounters woke up Helen so that she started taking every possible opportunity to provide "first-hand experience" about Arab people and culture against the distorted media discourse, as she recorded in a journal entries. As discussed elsewhere, in an

undergraduate class where she was invited as a guest speaker the students were asked to discuss an article about “hijab.” Helen was very glad about the “great experience” not only because “a number of young students” in the dominant culture wanted “to know more about the choice of millions of Muslim women to wear the hijab worldwide” but also because her input made some students realize that they had had “a preconception that Muslim women cover their heads out of shyness or inability to face the world” (Journal, 10/11/2009). Coming all the way from being uncomfortably stared at to being a first-hand informant Helen’s racial identity evolved through different phases. Reflecting on the struggles and negotiations she had been through, Helen realized that she had learned more about “other cultures in which we all share a human meaning” thus understood that racial problem “is not with our difference but it’s in our understanding and respect of this difference” (Journal, 10/11/2009).

While claiming to be a Muslim woman with salient racial identity Helen identified herself as a hardworking student and a caring mother. As she reflected in a journal entry, the irreconcilability between the dual roles of student and mother often gave her the sense of guilt thus pushed her “to give any free time that I have to my daughter” (Journal, 6/10/2009). Helen would compensate her child with “whatever free time I have because I spend a lot studying for my Ph. D” (Journal, 7/4/2009). She enjoyed her daughter’s “learning of things day after day” and was surprised at the child’s ability to learn two languages, Arabic and English, at the same time. As a proficient student mother, Helen was not satisfied with being just a witness of her daughter’s growth but pursued to be a knowledgeable parent by self-learning and even attending academic conferences on child education (Journal, 8/22/2009).

While restricted in her family life and academic work, Helen longed to make friends and was eager to socialize with them. However, it was not until she finished her coursework that

Helen eventually met “four female students with whom I had the chance to chat outside the class and about other things than the course material” (Journal, 6/10/2009). A year and a half’s busy life entangled with coursework, housework, motherwork, and absence of friends filled Helen with bittersweet emotions that when she read an article “how to make friends” in the handbook for internationals Helen couldn’t help laughing and crying at the same time (Journal, 6/10/2009).

As summarized in one of her journal entries, Helen had tried to be “an ideal person” all her life. She wanted to be “the perfect person wherever I go and in whatever I do” (Journal, 6/10/2009). She was always considered the best student in her class, the most loved child and sibling in her family, the most popular teacher with her students, and the greatest problem-solver among her friends. As such, Helen had always striven to be a good mother and a good wife and a good doctoral student at the same time. She was so hardworking that she even missed her 28th birthday in the US! After struggling strenuously for a while, however, Helen found that she was “losing control over my life, at least the one I used to live before.” After a number of negotiations, Helen was brought to the fact that she was not “an iron lady” perfect in fulfilling every role (Journal, 6/15/2009) hence her conclusion that “whoever wants to be an ideal person will prove to be a failure” (Interview, 6/4/2010).

Given their different ESL backgrounds, Helen walked in her husband’s shoes and understood his language barrier thus she took over many jobs in the US that used to be undertaken by her husband in their home country, particularly in communication about some home issues. However, coming from a conservative Asian culture, Helen could not completely shrug off her former gender responsibilities thus was often doing both people’s jobs. The husband, on the other hand, was confined at home taking care of the baby due to his language difficulties as well as nonimmigrant visa status. Although redistribution of work gave Helen and

her husband a very hard time at the beginning, yet through struggles and negotiations, Helen became smart and was able to manage her tight schedule and stay with her family around as a doctoral student. Her husband changed a lot accordingly: he could not handle the baby himself at first but in the end he was an expert in child-rearing. The transformation led to Helen's reexamination of her AGSM life and redefining of her family's role in her study life, as she summed up in her debriefing interview, "I couldn't have done it without my husband's support. He is the first support that I can always reach." (Interview, 6/4/2010) In addition, having her child with her was what Helen liked about her graduate study in the US. As such, gender role reversal might not necessarily be a minus but could be a plus, and studying with her family might not be a burden but could be a privilege for her in comparison with the single international students in the US.

Future

In our initial interview Helen expressed her plan to return to her home university to teach after graduation. She felt that students in her home country still had the "obstacle of learning English as a foreign language" and they were afraid "to express themselves in English" (Interview, 5/12/2009). Helen believed that as a teacher she could do something to help the students in her country. In our final interview, Helen told me that she was further convinced that she needed to return to her country because she saw many youth programs she believed she could contribute both as a professional and as a volunteer. With respect to Helen's racist experience in the US there seemed to be a connection between Helen's future plan and her professional and national identities in the study. The bitter experience along race/ethnicity lines might have brought her a social awakening (Chae, 2008) hence the plan to contribute her knowledge to her home country.

Helen's experience was only a specific case of non-native English speaking graduate student mother in the United States. In our initial interview reversed gender role identity was one of Helen's salient identities in her narrative. Later in her journal entries Helen did not mention much about that issue, instead, racism emerged as a main topic of her discussion. The change of themes showed explicitly how Helen's identities were fluid and dynamic, with some salient and some not at a certain point of time and context. The comparison between the way Helen's friends complimented her English performance and the way people outside the school setting treated her would lead us to rethink that racism was no longer what it was several decades ago. Either as progress or craftiness, racism became more subtle and individualized, as exemplified in the case of Helen as an AGSM.

In this chapter I have presented the qualitative analysis of the data and provided deeper insight into what the student mothers experienced in their everyday lives in the United States. The AGSM experiences demonstrated that due to various internal and external factors, the female participants strove to become good students, good mothers, and good spouses thus managed many different roles and underwent various struggles and breakdowns. Based on the knowledge from their postcolonial literature, most women had misunderstanding about the host culture and people hence misleading expectation and subsequent frustration in their graduate study in the US. Through the AGSM experiences, however, most women were brainwashed and reconceptualized their roles as good mothers, students, and wives.

Although the AGSM experiences were tough and challenging yet in retrospect, most participants considered them valuable and constructive. The life history of Helen presented at the end of this chapter illustrated how an AGSM's identities evolved in the process of their graduate study in the US. It indicated pedagogically that while classroom was a comfort zone for most

AGSMs, the real big challenge came from the larger social setting outside school. Helen's highlight of racial identities in her personal journal writing reminded us that when women interview women "gender is not enough" due to the background gaps between the interviewer and the interviewee (Riessman, 1987). Back to the departure purpose of the study, the following chapter will work to provide a full picture for the women who are dealing and will deal with their situations as AGSMs in the United States.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study intends to explore what characterizes the experiences of being an Asian graduate student mother in the United States. The women narrative accounts present a wide range of identities in relation to their race, gender, class, and culture. Their identities are hybrid, dynamic, ahistorical, and constructed socially, culturally, economically, politically, and linguistically. Coming from diverse yet conservative Asian cultures, respectively, Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, and Western Asia, most female participants had to play a series of ten identities in their experiences as Asian graduate student mothers in the US. In the meanwhile, each woman professional had a unique and personal history about their past, present, and future as an Asian, an ESL graduate student, a mother, a wife, and many other hidden roles they played in their everyday lives. There are unique identities as well as some underlying similarities. In some contexts identities appear singular but in other contexts they seem plural.

Many internal and external factors worked on the professional, racial, linguistic, cultural, class, gender identities of the focal women in this study in relation to their social, cultural, economic, and linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) they owned differently in their home countries and in the US. Although the new environment asked for drastic change of gender roles neither the women nor their husbands were ready to reposition themselves in their families. Most of the women's husbands were unwilling to "establish a balanced distribution of responsibilities" between the couples (Wodak, 2005, p. 97) but clung to their traditional male-dominant roles, which caused enormous motherhood pressures and conflicts in the women's career and personal lives. On the women's part, while they were trying to play superwomen in their professional life they still remained secondary to the roles of dominant wives, mothers, and women according to

their traditional cultural status quo. To some extent, therefore, the real issue is not the men but the women's positions in their families. In the part that follows I conclude my study with an axis indicating horizontally the identities pertaining to the focal women's race, gender, class, and culture; and vertically the different forms of capital the women possessed and the strategies they resort to in their graduate student mother experiences in the US.

Gender Asymmetry

Among the most frequently played identities across the eight participants are their professional identities, professional and mother identities, reversed gender role identities, and good mother identities, which present saliently how the AGSMs had to cope with multiple roles and identities in different contexts in the US. While possessing vast amounts of educational experiences in both English and native languages hence privileged backgrounds in their native countries, most women had longed to accumulate more linguistic, cultural, and symbolic capital (Lin, 2004; Park, 2006) thus cherished their dreams of seeking graduate degrees in the US for years. In the end they left the comfort zones in their homeland and came to the frontiers as the pioneers of their families. Considering their marital status the women's oversea study dreams naturally involved their husbands as well as their children later on.

The unique finding of this study reveals that the Asian female graduate students and their husbands all face difficult and challenging professional and personal adjustments. While the degree-seekers worked so hard in both their personal life and academic life and endeavored to keep their husbands from liabilities and burdens with respect to their linguistic proficiency, none of the husbands seemed very supportive in their wives' intellectual pursuit or family responsibility. Most of the men were so absorbed in the self-pity, self-centered, traditional male ego. They did not go out to work hard enough, study English hard enough, or adjusted their

“domestic identity as fathers” (Lazar, 2005) hard enough. Some men did help out in the home, but this had not “amounted to a radical redistribution of the domestic responsibilities” (p. 142). The men’s positioning in the families made women obliged to face the difficulty in “having to juggle a career and family responsibilities alone” (p. 142), in a society where childcare and housework help were hardly available.

Traditional Confucian-Asian values “support men’s position as heads of households, and prioritize for women their ‘natural’ reproductive and nurturing roles as mothers” (p. 143). With the AGSMs and their husbands “reversing” their gender roles in the new context, however, the men refused to take care of house chores and supervise their children’s homework while they stopped being able to provide financial support, make critical decisions, and set disciplines in their families. Compounding this is the difficulty in disempowering the men of their head positions in the families. As such, some unpleasant events must be hidden or filtered to the men because they would either play an inappropriate part in the solution or embarrass someone like their children. When the men also enrolled in graduate programs in the university they asked for both unreserved support and gentle advice from the female professionals so that the women had to take care of the men as vulnerable little children and respected them as family authority at the same time.

What complicated the issue was that most of the women’s husbands used to be equally or more successful professionals in various fields in their home countries but they encountered giant blocks in English communication in the host country. They were reluctant to give up their careers, middle class status, and social distinctions to become unrecognized spouses of the female students. In the graduate programs, most men were completely re-classed to the lower class they could not adjust to thus became totally shattered. As such, most of the men were

neither grateful for the women's contribution to the families nor willing to become an equal parent and partner.

Most of their previous careers may not translate easily to success in America. Limited linguistic capital or language barrier has restricted the men's access to the social resources (Pao, Wong, & Teuben-Rowe, 1997) so that they face difficulty in employment, racism, reversal of gender roles, and the loss of paternal authority in the family (Lowe, 1996a, p. 122). The inequality of language potentials and disparity of gender stereotypes between the women and their husbands resulted in a lot of gender and power issues in their gender relationships. While the women developed their new gender ideals in the US their husbands would not let go of their dominant positions and their longstanding authoritative identities that they brought from their home cultures.

Feminist Angel in the House

A typical feature common across the women in this study, including myself as presented at the beginning of this project, was that we were overconfident about ourselves. Single mothers, in particular, had even stronger willpower as presented in their narrative accounts. Central to the Asian graduate student mother's experiences is their daily juggling between professional and academic demands in American graduate schools AND their familial and domestic duties in their marriages at homes as mothers and wives. Coming from diverse but rather conservative cultural backgrounds with stereotypical gender roles in domesticity, most women under study have internalized the criteria of "wise wife" and "good mother" as being nurturant, kind, and selfless (Badinter, 1980; Birns & Hay, 1988).

Despite the whole spectrum of children of different age, sex, and culture in this study, being or aiming to be good mothers is one of the most important identities across all the women

under study. The identities were presented in the various reasons about why the women brought their children to the US and how they always prioritized their children's benefits before their own. Actually, other-centeredness or sacrificial love is the most salient feature defining all the women under study hence the reason for the existence of the group. The women's sense of guilt and sacrifice was presented across race, culture, geographic area, and academic discipline.

As pioneers of their families in the new land, the AGSMs had to make difficult adjustments from being established and often higher ranking professionals in their home countries to being graduate students earning meager stipends and trying to meet rigorous academic requirements while carrying all the domestic duties of motherhood and wifeness. Since most husbands had insufficient English proficiency and were reluctant to give up their careers, middle class status, and social distinctions to become unrecognized spouses of the female students, most women had to play both the cool key figures and subversive wifely roles in the domestic sphere. However, what caused the enormous motherhood pressures and conflicts in the women's career and personal lives lies not only in the men, but in the women's position in their families. The issue is partly attributed to the gender relationship the women position in their families.

A close look at the women's moving narratives would reveal their complex identities of being both traditional and feminist. Relying on their high English proficiency and non-dependent visa status, most women assumed that they had more potential in the English-speaking country compared with their dependent husbands, who may actually have higher degrees and saved money in their home countries but whose English level is comparatively lower. To keep align with their traditional gender roles most women became submissive advisors of their husbands and 24-7 mediators of their children. While the women play tough, overconfident, and strong-

willed superwomen they had elbowed their husbands to play on-lookers with the excuse of language insufficiency. It was the internalized traditional values and status quo that made the women cling to the traditional, masculine, and good mother and wise wife style and suffered a lot of conflicts and stress.

Through numerous struggles and breakdowns, most women came to understand really late that they could not become superwomen no matter how hard they tried. They were just killing themselves as ideal mothers and good wives. That created so much pain. The understanding that “I’m Not the Iron Lady!” traveled a long way to reach the female professionals. Based on this new understanding, the women sometimes stopped playing the angel in the house (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000) and demanded redistribution of family responsibilities with their husbands. Surprisingly, when the men were tried, they did “a great job.” The miraculous change on both sides solidified the affection between the couples when the hidden beauty was mutually appreciated and the sacrifices were mutually recognized.

Despite their dreams and strengths, the AGSMs revealed their extremely contradictory and contextually bound identities (Bailey, 1997). Caught between conservative and liberal cultures, the women clung to their traditional, patriarchal, gendered roles while embracing their liberal, American, feminist ambition. Their identities are complex and multilayered. They are not completely traditional and they are not completely feminist. They are sometimes in traditional style and sometimes very American feminist. It is hard to define them as feminist or traditional because they are a mix. The dynamics of the AGSMs’ feminist identities is exactly the complexities in dealing with their issues. It further evidences that feminism is not one-dimensional or an explicit ideology. It sometimes comes into play and sometimes is pushed to the side. The gender identity of AGSMs is a discursive construct. Similar to racial inequality, it

depends on “the reversal of values, attitudes, and the human nature” (McCarthy, 1994, p. 87). It is true that one is not born a woman (Simon-Maeda, 2004a; Lazar, 2005) but becomes a woman. The following question is what possibilities are “available to women and men both within the domestic sphere, and between the domestic and public spheres of life” (Lazar, 2005, p. 145).

Self-assurance and Insecurity as ESL Users

The initial purposes of the female participants to come to the US to get graduate degrees are powerful reflections of ELT as cultural, social, and economic capital in the current globalized world, particularly in Asia. Due to linguistic educational imperialism, for most women under study the degrees obtained from the US were perceived more valuable than those obtained from their native countries. Before coming to their graduate programs most women conceptualized the US based on their textbook literature and limited experiences communicating with a few Americans on their EFL/ESL homelands, where American culture was depicted as free and equal and American people friendly and respectable. Confrontation with the reality awakened the female participants that their dream of language and professional development is distant from the reality in the new environment.

As presented in the AGSM narrative accounts, most women had good educational backgrounds in their home countries and brought with them rich native cultures and academic achievement to the US with the expectation that their professional expertise would be as much valued as in their homelands. Due to the postcolonial dominance, however, American academy usually did not acknowledge third world higher education degrees and higher education experiences and credentials. Since nothing counted outside American academy the women had to start everything from scratch. The difference between American and Asian educational systems, American and ethnic epistemology (Ladson-Billings, 2000), ways of participatory practice

(Norton, 2001), and nonnative speaker fallacy (Canagarajah, 1997), all led to the female students' nervousness and nonparticipation in class. Excluded by the native speaker group "whose linguistic habitus is the *realization of the norm*," the ESL women could not manifest "the ease given by self-assurance" but the "negatively sanctioned *outspokenness* and silence" given by "insecurity" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 658).

It is known that women's outspokenness is devalued in traditional Asian cultures but little known to the female participants that outspokenness is not welcome in American culture either (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Silence of the women was treated as an individual business while outspokenness offended and "threatened" both the American and international fellow students. The double marginalization as a result of both gender and non-nativeness in this case cornered the outspoken women to the other extreme of silence which aggravated their dilemma and depression. Apparently, silence and outspokenness of the AGSMs are interrelated and both showed the women's discomfort in the American class. The Asian female graduates were still left to sink-or-swim as were experienced by immigrant children several decades ago (Park, 2006).

With their linguistic passport into American culture (Pao, Wong, & Teuben-Rowe, 1997), however, bilingualism provided the female graduates a choice to redefine and re-identify themselves in their academic work. When the "I don't know how to say that in English" stage was over, when it came to learning "Old English" as a foreign language, and when translation asks for both English and foreign languages, the women's ownership of English (Widdowson, 1993) was reclaimed and their former identities were activated as high proficient and knowledgeable bilingual or multilingual scholars, which turned their marginalization into

privilege in the dominant culture. This, of course, is an impossible task without the support and understanding of the program, professor, and institution.

Bilingual Professional Asian Mothers

Distinctive from local women in the US the Asian graduate student mothers here do not have enough social capital to reach out for child-caring support. To complicate the issues even further, most AGSMs were previously often with far more supportive familial and social network to turn to help with childcare in their home countries by way of “multiple parenting.” In America, however, which focuses on “individual mothers at the core of children’s development” (Ambert, 1994), these women have to nurture their children on their own to learn EFL/ESL, to make cross-cultural adjustments to America, and to negotiate their new identities of race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, language, and culture. Thus the questions are, if all the graduate courses are scheduled in the evening can a single international student mother leave her child home alone? If a child cannot be left home alone is it legal for an Asian woman to ask her husband to babysit her child online across oceans? If the class lecture is inappropriate for children under thirteen, is there any place in the university appropriate for the student mothers’ children anytime? If all the children are required to have babysitters, have the graduate programs provided necessary assistantships for the Asian graduate student mothers? All the answers to the previous questions are NO. Thus, on the one hand, state guardianship laws have failed to cater for the needs of international student mothers; on the other hand, child caring system of American higher education has not treated the AGSM group equally because of their nonimmigrant backgrounds.

With their high English proficiency the Asian graduate student mothers under study distinguished themselves from other immigrants in that they were able to help their children with certain language assignments. Where the children did not succeed the women would blame themselves for their children’s problems and failure. To compensate and help, the student

mothers would get involved and directly contact the school and related teachers. Unfortunately, it was often late when a woman learned that neither she nor her child really did anything wrong. Instead, it was the institution that ignored the particularity of the individual EFL/ESL students and failed to facilitate their needs sufficiently. More importantly, the Asian female scholars' EFL/ESL expertise was not valued enough by the teachers and professors who were labeled as native speakers. To some extent, no one from the institution was really curious about how important the performance records were for the EFL/ESL learners, how hard the Asian women endeavored to pay their college children's tuition – 4 times that of their American fellows, and what efforts the Asian women and their children put in earning a good grade, “the dwindle of irredeemable hours beneath the cheap tube lights” (Lee, 1995, p. 188). Most regretfully, failures and mistakes often happened to the courses where the children previously excelled so that both the children and the mothers got badly hurt and lost their confidence afterwards. Thus we question here, is the US an individualist country to all the children? Do the ESL Asian professionals have a scholarly say in deciding where to put their children at school? And if the AGSMs put so much trust on the children's school how should the teachers live up to their expectations? The student mothers were not to be blamed for their children's problems and failure. Rather, the one-size-fits-for-all teaching practice and the sink-or-swim institutional policies should take the fault. For the AGSMs to rid of their imposed maternal guilt the good motherhood myth should be removed first, which is mostly a top-down rather than a bottom-up effort.

Most Asian student mothers under study strived to provide favorable learning environment despite the resistance from their children and the limited capital they possessed in the host country so that their children would maintain their native languages and core native

cultures. Being bilingual and bicultural is exclusively highlighted in most AGSMs' educational ideology of their children, particularly young children whose native language literacy was not yet mature. Although there were challenges such as predominant use of English, fear of being perceived as different, limited visits to the native country, and lack of access to other native speakers (Mucherah, 2008), the AGSMs labored to maintain their children's native cultures, native language communication, and traditional cultural and gender behavior. Since the university was located not in a metropolitan city with large Asian population, the women's children had no exposure to native media, attending cultural events, interaction with many other native speakers (Mucherah, 2008), or going to native language schools (Park, 2006). With their academic backgrounds, however, some women would resort to the high-proficient native tutors and even worked as tutors themselves in order to improve their children's basic as well as academic literacy (Freeman & Freeman, 2001).

Social Capital Home and Abroad

Most female participants and their husbands had rich social capital in their home countries due to their upper-middle to upper-class backgrounds. All the family members contributed disproportionately to the total capital of the family. The core network of their extended families and relatives back home also helped them with child-caring, cooking, housekeeping, and lodging. Most importantly, parental families served as a shelter place when the female participants needed a retreat. All of the above networks were essential and helpful social capital, which converted economically, also provided their families with invisible financial support. An interesting part of the social capital that the Asian graduate student mothers owned back home was their social network with relatives in the US: almost half of the participants had this capital. This part of social capital was first the motivation of the women's coming to the US

to study and later added significantly to the women's social network in the new environment.

After coming to the US the "idling" of most of the women's husbands brings fatal cut of the social capital that the family had in all. In a real sense, the network of one or two relatives was the only social capital that the Asian graduate student mothers and their families owned when they first came to the host country. In comparison with those international students without these resources, the cross-boundary capital that the women possessed unquestionably put them and their families in a privileged position, where they could get both information and advice about the host culture and people, employment opportunity, children's education, child-care service, and places for a break.

When the women's social network was expanded to their fellow students, international neighbors, host families, ethnic communities, and even professors later, professor support is one of the most important supports available to the graduate students as well as the most commonly appreciated support across the female participants. The importance of professors' help is closely related to the Asian cultures where professors are often considered authorities positioned much higher above their students. For this reason, professors' comments and attitudes always had immediate effect on the female professionals' identities. This may be beyond the imagination of most Western and American educators whose relationship with the students is rather equal than hierarchical. Except for one perceived negative example of ageism, professors' help scattered everywhere in the women's narrative, ranging from giving compliments on the AGSMs' academic performance, understanding their "nonparticipation" in class, giving them extra guidance and help, caring about them as a whole person, showing respect to their racial and professional identities, sharing their own social network with the women, and caring about the women's husbands and children.

There was no difference of gender pertaining to professors' help per se. However, the extent of help did differ from individual to individual hence the different stories and conclusions in the AGSMs' reflections. To a big extent, professors' help decided what social capital, particularly academic capital the women could access to, how, and when in the host country. It even affected the strategic decisions of the women's academic development as well as their future plans to stay or to return. Ultimately, professors' recognition and support is the most essential element with which the women had defined their social identity (Tajfel, 1974) in their graduate study.

A unique form of social capital available to the AGSMs in the US was their parents and in-laws. This capital would not be withdrawn by the women except rainy days when an AGSM had a new baby or when she had no way to solve her problem. Consequently, sometimes a parent would come to support in person from her home country, and other times a parent would transfer some symbolic capital, such as instruction and advice, from his/her country to the US. This capital from the parents, similar to the cross-boundary capital mentioned earlier, was obviously rooted in the AGSMs' home countries rather than in the US.

Another unique form of social capital available to the international student mothers was their children's network, which included their children's classmates, teachers, friends, friends' parents, and sports and other talent teams. Seemingly the youngest of the family the children actually interacted with local people most frequently on the daily basis thus accumulated their linguistic and social capital fastest of all the family members. Understandably, part of this individual capital may also become collective capital of the whole family hence part of the AGSMs' social capital.

Middle-town Class of Asians

The social class of AGSMs is closely related to their changed income in the host country. The women's social, economic identities are crucial to their suffering and dilemmas because this is again the situation that they cannot reconcile. The conflict between elitists, middle-class, and intellectual pursuit is indeed the nature of graduate study. Although most AGSMs were middle-class professionals in their home countries, as presented in their narrative stories, they were reclassified financially to an impoverished, working-class social economic status in the new environment, temporarily for 4-6 years. As to any individual graduate student the experience was very difficult for the AGSMs and their families to go through.

Before they actually came to the US the AGSMs had a myth about their social economic status. For most of the female professionals, America was a "land of opportunity" where they could stay in the middle and property class (Kwong, 1995) as they did in their home countries. This myth was created as a result of the colonization of English language in Asia so that English has become "not only the lingua franca, but also the language of government, law, business, and education" hence "the major language of Westernization, or modernization, for most of Asia" (Tam, 2004, p. xi). The gap of capital possession in the two continents made the female graduates hard to fit in any given social class in the US. While they had well-educated professional backgrounds the student mothers lacked the Uptown Asians or professional middle class's financial security to live in their own suburban houses and invest HEAVILY in their children's education. The sort of underclass social economic status implied that the AGSMs had to struggle by themselves because they could not afford babysitters or other helpers and they had to pursue graduate assistantship by working several hours a day. The lack of financial resources

decided that the women were strained financially hence endless and perpetual struggles and stress.

The complexity of the AGSMs' social class, however, is that in the bipolar of selected Asian immigrants to the US these women stand on the end of the Asian Uptown professional middle class, who has sufficient cultural and linguistic capital and moderate economic capital accumulated through years of educational experiences in various social contexts. They were not impoverished to the extent of living in concentrated ethnic ghettos which is typical of the working-class "Downtown" Asian Americans, according to Kwong (1995) social class categorization. Although the female professionals could not afford to heavily invest in their children's education, they could afford to hire tutors to help their children's development and maintain their core native cultures. They were also able to partake in their children's school education and even provide extra academic tasks for their children. Thus, the graduate student mothers rather belong to a "Middle-town class" of Asian Americans, who were paid working-class wages and lived below poverty line but enjoyed middle-class jobs and had personal savings as secure backup, and who were able to create favorable conditions for their children's education bilingually and biculturally.

Controversial Race and Ethnicity

For non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs), experiencing marginalization may occur as a result of their visible minority race (Amin, 2001; Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Park, 2006; Tang, 1997). The same is true with Asian graduate student mothers in this study. Racial identities seem the most important parameter that makes the participants feel respected or disrespected, valued or devalued in the host country. Most participants agreed that there was no discrimination existent in the classroom but it still existed in the US in subtle forms. It includes

disturbing “staring” of Arab women from the local people, biased depiction of Arab people as terrorists who are in a constant war with the US and the frequent replay of the broadcast on TV, the racialized attitude of the local people to the female professionals and their children outside school setting, and most important of all, the unfair judgment on the conflicts between the white and the Asian women by the governmental institutions, such as police officers and car insurance companies. These racial confrontations with the local people badly “swerved” the Asian women’s preexisting “textbook or short-term” impressions on the US, the country in their minds being fair and polite, free and democratic because their ethnic identities were saliently devalued and hurt in their real experiences.

It is vital to notice that most American friends of the Asian women under study are aware of the prejudices thus seldom generalize. It seems to indicate that the ethnocentric literature written by the native authors distorts the reality of the Oriental countries (Said, 1978), which gives the local people both limited and biased knowledge and entails intercultural miscommunication. Interestingly, the racialized experiences projected on the ethnic identities turned into the Asian female professionals’ subsequent endeavors to provide authentic testimonies of their own cultures in all contexts possible.

In conclusion, the female participants in this study encountered numerous situations where they had to negotiate their complex identities as Asian students, mothers, and wives, with both marginalization and privilege. Each of the roles was a full-time job so that the women always felt in need of time. However, it was not issue of time management. There were many factors contributing to the women’s struggles and stress. First, the stereotypes of good mother and good women internalized in the traditional patriarchal cultures killed the professional women in the new environment when they had to struggle between high academic demands and

domestic gender and parent requirements. The realization that they were not able to fulfill each of the roles and please everyone was the beginning of the women's emancipation and the end of their guilt for their families. Second, while the middle-class privilege and social capital at home made the women able to come to study in their graduate programs, both the women and their husbands were completely re-categorized to the lower class in the United States. With limited capital of various kinds, the women had to face great difficulty in paying baby-sitting, transportation, house rent, tuition, and children's outside school activities.

Third, while engaging in their own academic development, all the women had to help their children's adjustment to the host country. None of the AGSMs had personal experiences as school kids in the US thus they had little to offer and consult their children when something wrong happened at school. Related institutions and educators, on the other hand, did not have enough knowledge about the EFL/ESL learners either and would not care about figuring it out or explaining the policies to the AGSMs and their children. Very often their decisions were based on the age-old stereotypes about Asian immigrant children and did not recognize the expertise of the EFL/ESL female professionals under study.

Fourth, the visible minority race as Asian and non-native English users marginalized the women in the white dominant society (Amin, 2001; Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Park, 2006; Tang, 1997). Although there was no obvious discrimination on the campus, subtle confrontations ranged from racialized attitude of the local people to the unfair judgment of the governmental institutions. While these racial confrontations did great hurt to the AGSMs and demystified the host country, they awakened the AGSMs that any generalization is a racial act, including their racial assumptions about the US based on their university textbooks.

AGSM Survival Kit

Although suffering from lots of pressure, struggle, and stress, when looking back, all the AGSMs felt it worth taking the bumpy road. Most women felt that they could not have had such enriched lives had they been in their home countries throughout the years. Most notably, they felt that studying without their children in the US was both unimaginable and lack of fun. The experiences of the AGSMs should provoke our thoughts: Are all the problems stated above avoidable? If a prospective AGSM wants to bring her children to the US, what issues might she need to address, and how can she make the best out of her student mother experiences? Scanning the diverse versions of the AGSM narrative and declarations, here are some survival tips summarized from their lived experiences.

On Academics

Choosing to come to the US to study means an AGSM must be ambitious and aggressive. She needs to know that her native culture is quite different from that of the US. Whatever middle class life she enjoys in her home country she is totally re-categorized to a lower working class in the US because of her student status and financial situation. While teachers of English are considered elitists in her home country she has become a poor minority student in the host country. With her ESL/EFL linguistic skills she may often feel under her American classmates because they seem to always need to be patient with her speaking. With her professional experiences and expertise, however, she has the capacity to distinguish herself in the academic field although it will take a lot more time and a lot more efforts. Thus she'd better not make the comparison for two reasons: (1) nonnative speakers can never become native speakers; (2) being nonnative is her plus because she is multilingual, multicultural, multiliterate, and has multiple perspectives.

There are almost no spoon feeding lectures in American gradate classroom. Instead, seminar is the main teaching form in most graduate programs, where a student needs to participate in pair, group, or class discussion by voicing her opinion. She shouldn't feel shy or timid or wait until she gets a perfect answer to the professor's question. In case she has difficulty understanding her peers' talking, she should always preview her studying material and make preparation to say something in class. Although her language does not equal her intelligence but fluency does help express her ideas. Finally, sharing her native culture is both important and necessary because she will soon realize: oh, I am a foreigner here. Then she will immediately want to learn who she is against her own culture.

She should not hesitate to ask when she has a question, particularly about her assignments. It is rare for an American classmate to initiate a conversation and check her class understanding. However, when she goes to the professor or any classmate most of them will be ready to help and explain things in great detail. No semester is easier than the others and no woman is a superwoman. It is hard and impossible for anyone to manage so many things well all the time. The end of the semester is usually the craziest time when all the final papers and projects will be due. Thus it is the most stressful and frustrating time for every graduate student. To concentrate on study, library will always be the first choice.

On Husbands

If her husband comes together they always need to work as a team. He may have a very hard time overcoming his language barriers and adjusting to his changed status. To help him anchor soon, an AGSM may need to translate for him on every occasion at the beginning. When he decides to get a graduate degree later, supporting him is even unavoidable. So the AGSM

needs to be patient to teach him but not spoil him. Language is not all the problem all the time. As time goes on, he needs to learn new skills and resolve to catch up as soon as possible.

Men are from Mars and women are from Venus? Forget it for a sec. They both come to the earth now. They both have to change and do things different from their traditional culture. If the woman has never paid any bills in her home country, she needs to do it now. If she has never rented an apartment, requested internet or cable service, and supported her family single-handedly, she needs to do it here. If her husband has never cooked before he will make a good chef soon. If the man has never done laundry in the home country, he needs to learn folding clothes soon. And he is changing the baby's diaper, heating the milk, and humming the baby to sleep. In the US, the man needs to share some "woman's" work. The woman should learn not to feel guilty about it because she is doing the "man's" work too.

It is understandable that her husband can be intimidated at communication with his broken English. Gradually, however, the woman should leave him alone to take a try. He will unbelievably do a wonderful job. The man may present weakness confronted with overwhelming difficulties, but he is a successful adult after all. Despite language differences, many skills are transferrable between cultures. Thus it is essential to redistribute the parent work and housework in the family from the very beginning. The woman is killing herself if she holds all the work to herself.

On Children

A student mother always needs tissues: when she breaks down in depression and when she takes pride in her child's achievement. Since the woman needs to play both roles as a student and as a mother she will always feel in need of time. It is hard to juggle both roles well since many of these things are intertwined. It is not wise for her to overestimate herself that she has all

the talents. The woman may often feel guilty when her child is not doing well enough or when she herself is too busy to set aside time for her children and husband. However, it is ok to prioritize her child most of the time but now and then she needs to make herself the priority. She should always learn not to feel guilty. An AGSM can't have a fixed schedule. The best way is this: when children go to school she goes to school; when children are home she is home. It is very easy that the woman won't have her personal life except just study and raising kid. Thus she shouldn't work many extra hours for her hands are already full.

It takes a while for her child to adapt to the new environment. When the child first comes, the woman should play safe and be a little conservative. Don't hurry! All knowledge becomes new knowledge if a child cannot understand the language, including math. Getting some positive experience is the most important thing to fuel his/her development. So don't expect prodigy in the first semester. Haste makes waste. A big question that the woman should soon decide is: whether to stay here or to return home after graduation. That answer will decide how much she will invest in her child's native culture education.

Her study habits will also have to be changed if her child is too small. Or she may want to delay having babies until after graduation. It is illegal to leave a child alone below 13 years of age in the US yet many graduate classes are in the evening. Babysitting will be a problem. Some friends, relatives, classmates, or babysitters in the neighborhood can be helpful. Student association of her ethnicity can also be a good resource in the university. Other student mothers can also be very informative. Again, she can't just sit there and wait. She needs to ask for help.

On Resources

Turning to different resources will save her a lot of time and trouble, and money perhaps. University student association of her ethnicity is always cozy and helpful, where she can share

the same culture, same language, and same food. Her professors are another kind of resource. They can help not only in her academics but in her family's adjustment to the host culture. International office will also provide lots of information. Church people and other international students can all be ready to help.

While most local people are nice and respectful an AGSM may encounter some negative experiences that she may never imagine in her home country, including rejection and some racial treatment. However, those are rare cases outside school setting. Thus it is vital to make her home textbooks just a reference: neither have myth or bias about this prospective country. As in other experiences, no matter how much she has known about the US, that is just knowledge not experience. In the meantime, she will never be over-prepared for this exciting adventure.

Being both a student and a mother (and perhaps more) on an alien land is no easy task but it is worthy and constructive. The enriched experiences will make her not only an intelligent professional but a strong woman who does not see any problem that she cannot deal with and who lives in so many worlds. Welcome aboard!

Implications

The group of Asian graduate student mothers has been deemed a minority of minority in TESOL study, sociolinguistics, and educational statistics. Current literature offers little about the roles and identities of these women so that they have remained under-researched and under-represented in both theory and empirical study and their voices have not been heard. To fill in the theoretical and practical ramification, this applied linguistic study examined eight AGSMs' lived experiences as ESL professional, mother, woman, and wife both inside and outside the American graduate classrooms by getting insight into the issues that the AGSMs are facing and offering some practical advice so as to benefit prospective international women students in the US. It

explored the complex roles, identities, thoughts and feelings associated with the Asian graduate student mothers in the US pertaining to their race, gender, class, and culture through presenting their professional ambition, child rearing, gender performance, racial discrimination, cultural preservation, religious practice, and settlement choice, in comparison with my own as an insider outsider researcher.

For Identity Study

The AGSM stories presented how the women survived as ESL professional women, Asian mothers, and independent wives in the US. The richness of their experiences is influenced externally by their seeking degrees, academic fields, and study phases and internally by their gender, race, class, and ethnicity. The findings demonstrated that the women's stubborn dreams of coming to the US to study are not simply individual choices but closely connected with the bigger social setting and the high status of English language in the Asian countries. Their degree-seeking rationale reflected the "U.S. political, economic, and ideological influence as well as an unstable economic structure of the home country, which has been visibly or invisibly under U.S. domination" (Chae, 2008, p. 29).

The AGSMs' linguistic and social capital accumulated in their home lands is what made them able to come and stay in the US; and the ruthless downgrade of social capital hence their social class is what made them struggle in the US. What added to their struggle was the conflict between American liberal perspectives and the traditional patriarchal ideology, which was confronted by both the women and their husbands, hence the belief in "good wife and wise mother" and shock at gender role reversal. That the women had different backgrounds and played multiple roles explains why their identities both resembled and differed from each other. Not all their identities were saliently pronounced in the women's narrative accounts. Some

identities were important yet they stayed at a much hidden layer. This finding proved that identities are fluid and multilayered thus if we focus only on pronounced identities precious information will be left out particularly in the study of women and ESL students.

The findings of this study also supported that race and ethnicity were essential components of individuals' larger social identities (Pao, Wong, & Teuben-Rowe, 1997). Race continued to be "salient" in the US society (Ladson-Billing, 2000), which demanded further exploration of the racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies pertaining to the AGSM group. The stories of the AGSMs challenged the media-propagated images of "model minority" or "docile Asians" because of the structured inequality in society and the economic constriction they confront (Chae, 2008). They further proved that "the economic, ideological, and legal elements that have influenced the lives of Asian immigrants must be apprehended within the complex interrelations of race, ethnicity, gender, and class in U.S. society" (p. 64).

Characterized with the co-existence of marginalization and privilege, the AGSM experiences revealed their complex identities as mothers living on the margin, students living on the margin, and nonimmigrant women living on the margin (Park, 2006). Due to their marginalized position in the dominant culture, most participants had no opportunities to reflect on the privileges they had back in their home countries. Their marginalized experiences come from reproducing the dominant ideology in the worldwide English language teaching enterprise that privilege and give more legitimacy to White native English speaking teachers (NESTs) (Canagarajah, 1999; Kubota & Lin, 2006; Motha, 2006, Park, 2006). Thus their bilingual or multilingual identities and the vast amount of privilege they brought from their previous backgrounds often tend to be overlooked by both themselves and others and are often seen as stigma. Their privileged backgrounds intersected with different forms of marginalization in their

TESOL programs contributed to the women's identity constructions and negotiations. The experiences of the AGSMs and their families bear "the weight of immigrant laws, geographical segregation, and the imposed relations of production" (Lowe, 1996a, p. 119). The difference in immigration policy, educational system, cultural value, communicative style, and ideology and epistemology all compels the AGSMs to negotiate various roles and identities in their study life in the United States.

For TESOL Teacher Education

The AGSMs constructed their "individual, multifaceted identities" (Simon-Maeda, 2004a) in their narrative accounts and demonstrated "the conflict between women's professional and personal lives, gendered and racial inequalities" as well as issues of "ageism, cross-cultural norms, and socioeconomic background" (p. 406). The women's stories indicated that the US graduate programs have not sufficiently addressed the commonality of these stories (Simon-Maeda, 2004a), such as the availability of child care (Menard-Warwick, 2005) and financial stability. With the challenges and contradictions faced by the female professionals, many of these factors can "only be understood through a macrolevel analysis of societal forces" (Lazar, 2005, p. 181).

Most AGSMs' experiences that demonstrated their marginalized linguistic and racial identities of NNESTs are not rare in US TESOL teacher education programs (Amin, 2001; Kubota, 2004; Norton, 2000; Park, 2006). The privileges of the Asian graduate student mothers were not fully activated in their programs, particularly in those of liberal art. They could not realize their true potential until they had the opportunity to provide first-hand experience about their own people and culture and were treated as real scholars rather than just novice pre-service teachers. The women's positioning of being at the periphery rather than at the center provided

further evidence that the masked notion of privilege is often silenced due to other complicated marginalization (Park, 2006) hence the power issues in many graduate programs in the US.

Most participants had rich ESL/EFL proficiency but not long-term experiences living in the authentic contexts of the US. As a result, most of the female professionals under study had stereotypes about the country and its people thus came with preliminary incomplete ideology and understanding. Thus, it will greatly benefit both the international students and the graduate programs if such topics could be incorporated in the graduate curriculum as “immigration, welfare, and education reform proposals, and advocate for laws that benefit the populations with whom they work” (Menard-Warwick, 2005, p.182). Meanwhile, administrators’ seeking “grant funding to pay for child care and for tutoring services” (p. 182) would further help the women students on a practical level. I also argue that the adult ESL curriculum should address a large array of real world concerns (Pavlenko, 2008), including common immigration information, which have direct implications for the classroom. Accordingly, “a problem-posing approach to instruction” (Schechter & Bayley, 2005) should be adopted so as to help the student mothers to deal with the issues they are confronting in their everyday life so that they could unlearn, for instance, “ ‘woman’ and ‘Orient’ are domesticated, feminized, assimilated” (Okihiro, 1995, p. 5).

Most notably, if the AGSMs are destined to take care of both her academic life and family life in her study, how should TESOL graduate programs help the women by helping their family dependents? If linguistic capital is the biggest hindrance for the women’s husbands to join in social communities, how could the programs bridge the men and the local resources and make financial negotiations on the women’s behalf? If children are the AGSMs’ biggest distraction in their graduate study, how do institutions and educators help to cater to the juniors’ adaptation

and biliteracy? As such, the AGSMs' narrative informs the fields of language teaching and language teacher education at least in the following aspects:

- Understanding multiple identities of AGSMs and promoting their multi-competent identities. Using personal narratives as window to this understanding.
- Individualizing mentoring and advising (Park, 2006).
- Resetting the criteria of program assistantships by incorporating the particularity of the women's family as a whole.
- Reforming curricula by incorporating parenting and everyday issue curricula (Menard-Warwick, 2005).
- Helping to establish the AGSMs or international graduate student mother community for sharing experiences and strategies.
- Preparing the EFL/ESL female professionals for effective participation in the American class.
- Relationship between TESOL and narrative inquiry (Simon-Maeda, 2004a).

For Policy Making

A number of AGSM stories talk about their stress and anxiety about nonimmigrant status thus informed policy making at different levels of the institutions in the US. The uncertainty of visa issuance was common across the female participants and practically caused great stress and inconveniences to the women and their families. As known, the mutual relationship between the US and some Asian countries has affected tremendously the type of visa issued to the prospective international students. This adds to the struggles of the AGSMs from the US-unfriendly countries because by paying home visit, the women may be rejected for new visas and stopped their graduate study thereafter. Given that most AGSMs come from countries with big

exchange rate of currency with the US and they have their families to support here, the numerous expenses in the US are huge burdens to the women.

Thus we ask: couldn't the formalities of visa application in most embassies/consulates in Asian countries be more reasonably grounded and simplified, without "threatening" the safety and benefit of the US people? Shouldn't the female professionals be allowed to work both on and off university campus, where there are real demands from the community for their language skills and professional expertise? If the women's husbands are not undocumented aliens, shouldn't they be entitled to work at least part-time jobs? Asian immigrants are not the issue (Kwong, 1995). A lot of times we focus on "classrooms," where most of the AGSMs' struggles are hidden and concealed. However, the AGSMs' lived experiences day in and day out inform policy makers that ignoring the "ecologies outside the classrooms" (Matsuda, 2008) is missing an overwhelming part of the AGSMs' lives in the US.

Final Thoughts

I look back when my writing comes to this page and cannot believe that I have covered such a long distance as an AGSM in the US. As I was writing on the other pages about the stories of my participants, my eyes become misty again. From where I am now I see those women still winding their way through the dark tunnels. I also see the heels of those ahead of me who are groping along the new mountain trails. Finally I fix my eyes on myself and see a big transformation from inside out.

I learn that I can be greater than my suffering for too much comfort can cause us to become unready for challenges that come our way. If I have so many things to carry I just need to make my shoulder stronger. I learn that being an AGSM has decided that my life will always be interrupted hence no time and space of my own. I can never really settle down but I have

acquired the ability to deal with uncertainty as an Asian MAMA PhD (Evans & Grant, 2008). I learn that everyone is an expert in designing others' lives: while I admire single students they admire my companionships. I learn that my friendship can be the best gain for my participants in the research. And I learn that "researcher as instrument" (Geertz, 1975) is not a metaphor but a must.

As witnesses and fellow-travelers of my AGSM's life, my participants have been co-researching, co-performing, and co-writing with me throughout the process, which endorses the saying "women help women." They understood me as a researcher and shared my difficulties as an AGSM in the US. They encouraged and supported me since the very beginning of this research. They responded promptly and passionately to my email of participant recruitment and said that "I have a friend who is an international graduate student mother and she has difficulty in finding participants for her study. That struck me and so I replied and volunteered as soon as I got your email and thought 'I must help her.' " They offered their ideas about my writing and interpretation and to make my work more academic they tried to use academic terms in our interviews and focus more on the academic aspect. When I was embarrassed to tell them about my change of the study plan they simply smiled, saying "no problem," and continued to recommend their friends when they themselves were excluded from my study. Last but not least, they reminded me that dissertation was not my final work from their own experiences and urged me to finish it as soon as possible. For this reason, I often switched with the women in our interviews where my life became the focus of talk and analysis and my husband and children were dragged in for a comparison with theirs.

Due to the rapport of the interviews, I was often taken into a past time and world as a listener (Riessman, 1993) to where the participants had lived their lives. I could not help but

frown their frown, pause their pause, and sigh their sighs. I needed to hold back my tears in numerous interviews and small chats, although some narrated experiences were similar to mine and some were not. While listening to their stories I could cartoon each AGSM in different contexts before and after they came to the US.

What is most unexpected and comforting from this research is the transformation that it brings to the women under study. First, it helped them understand that they were not alone in this journey. Second, they began to learn to deal with their situations and learned that there were many alternatives to a particular occurrence. Third, with so many roles to play, they learned to be satisfied with their imperfection in their lives. Fourth, they were happy about their gender role shift and proud about their husbands' adaptation. Fifth, they valued their families and marital relations much more.

Looking back, it is hard to see where I started first. However, I clearly recall that I wanted to evidence the struggles and endeavors of the group of AGSMs so that their husbands would recognize and appreciate their contribution to the families. I hoped their children may come back to my project for references when they grow up and stop condemning their mothers "You ruined my childhood!" I wanted to co-voice with the female professionals that we were not iron ladies and we needed help and attention. While adding to the family treasures of the women under study, this project is a guideline to the potential AGSMs who plan to come to study in the US with their children. At this point, it raises more questions for follow-up investigation and longitudinal studies: Will the women's husbands evaluate their dependent 2-visa lives differently from what the women stated in this study? Will "good father" be one of the salient identities as well among the men? Why and on what condition do the men decide to join their wives and children in the United States? And, what do the children say?

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Appendix A - Demographic Information of the Participant

Name _____ Home country _____ - _____

Age _____ Native language _____

Visa type _____ Marital status _____

Profession/Job in your home country _____

Major in your home country _____

Time arriving in the US _____

Major/track at current university _____

Program at current university _____

Degree sought at current university _____

Number of years learning English _____

Other places you have stayed in the US, and for how long?

A. _____ Duration _____

B. _____ Duration _____

Countries you have been to other than the US, and for how long?

Temporary plan for the future:

Stay in the US _____ Return to home country _____

Other _____

Did you keep a journal before you came to current university?

No ___ Yes ___ Handwritten/online blogs _____

In what language _____

From (mm/yy) _____ to (mm/yy) _____

Do you keep a journal at current university?

No ___ Yes ___ Handwritten/online blogs _____

In what language _____

From (mm/yy) _____ to (mm/yy) _____

Demographic Information of Your Child(ren)			
Item \ Birth order	1st	2nd	3rd
Name			
Gender			
Date of birth			
Place of birth			
Nationality			
Duration in the US			
Time joining you at current university			
School grade			
Current address			
NOTE			

Is your husband here with you?

Yes _____ He is _____

No _____ He is _____

His age _____ Visa type _____

Years he learns English _____

His major in your country _____

His job in your country _____

Time he joined you at current university _____

Other places he stayed in the US and duration _____

Other countries he has been to and duration _____

Appendix B - Initial Interview Protocol

First I really appreciate that you can come to participate in my project because I know your schedule is very full. I hope that we can have a conversation and share our experiences together. All right, now I wonder if you mind my audio recording our interview, which only my advisor and I have access to. Thanks.

As I told you, I am doing a dissertation on the experiences of international student mothers and I would really like to understand this experience from your perspective. My research topic is *An Exploration of the Identity of International Student Mothers in the United States*. So my project focuses on international women students in the United States. These students come as 1-visa holder such as J-1 or F-1. Their children may come with them or join them later. But the women must be the first of their family to come. I want to study the experiences of this group of people.

As you know, I am like this myself. I feel there are lots and lots of experiences or stories that sometimes I want to share with other people. (Actually, we two have already shared many stories.) I know that for me, in the course of being an international student mother, there have been lots of bitterness and sweetness, pain and joy mixed together. For example, I always feel that I have many different roles. Do you? Your situation may be a bit different from mine so I am very interested in your experiences and understandings. What was this experience like for you? Anything you can tell me will be of value ...

I am a university teacher of English in China and I come here to study for PhD after I was done in an exchange program in another American university. I am curious why you initially have this idea to come here to study? Is English very important for your job in your country? ... You know the degree I got from here should weigh more than its counterpart in China. That is one reason I come here to get my degree. What does pursuing a graduate degree in the US mean to you, to your family, and probably to others around you?

That is very interesting. But why do you decide to invite/take your child(ren) to the US and why then? Who can help take care of your child(ren)? Is your husband here with you, why and why not? Oh, he is here (he is in your country). .. So do you always leave your child to (your husband) or your friend or it was just a single incident? Could you tell me about those other times?

Thank you, that is great. Do you have anyone else to help you take care of the child esp. in emergency? In China, my parents helped me take care of my son a lot. ... You too? That's understandable. How about in the US? Why can't you find a babysitter?

In China, both my husband and I had fulltime jobs and we could both take care of the family and our work well. But here is different. Most of the time I need to communicate about my son's schooling, but not my husband because of his language. Yet he helps to cook a lot more. How is your housework distributed between you and your husband and why? Who communicates about your child(ren)'s schooling esp. when the child is in trouble, and why? ... Oh, that is hard. I totally understand that and sometimes I feel very guilty and bothered for not being able to fulfill my duty as both a "good mother" and a "good student" (and perhaps a "wise wife" too). Do you? Does it bother your study? Sure! Do you feel that your life as a professional woman is different

here from back in your home country? I have to tell my son to take care of himself when I work as a single mother on my final paper. He has been accustomed to that now. But sometimes I will feel guilty for I haven't fulfilled my duty as a "good mother" or a "good student" or even a "wise wife." But I really can't be split into two halves, right? How do you balance the two or more different schedules of your child and your own? ... Same feeling. You just can't ignore the child.

Do you also have to prioritize your child when spending money? ... Oh, you are a great mom. I find it hard to take up a part time job and earn a little money while I have to take care of my son and my coursework at the same time. However, in this case, I have to spend the money we took from China. Do you have to work several jobs to get extra money to support the family? ... You don't have to (You do)? So you can focus more on your study. That'll be better. Then what are your main financial sources in the US in comparison with that in your home country?

I have never taken care of my child on my own in China. So one of the things that have been very difficult for me is what happened to my son in school when he first came to the US and his dad returned China. I had to take the responsibility totally on my own. Do you experience it the same way or different? ... That's really hard on you. I understand the experience. ... I had a very bitter experience when I took care of my son by myself. The other day, my son got lost from a grocery store. That was really a nightmare for me. I suddenly couldn't see what I was doing here and why I was here. I even sat in front of the store and began to wail and later my friends helped me call the police ... Did anything similar happen to you, such as physical or emotional breakdown? ... Oh, I really can understand how hard that was. Could you follow up on that ... what is your most unforgettable story about your child since he/she came to the US? ... Oh, that similar event happened to my son too. Your strategy is very smart.

Sometimes I feel a bit hard to educate my son in the different cultural environment, for example, how to communicate with American children, esp. when they didn't treat my son well at the beginning. But based on the Chinese culture, I don't want my son to be aggressive. Do you have the similar dilemma? ... Yes, that helps. When the child grows older, are you going to address his/her native country identity or American identity? ... You must have strong reasons to do so.

I agree. The other day, my son and I did some shopping and after we came back I went to do something else in a hurry. So all the food including the frozen ones were just piled there. When I came back, the stuff was still there. Well, it is ok. But what made me really mad was that he put his frozen stuff safely in the fridge. That earned him a good scolding. He complained that for such a trifle, I could scold him for such a long time. I asked myself the same question too. But what upset me most seemed to be "You are over too much self-centered." You know? Do you blame your child and what are usually the reasons? ... Wow, that is a really similar story.

So your husband is here? Is he working, or studying, or ...? Really?! My husband is studying for a master degree too and his English is not good enough. So I have to help him sometimes with his homework - reading, writing, and even thinking. You too?! Actually, after my husband came to join us, things are not getting much better esp. at the beginning. Do you feel that your husband helps much? ... How do you balance his schedule with yours? ... Wow, we are superwomen! You are right, both my husband's schedule and my schedule have to be put after my child's schedule. Right, that's maybe Asian culture.

I have many international classmates and we are really close. They give me lots of help. But in comparison, some American classmates and professors are a little bit indifferent. Are your classmates good to each other and how are your professors - or how do you like your current program? How do you think others view you? ... That's a very touchy story. It must be very encouraging to you. In China most teachers of English are females and here there are many female students too in our program, how about your program here? How many of your classmates/students in the program are females? That is interesting. Our program is TESOL and there are both international and American students. To be frank, I feel I am different from American students sometimes. Do you feel the same way? What does non-native English speaker (NNES) mean to you? ... Absolutely, I understand.

Sometimes I consider all the things together, my study, my GA work, TA work, my future job in the US and I can't help recalling my life in China. I feel tired out here. Do you feel the same way? ... Well, we are in the same boat (your situation is just different from mine).

I feel most of the time, my family follows my rules. I set the rules and I set the model. I play the "black face" or the strict parent. But I don't always feel good. I don't know why. Is it the same case in your family? Who set the rules and follow them? That is an interesting story. So you are not a "black face" but a "follower." I always feel that I am the breadwinner of the family here. I have to carry the yoke by myself and my husband depends on me esp. at the beginning. I think it has to do with the program, age, and your investment in your home country, doesn't it? Do you have similar feeling? ... I am glad that you found a solution to this.

I feel that the affection between my husband and me is better after we came. But still, our difference is huge. He even complains for my staying in the US and leaves his prosperous career back home sometimes. I feel it is unfair to me! Who do I stay here for? Not for myself of course ... So did your husband say anything that hurt you or do you feel that men seem to become more vulnerable and helpless here? ... Right, that really has to do with our investment in China and restriction here, and our initial plan before we came to the US... When I first came I didn't plan to bring my son to the US. I was really not very prepared to settle down in the US. What is your case? ... So you made preparation long before. No wonder.

How the relationship between you, your child(ren), and your husband changes after you come to the US? Is it that sometimes your child can give the final say? But was it possible in your home country? ... That is a touchy summary.

So in retrospect, our experiences are not just stories of victims, but also stories of privilege and gains, right? What do you say is your advantage and disadvantage as an ISM in the US in comparison with other international students (or international student fathers)? If you had to summarize your experience as an ISM what would you say? ...

I really can't see what lies ahead of me very clearly now. I just depend on faith. What is your next step that you can see? What is your future plan?

Thank you very much for sharing your experiences with me. I really appreciate that.

Appendix C - Guidelines for Personal Journal Writing

First of all, thank you for agreeing to work with me on this research. The main research question of the journal study addresses the experience of being an international student mother: *What characterizes the experience of being an international student mother in the United States?*

Identity researchers contend that people typically are embedded in multiple role relationships in multiple groups and they hold multiple identities. I want to know from your experience how many identities and roles an ISM has and whether and how these roles and identities are related to each other. I want to know, for example, how your experiences differ from when you were back in your country, who gave the most help to you as an ISM, and how language, race, class, culture, ethnicity, religion, age, nationality, and other factors influence you as an ISM.

I hope that the journal writing can provide you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences as both a student and a mother in the US. I also hope that the narratives of your experience will provide researchers in applied linguistics, women study, and TESOL with more knowledge about the complexities of international student mothers' learning contexts so that they can structure better to meet the needs of the second language learners in the future.

Directions

1. I would like you to keep a journal for two-three months about your personal experiences as an international student mother in the US.
2. I hope you will arrange entries by date and report on what has happened over the course of a day or other periods of time.
3. You are not required to make entries every day, yet frequent entries of your journal will of course strengthen your opportunity to reflect on your experiences and provide me with more data.
4. There is no limit of length for each entry.
5. I would like you to write in English though you can choose differently.
6. The focus of my study is not on your writing ability, but on how your journal entries present the change of your identities. So don't worry about your grammar.
7. There are three ways you can send me your journal entries:
 - To email me a word document
 - To give me access to your weblogs
 - To write in a paper notebook
8. I would like to collect and return journals regularly, for example, weekly, and ask for clarifications for certain questions.

* Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any difficulty in keeping a journal for the expected period of time. We can try other ways such as emailing, having small talks, chatting online, or making phone calls. While you are keeping a journal, I will also keep a journal during the course of the project. I am sure it will be a good experience for both of us. Thank you so much!

Appendix D - Debriefing Interview Protocol

First please accept my sincere thanks for your participation in my study throughout the whole process. I have benefited a lot from your shared experience as an international graduate student mother in my study. I do hope that participation in this study has also helped you understand better your life as an international graduate student mother in the US. As part of debriefing, I have given you the relevant parts of my dissertation to ensure confidentiality and accuracy. Are there any elements that we missed in the written interpretation of your stories?

Thank you. We haven't actually talked since you finished making the journal entries for my study. Are there any dramatic changes in your life as an international graduate student mother since then? Oh, that's terrific/I am so sorry to hear that. Frankly speaking, conducting this research has greatly changed my perception about my life as an international graduate student mother in the US. I used to consider myself a victim in every aspect but now I don't think so any more. I realize I have both pains and gains. I shared my reflections with several other participants in my study and here is what they told me ... So, how do you like your life as an international graduate student mother now? Do you feel that participation in this research has changed your perception about your life as an international graduate student mother in the US?

That's very interesting. As you know, there are two different ways you participate in this study: interviews and journal writing. And you have participated in both. Which do you think has the most impact on you? Could you follow up on that?

Well, I'm glad that the research has helped you with that understanding. So what is your next step that you can see? Are you going to graduate soon and return to your home country or stay in the US?

Thank you for sharing your reflections with me again. I really appreciate that. I wish you enjoy your life more as an international graduate student mother in the rest of your study here. Additionally, you know that you are not alone now. We have a whole community where we can share our experience and help each other in any situation. Use it. Thanks again. Take care.

1. What do you think about the relevant parts of my dissertation that I sent you, in relation to their accuracy and confidentiality?
2. Are there any elements we missed in the written interpretation of your stories as an international graduate student mother here?
3. What are some dramatic changes in your life as an international graduate student mother since our first interview (or since you finished your journal writing)?
4. In what ways has participation in this study changed your perception about your life as an international graduate student mother in the US?
5. There are two different ways you participate in this study: interviews and personal journal writing. Which do you feel has the most impact on you?
6. How do you like your life as an international graduate student mother now?
7. What is your plan now? Why?