A Comparative Study of the Highly Educated Muslim Uyghur Immigrants’ Identity Reconstruction Experiences in Quebec and English Canada

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Abstract

Among the Muslim immigrants who have been arriving in Canada in recent years, Uyghur immigrants from Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China reveal many special features. Their religious identity, language, education, and other forms of human rights have been facing serious threats under the current Chinese government. While immigrating to the Western liberal democracies may be conducive to protecting and strengthening their cultural identities, this may also create various new challenges to their collective identity. With such a background, this comparative study intends to explore the identity reconstruction experiences of the highly educated Muslim Uyghur immigrants in French Quebec and English Canada.

This study looks into the Uyghur identity experiences through the intersection of multiple theoretical lenses, namely identity politics, post-colonialism, critical race theory and “Lost in Translation”. Methodologically, critical narrative analysis (CNA), which is an organic combination of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and narrative analysis (NA), is used to investigate the discursive formation and reconstruction of Uyghur identity within various Canadian contexts. More specifically, the narratives of 12 participants are studied through thematic analysis, as well as constant comparison method.

Generally speaking, the findings of this comparative study show both similar and different perspectives and experiences of the Uyghur immigrants living in Quebec and English Canada. In terms of their educational experiences and perspectives, they expressed very common voices over the positive as well as negative influences of the Canadian educational institutions on the Uyghur identity and cultural values. They all began to more deeply value and appreciate their own community cultural wealth, while starting to question the Eurocentric cultural capital produced and reproduced in the Canadian education system which they once highly admired. When they all showed dramatically increased consciousness of being Uyghur and Muslim in all Canadian contexts, they felt a significantly deeper sense of being excluded and discriminated in Quebec than in the English provinces.

Moreover, there is a possibility that most of them may have internalized or developed an us/Muslim immigrants vs. them/local, White Canadians dichotomy, reflecting the long-existing discourse of Orientalism. But the extent of such a gap may again vary in different provinces, with Quebec exposing a wider and deeper division. At the same time, in English Canada, such a dichotomy seems to be largely cultural rather than political, while in Quebec it appears to be equally political and cultural. In other words, while they unanimously expressed their resistance to the dominant cultures in Canada through highlighting the values and importance of their own cultural wealth, in English provinces their resistance appears to have been unfolding more in the form of “oppositional culture” which could be quite apolitical. Yet in Quebec, it may have been manifesting itself at the level of “oppositional consciousness”, which can be significantly political.

Meanwhile, their increased opportunity for resistance and freedom in Canada has also been accompanied by dilemmas, tensions and new forms of displacement, which have rendered them outsiders again after having lived as “strangers in their own land” - Xinjiang for about three decades. Such form of double displacement or twofold experience of alienation/estrangement has, to a great extent, shaped the process of the reconstitution of Uyghur identity in Canada.
Résumé

Parmi les immigrants musulmans qui sont arrivés au Canada ces dernières années, les immigrants ouïghours de la région autonome ouïghoure du Xinjiang (XUAR) de Chine révèlent de nombreuses caractéristiques spéciales. Leur identité religieuse, leur langue, leur éducation et d'autres formes de droits humains ont du faire face à des menaces sérieuses sous le gouvernement chinois actuel. Bien que immigrer dans les démocraties libérales occidentales peut être propice à la protection et au renforcement de leur identités culturelles, cela peut également créer de nombreux et nouveaux défis pour leur identité collective. Dans ce contexte, cette étude comparative se propose d'explorer les expériences de reconstruction identitaire des immigrants ouïghours musulmans hautement qualifiés du Québec français et du Canada anglais.

Cette étude examine les expériences concernant l'identité ouïghoure à travers l'intersection de multiples lentilles théoriques, la politique identitaire, le post-colonialisme, la théorie critique de la race et «Lost in Translation». Sur le plan méthodologique, l'analyse narrative critique (ANC), qui est une combinaison organique d'analyse critique du discours (ADC) et d'analyse narrative (AN), est utilisé pour étudier la formation discursive et la reconstruction de l'identité ouïghoure dans divers contextes canadiens. Plus précisément, les récits de 12 participants sont étudiés au moyen de l'analyse thématique, ainsi que la méthode de la comparaison constante.

D'une façon générale, les résultats de cette étude comparative montrent que des perspectives et des expériences des immigrants ouïghours vivant au Québec et au Canada anglais sont à la fois similaires et différentes. En ce qui concerne leur expériences éducatives et leur perspectives, ils ont exprimé des voix très communes sur les influences positives et négatives des établissements d'enseignement canadiens sur l'identité et les valeurs culturelles ouïghoures. Ils ont tous commencé à valoriser et à apprécier plus profondément la richesse culturelle de leur communauté, tout en commençant à remettre en question le capital culturel eurocentrique produit et reproduit dans les systèmes éducatif canadien qu'ils admiraient jadis. Lorsqu'ils ont tous montré une conscience considérablement accrue d'être ouïghours et musulmans dans tous les contextes canadiens, ils ont ressenti un sentiment d'exclusion et de discrimination beaucoup plus profond au Québec que dans les provinces anglaises.

De plus, il est possible que la plupart d'entre eux aient intérieurié ou développé une dichotomie nous / immigrants musulmans contre eux / Canadiens blancs/locaux, reflétant le discours de longue date de l'orientalisme. Mais l'ampleur d'un tel écart peut à nouveau varier d'une province à l'autre, le Québec exposant une division de plus en plus profonde. En même temps, au Canada anglais, une telle dichotomie semble être largement culturelle plutôt que politique, alors qu'au Québec, elle semble être tout aussi politique et culturelle. En d'autres termes, bien qu’ils ont exprimé à l'unanimité leur résistance aux cultures dominantes au Canada en soulignant les valeurs et l'importance de leur propre richesse culturelle, dans les provinces anglaises, leur résistance semble s'être davantage développée sous la forme d'une «culture oppositionnelle» qui pourrait être assez apolitique. Néanmoins, au Québec, elle s'est peut-être manifestée au niveau de la «conscience oppositionnelle», qui peut être significativement politique.

Entretemps, leur possibilité accrue de résistance et de liberté au Canada s'est également accompagnée de dilemmes, de tensions et de nouvelles formes de déplacement, qui les ont rendus des étrangers à nouveau après avoir vécu comme des «étrangers dans leur propre pays» - le Xinjiang - pendant environ trois décennies. Une telle forme de double déplacement ou double expérience d'aliénation / éloignement a, en grande partie, façonné le processus de reconstitution de l'identité ouïghoure au Canada.
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Abbreviations

CDA – critical discourse analysis
CNA – critical narrative analysis
CRT – critical race theory
DA – discourse analysis
NA - narrative analysis
XUAR - Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
CHPATER 1: Introduction

1.1. Objectives and Outline

Experiencing identity challenges and dilemmas has been a very prevalent issue among the Muslims who have migrated to the Western societies, as the popular as well as systemic discourses around non-Western religions, especially Islam have been increasingly unwelcoming and negative in those contexts (Cesar, 2009; Mohiuddin, 2017). Muslim Uyghur immigrants from the north-west of China are not an exception in this regard. As Islam has been an integral part of Uyghur culture for many centuries, it is difficult to separate this religious tradition from Uyghur identity; being Uyghur automatically translates into being Muslim in Uyghur collective identity (Brophy, 2016; Kuşçu, 2013). As such, Uyghur immigrants, as part of the imagined communities (Anderson, 1990) of the global Muslims that have been increasingly essentialized as homogeneous, backward, and violent (Afsaruddin, 2015; Said, 1978, 2002), would have experiences common to various other immigrant Muslim groups in the West. Meanwhile, their unique socio-political and cultural backgrounds may produce some distinct experiences and perspectives in relation to their shifting collective identity.

Uyghur migration to the Western countries started as early as 1980s, while Canada began to host the first Uyghur immigrants in the late 1990s. According to Statistics Canada, in 2016 there were 1555 Uyghurs living in the country¹. Some estimates that in early 2019, there were around 3000 Uyghurs in Canada, while about 500 of them were living in Montreal (Gruda, 2019). Yet,

¹ See https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=01&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=Canada&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Ethnic+origin&TABID=1
some other sources claim that the Uyghur population in Canada had already reached 5000 by 2012 (Reyhan, 2012, a,b).

Figure 1. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China

Source: https://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pix/maps_and_graphs/2009/07/06/china_urnmqi.gif

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2 Source: https://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pix/maps_and_graphs/2009/07/06/china_urnmqi.gif
With such a background, this thesis intends to explore the identity reconstruction experiences of the highly educated Muslim Uyghur immigrants in Quebec and English Canada. More specifically, this study analyzes how the collective social identity of the highly educated Uyghur immigrants has been transforming in “multicultural” English Canada and “intercultural” Quebec. At the same time, this research gives special attention to the two crucial facets of Uyghur social identity, i.e. religious and ethnic/national aspects of being Uyghur, while investigating how these newcomers have been repositioning themselves in Canada through their lived experiences.

By using the term “reconstruction”, I do not mean that Uyghur diaspora identity would necessarily undergo a dramatic or drastic shift. Rather, this concept primarily refers to the emergence of fresh perspectives on self and “the other” or new dimensions of self-concepts and self-reflections. These new perspectives and dimensions can be the product of the dialogues between their former or existing identities and new social discourses (Watson, 2009). In such a process, their social identity would be reshaped through the projection of others towards the self, and vice-versa; it is a reciprocal journey (Beech, 2008).

Simultaneously, I highlight Bauman’s (1988) perspective of identity which entails not only

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3 This refers to the skilled immigrants who obtained at least a post-secondary level of education and had several years of work experience before immigrating to Canada, excluding the refugees who may or may not have post-secondary educational experiences prior to migration to Canada. All my research participants came to Canada through Federal and Quebec Skilled Worker Programs. Thus, by using the term “highly educated”, I refer to the people who have had high levels of education. I did not use the term “well-educated” because this term has an implied value judgement on which there isn’t consensus. For example, “well-educated” may mean being educated in prestigious institutions, but “well-educated” could also mean developing critical thinking and intercultural skills, as well as values of democracy, ethics and cosmopolitanism. In contrast, the term “highly educated” seems to be less subjective.

4 Using ethnic and national in parallel does not mean they are the same. However, in the Uyghur language the term “milliy” refers to the above two concepts at the same time. The political flavor of the term “milliy” can only be sensed in the specific context in which a Uyghur speaks. And in many cases the Uyghurs tend to overlook the boundary between these concepts, as can be seen from the data analysis. Thus, I use these two words side by side here.
the question “who am I?”, but also “how should I live?” and “who do I want to become?” (p. 62). All of these angles (pertaining to the past, present, and future) are essential to my inquiry into the identity reconstruction experiences of the Uyghur immigrants in the Canadian diaspora.

Against this conceptual background, diaspora can be defined as the “myriad, dislocated sites of contestation to the hegemonic homogenizing forces of globalization” (Braziel & Mannur, 2003, p.7). In the Canadian contexts, Uyghurs would continue to carry on their resistance to assimilation while experiencing the fear of loss of identity, which they have long been undergoing in China. Yet, this time, they have to deal with liberal globalization based on Eurocentric culture and free market, rather than authoritative homogenization based on Han Chinese nationalism they are subject to in China. The majority Han Chinese diaspora itself, as Ong (1999) puts, has to face not only “the contradictions between cultural homeland and host country,” but also “the governmentality of the [Chinese] state and disciplining of the labor markets, and the politics of imposed identity and the politics of self-positioning…” (p.23). The Uyghur diaspora communities may encounter some similar as well as unique challenges and dilemmas in relation to their Chinese background, which will be discussed more in detail later. Meanwhile, they may resist becoming the same as “the others”, namely the English or French majority communities, through glocalization – diversification of cultures (Robertson, 1992) and try to create their “third space” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 219) where they could have hybrid identities that would enable them to find the right balance between themselves and the new world. The term “reconstruction” can be further understood within such an epistemological backdrop.

That being highlighted, the following research question and sub-questions are formulated to guide this study.
How are the highly educated Uyghur immigrants reconstructing their collective identities in Canada?

Sub-questions:

a. How are the highly educated Uyghur immigrants perceiving and positioning themselves as Muslim and Uyghur after living in Canada for some years?

b. How do highly educated Uyghur immigrants perceive education in Canada (formal, non-formal and informal) as an influencing factor on their collective identity?

c. To what extent do their experiences and perspectives differ in the contexts of Quebec and English Canada? (This applies to all the data analysis process).

These questions are put, partly considering some very special characteristics of the recent Uyghur socio-political situation. Their religious identity, language, education, and other cultural rights have been facing significant threats under the current Chinese state, especially since early 2000s (Clarke, 2018, Millward, 2018; Roberts, 2018 a,b)\textsuperscript{5}. Thus, the intention of immigrating to Canada, including those of the highly educated and skilled immigrants may have been, to a great extent, triggered by the perceived necessity to protect their collective identity. Islam and Turkicness (ethnic/national) represent the two essential aspects of Uyghur collective identity (Brophy, 2016; Kuşçu, 2013). Islam as a religion as well as culture has been part of Uyghur identity since the 10\textsuperscript{th} century, while being Turkic conveys the notion that Uyghurs belong to a Central Asian ethnicity along with other Turkic peoples. As such, addressing these two identity markers is essential to analyzing the integration experiences of the Uyghur immigrants.

Theoretically, this study puts the inquiry at the intersection of identity politics, Critical Race Theory (hereafter CRT), post-colonial perspectives, and the lens of “Lost in Translation”

\textsuperscript{5} Relevant policies and developments are discussed more in detail in the next chapter.
The nature of identity and the relevant politics in our increasingly globalized and interconnected world should be well understood in order to effectively tap into the identity experiences of various immigrant groups. CRT, as an expanding framework, can help us better explore the experiences of the Uyghurs who happen to be a racialized minority Muslim group both in China and the West. Post-colonialism is also very pertinent to the experiences of the Uyghurs, as they generally see themselves as being colonized under the Chinese regime (Roberts, 2009, 2016). Equally important, we are all living in a post-colonial world in which the unequal power relations between the North and South are manifested through the very epistemology of colonialism that subordinates the racial “others” (Bhabha, 1990; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1984). Hence, the increasingly racialized and subaltern status of the global Muslim communities (Afsaruddin, 2015; Turfjell, 2008), such as the Uyghur immigrants, could be best analyzed through the intersection of CRT and post-colonialism.

Community cultural wealth - the knowledges that are vital to maintaining and strengthening the minority group identities (Yosso, 2005), as a new dimension of CRT, should not be neglected, as well. Cultural capital, as a Eurocentric concept, largely refers to the knowledge of the White people in the West, while blinding us to the existence and values of minority knowledges that can be crucial to the identity and livelihood of various marginalized groups (Yosso, 2005). For the Uyghurs, too, their own indigenous culture and knowledges can be very valuable for maintaining and fortifying their collective identity. Closely related to this point, cultural integration of Uyghurs could be observed through the lens of “Lost in Translation” (Hoffman, 1989), as these immigrants

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6 This is an autobiography of Eva Hoffman who narrates her and her family’s cultural integration journeys in Canada and the US. More details on why and how I use her stories to analyze my participants’ voices are given in chapter 3.
would find themselves at the point where they have to negotiate between their own culture and the Canadian majority cultures which are “the norms”.

Methodologically, the thesis primarily employs critical narrative analysis – an organic combination of narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis (Souto-Manning, 2007, 2010, 2014). Using this syncretic methodology is also to challenge the “binary of seeing the person as either the autonomous origin of his or her experience or the ideological pawn of social determination” (Allen & Hardin, 2001, p.163).

In terms of research methods, this qualitative study is based on semi-structured interviews of 12 Uyghur immigrants (six males and six females) who have been living in Quebec (six) and some English provinces (six) in the last 5-15 years. The data is analyzed through an open coding scheme (Butler-Kisber, 2010), using thematic and structural analysis methods (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008). Constant comparison method is also used to analyze the data in contrast to the already existing findings or insights generated from similar studies or works, while consistently relying on inductive, rather than deductive reasoning (Silverman, 1993).

The thesis is composed of nine chapters which include an introduction, the background information, theoretical perspectives, methodology, the sections on the findings, and a conclusion along with implications as well as recommendations both for the Canadian and Chinese governments. The findings are categorized under four different themes, namely: shifting Uyghur ethnic/national and religious identities, the contradictory faces of the Canadian education system, experiences in the Canadian labour markets and workplaces, and “Lost in Translation” (Hoffman, 1989): the cultural facet of the shifting Uyghur identity, a relatively apolitical aspect of Uyghur cultural identity.
The stories of my participants reveal both similar as well as some quite contrasting perspectives and experiences in Quebec and English provinces. The first and third themes expose some vivid disparities, while the second and last ones show many parallel features and elements. The disparities mostly revolve around how and in what specific ways their Muslim background was affecting and reshaping their self-concept, livelihood, and future aspirations in the two contexts. The similarities are generally displayed in their narratives on how they would perceive the education in Canada, and how they were interacting with the Canadian/Quebec or local “White culture”, yet, there are some subtle differences within that conformity.

1.2. Significance of the Study

According to Statistics Canada, foreign-born immigrants comprised 20.6% of the total Canadian population in 2011, and 19.1% of them identified as visible minorities. As one of the most welcoming immigrant-receiving Western nations, Canada most probably will host increasingly more immigrants in the coming decades. Thus, the healthy integration of this particular group of population is particularly important for Canada.

With this background, Muslim immigrants have become one of the largest new demographic bodies in the recent years. Statistics Canada estimates that the Muslim population in Canada reached over one million in 2011 representing 3.2% of the nation’s total population. Besides, according to National Household Survey (2011), Muslims are the fastest growing population segment in Canada. The recent influx of Syrian and other displaced peoples into Canada has further

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7 For more information see https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm
8 Here, it should be noted that the Muslims are ethnically and culturally very heterogeneous, although they all follow the same religion. Islam itself is internally diverse.
contributed to the existing trend. Again, the same National Household Survey (2011) reveals that the Muslims represent the third largest religious group (3.1%) in Quebec after Roman Catholics (74.7%) and other Christians (7.5%), hugely surpassing all other minority religious groups. Statistics Canada predicts that by 2031, Muslims would represent 11% of Quebec’s population (as cited in McAndrew & Bakhshaei, 2012).

Yet, according to various recent studies, compared to other groups of people, Muslims have been subject to significantly complicated and difficult integration experiences (e.g. Arat-Koç, 2017; Nagra, 2010, 2017; Itani & Sidani, 2018; Litchmore & Safdar, 2015; Razack, 2008, 2017; Reitz, Simon & Laxer, 2017; Selby, 2018; Selby, Barras & Beaman, 2018; Sidani & Itani, 2017). Only a few researchers find that Muslim immigrants have been “well integrated socially” (e.g. McCoy, Kirova & Knight, 2016, p. 21). The situation in Quebec may have been more serious, as pointed out by many scholars (e.g. Amarasingam & Tiflati, 2015; Bakali, 2015; Brodeur, 2009; Dwivedi, 2017; Jedwab, 2015; McAndrew & Bakhshaei, 2012; Sarrouh & Banting, 2016). Meanwhile, in the last decade or so, Quebec has been continuously losing its people to other provinces for various reasons, and the biggest chunk of this group of people are allophones or immigrants (Serebrin, 2018, Shingler, 2017), possibly, many of whom are Muslims (Paperny, 2018). As such, Quebec should pay very special attention to better integrating its population, particularly the Muslims.

Nevertheless, integration of Muslim immigrants has not been given enough awareness in Canadian academia, despite the growing public debates over Muslim issues in Canadian society (Kazemipur, 2017; McCoy, Kirova & Knight, 2016). Therefore, this study can be seen as one of the timely efforts towards better understanding the integration experiences of the Muslim immigrants in Canada. Equally important, the Quebec context and comparative nature of this project may be regarded as very much significant, because the relevant situation in Quebec may
have been more critical, as mentioned above (e.g. Amarasingam & Tiflati, 2015; Bakali, 2015; Jedwab, 2015).

At the same time, this research will give voice to the marginalized and oppressed Uyghur Muslims who desperately need international attention and support. This will also help raise awareness of the current policies and practices that have been othering and oppressing the Uyghurs in China.

1.3. Original Contribution of This Research

“Intellectual originality” is the most important characteristic that defines if a PhD project is successful or not (Clarke & Lunt, 2014). More specifically, as Guetzkow, Lamont and Mallard (2004) argue, in natural sciences originality is generally defined “as the production of new findings and new theories”, while in social sciences and humanities it broadly refers to “using a new approach, theory, method, or data; studying a new topic, doing research in an understudied area; or producing new findings” (p.190).

Through such an angle, I would say that my study is original regarding its data, its research subjects who are very much understudied, as well as its findings. Overall, my study contributes to the inadequate but growing academic literature on the integration experiences of the skilled Muslim immigrants in Canada. The comparative dimension of this research could be seen as particularly significant, too. Equally important, this is the first broad-based or in-depth qualitative study focusing on the shifting identities of the Uyghur skilled immigrants in Canada. Besides, the Uyghur diaspora identity in other Western contexts has not been studied in a similar manner yet.

The findings, especially the differences between the identity experiences of the Uyghur immigrants in Quebec and English provinces could be seen to be particularly noteworthy as they
demonstrate some fresh perspectives in two contrasting Canadian contexts. On the one hand, the findings obtained through this comparative study will add to the general area of research on Canadian immigrants, most notably the Muslim immigrants. On the other hand, this project as a whole will contribute to the newly emerging field of Uyghur diaspora study.

1.4. Literature Review

So far, the relevant literature on the Muslim immigrants’ identity or integration experiences in Canada has mostly focused on the overall Canadian context (e.g. Arat-Koç, 2006, 2010, 2017; Dakrouy, 2013; Itani & Sidani, 2018; Joly & Reitz, 2018; Kazemipur 2014; Litchmore & Safdar, 2015; Nagra, 2010, 2017; Nakhaie, 2018; Ogbruag, 2012; Razack, 2008, 2017; Reitz et al, 2017; Zine, 2012). Comparing Muslim identity experiences in different Canadian sub-contexts has not been given enough attention, especially between Quebec and English provinces, while the studies on single provinces, such as Quebec, have been flourishing (e.g. McAndrew & Bakhshai, 2012; Sarrouh & Banting, 2016; Ghosh, et al, 2018; Sharify-Funk, 2010; Tiflati, 2017). It seems that the recent rise of the global war on terror rhetoric and the homogenization and racialization of diverse Muslim ethnic groups (Volpp, 2002; Kibria, Watson & Selod, 2017) have also been pushing the global scholars to view the Muslims as a unified or monolithic collective. This may have made the interregional or inter-ethnic comparative studies look less attractive or necessary.

Meanwhile, most of the relevant quantitative studies (e.g. Cochrane, 2013; Joly & Reitz, 2018; Litchmore & Safdar, 2015; Nakhaie, 2018; Reitz et al, 2017) have tended to lack specific cultural, ethnic, contextual and subjective dimensions, which are essential to better comprehending the lived experiences and perspectives of Muslim immigrants. Simultaneously, the corresponding qualitative studies generally do not have specific contextual and/or comparative dimensions, as
mentioned, (e.g. Arat-Koç, 2006, 2010, 2017; Brani, 2017; Hennebry & Momany, 2013; Kazemipur, 2014; Nagra, 2010, 2017; Nagra & Peng, 2013; Razack, 2008, 2017; Selby, 2018; Selby, et al, 2018; Zine, 2012), and are written primarily through a political science or psychological perspective, whilst many dwell on theoretical and policy debates on the universalized experiences of the Muslims (e.g. Antonius, Lebelle & Rocher, 2013; Arat-Koç, 2006, 2010, 2017; Delic, 2018; McCoy, 2018; Razack, 2008, 2017). The mixed-method studies are also prone to generalizing the experiences of all Muslim groups in diverse Canadian locations (e.g. McCoy et al, 2016; Sirin, et al. 2008). Furthermore, as Nakhaie (2018) contends, so far, the studies on the social integration experiences of the Muslims in Canada have mostly focused on their religiosity and the discrimination they faced, which means broader and more diverse aspects need to be the focus, too.

The boundaries among Muslims, Muslim immigrants, Muslim Canadians, Muslim skilled immigrants, or even Muslim refugees in Canada have largely been overlooked in academia. These terms may refer to very different groups under specific circumstances. In the meantime, while the studies on the integration or identity experiences of the general or non-Muslim skilled immigrants in Canada have been thriving (e.g. Bonikowska, Hou & Picot, 2011; Boyd, 2018; Friesen, 2011; Guo, 2013; Hawthorne, 2018; Reitz, 2018; Triadafilopoulos, 2018), concentrating specifically on the highly educated/skilled Muslim immigrants’ identity or integration experiences has not been given enough consideration. Along the same lines, some rare qualitative studies on the skilled Muslim immigrants also tend to generalize the research participants who have diverse ethnocultural backgrounds (e.g. Ogbuagu, 2012; Brani, 2017; Younis, 2017). As an example, Brani’s (2017) study compares the identity experiences of the first- and second-generation Muslim immigrants (first-generation Muslim immigrants in this study tend to be skilled immigrants as the
author explains) in Canada, yet, again, it generalizes the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of her 50 research participants, while failing to conduct an inter-regional comparison.

Although, some very few scholars, such as Reitz, et al, (2017) have compared the skilled Muslim immigrants’ integration in France, Quebec, and rest of Canada, their study is not based on qualitative interviews, but quantitative secondary data. Once more, the Muslims in this study are seen as a homogeneous collective in terms of their ethnicities as well as immigration statuses. Whilst, Younis’ (2017) qualitative study specifically focuses on the everyday narratives and lived experiences of the Muslim youths in three different contexts: Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen, its participants are not skilled immigrants. Besides, their ethno-cultural disparities, again, are not taken into account, even though ten out of total 30 participants are converts.

There have been some studies on certain specific Muslim ethnic groups in Canada, but they do not have a regional or inter-provincial comparative dimension. As a very pertinent example, Jamil’s (2014a) qualitative research discusses the racialized Muslim identity of the Pakistani Muslim immigrants who are pushed to reconstruct their self-concept within the post-9/11 public discourses in the context of Montreal where interculturalism presents the White Francophone Quebecers as the powerful majority. Although, this is an in-depth narrative study, it does not compare its participants’ experiences with their counterparts’ in other Canadian provinces where multiculturalism speaks for somewhat different power relations. Besides, many of the participants of this study are not skilled immigrants.

In the same vein, Rousseau, Ferradji, Mekki-Berrada and Jamil’s (2013) qualitative study looks at the identity experiences of the Moroccan and Algerian immigrant families who try to cope with the stigma after 9/11 events and protect their young generations from the negative impacts of Islamophobia and discrimination. All of the research participants in this study had post-secondary
educational experiences in their home countries, but, the authors do not clarify if they all went through the point-based selection system. As a compact study, this article only focuses on how the North African highly educated Muslim immigrants deal with the war on terror rhetoric or discourse. No other aspects of their lives are discussed, nor are the voices of their counterparts in other Canadian contexts analyzed comparatively. Another similar qualitative study is conducted by Hirji (2010) who utilizes narrative methodology to explore the positioning of the South Asian Canadians between Canadian and South Asian cultural identities, through examining their reactions to and perspective on the Bollywood films. Thus, the reference points of this study could be seen to be quite narrow too. Meanwhile, the socio-political, economic, educational and ethnic disparities among the participants are largely neglected. Moreover, generalization rather than comparison of those internally diverse South Asian groups (apart from comparing the Muslims and others) is the main tendency in this research. Ahsan (2015) explores the hybrid identity construction experiences of the Bangladeshi immigrant communities living in Greater Toronto area, also through narrative methodology. However, this study dwells on only one specific area in Toronto and not all of its participants are landed skilled immigrants. The experiences of recent graduates who just became permanent residents and landed immigrants who had worked in their home countries for some years would differ hugely. Tiflati’s (2017) study discusses the identity spectrum of the second-generation young Arab Muslims in Montreal between being Quebecer and Canadian, but it is not an inter-provincial comparison, either. Besides, his research participants obviously are not skilled adult immigrants.

In terms of comparing some specific ethnic groups, a very interesting study (Rousseau, Hassan, Moreau & Thombs, 2011) discusses the perceived discrimination and its association with psychological distress among the newly arrived Arab Muslim, Arab non-Muslim, and Haitian
groups to Montreal, Canada, before and after September 11, 2001. This quantitative research concludes that Arab Muslims perceived a significant increase in psychological distress associated with discrimination from 1998 to 2007, compared to other groups. While, the inter-group comparison in this study has yielded some valuable findings, an inter-regional comparison, through a qualitative method can be another interesting and worthwhile approach to utilize. Dilmaghani’s (2018) quantitative study also compares the Muslims and other groups such as Jewish, Hindus and Buddhists in Canada, and finds that the Muslims perceived the highest level of discrimination and this has been negatively affecting their confidence in Canadian institutions. Here, the inter-regional comparison could be recommended, too.

That being so, perhaps, one of the closest studies to my current research, in regard to the socio-cultural backgrounds of my participants, is Chen and Kerr’s (2018) article which analyses the Chinese Hui Muslims’ integration experiences in Canada. This study explores how their ethnic and religious identities could affect their integration processes differently from their other Chinese (non-Muslim) or Muslim counterparts (not Uyghur). However, their study is based on the quantitative data from all major Canadian cities and does not show any regional comparison, either. Moreover, the educational and the immigration status backgrounds of the participants are not controlled.

Overall, the specific ethnic dimension and inter-provincial comparisons have been, for the most part, overlooked in studying the identity experiences of the skilled Muslim immigrants in

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10 Hui Muslims are mostly concentrated in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, but they also live throughout China. Their population is also more than 10 million, according to 2011 National Census. Unlike Uyghurs, their mother tongue is Chinese, and embrace Han Chinese culture, and do not pose threat to national integrity. Therefore, they don’t face harsh oppressions like the Uyghurs do. For more information, please see Gladney, D. C. (1996). *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (2 ed.). Harvard University Asia Center. Gladney, D. C. (2004). *Dislocating China: reflections on Muslims, minorities and other subaltern subjects*. C. Hurst Co. Publishers.
Canada. My study intends to address this gap by looking into the particular lived experiences of the Uyghur skilled immigrants in Quebec and English Canada. Meanwhile, this endeavor will demonstrate to what extent the unique backgrounds of the Uyghur immigrants would influence their integration processes in Canada, and how those different Canadian contexts may re/shape their self-concepts as first-generation skilled Muslim immigrants. In the same vein, it can be expected that their experiences, to a great extent, may overlap with other Muslim groups, at least partly due to the homogenization and essentialization of Muslim identities after the 9/11 terrorist events (Gotanda, 2011; Volpp, 2002). Concurrently, this study will be the first broad-based study on the Uyghur diaspora’s identity experiences. Considering that the Uyghur diaspora in the Western countries has been growing fast in the past few decades, it would be necessary and interesting to explore the identity reconstruction experiences of this community in various Western contexts, such as Quebec and English Canada.

1.5. Situating Myself within the Inquiry

As a skilled Uyghur immigrant myself, I am deeply interested in exploring the narrative identities of other skilled Uyghur immigrants in Canada. My life experiences resonate so much with theirs; I could see them in me, and vice versa, to a great extent. I had not thought otherwise regarding this reality before starting my interviews for this very study. My research has further convinced me of this. Simultaneously, I have long been contemplating being Uyghur in different contexts and times, while living within or sometimes partially disconnected from the Uyghur communities in various spaces. More specifically, I had lived the first three decades of my life in Xinjiang, had worked and studied for three years in the UK where I continually socialized with other Uyghurs, yet much
less frequently. After that I studied in Spain where I had not seen any other Uyghurs for about five months. Since then, for almost 10 years, I have been living closely connected with the Canadian Uyghur diaspora community, which is like my virtual home.

Looking back, I feel amazed that I have always been deeply attached to my own ethnic group in my academic life, too. I started my higher education with the tremendous enthusiasm for studying Uyghur literature and folklore at Xinjiang University. After finishing my first MA study with a thesis on Uyghur funeral culture, I had the opportunity to pursue my second MA program in education at the Institute of Education, University of London. For that program, I wrote my thesis on the educational reformism movements among the Uyghur intellectuals (Jadidism) in the early 20th century. Currently, I am pondering the identity experiences of the highly educated Uyghur immigrants in Canada. In brief, while being a Uyghur researcher myself, I have always been drawn to the topics about Uyghurs, which is a huge blessing in my eyes.

During the same process, I have also come to know, in person or in virtual ways (e.g. through reading academic works), many excellent Uyghur study scholars who are non-Uyghur. While gaining highly intellectual knowledge and insights through this journey, I have also realized how rewarding being an insider researcher could be. In other words, I have been able to connect their studies with my lived experiences. Meanwhile, I have learned much on how to observe and analyze the Uyghur identity through outsider perspectives. However, I have also been able to spot some problematic assumptions they made on the Uyghur experiences. In this respect, I would say that I may enjoy more advantages in terms of better understanding some very subtle and complex meanings of being Uyghur in various contexts and historical moments.

Equally important, I feel I am also more privileged in gaining the trust of my fellow Uyghur participants who have been politically sensitized due to the increasingly worsening political
climate in Xinjiang. Many scholars who study the Uyghur issues have acknowledged such a delicate reality (e.g. Bovingdon, 2010; Roberts, 2009, 2016; Smith-Finley, 2013). As such, I feel I am very lucky, as most of my participants were my close friends through whom I conveniently found some other Uyghur participants. Moreover, those who were recruited through such snowball method very quickly developed trust in me, since we were introduced through mutual close friends. Thus, I am very sure that all my participants freely expressed themselves without being worried about any significant threats to their personal safety. My experiences have confirmed that “this insider role status frequently allows researchers more rapid and more complete acceptance by their participants. Therefore, participants are typically more open with researchers so that there may be a greater depth to the data gathered” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58).

Yet, I also acknowledge that being an insider may not always have offered me benefits. I am fully aware of the possibility that I might have allowed some implicit biases affect my research processes. As human beings, we all tend to have implicit or unconscious biases. As Femi Otitoju highlights - "If you have a brain, you have a bias." Our specific life experiences inevitably create in us various biases regarding certain realities. My insider position with respect to my research participants undoubtedly fortifies such a possibility, as Kanuha (2000) puts it,

for each of the ways that being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population that may not be accessible to a nonnative scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised because perhaps one knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied (p. 444).

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11 Femi Otitoju talks about how everybody tends to have unconscious biases towards or against something or somebody in her interview by CBC Radio. For more information please visit https://www.cbc.ca/radio/tapestry/if-you-have-a-brain-you-have-a-bias-1.4040571
Such a perspective allows me to realize that my Uyghur background and my upbringing in the Uyghur community may have created some issues in terms of “objectivity, reflexivity, authenticity” (Kanuha, 2000, p. 444), as well as neutrality of my analyses. I am fully conscious of such a likelihood, so I have tried my best to avoid falling into the trap of implicit bias. More specifically, I have constantly shared many of my key data analyses and findings with other scholars through conference presentations as well as everyday conversations, in the past three years. Getting feedback from those outsiders has been tremendously enlightening and constructive so that I have been able to effectively revisit my perspectives and positions. Equally important, during my interviews, I tried not to influence, in any way, the thought processes of my participants. In Milligan’s (2016) words, I regarded my key job was to “find ways to enable the participants to share what they thought rather than what they thought I wanted to hear” (p. 249).

That said, I also find it problematic to see being an insider and outsider as two opposite sides that mutually excluded each other (McNess, Arthur & Crossley, 2013). It is true that I belong to the same ethnic and cultural group as my participants. But we are different in many other aspects of our lives. We have diverse life experiences and varied perspectives on our experiences. One good example would be our academic backgrounds; I have had a very different academic journey from my participants. None of my participants has pursued master’s studies or PhDs in the field of social sciences; all of my participants undertook their higher education in natural sciences in China, apart from one who obtained a master’s degree in biology in Europe. I don’t have any children, unlike all of my participants who at least have one child whose future in Canada is one of the most important concerns for them. Accordingly, some of my interview questions are directly related to their children’s education and identity in Canada. Thus, I could regard myself as an outsider, to some extent; I am not totally an insider. Here, I would like to describe my position
using Milligan’s (2016) new concept of ‘inbetweener’ (p.235), which could be viewed as an ideal status in conducting cross-cultural educational research. I could deeply identify with such a position while reflecting on my own research journey.

1.6. Summary

In this chapter, I have briefly presented the objectives of my research as well as the outline of the thesis. Then, the significance of the study is discussed, highlighting the precarious situations of the Muslim integration in Canada, especially in Quebec. The necessity of better understanding the integration experiences of this particular segment of immigrants is emphasized accordingly. The originality or significant contribution of this research is demonstrated through emphasizing its new data sources, findings, as well as its comparative dimension. I started the literature review from a broad scope of Muslim immigrant integration in Canada, and gradually narrowed it down to exploring ethnically specific, highly educated/skilled Muslim immigrants in different contexts of Canada, namely Quebec and English provinces. Ultimately, the literally untouched area of the identity issues of the Uyghur skilled immigrants in Canada is underlined. In such a background, I have also tried to position myself regarding my study which is closely linked to my own identity and experiences. After discussing my insider as well as outsider identities in relation to my research, I have reasonably positioned myself as an “inbetweener” (Milligan, 2016, p. 235), because being an insider or outsider cannot adequately represent my identity as a researcher with reference to my current research.
CHAPTER 2: Background Context of the Inquiry

2.1. A Brief Review of the Uyghur Collective Identity

People’s Republic of China has 56 officially recognized ethnic groups among which 55 are ethnic minorities. Han Chinese majority comprises 91.51%, while ethnic minorities constitute 8.49% or 113.8 million of China's total population (China Census, 2010). Uyghurs are one of those officially recognized minority groups, and they mostly live in the far northwestern border region of China which is the hub of the Eurasian crossroads. Manchu Empire annexed the region to China proper in the second half of the 18th century and had ruled the local inhabitants through rather indirect means till 1884 when Xinjiang (CH. new dominion) province was established (Millward, 1998, 2007). According to the 2017 national statistics, their population in China is more than 11 million\(^{12}\).

More specifically speaking, Uyghurs are one of the Turkic groups who live within wider central Eurasian region spanning from northwest of China to Turkey. The Uyghurs follow a moderate form of Sunni Islam which is organically mingled with their own traditional beliefs and worldviews (Brophy, 2016; Millward, 2007, Thum, 2014). In Brophy’s (2016) words, “Islam had come to Xinjiang and constructed a new spiritual landscape out of sites that already held meaning for local communities” (p. 33). Meanwhile, like many groups in Central Asia, they show various or mixed racial or genetic features of Middle Eastern, European and Mongolian or East Asian. Various studies show somewhat different ratios of these components in Uyghur genetics. One

\(^{12}\) This is according to Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Bureau of Statistics. However, Uyghur American Association states that the Uyghur population is more than 15 million.
study finds the western Eurasian-specific haplogroup\textsuperscript{13} in Uyghurs to be 42.6\%, and East Asian haplogroup to be 57.4\% (Yao, Kong, Wang, Zhu & Zhang, 2004). Another study with larger samples concludes that European genetic component can be around 30\% among Uyghurs (Li, Cho, Kidd & Kidd 2009). A further study which compared different regions shows slightly greater European component (52\% European) in the Uyghur population in southern Xinjiang, and slightly greater East Asian component (47\% European) in the northern Uyghur population (Xu & Jin, 2008). Generally speaking, the Uyghurs are genetically very similar to other Central Asian populations (Bian, et al, 2016).

The name “Uyghur” can be traced back to the ancient Uyghurs - one of the various Turkic tribes who built the Uyghur Khanate (Kingdom) stretched from the Caspian Sea to the Mongolian Steppe in 744 AD. After the demise of the Khanate by the Kyrgyz invasion in 840 A.D., some of the Uyghur tribes migrated to the eastern part of Central Asia – now Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China and mingled with the local Indo-European peoples. After that great migration, the Uyghurs built Qochu Uyghur Kingdom (843-1209) in Turpan region and converted from Manicheism to Buddhism (Millward & Perdue, 2004; Millward, 2007). After the Buddhist Uyghurs in that region accepted Islam in the 15\textsuperscript{th} century, the name \textit{Uyghur} had become nearly obsolete till the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, because the locals started to address themselves as \textit{musulman} (Muslims) or using the local place names (Bovingdon, 2010; Thum, 2014). Some other Turkic tribes like Karluks, Yagmas, and Chigils established Kara-Khanid Khanate (840-1212) in Kashgar region in nowadays southern Xinjiang and converted to Islam in the 10\textsuperscript{th} century (Hansen, 2012; Golden, 1990; Millward, 2004; Soucek, 2000). Kara-Khanid Khanate together with Qochu Uyghur

\textsuperscript{13}A haplogroup is a genetic population group of people who share a common ancestor. For more information, see \url{https://isogg.org/wiki/Haplogroup}
Khanate became the subjects of the Mongol empire in the 13th century and underwent several Turko-Mongolian dynasties that all would embrace Islam in the subsequent centuries (Millward, 1998, 2004, 2007).

With the Islamization of Central Asia, the whole tribal or ethnic names including the ethnonym “Uyghur” had been submerged by a pan-Islamic identity that had unified all different groups of people under one overarching and generic Muslim identity. Consequently, people from various locations in Central Asia began to call themselves simply Musulman (Muslim) or yerlik (local) and used the name of their oases when it was necessary to further clarify their backgrounds (Thum, 2014). Along with the Russian conquest of Central Asia, the name Turkistan began to be used in the whole region where those Turkic peoples were living (Meakin, 2007). Accordingly, the terms Turkistani and Turki began to be widely used as an identity marker during the 1920s thanks to the literary usage of such names by the local intellectuals (Allworth, 1990). After the establishment of Central Asian Soviet Republics, many other ethnonyms, such as Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazakh started to replace above designations. However, identification with the local oases has never ceased to exist in the whole Central Asia (Finke, 2014). Accordingly, Rudelson (1997) specifically focuses on Xinjiang where the geographical location still was seen as one of the primary identity markers by the Uyghurs in the 1990s. Yet, Smith Finley (2013) argues that such sense of belonging has waned much since early 2000s, while a unified pan-Uyghur identity has become more salient.

The initial formation of the modern Uyghur identity was the result of the interaction of Russian and Chinese superpowers with the local Muslim inhabitants (Brophy, 2016; Millward, 1998, 2007). Allworth (1990) argues that one of the most important political events that triggered the formation of modern nations or ethnicities in that zone was the conference held in Tashkent in
1921 that first mentioned the name *Uyghur*. Yet, the origin of the term as an ethnonym could be traced back to a few years earlier when a local intellectual had first used it for a cultural organization (Brophy, 2005). Accordingly, Sean Roberts (2009) emphasizes the agency of the Uyghurs themselves in creating and reproducing their own national identity in the early 20th century, referring to the thriving native intellectual literature at the time. Many other scholars also highlight that it would be naïve to perceive that the forefathers of contemporary Uyghurs in Central Eurasia didn’t have any solidarity and agency that would help them reconstruct or fortify their group identities vis-à-vis the Russian and Manchurian colonial powers. The advent of the Russian and Manchu imperialism only pushed them to further solidify and strengthen their collective identities that were already becoming cohesive and distinct (Bellér-Hann, 2008; Millward, 1998; 2007; Newby, 2007; Roberts, 2009). During this process, the name “Uyghur” was conveniently adopted by many local intellectuals in their writings as the reminiscent of the ancient Uyghur Kingdom (Qochu Khanate) established in Turpan region of Xinjiang some 12 centuries ago (Dwyer, 2005; Millward, 2007).

On the other side of such a nation building process, there existed a political agenda devised by Russia to “divide and rule” the local Turkic peoples who had strong cultural and linguistic affinities with one another (Conquest, 1962, p. 28; Sabol, 1995). Such an agenda was regarded as very reasonable and useful by the governor Sheng Shicai in Xinjiang during the 1930s and 1940s, therefore, he supported the discourse and activities that would foster Uyghur national identity (Benson, 1990). Thus, in the 1930s the new Uyghur identity began to be officially recognized by the local government (Brophy, 2018). The establishment of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in 1955 formally signaled that the name *Uyghur* became legitimate for the local majority Turkic Muslims – one of the 55 ethnic minorities in China. By the 1980s, the Uyghur
ethnonym was widely accepted by the local public - “Altishahris” (literally meaning the natives to the six cities – a broader term for the local peoples who live in those oases cities in nowadays southern Xinjiang) (Thum, 2014, p. 176).

At the same time, after Chinese communist party established its regime in Xinjiang, the ethnic and religious identities of the locals have become very sensitive issues. Especially during the Great Cultural Revolution all religious faiths and ethnic or traditional cultures were harshly attacked as being seen as backward and harmful. For this reason, many Uyghurs consciously or unconsciously accepted communism (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014). After the Cultural Revolution, especially since the beginning of the Opening-up Era in 1978, Uyghurs started to have more freedom to reembrace their own religious and ethnic cultures. The reform policies gave the Uyghurs rights to use their own language in their education systems, and observe their religious and cultural beliefs and activities, but within some strict limits (Dwyer, 2005; Millward, 2007). Bovingdon (2010) notes that Uyghurs adopted the new policies so fast that by the end of 1981 in Kashgar region alone the number of mosques grew from merely 392 to 4700. In the next decade, the mosques in Xinjiang increased by 5.8 times (Smith Finley, 2013). Moreover, in the early 1980s, the government started sending the Uyghur youth to some Islamic countries for studying religion (Roberts, 2004). That is why the 1980s is referred to as an era of “Islamic revival” in Xinjiang by some scholars. (Roberts, 2004, p. 226).

Generally speaking, since 1949 till the early 2000s, the Chinese government policies towards Islamic faith and practices in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), as well as in whole China had “oscillated between radical intolerance, based on the imposition of the atheist principle underpinning Marxism-Leninism,…and controlled tolerance of religious institutions that are co-opted under the auspices of the state” (Waite, 2006, p. 253). 1980s witnessed some “relative
openness” (Millward & Perdue, 2004, p. viii). Such “openness” culminated in the establishment of the Law on National Regional Autonomy of 1984 that granted national minorities the most pluralistic rights in comparison to any of the previous legislation (Wu, Xiaohui, 2014).

With the fast restoration of Islamic knowledge and identity among Uyghurs, the Uyghur national identity also gained momentum during the 1980s and 1990s. Since then various forms of unified resistance against the unfair ethnic policies have started to emerge in the region (Bovingdon, 2010; Millward, 2007; Smith Finley, 2007b, 2013). Various forms of collective resistance represent the reality that a more universal and solidified Uyghur identity was indeed becoming increasingly visible, while the fragmented and localized ‘oases identities’ (Rudelson, 1997) were turning into a history (Smith, 2002; Smith Finley, 2013). Especially through higher education, young Uyghurs who came from various oasis cities to study in the same universities in larger cities began to form more inclusive and stronger ethnic bonding in the 1990s (Bovingdon, 1998). Such a process has also been facilitated by fast developing mass media, communication, and transportation. The Uyghurs started to criticize the excessive attachment to a specific local region as “yurtwazliq” (a negative term for the affection or over-attachment towards one’s own home oasis while downgrading or excluding the Uyghurs from other places).

In parallel with such a development, during the late 1990s, especially since the early 2000s, religious and other cultural rights of the Uyghurs have been increasingly suppressed by the authorities (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Clarke, 2014, 2015, 2018; Waite, 2006, 2007). Especially after the 9/11 terrorist events, the government rhetoric has been to equate the Islamic knowledge and identity with violent separatism and terrorism. Consequently, Islamic ideology and observance have been restrained and subject to questioning in all social settings, notably in educational
institutions in Xinjiang (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Kanat, 2015; Roberts, 2016, 2018a). This development will be further discussed in the next chapter on religious education.

Despite all, as Erkin (2009) argues, the emerging Uyghur middle class (my research participants are part of this group) have been inspired by the cultures and modernity from the Turkic and Western world rather than that of China when constructing their modern collective identity. Middle Eastern culture can be seen as another reference point to the contemporary Uyghur middle class identity (Harris, 2005). Thus, on the one hand, Uyghur elites have been seeking a more globalized identity, while on the other, they continue to resist the assimilation into the Chinese nation.

In sum, the construction of the 20th century Uyghur identity is “an ambitious act of redefinition” (Brophy, 2016, p. 22), a highly complicated phenomenon in terms of its ethnic and religious dimensions; it has been deeply influenced by a number of factors, namely, historical mass migrations, religious paradigm shifts, colonialism, political oppression and resistance, current global discourses around Islam and terrorism, as well as their translation into the Chinese context. All of these components have contributed to the construction of the contemporary Uyghur identity. Again, in Brophy’s (2016) words,

This discourse of Uyghur nationhood tapped into a rich historical and philological legacy, harking back to a golden age of Uyghur civilization and by extension pointing to the decline that had since reduced the community to a fractured and colonized condition (p. 22).

Once more, migration to the Western countries has created some brand-new conditions as well as challenges for the Uyghurs whose identity has never stayed static and simple. With such a background, the focus of this thesis will be the experiences of those immigrant Uyghurs in the
context of Canada where they reconstruct their group identity through interacting with the new “others”.

2.2. A Short Introduction to the Uyghur Formal Education in Xinjiang

2.2.1. A glimpse till the early 2000s

Before being formerly incorporated into People’s Republic of China in 1949, Uyghurs had their own education systems that primarily included private Islamic madrasas, Jadid schools (new schools that taught language classes in the Western methods, Islamic history and Quran, as well as science classes), and later the Soviet style secular educational institutions (Brophy, 2016; Khalid, 1998; Waite, 2006, 2007). Yet, the Chinese communist regime, especially starting from the late 1950s, had begun to outlaw the existing educational traditions of Uyghurs and enforced Mandarin language and culture in all educational institutions up until the end of 1970s. From early 1980s till early 2000s, Uyghur language and culture had been given priority in all schools where the predominant student population were Uyghurs, while Mandarin Chinese was taught as a separate language class only (Dwyer, 2005; Smith Finley & Zang, 2015). However, with the beginning of the new millennium a huge shift has occurred in the educational policies in Xinjiang, which is discussed more in detail in the next subsections.

Since the end of the Great Cultural Revolution till the early 2000s, there have existed separate minority and Han Chinese schools side by side. As part of the minority school system, most notably since late 1970s, Uyghur language schools at all levels had flourished and the Uyghur students in those schools were called Minkaomin (民考民- Uyghurs educated in Uyghur schools).
Some Uyghur parents opted to send their children to Han Chinese schools, and these students were labeled as *Minkaohan* (民考汉 - Uyghurs educated in Mandarin Chinese schools). As Han Chinese schools did not offer minority language and culture classes, the *Minkaohan* students were seen as being alienated from their ethnic culture and identity; they were not regarded as authentic Uyghurs and were not accepted as real Han Chinese, either (Clothey, 2005; Smith Finley, 2007a; Smith Finley & Zang, 2015; Taynen, 2006).

This form of bifurcated education system gave Uyghurs great flexibility in terms of choosing which school to attend. Those who attended Han Chinese schools also enjoyed a preferential policy (优惠政策 – Youhui Zhence) that offered extra marks for their university entrance exam results. However, this policy has also been seen as a “reverse discrimination” (Simayi, 2014, p. 142), or a sort of positive discrimination that further subordinates Uyghur minority’s already “backward” status. As Dwyer (2005) points out, such a policy proved to be a “double-edged sword”, as it has served to confirm the popular stereotypes that minorities are “low quality” and “backward” (p, 11). As such, this may only have been exacerbating the prejudices or discrimination against the Uyghurs.

The following section specifically focuses on two typical educational policies, and how these policies have been affecting the Uyghur identity in Xinjiang especially since the beginning of the 21st century.

### 2.2.2. “Bilingual” education since early 2000s

“Bilingual” Education Policy （双语教育政策） was officially launched in 2002 in Xinjiang region to replace the traditional bifurcated educational system that gave the special rights to Uyghur language in Uyghur dominated schools. The new model actually prioritized Mandarin
Chinese as the major language of instruction (Schluessel, 2007; Smith Finley, & Zang, 2015; Tsung & Cruickshank, 2010). This policy came into effect while joint Chinese-minority schools began to be proposed and developed at the same period (Yi, 2016).

In 2002, Xinjiang University, the most prestigious higher educational institution in Xinjiang, first started to implement Mandarin Chinese instruction in all courses except native language and literature classes, replacing the tradition of teaching in diverse languages (Schluessel, 2007; Wingfield-Hayes, 2002). The 2004 “bilingual learning” document officially made Mandarin Chinese the number one or sole language of instruction in primary and secondary school classrooms (Feng & Sunuodula, 2009; Schluessel, 2007). Thus, since 2004 all minority schools (primary and secondary) in Xinjiang have been forced to use Mandarin in all subjects apart from native language classes. By 2008, all Chinese and ethnic minority schools (mostly Uyghur) in urban regions had been merged (Simayi, 2015). For the kindergarten children, two years of “bilingual” education was required in the beginning, but in 2016 the requirement has been raised to three years. The object is to let 85% of pre-school children access “bilingual” pre-school education by 2020, while the 2015 figure was 75% (Martina, 2016).

Due to the sensitivity of the issue, it has been extremely difficult to measure and reveal the true results of such a new policy in education. According the Radio Free Asia’s rare interview of a high school teacher, the overall educational achievements of Uyghur students have been very unsatisfactory due their poor Mandarin skills. It was also pointed out that the Uyghur students were not developing satisfactory language skills either in Chinese or in Uyghur (“Uyghur teacher: new”, 2016).

By 2016, the Uyghur content in Uyghur literature textbooks dropped to only about 30% while the rest is from Chinese literature (“Uyghur teacher: new”, 2016). Regarding this
development, many Uyghur intellectuals expressed deep concerns over the cultural identity of Uyghur students who have increasingly less opportunity to learn about their own literature and culture (“Uyghurs express deep”, 2016). Some studies on the joint Chinese-minority schools also revealed the growing concerns over their students’ identity crisis as well as academic performance (Sunuodula, 2015; Zhang & Yang, 2018).

Yet, some other scholars find that such policies in Uyghur education have been making Uyghur students more conscience about their ethnicity. The emphasis on Chinese language and culture in schools has reversely or negatively affected many Uyghur students so that they have started to more firmly embrace their ethnic identity, while showing resentment towards Han Chinese (Hoshur, 2016; Schluessel, 2007; Sun, 2014). This progress has been contrary to one of the main goals of such educational initiatives that is to help preserve and strengthen the stability of the region (Blanchard, 2014). Albeit, the government declared to end the support for the Uyghur language medium education by 2020, while making all high school Uyghur graduates to achieve full national common language (Mandarin) proficiency (XUAR Government Education Department, 2011; as cited in Sunuodula, 2018).

Although, one of the main purposes of “bilingual” education is to better prepare Uyghur graduates for employment by effectively improving their Chinese language skills, the reality shows that the Uyghur graduates who have obtained full Chinese proficiency would still become the victims of discrimination in the local job market (Howell, 2013; Simayi, 2015). For example, according to Zang’s study (2011) the Uyghurs earned around 30% less than Han Chinese in Ürümchi, Xinjiang in 2011. Chen’s (2011) survey among 969 higher education graduates reveals that the employment rate of the Uyghurs was 65.12%, while the rate of Han Chinese was 90%. It is also estimated that overall employment rate of Uyghur graduates in 2015 dropped to as low as
15% (Tohti, 2015), which shows how dramatically the situation has deteriorated in the past decade. In brief, as Simayi (2014) points out, although there have been some preferential policies in education, there has been a lack of corresponding preferential or equity policies enforced and supported by the government in the regional job market.

With this background, there emerged some local activists who tried to defend Uyghur language rights, but all faced harsh punishments. For example, Abduweli Ayup, who had an MA in linguistics from the University of Kansas, attempted to open a Uyghur language private kindergarten. He had been put to jail in 2014 for 15 months charged with the crime of illegal fund raising (Jacobs, 2014). Professor Ilham Tohti who had openly criticized the government’s unfair minority policies and advocated true autonomous rights of Uyghurs including the language rights in education was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2014, accused of being a separatist (Sperling, 2016). In sum, while Uyghurs are still constitutionally entitled to the right to use and develop their own language, any attempt to promote Uyghur language through education has become increasingly difficult and risky in the recent years.

2.2.3. Inland boarding schools

Although, boarding schools for primary and secondary level Uyghur students existed during 1990s, or even 1950s, those schools had all been operated inside Xinjiang till the beginning of the 2000s (Benson, 2004). In early 2000s, the Chinese government started to launch inland boarding schools (neidiban or Xinjiangban) for Uyghur middle and high school students, primarily for

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further integrating minority youth into the mainstream Chinese system (Chen, 2013). Since then, each year over 5000 high school students from Xinjiang have been sent to the Xinjiang classes in schools in eastern Chinese provinces (Zhang, 2014). By 2010, the number of the graduates of those schools had reached 13000 (Jiang, 2011; Chen, 2014). In 2014, the annual enrolment surpassed 10,000 (Grose, 2015, a, b). As Chen (2013) suggests, most probably these schools will continuously thrive, and their impact on Uyghur ethnic identity and Uyghur-Han relations can be tremendous. I would argue that the negative impacts could be much more salient than the positive ones.

The young candidates for these schools are usually the top students in their home schools. They are sent to the schools in inland provinces of China where they can supposedly benefit from the high-quality education delivered in Mandarin Chinese and improve their social skills in Chinese. The state hopes that those students will deeply internalize mainstream Han Chinese culture, develop attachment to China as their motherland, and eventually become patriotic minority elites (Grose, 2010, 2015b). Meanwhile, the government’s openly alleged goal is to improve the employability of the Uyghur youths. Yet, after graduating from top universities in inland China, those Uyghurs still face a serious discrimination in Xinjiang’s job market (Sunuodola, 2018).

Thus, such a controversial project has been criticized by many Uyghur intellectuals who see that the main purpose behind it is to assimilate those young Uyghur students into Chinese culture, and ultimately assimilate the whole Uyghur nation (‘Opportunity for a splendid’, 2016). Accordingly, when CNN reporter David McKenzie (2015) interviewed the students and teachers of one of those schools, he was openly told by the principal that the main objective of those Xinjiang classes is to cultivate love for the Chinese state among Uyghur students. However, various studies have revealed that these schools often fail in producing patriotic and loyal elites
among Uyghur graduates. Conversely, these schools may have been strengthening the ethnic
awareness and pride among many Uyghur students, while exacerbating the tension between
Uyghurs and Han Chinese (Grose, 2010, 2015b; Yuan, Qian & Zhu, 2017).

Furthermore, the findings from Chen’s (2013) study shows that some of those students have
been developing negative images regarding their own ethnic group. The “misrecognition” or
simply “unrecognition” of their ethnic culture and identity in the education they receive (both overt
and hidden curricula), may have been leading to what Taylor (1994) calls a sense of “false,
distorted, and reduced mode of being” (p. 25) among those young students.

At the same time, the treatment of the Uyghur students in those boarding schools has been
very harsh and discriminatory. As revealed in Grose’s (2015a) in-depth interviews, most students
feel like they live in “prison”. They are expected to work 14 hours a day, six days a week, and
their religious rights and customs, even greeting in Islamic way, and saying a short prayer after
eating are strictly banned. They spend most of their time in school; they can rarely socialize with
the outside world. Their contact with their parents is limited; in most cases, they can only visit
their parents once a year due the long distance between their schools and homes. Wang and
Phillion’s (2010) study also exposes a very similar situation among Tibetan inland boarding school
students.

All of these are reminiscent of the residential schools of Canada regulated for the
indigenous populations during the colonial era. While the Canadian government has already
apologized for the damage and loss the dislocated education brought to its indigenous groups
(Anaya, 2014), the Chinese government has been increasing the investment and support for those
boarding schools under the name of assisting those underprivileged and “left-behind” minority
students. The primary goal of such a project can be seen as political - assimilating those students
into Han Chinese society; using education for political and cultural assimilation, rather than promoting diversity, which is a form of cognitive imperialism.

2.2.4. Summary

The formal education for the Uyghurs in Xinjiang has undergone several distinct stages as discussed above. After two decades of minority-Han bifurcated education system in Xinjiang, the minority schools, namely the Uyghur schools have been gradually merged with the mainstream Han Chinese schools starting from the early 2000s under the rhetoric of “bilingual” education. Inland boarding schools, as the tool to more effectively assimilate the Uyghur junior and senior high school students into Han Chinese socio-political and cultural system, have become increasingly popular in the last two decades. As Sunuodula (2018) says, the current educational policies in Xinjiang are “more about differential power relations than anything else, rather than being about ‘modernization’ and ‘aiding’ the economic development of Uyghurs, as is constructed in political, media and academic discourse” (p. 210). Apparently, all these policies have mostly yielded the results opposite to what the government expected to achieve. The Uyghurs may have become more dissatisfied and resentful towards the Chinese state and Han population, while becoming increasingly conscious about, and inward-looking towards their ethnic identity and religious culture. This is likely only to add to the growing dissent among the Uyghurs who have long been feeling excluded from the socio-economic development in the region due to various discriminatory policies and practices (Clarke, 2015, 2018, McMurray, 2017; Sun 2014).

That being so, almost all of the Uyghur immigrants who participated in my research were the products of the education during the 1980s and 1990s; they all went to Uyghur schools (minkaomin), apart from one participant who attended Han Chinese schools at the primary and
secondary levels (*minkaohan*). Yet, all of them took their university courses mostly in the Uyghur language, including the above *minkaohan* participant. He is not a typical *minkaohan* who tends to have rather poor Uyghur language skills (both in reading and writing). Thus, all of them are fluent in Uyghur language and culture, which is the key characteristic of the Uyghur generation educated before the “bilingual” education era. Moreover, they came from various parts of Xinjiang. Therefore, they can best represent the Uyghur intellectuals of their own time.

2.3. Religious Spaces

2.3.1. *A general picture*

Religion has always been a deeply contested topic in the People’s Republic of China. As the contemporary Chinese vision on religion is based on a highly secularist\(^\text{15}\) paradigm, religion has generally enjoyed a very limited space in society, especially in educational spheres. Although, during the early years of the Republic, religion had been tolerated to some extent due to many other urgent priorities, in the late 1950s, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) all religious traditions, including the native religions, were ruthlessly suppressed.\(^\text{16}\)

At the end of the Cultural Revolution, most notably during the 1980s, all religious beliefs and faiths began to be treated with more tolerance and acceptance by the government, as a result of the newly-launched reform and opening-up policies (simplified Chinese: 改革开放政策). Accordingly, a wide range of traditional cultures, values, and faiths was offered the chance to

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\(^\text{15}\) I use the term “secularist”, in the way Robert Jackson (2012) sees, as a paradigm that deems “religious claims are false or meaningless”, versus “secular” which refers to equal treatment of various religious traditions while respecting the principle of freedom of religion (p.60).

revive and flourish again to a certain extent. Yet, during the late 1990s, the authorities began to perceive the link between religious faiths and security of the state, especially regarding Falun Gong and Islam. In the latter case, the rhetoric of the government has been increasingly parallel with the one of the West, where the “war on terror” campaigns have been exclusively targeting Muslims and their faith (Hilal, 2017; Jamal, 2008).

When it comes to education, China has always tried to exclude religious rhetoric, knowledge or activities from the compulsory education system both at primary and secondary levels. As Article 8 of the Education Law of the People’s Republic of China adopted in 1995, one of the fundamental laws of China regulating education states: “Education activities shall be in the benefit of public interests of the state and the society. The state shall separate education from religion. Any organization or individual may not employ religion to obstruct activities of the state education system.” Accordingly, since the early 1980s, the only available religious content at the primary and secondary level of education has been strictly limited to the introduction of the world’s major religions and some relevant cultures (Nanbu, 2008).

At the tertiary level, academic courses and programs related to religion have been offered, but exclusively through secularist or irreligious perspectives (Nanbu, 2008). Consequently, according to China expert Dru Gladney, intolerance towards Muslim minorities in China has been growing due to a severe lack of religious education in mainstream education. Although, religion-related content in the Chinese curricula has increased in the past two decades, it is still largely discussed in superficial, negative or pejorative ways (Zhou, 2017).

If there is considerable space for religion in the Chinese education system, it is in the religious institutions operated by various patriotic religious organizations that aim to train officials and

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17 For more information about the content of this law, see http://www.china.org.cn/english/education/184669.htm
scholars who work in jobs related to religion. The most important obligation of these schools is to
cultivate a group of young religious professionals who are patriotic, upholding socialism, and loyal
to the Communist Party (Department of Ethnic Religion Theory, Central Institute of the Party, 1998, pp. 448–9). Moreover, “regulations governing education of religious schools shall be
formulated separately by the State Council,” as stated by the Article 82 of the Education Law of
the People’s Republic of China.

2.3.2. A Review of the Rhetoric, Policies and Practices regarding the Access to Islamic
Knowledge and Education in Xinjiang

The Islamic Association of China was founded in 1953 shortly after the establishment of the
People’s Republic of China in 1949. Under its administration, the first Chinese Islamic Institute
was built in Beijing in 1955. The operating guidelines of the institute state that its objective is to
cultivate “specialists in Islam who love the socialist motherland, uphold socialism and have
thorough knowledge of Islam and Arabic as well as Chinese’ (Yang & Yang, 1999, p. 318).
However, during the Cultural Revolution, the institute was closed along with many other religious
organizations. It was reopened after the Revolution, and since the early 1980s nine other Islamic
institutions have been established throughout China, including the one in Ürümchi, Xinjiang. One
of the most important aims of these schools is to train young imams who will work in various
mosques in China, replacing former imams who were mostly trained in traditional madrasas

As mentioned earlier, since 1949 up until the 2000s, the Chinese government policies
towards the Islamic faith and practices in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region had alternated
between “radical intolerance” especially during the 1960s and 1970s to “controlled tolerance” (Waite, 2006, p. 253) with “the relative openness” starting from the early 1980s (Millward, 2004, p. viii). The “openness” culminated in the establishment of the Law on National Regional Autonomy of 1984 that granted national minorities the most pluralistic rights in comparison to any of the previous legislation (Wu, Xiaohui, 2014). Thousands of mosques were built during the 1980s in Xinjiang (Bovingdon, 2010; Smith Finley, 2013), and private religious education had been tolerated to a limited degree until the end of the 1990s (Roberts, 2004).

Yet, all but in Xinjiang, the tolerance towards religious education has allowed all mosques throughout China to organize classes in Arabic and Islamic studies for all members of society regardless of their age. The graduates from those institutes are even able to establish smaller independent religious schools. Only in Xinjiang, the perceived link between Islamic knowledge or identity and Uyghur separatism or resistance has stopped the government from regulating such policies (Armijo, 2007, 2017).

This being the case, right after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, there occurred a “rhetorical shift” in dealing with Uyghur resistance, as the PRC for the first time officially asserted the existence of the Uyghur terrorist threat in China. In other words, Uyghur “separatism” has become “terrorism”, as a result of a convenient conflation of Islam with violence and terrorism (Roberts, 2018 a, p. 234; Harris, 2014). The sole state media as well has intentionally reinforced the imagined connection between Islam and terrorism in the context of Xinjiang (Harris, 2013; Lams, 2016). In other words, the government has started to conveniently use the global “war on terror” rhetoric to suppress the Uyghur rights to access Islamic knowledge and education (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014, Clarke, 2014, 2015, 2018; Roberts, 2016, 2018a).
Since then, the Islamic knowledge, ideology and practices have been increasingly obstructed and subject to questioning in all social spheres, most notably in educational institutions in Xinjiang (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Kanat, 2015; Roberts, 2016, 2018a). Young people under 18 have been banned from attending mosque prayers and forbidden to have any religious education in underground madrasas (“China restricts Ramadan,” 2016; Morelos, 2014). Wearing religious symbols and engaging in religious activities, including praying, fasting during Ramadan, etc. have been outlawed in all educational institutions in Xinjiang (Dearden, 2017; Grieboski, 2014). Thus, the Uyghurs’ right to access Islamic knowledge and practice Islam has been increasingly restricted and diminished (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Cook, 2017). This trend has become more drastic and exaggerated since 2009 under Xi’s rule; “a wide range of routine and peaceful aspects of religious observance that were once permissible have been arbitrarily labelled as ‘illegal activities’ or ‘religious extremism’” (Cook, 2017, p. 70; Ibrahim, 2018a).

Such a repression has reached the highest level since CCP secretary Chen Quanguo, who was transferred from Tibet Autonomous Region to Xinjiang in August 2016, began an intensive securitization program targeting the Islamic knowledge sharing and observance among the Uyghurs in early 2017 (Millward, 2018; Zenz & Leibold, 2017). New rules launched in October 2016 to restrict the Uyghur parents from teaching their children religious knowledge and attracting or forcing their children into religious activities. The perpetrators would face serious penalties (Surana, 2016). Giving Uyghur babies Islamic names has been banned, as well (Haas, 2017; Ibrahim, 2018a, b). In March 2017, *Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification*\(^\text{18}\) was adopted, further restricting the religious knowledge or information sharing in all private and public spaces, while explicitly “making religion [referring to Islam – author]

\(^{18}\) For more information, see http://www.iuhrdf.org/content/xinjiang-uyghur-autonomous-region-regulation-de-extremification
more Chinese and under law, and actively guide religions to become compatible with socialist society” (Article 4). Accordingly, the Regulations state that religious schools and institutions also “should adhere to the direction of sinocizing [sic] religion, and earnestly perform the duties of cultivating and training religious professionals, to prevent permeation by extremification” (Article 40). “Sinocizing” (Sinicizing) here obviously means “secularizing” or “modernizing” under the discourse of “Internal Orientalism”, which, in this context, further demeans Islam as a backward and innately violent religion.

Subsequently, those who have been suspected as being too religious or showing signs of radicalization (including participating in very mainstream religious activities like praying, fasting, wearing religious symbols, men wearing hijab and growing beard, abstinence from alcohol, etc.) are sent to newly opened “Education and Transformation Training Centers” (教育转化培训中心) or “Counter-extremism Training Schools” (去极端化培训班), where they must stay for months or indefinitely away from their families to “unlearn” their religious ideologies. Since their inception in early 2017, these schools have been opened in many parts of Xinjiang, and have already “re-educated” thousands of people (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Currently, it is estimated that as many as one million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims could be living in those Nazi style political education centers where conditions are extremely poor (Thum & Wasserstrom, 2018; Zenz, 2018). As Ibrahim (2018b) puts it, for the government, it is necessary to “re-educate” the entire Uyghur population to achieve “ethnic harmony” and “social stability”.

Furthermore, it seems that the authorities have started to see Islamic education from abroad as problematic too. It is known that recently all Uyghur students who were studying Islam in Egypt have been required to go back to China. Reportedly, under the pressure of Chinese authorities, the Egyptian government arrested and extradited many Uyghur students (Awad, 2017; Batke, 2017).
The students who returned either disappeared or have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms (Smith, 2017).

Under such circumstances, accessing religious knowledge among Uyghurs has been increasingly through oral traditions (Waite, 2007). Recent developments in Internet technology and social media had facilitated the sharing of Islamic knowledge among Uyghurs to some limited extent till the late 2016 (Clothey & Koku, 2016). However, since early 2017, this channel has been subject to ever-tightening censorship and control\textsuperscript{19} that such a sort of knowledge exchange has become virtually impossible (Vanderklippe, 2017; Smith Finley, 2018b).

Considering such developments, China expert Dru Gladney regards the recent efforts of Chinese authorities have “intended to make the Uyghurs look as if they’re a threat, an Islamist terrorist organization,” as a group. He warns that this may cause further alienation of the Uyghurs from the state, creating more tensions in the region (Drennan, 2015). In a similar vein, Sean Roberts (2018a) utilizes Michel Foucault’s (2010) concept of biopolitics to argue that the current counter-extremism and counter-terrorism rhetoric and policies in Xinjiang are targeting the whole Uyghur population as potential terrorists. These polices aim to quarantine all Uyghurs as a “virtual biological threat” or the potential suspects of terrorism, which is a sign that the corresponding security measures and practices have reached unprecedented levels. He also contends that these policies have only played the role of alienating the Uyghurs from the Chinese state and severely disfiguring their image in broader Chinese society (Roberts, 2018a, p. 252).

While, one cannot deny that religious extremism has indeed been infiltrating through the Xinjiang borders in recent years, Uyghur expert Michael Clarke (2014, 2015, 2018) attributes

\textsuperscript{19} A typical way of censorship has been to directly check smartphones or mandatorily install some apps for detecting religious content. For more information see https://www.theregister.co.uk/2017/07/24/china_installing_mobile_spyware/
some of the key reasons of violence in Xinjiang to the Chinese government’s repressive policies in the region, including restrictions on Uyghur religious education and expressions. Many other experts (e.g. Botobekov, 2016; Cafiero, 2018; Neriah, 2017; Roberts, 2016, 2018a,b) also see the same oppressive policies as, to a great extent, pushing some Uyghur people to support or adopt religious extremism in various forms to express their resistance to the central or local governments.

For example, the Uyghurs joining ISIS has been a pressing issue in recent years (Botobekov, 2016; Cafiero, 2018; Clarke & Kan, 2017). Chinese authorities estimated that the number would be around 300 in late 2015 (Cook, 2015, Drennan, 2015). As of May 2017, the Syrian ambassador to China mentioned that there were as many as 5000 Uyghurs fighting in Syria along with ISIS (Blanchard, 2017; Cafiero, 2018). According to a Washington-based think tank, Xinjiang has supplied the highest number of foreign ISIS fighters from any country of the world outside of Tunisia and Saudi Arabia (Tewari, 2017).

Uyghur ISIS fighters themselves specifically mention, in their propaganda videos, how restrictions over religious rights have pushed them to join ISIS where they can enjoy religious freedom and fight for the cause of Islam\textsuperscript{20}. The Xinjiang expert Sean Roberts (2018 a,b), based on his personal interviews of some former Uyghur fighters in Syria also confirms that the systemic oppression, especially the ever-increasing restrictions over the Islamic education, identity, and practices among Uyghurs within Xinjiang may have been “the driving force in the recent creation of a viable Uyghur militant movement in Syria” (Roberts, 2018a, p.252).

Some scholars also find that the repressive policies have strengthened the collective or Islamic identity of the young Uyghur students in China. For example, Timothy Grose’s (2015a,

\textsuperscript{20}Jihadology Project run by Aaron Y. Zelin has collected some video speeches of some young Uyghur Jihadists. Please check all the related videos from this link: http://jihadology.net/2016/06/07/new-video-message-from-ḥizb-al-islami-al-turkistani-in-bilad-al-sham-a-call-from-the-front-lines-of-jihad-19/
b) studies show that the Islamic faith and collective identity vs. being part of the Chinese nation among the Uyghur students studying in inner Chinese schools further solidified, despite the reality that they were isolated from their communities back in Xinjiang and their religious faith and practices were heavily curtailed in those schools. Similar studies of some boarding school Uyghur students in inner Chinese cities conducted by Yangbin Chen (2008, 2009 with Postiglione, 2010) conclude that while the Uyghur students were deliberately isolated from their cultural environments and restricted from using the Uyghur language and accessing the knowledge about Uyghur Islamic culture, they became more conscious of their cultural and religious roots, and developed more in-group social capital among themselves vis a vis the pan-Chinese.

In sum, the rhetoric, policies, and practices of the Chinese government pertaining to the Uyghur rights to access Islamic education and knowledge and practice Islam have not been consistent over the last 7 decades. While the government attitudes towards Islamic faith and identity had alternated from complete intolerance in the 1960s and 1970s to “controlled tolerance” in 1980s (Waite, 2006, 2007), the drastic transformation of the international discourses around Islamic faith and Muslims at the turn of the new millennium has largely reshaped the rhetoric and policies of the state. The current developments indicate the situation has reached its unprecedented oppressive level that many scholars, both through their theoretical and empirical analyses, have warned against the negative consequences of such developments.

2.3.3. News reports on recent violent events and some speculations

Ethnic clash or politically motivated violence has always existed throughout the history of Xinjiang. However, the past few years have witnessed the most serious incidents in which the
highest number of causalities has been produced (Larroca, 2015; Roberts, 2018 a,b). Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, the government rhetoric and policies around these events have been increasingly more emphatic on the Islamic, rather than the ethnic aspect of the Uyghur violent attackers (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Roberts, 2012, 2016, 2018 a,b)

For example, on 5 July 2009, there was a student demonstration in Ürümchi, Xinjiang. This was apparently fueled by the unsatisfactory response of the government to the murder of at least two Uyghur workers by the Han Chinese in a toy factory in Guangdong province. Many argue that the growing dissent among the Uyghurs towards oppressive government policies in Xinjiang was the root cause of this incident (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Roberts, 2012, 2016, 2018a,b; Smith Finley, 2013). The demonstration turned violent because of the government’s harsh crackdown, and during which more than 200 civilians were killed, and 1800 injured (it has been the most serious event in the recent history of Xinjiang). The government blamed the outside Islamist terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida as instigating the violence (Wu, Chaofan, 2009).

In October 2013, three Uyghurs drove a truck into a crowd on Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, killing two people along with themselves (Rajagopalan, 2013). On March 1, 2014, Kunming City knife attacks caused 31 deaths and more than 140 injuries. Chinese state media agency Xinhua claimed extremist militant Uyghurs carried out the attacks (Beech, 2014; Blanchard, 2014). In May 2014, bomb attacks in an open-air market in Ürümchi left 31 people dead and 94 injured. In July the same year, 96 people died in an ethnic clash in Yarkant County, including 59 assailants (Zuo, 2014). In November again the “terrorists” in the same place attacked the civilians, during which 15 died, including the assailants (Phillips, 2014). After two years of relative silence, on February 14, 2017, eight people were killed in a knife attack in Pishan county, Xinjiang (Ng, 2017). Most of these violent events were treated by the government exclusively as terrorist events resulting
from religious extremism, while these incidents were primarily provoked by the repressions over the basic human rights of the Uyghur, including their religious rights (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Clarke, 2014, 2015, 2018; Roberts, 2012, 2016, 2018a,b; Smith Finley, 2018a).

It seems that in most recent years there have not been major violent incidents in Xinjiang. However, some argue that the situation may have been getting worse, as there is a possibility that many attacks are not being reported at all for various reasons (Gracie, 2017). Be it true or not, it is obvious that the government has been excessively highlighting Islamist extremism or terrorism when assessing these violent incidents and formulating and further tightening relevant policies and regulations.

2.3.4. Discussion

It seems that the recent developments in terms of the rhetoric and policies revolving around Islamic knowledge and practices in Xinjiang can be partly explained by the widespread systemic discourse – “Internal Orientalism” (Schein, 1997, p. 70). Schein (1997) uses the term to describe how minority cultures, since the early 1980s, have been commercialized in an essentialized fashion, and categorized as ‘female, rural, and backward’, while the majority modern ‘Han urbanite’ lead them to ‘progress’ (p.89). More specifically speaking, for the majority Han Chinese, “‘culture’ is inextricably linked to education, where ‘education’ is understood as: a) mastery of the Chinese language; and b) knowledge of Confucian codes of behaviour (li)”. Behind this notion, there is a deep assumption that the education in minority languages, or Islamic education is being “lack of culture” or “uncultured (meiyou wenhua)” (Smith Finley, 2013, pp. 125-126).
Recent global rise of “war on terror” rhetoric and Islamophobia have only reinforced such a systemic discourse in the Chinese society. While the international Muslim communities have become “the most visible enemy” of the West, following 9/11 terrorist attacks (Jamal, 2008; Saito, 2001, p.15), the Uyghurs have been increasingly seen as “an almost biological threat”, as a collective, to the state by the Chinese government (Roberts, 2018a, p. 246), while other Muslims, such as the Hui ethnic group, in other regions of China have been enjoying much more free access to Islamic knowledge and education (Armijo, 2007, 2017; Dillon, 2016). Of relevance is Taylor’s (1994) concept of misrecognition that could effectively explain how the “false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (p.25) of the Muslim Uyghurs has been created and reinforced.

More specifically, before 9/11, Muslims around the world more often had been addressed by their ethnic or geographical backgrounds rather than their Muslim identity (Kymlicka, 2015). Likewise, in China, the primary identifier of Uyghurs has become “Muslim”; most of the attention has begun to shift from the ethnic to the Islamic aspect of Uyghurness. In other words, the global “war on terror” rhetoric has transformed the Uyghurs from a “backward ethnic group” to “uncivilized and violent Muslims”. Furthermore, the current “confining or demeaning or contemptible picture” (Taylor, 1994, p.25) of Muslims created by the international media and right-wing politics has made the Chinese government more prone to be anti-Islamic in its own educational and public policies and practices. Subsequently, Chinese government has constructed an “us/Chinese state vs. Muslim Uyghurs” dichotomy (Mahmut, 2019).

Therefore, when violent attacks are committed by a few Uyghur extremists, these acts are always easily attributed to the whole Uyghur Muslim community, like Afsaruddin (2015) argues, as if there is an underlying problem with the Islamic faith itself. This sort of ‘misrecognition’ (Taylor, 1994, p. 25) of Islamic faith of the Uyghurs would not only sabotage the general Uyghur
identity, but also could create hostility among those Uyghur against the Chinese state as well as the Han population, as suggested by many China experts (e.g. Botobekov, 2016; Cafiero, 2018; Clarke, 2014, 2017, 2018; McMurray, 2017; Neriah, 2017; Roberts, 2012, 2016, 2018a,b; Smith Finley, 2018a). As some scholars have suggested, the most recent developments in Xinjiang have become more parallel with the reality in Palestine and Israel; the consequences will be contrary to what the government is expecting to see (Clarke, 2015; Smith Finley, 2018, Wang, 2007, 2014).

Moreover, as Sen (2006) strongly warns, overemphasizing a particular religious faith could strengthen the authority of orthodox or extremist religious groups. In the same vein, overstressing and interrogating Muslim identity could further alienate the Muslim Uyghurs from mainstream society or make them more attached to their faith or even radicalize (Botobekov, 2016; Clarke, 2014, 2015, 2018; Neriah, 2017). Combining with the long-existing alienation and marginalization resulted from the unfair economic opportunities in Xinjiang (Sun, 2014), this will only make the situation worse. The reality that many Uyghurs have been attracted to some radical groups including ISIS is a typical example of this (Botobekov, 2016; Cafiero, 2018; Clarke & Kan, 2017; Roberts, 2016, 2018a,b). A very recent large-scale quantitative study of the phenomenon of radicalization conducted by Bélanger and his colleagues (2019) confirms the very positive correlation between social alienation and intention to join a radical group or ideologically-based violence.

It seems that current Chinese policies and practices have been successful in eliminating some pull factors that could lead to radicalization, such as peer group (Tharoor, 2015), criminals in prisons (Samuel, 2012; Saunders, 2012), self-radicalization through exposure to online material (Behr, Reding, Edwards & Gribb, 2013) at the personal level. At the societal level, the factors like enticing media stories and messages evoking sympathy and affiliation via social media and the
Internet (Behr, et. Al., 2013; Tucker, 2009), recruiters on or offline and social media (Braniff, 2015), and radicalized religious or community leaders (Bergen, 2015; Duffy & Harley 2015) have been curtailed to a great extent as well.

However, the same rhetoric, policies and practices have been creating and reinforcing some push factors such as deemed threat to individual and collective identity (Seul, 1999; Taylor, 1994), tendency for looking for revenge against perceived wrong or believing that revenge through murder is just (Samuel, 2012) at the individual level. At the societal level these developments may have been causing marginalization and alienation among the disenfranchised Uyghur youth (Esposito, 2015; Euer, van Vossole, Groenen, Van Bouchaute & Hogeschool, 2014; Taylor, 1994), the perception of ideological necessity or sacred duty to take revenge against those seen as enemies (Esposito, 2015; Zalman, 2015), or the recognition of religion as a socio-political guide to reach similar goals (Esposito, 2015; Roy, 2004). Although the negative effects of globalization with information and communications technology (Ştibli, 2010) have been largely countered through strict censorship policies and measures, it is not enough to counter extremism, and it is highly oppressive and unethical.

Meanwhile, the lack of mainstream Islamic knowledge resulted from the limited access to religious education can be seen as another key factor that would push the naïve individuals to internalize radical forms of Islam (Batrawy, Dodds & Hinnant, 2016; Ghosh & Chan, 2017; Kelley & Morgenstern, 2006). In other words, lack of religious literacy could become one of the root causes of religious intolerance and extremism both among the insiders and outsiders of a particular religion (Esposito, 2015; Ghosh, et al, 2016; Moore, 2006). Considering the reality that Islam is an integral part of Uyghur collective identity (Brophy, 2016; Kuşçu, 2013), the Uyghur youths
who do not have access to even the basic or mainstream Islamic knowledge may easily be misguided by the extremist ideologies in searching for their Muslim identity.

The same development could be summarized in James Millward’s (2016) words:

The party-state claims that Uyghur unrest arises entirely from infiltrated foreign jihadi ideology, as manifested by long beards, veils, and Ramadan fasting, rather than as a reaction to its own policies. Whatever the role of Islamist propaganda in Xinjiang today, the painful irony is that China’s own efforts to centralize and thus control Uyghur Islam have worked for six decades to undermine precisely the same characteristics of Uyghur religion that Al Qaeda, ISIS and their ilk fulminate against.

Such a vicious process, in turn, could lead to more ethnic divide and disharmony, exacerbating the distrust and friction between the mostly religious Uyghurs and mostly non-religious or irreligious majority Han population in the region. Equally important, more Uyghurs may become alienated from and hostile towards the Chinese state and be easily attracted to the Jihadi ideologies seeping through the national borders, as suggested by many scholars (Cafiero, 2018; Millward, 2016, 2019; Roberts, 2016, 2018, a,b). Ultimately, such a consequence can prove to be very much detrimental to the collective image of the Uyghur Muslims, as well as the wellbeing of Chinese society as a whole.

2.3.5. Summary

Access to religious knowledge and education has always been strictly controlled in the history of the People’s Republic of China. This has been particularly evident in the case of the Uyghurs who have been subject to waves of differing political rhetoric and increasingly tight policy measurements around Islamic knowledge and education. Most recently, the supposed link between
Islamic knowledge or religiosity and violent extremism or terrorism reinforced by the global “war on terror” discourse has resulted in an unprecedented degree of repressions over the basic Uyghur human rights, since the end of the Great Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

Theoretically speaking, the recent evolution of Chinese rhetoric and policies regarding Islamic knowledge and education among Uyghurs can also be understood through the lens of “Internal Orientalism” (Schein, 1997, p. 70) that puts the religious knowledge and culture of the Uyghurs in a subordinate status vis a vis the “modern” and “advanced” Han Chinese way of education and life (Smith Finley, 2013). The racialized and subaltern image of global Muslims after 9/11 has further reinforced such unequal power relations in the context of Xinjiang. In other words, this has been a direct reflection of the global “misrecognition” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25) of the general Muslims who have been the victims of systemic discrimination in their own nation states. This being reality, as Sen (2006) warns us, overemphasizing singular faith of a religious group (in this case, the Uyghurs) would further strengthen the authority of orthodox religious groups.

While, through its specific policies and measures, the Chinese government seems to have been offsetting some factors that could create the conditions for religious radicalization, it has been largely overlooking some very dynamic factors that could trigger violent extremism. The aftermath of the latter scenario appears to be greatly outweighing the benefits of the former in the long run, and the current reality is already showing clear signs of such a prospect. At the same time, religious illiteracy among the young Uyghurs – a possible consequence of such repressive rhetoric and policies, could create a perfect atmosphere for various extremist groups to propagate their ideologies. This is not only harmful to the Uyghur Muslims, but also the wider Chinese society.

Various scholars and experts have analyzed such developments and universally expressed their concerns over the possible ramifications. However, no specific study has yet focused on the
nature and possible consequences of the government rhetoric and policies on the Uyghur rights to access religious knowledge and practice religion through the theoretical lenses of post-colonialism, Orientalism, essentialism, Politics of Recognition (Taylor, 1994), push and pull factors that trigger radicalization, as well as religious literacy. Exploring the perspectives of the Uyghur diaspora is also a fresh endeavor in this respect.

Albeit, the most recent developments do not indicate a positive move, instead, many scholars\(^{21}\) studying Uyghur culture, especially the religious culture have been detained or even disappeared during and after the interviews for this study were conducted. Considerably more Uyghurs have been put to re-education camps and prisons due to their religious identities and expressions (Raydoun, 2018; Turdush, 2018). Thus, the international community, including the academic world, should give more attention to the current plights of the Uyghurs.

### 2.4. Summary

This chapter has briefly covered the evolution of the Uyghur ethnic and religious identity in the history, the formal educational experiences of Uyghurs within the Chinese regime, and the Uyghur access to the Islamic knowledge and education in the last few decades. The historical background of Uyghur ethnic and religious identity demonstrates a vibrant and multifaceted characteristics of Uyghur collective identity that has always been shifting yet increasingly becoming dynamic in the

\(^{21}\) Some of the very prominent scholars are Mohammed Salih Hajim who translated Quran into modern Uyghur for the first time in the 1980s (he died at the age of 82 during his custody) and professor Rahile Dawut who studies Uyghur Islamic shrines. Many other intellectuals or celebrities suspected of being nationalist or separatist have been detained too. For more information see https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/china-erase-uighurs-culture-181012155613937.html
recent decades. The 20th century seems to have played a major role in constructing a more unified and solid Uyghur collective identity. The Chinese regime has not been able to dilute such unity.

More specifically, within the formal educational spaces, during the 1980s and 1990s the Uyghurs were able to reconstruct and fortify their ethnic and religious identities which were seriously damaged by the Cultural Revolution. Although, the subsequent decades have turned out to be drastically different from the previous two or become increasingly intolerant towards the education in Uyghur language and access to Islamic knowledge and following Islamic practices, the Uyghurs have continued to demonstrate their strong cohesion and resistance to assimilation. There is also evidence that they are becoming more united and conscious about their collective identity.

The Western political rhetoric of “war on terror” and its application to the Uyghurs has resulted in some serious human rights abuses and atrocities in Xinjiang. The ever-increasing number of the so-called reeducation camps targeting the Uyghurs who are suspected of being religiously radicalized shows how intolerant or hostile the Chinese government has become in terms of the Islamic faith of the Uyghurs. Witnessing all these realities and developments, the Uyghur diaspora communities have been undergoing unprecedented levels of stress and anxieties. Against this backdrop, this study tries to explore the narrative identities of the Uyghur immigrants in Canada depending on the interviews conducted between October 2016 and September 2017, during which period the infamous reeducation camps were just starting to be built in large numbers but did not reach their current high quantity which is estimated to be at least one million22. The conditions in those camps were not as bad as they would be later. Moreover, the immigration status and lack of involvement of my participants in political activities against China may have made

22 For more information, see https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/claims-10192018155555.html
their family members in Xinjiang more immune to the reprisals of the Chinese government. Unlike Uyghur asylum seekers, no one among my participants was actively involved in political activities against China during the time of their interviews. As such, they were still able to communicate with their parents, relatives, or even friends back home to some extent. Therefore, their narratives did not reveal very much of their frustrations over the reeducation camps and relevant issues.

The above reality should be noted, as my participants’ voices could have been quite different if they were interviewed in 2018 or later, during which virtually all Uyghurs, whether or not they engaged in political activities against the Chinese government, began to be treated as the same - the potential enemies of the state. However, many of those participants’ family members and friends were sent to re-education camps in 2018 and 2019. For that reason, the data analysis and relevant discussions will not include the Uyghur situation after 2018.

3.1. Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, Uyghur identity is a highly complicated and delicate phenomenon that has gone through various challenges and dramatic renewals not only in the distant past, but in the recent decades, too. Especially the most recent history has been creating some extremely testing predicaments for the Uyghur collective identity. Moreover, as Wegner (2016) puts, migration adds a new dimension to identity pushing it to reconstruct itself which could sometimes result in “a devastating effect” on the identity of immigrants (p.237). The Muslim identity of Uyghurs could add another layer of complexity to their identity experiences in the secular Canada. As such, using multiple theoretical lenses would be most appropriate in order to more effectively tap into the narratives or the storied lives of this immigrant group.
That said, it should be noted that Quebec is a unique province in terms of the national identity of its majority inhabitants who have a French cultural background. Before the Quiet Revolution\textsuperscript{23}, Catholicism played a major role in defining the Quebecois identity vs. a vs. the Anglophone Protestants. While after the Revolution the focus has shifted to French language heritage which is protected under the Bill 101 passed in 1977. However, in this secularization process Catholicism has not been totally eliminated from the Quebecois national identity (Zubrzycki, 2017). As Zubrzycki (2017) further argues, “Quebec’s distinctiveness, within the Canadian federation, depends on its paradoxical combination of a French-speaking and ‘Catholic’ landscape with its secular, generally progressive social policies” (p. 146). With this background, the education in Quebec has become a very explicit tool to bring about “the new social order of interculturalism” that grants priority to French language and culture which includes Catholicism, contrasting to Canadian Multiculturalism that treats all languages and cultures as equal (Ghosh & Galczynski, 2014, p. 38).

\textsuperscript{23} Quiet Revolution (French: \textit{Révolution tranquille}) in the 1960s refers to the movement to end (a) English domination, and (b) the authority of the Catholic Church in all aspects of society. During the rapid secularization movement that followed in Quebec in that period, the Roman Catholic Church lost control of the provincial education and healthcare sectors. These sectors began to be directly regulated by the government. French-Canadians in Québec also adopted the new name 'Québécois', distinguishing themselves from the people of France as well as the English-speaking Canadians. For more information, see Dickinson, J. & Young, B. (2003). \textit{A Short History of Quebec}. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
With such a background, this chapter discusses how identity politics, critical race theory, post-colonial perspectives, and “Lost in Translation” (Hoffman, 1989) as a cultural lens, can offer a useful intersection of multiple theoretical lenses for effectively exploring the identity reconstruction experiences of the Uyghur immigrants in Canada. I believe that such an intersectionality of multiple lenses enables me to better understand the voices of my participants, putting their home and diaspora life experiences and stories into their concrete historical, socio-political, and cultural contexts. In the following section, these perspectives, as well as some relevant debates are introduced and discussed.

3.2. A Short Review of Identity Politics

Identity is “a sort of virtual home to which it is essential that we refer to explain a certain number of things” (Lévi-Strauss, 1977, p. 322). This old and classic definition of identity can effectively convey the gist of the concept. It is indeed like our “virtual homes” to which we always want to
be attached to. While constantly being drawn to such a virtual space, people not only keep asking themselves “who am I”; their concerns also revolve around the questions like “how should I live” and “who do I want to become”. The first question is related to their positions in the past and present. The second one represents their present struggles in finding their best or ideal social locations. The last one is about their aspired positions in the future (Bauman 1988, p. 62).

The sense of attachment mentioned above could first necessitate the experience of identification. Since identity is formed through relationships, this may occur when a person perceives or develops an association or link with a group in terms of values and emotions (Turner, 1982). Rummens (2003) distinguishes identification from identity arguing that identification is the classification act itself that can be seen as “inherently processual”, while identity is solely a label that is both “relational and contextual” (p. 5). Similarly, Weinreich (2003) contends that one’s identity is formed through her or his identification with significant others (individuals or perceived “groups”). These significant others may seem “benign” - such that one aspires to their characteristics, values and beliefs (a process of “idealistic identification”), or “malign” - when one wishes to dissociate from their characteristics (a process of “defensive identification”) (pp. 54-55). However, seeing identification as such a dichotomic process may not always be necessary. In many cases, those “others” may simply be seen as different, rather than benign or malign, yet could pose a threat to the “purity” of a certain group’s identity. They may be merely “significant” regarding their differences (Triandafyllidou, 1998, p. 594). In any way, identity cannot be constructed without the process of identification (Mouffe, 1993). In Marková’s (2007) words, “One cannot meaningfully ask the question about identity without posing the question about self and other” (p. 219).
In the following section, some important characteristics and aspects of identity as a concept will be discussed.

3.2.1. Multi-faceted nature

In his influential book *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity*, Taylor (1989) reminds us that “our identity is deeper and more many-sided than any of our possible articulations of it” (p. 29). In a similar vein, Hall and Paul du Gay argue (1996, p.4) that “identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions.” In Sen’s (2006, p.xiii) words, as social beings, we all have ‘inescapable plural identities’, and some of them can be more prominent than others in a particular context. He strongly warns against the danger of the assumption of singular affiliation that may lead to mutual exclusion and violence.

Sen (2006) also illustrates many specific types of identities for highlighting the fact that we are all connected to one another in one way or another. These different types of identities allow us to have situational identities which present or highlight themselves according to the corresponding and specific situations (Cohen & Kennedy, 2000). As Ghosh and Abdi (2013) point out, people may demonstrate different aspects of their individual and social identities in different times and spaces based on their perceived importance.

Apart from being plural, our identities can also be multi-dimensional, i.e. “affective, cognitive, symbolic, relational, power etc.” (Conde, 2011, p.15). This aspect of identity, together with its plurality, constitute its multi-faceted nature that is highly complex. Yet, generally speaking, individuals can develop two principal categories of identities: personal and social (collective)
(Rummens, 2001, 2003). Personal identity encompasses unique, idiosyncratic information about oneself that makes up the personal entity, while social identity envelops all the information, collective image, shared values, beliefs, habits, and desires related to the groups to which a person belongs (Fearon, 1999; Tajfel, 1978). Since this thesis is about group identity, it will focus on the social identity of the Uyghur immigrants.

3.2.2. Fluidity

It is incorrect to think of that “identity as a fixed point of thought or being, a ground of action … the logic of something like a ‘true self’” (Hall, 1991, p.9). Actually, it is constantly “evolving images of self and other” (Katzenstein 1996, p.59). It is a “process of becoming rather than being” (Hall, 2003, p.4). It is an ongoing work that spans one’s past, present and future (Bauman, 1988). Thus, identity is fluid rather than rigid (Dolby & Cornbleth, 2001), as it is “formed in social processes, and in terms of relations” (Ghosh & Abdi, 2013, p. 26). It constantly reshapes itself responding to and influenced by different times, contexts, and experiences (Tuan, 1999; Phinney, 1989; Waters, 1990). In other words, identity always “emerges as a kind of unsettled space, or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of interesting discourses” (Hall, 1991, p.10). Therefore, Richardson (1994) sees this process of identity construction as “discursive struggle” in which “one’s subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed, rigid” (p.518). Thus, human identities “are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation” (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

As such, identity “is not a boundary to be maintained but as a nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging a subject…” (Clifford, 1988, p. 344). In other words, identity is “mutually constructed” (Katzenstein 1996, p. 59). It is constructed “only through the relation to
the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside*” (italics by Hall) (Hall 2000, p.17). It is defined and re-defined through the influence of the “significant others” who are different (Triandafyllidou 1998, p. 594). As Erikson (1993) puts, group members not only should have common cultural backgrounds, but they also must share a common feeling that they are different from the “others”. Therefore, “group identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not” (p. 10). In De Fina’s (2003) words, identity is an “openly negotiated” process between different parties (p.8). That being so, the fluidity of identity is inevitable, especially when people live in increasingly multicultural and globalized contexts, where they constantly and directly encounter the “Other” in their daily lives.

Accordingly, global immigration has made the concerns about group identities more prominent than ever before (Banks, 2017). Immigration indeed can add more complexities to the collective identities of various displaced peoples whose experiences at home and the host countries present substantial disparities or even contradictions. These inconsistencies can revolve around cultural, socio-political, and economic aspects of society that could influence or challenge immigrant identities both at personal and societal levels. In Ewing’s (1990) words, “individuals are continuously reconstituting themselves into new selves in response to internal and external stimuli” (p.258). These stimuli could be extraordinarily prominent for the global immigrants who may develop “multiple, fractured, dual, shifting, and hybridized” (Bhatia, 2008, p.302) identities, while struggling with asymmetrical socio-political and cultural perspectives and discourses in their new world.
3.2.3. Essentialist understanding of identity

Essentialism in Western thought can be traced back to Plato who first conceptualized ideal and unchanging essential attributions of any existence. Those attributions are necessary and cannot be missed as they define the real essence of that existence (Cartwright, 1968). Generally speaking, “essentialism suggests that qualities are inherent in objects of study, with little reference to contexts, ambiguities, and relativities” (Ritzer & Ryan, 2011, p.193). In Fuss’s (1989) words, it is a “belief in the real, true essence of things” (p. xi). As Liebmann (2008) contends, “essentialist discourses reduce complex heterogeneous structures to a supposed inner truth or essence…and function within colonial regimes to reinforce hegemonic control over colonized peoples, inscribing inferiority upon them by controlling the dominant modes of representation” (p. 73).

In identity politics, essentialism regards any person has a static, inherent, and unchanging “real” self – “an authentic identity” (Harris, Carlson & Poata-Smith, 2013, p. 3). Essentialist and static understandings of identity assume that social markers of difference should be seen as culture of resistance and represent a pure sense of belonging (Toivanen, 2014). Edward Said (1993) warns against the essentialism and exclusiveness in identity politics asserting that “they give rise to polarizations that absolve and forgive ignorance and demagogy more than they enable knowledge” (p.31). In his seminal work Identity and violence: The illusion of destiny, Amartya Sen (2006), as well, specifically discusses the prevalence and danger of essentializing identity.

Essentialism and the concept of “Imagined Communities” (1983) go hand in hand as the former is the precondition of the latter. One can create or think of an overarching or unifying identity of a group of people who are different from others only through their very essentialized characteristics (Hall & Du Gay, 1996). Some specific types of such essentialism are studied by many scholars. For example, Schwartz-Marin (2017) focuses on how genetics can be essentialized
to homogenize ethnicity and Lechner (2007) explores how soccer as a global game has reshaped Dutch national identity in the most recent history.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1984) introduced the concept of “strategic essentialism” to describe how nationalities, ethnic groups or minority groups can deliberately essentialize their identity as a shortcut for reaching some intellectual, political, or other goals. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998, 2007, 2013) highlight the potential benefits of such a process through which those groups could temporarily “essentialize” (unite and simplify) their group identity that is largely heterogeneous, therefore resist political oppressions or counter the assimilative effects of globalization. While essentialist cultural categories are always flawed, marginalized or oppressed cultural groups can have the agency to unify and solidify their increasingly fragmented identities to achieve specific political goals (Ashcroft et al. 1998, 2013). In other words, as a deliberate process, strategic essentialism can be used by a subaltern group as a tool to overcome the assimilative forces of colonialism or post-colonialism (Nkomo, 2011).

Strategic essentialism may have been occurring among the Uyghurs, as they currently have urgent needs to protect themselves from being assimilated into Chinese cultural system at home, and global (Western in this sense) cultures in their host countries. Therefore, their identity reconstruction experiences in the Western diaspora may involve, to some extent, strategic essentialism as well.

### 3.2.4. Habitus, culture, identity and religious identity

As habitus and culture play crucial roles in shaping identity, it is necessary to briefly discuss their interactions, especially in relation to the minority, periphery, or marginalized immigrant groups whose cultures and habitus tend to be highly distinct from the ones in their host countries.
Habitus, as a concept elaborated by Bourdieu (1977), is the embodiment of cultural capital because it refers to the way we think, the skills we have and our daily habits. Our dispositions, skills and habits are the result of our cultural capital and influenced by our position in society. It is the “durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations” that “produce practices which tend to reproduce regularities” through all stages of human learning experiences, especially through formal education (p. 78). In Wacquant’s (1992) words, “it is the habitus that maintains a social life that is so regular and predictable” (p.18). It is an “ontological complicity” between the objectified social roles and dispositions of people, like “the king and his court, the employer and his firm, the bishop and his see”. People feel natural and at home between the two (Bourdieu 1981, p. 306).

Bourdieu (1990) further argues that habitus is very durable and operates below the level of consciousness, because it has become so normalized that people do not think of them as being acquired or developed. Bourdieu also likens it to a “feel for the game” meaning a gut feeling, through which people conform to social rules. And people usually do not question the reasons behind the social rules and the consequences of such rules (p.59). Bourdieu (2000) contrasts habitus with what he calls a “scholastic” understanding of mind, “which cannot conceive of spontaneity and creativity without the intervention of a creative intention, or finality without a conscious aiming at ends, regularity without observance of rules, signification in the absence of a signifying intention.” Habitus is opposite to such a mentality (p. 137).

Habitus is also the embodiment of a particular culture among a particular group of people during the socialization process beginning from early childhood. It is “an overall space of lifestyles” in which “the position an agent or group occupies in this space as their cultural cognitive niche” can be visualized. Such niches are constructed by the habitus (Theiner & Fogle, 2018, p. 232). As
such, culture and habitus are more like two sides of the same coin, as they cannot be understood separately.

Ghorashi (2003) emphasizes the link between habitus and identity, contending that human identity is not always reconstructed freely and consciously. This process involves the dialogue with both past and present social contexts filled with countless sets of habitus. As a “deeply rooted schema”, habitus ‘offers identity formation a certain amount of continuity” (p.64). However, this practice can also be rough as the “hysteresis effect” takes place when old habitus meets new situations that are not in parallel with the original or traditional upbringings; old habitus cannot catch up with the new conditions or positions which are built on some unfamiliar habitus, resulting in delay (Bourdieu, 1990, p.78). Such a phenomenon occurs “when environmental contexts change in a way that leaves actors without an ontologically complicit relationship to institutions as scaffolds of action” (Strand & Lizardo, 2016, p. 164). Thus, identity reconstruction is greatly influenced both by continuities and discontinuities of habitus within new contexts where the individuals face fresh challenges. What Hoffman (1989) intends to convey in her memoir “Lost in Translation” could be best understood through such a conceptual lens, as well.

Bourdieu also (1999, p. 511) uses the term “cleft habitus” to depict the possible situations which come up when someone encounters a very different habitus in a new context and tries to internalize it. This concept originated from his analysis (his own experience) of how working-class students would have “double isolation” from both of the original and new classes when they are moving through the upper levels of the French education system (Bourdieu, 1996, p.107). Lee and Kramer (2013) further explain this phenomenon illustrating how a lower class/immigrants/black student in a prestigious middle-class university would be obliged to change his tastes, behaviours, and language in order not to be seen as different and that process could
alienate them from their home habitus. This person would find it difficult to find the “balance” between those two habituses, which highly contrasts to what Bhabha (1994) calls a “third space” (p. 219), as in that space people would not feel like fish out of water, rather they would feel comfortable in both cultures. Yet, for many people finding such a space is not easy.

Recently, more and more scholars have been contending that habitus itself is not immutable at all; it also operates at a conscious, reflective, and deliberative level (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Horvat & Davis, 2011; Lee & Kramer, 2013). People are capable to “adapt their habitus” in creative ways in new contexts (Kerr & Robinson, 2009). That is why we can have innovations and changes in our societies. Some scholars (e.g. Crossley, 2001; Sweetman, 2003) further assert that various dramatic forms of economic, cultural, and social shifts in post-modern societies have been making habitus more flexible and reflexive. Especially the upward social mobility among young people in our modern age could more easily “undermine” the “durability” of habitus (Schneider & Lang, 2014, p.90). Another closely relevant idea is “habitus transformation” that refers to the possibility of shifting from one habitus to another in the different social contexts without being lost in between (Byrom & Lightfoot 2012; Horvat & Davis 2011; Rosenberg 2011). This may have been the case especially in multicultural societies like Canada, where growing number of immigrants have been actively interacting with the social, cultural and economic landscapes of the country. In this process, the role of individual agencies and social or institutional factors should not be underestimated (Adams, 2006; King, 2000; Reay, 2004).

Furthermore, Schneider and Lang (2014) propose the concept “habitus diversification” while questioning the most frequently referenced characteristics of habitus. Their findings from their study on the second generation of Turkish immigrants’ identity experiences in Germany show that the transformation of individual habitus may not lead to “alienation” from the habitus of their
“milieu of origin” nor from the habitus of the host country. They can actually effectively engage with both groups with their flexible habitus (p.92). This reminds us of what Bhabha (1994, p.219) called “third space” through which people can navigate their identities naturally in both contexts. We could see the link between habitus negotiation and successful identity reconstruction, which would lead to the creation of hybrid identities that are highly desirable in multicultural nations. Yet, for the first generation of immigrants, this may be more challenging to achieve.

Identity is a multifaceted phenomenon as discussed earlier. And one particular facet of identity this thesis dwells upon is its religious dimension, i.e. religious identity. Thus, here I deem it necessary to present some academic conversations regarding such an identity marker. Generally speaking, religious identity can be seen as a sense of belonging to a particular religious group that offers its members a strong personal or collective sense of self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). It is “a discourse of boundaries, relatedness, and otherness” within and regarding the religious spaces (Wetherell & Mohanty, 2010, p. 233). Religion itself, as a powerful socializing tool, “ought to serve a uniquely powerful function in shaping psychological and social processes. It is the truth, or the only right way to reach the Ultimate in the eyes of its followers who would reject the other paths leading to that Ultimate (Carmody & Brink, 2013). Accordingly, religious identity offers its follower “a distinctive ‘sacred’ worldview and ‘eternal’ group membership, unmatched by identification with other social groups” (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010, p. 60). Therefore, when religion and identity intersect, the resulting social dynamic can be very powerful.

As a specific aspect of identity, religious identity, however, is a shifting phenomenon, too; the religious boundaries can also be fluid (Wetherell & Mohanty, 2010). In our increasingly globalized world in which migration, technological developments in media and transportation
systems as well as the borderless economy have become forceful trends, religious boundaries can be “much more - and increasingly - difficult to determine” (Coleman & Collins, 2017, p. 14).

This perspective resonates much with the growing debates over the shifting nature of habitus, which is also manifested within religious identity and culture. This being the case, Bourdieu defines the concept of religious habitus as (1) “a lasting, generalized and transposable dis-position to act and think in conformity with the principles of a (quasi) systematic view of the world and human existence” (Bourdieu 1987, p. 126); and (2) “the principal generator of all thoughts, perceptions and actions consistent with the norms of a religious representation of the natural and supernatural worlds” (Bourdieu 1971, p. 319).

Accordingly, Mellor and Shilling (2010) define the same concept “as a contingent outcome of religious practices and beliefs (p.30). However, unlike, Bourdieu’s understanding of religious habitus, Mellor & Shilling (2010) think that religious habitus may not have reproductive consequences; it is produced by the environment, but it may not reproduce the environment.

Albeit, the social dynamics of religious identity can be reflected through and beyond shaping religious habitus. Religious identity could contribute to social harmony and in-group well-being; however, it could also lead to conflict between different religious groups (Wellman & Tokuno, 2004) or within the same religious groups (Wetherell & Mohanty, 2010). The latter function of religious identity may have become increasingly visible over the last few decades, and the growing academic literature on religion reflects such a trend (Gagné, Loumakis & Miceli, 2016; Ysseldyk et al, 2010).

Particularly, in the public as well as systemic discourses in the West, Islamic identity has become the most important factor that has been “othering” the Muslims after the 9/11 incidents (Gotanda, 2011; Razack, 2008, 2017). This is one of the key reasons why I want to focus on the
religious identity of the Uyghur immigrants. As part of the generalized, homogenized as well as essentialized Muslim community in the contemporary world, their experiences may overlap with the experiences of many other Muslim groups. At the same time, they might have had many distinctive experiences, as their religious identity intersects with their own unique socio-cultural and political backgrounds.

### 3.3. Critical Race Theory and its New Dimensions

Critical race theory (CRT) originally started as an academic discipline to examine the relationships between race, legal systems and power relations in the US society (Bell, 1980; Delgado, 1988; Gordon, 1999; Williams, 1985). It proposes that White supremacy has never stopped to exist, and that legislation may have been playing a major role in maintaining this process. It aims to achieve racial emancipation and anti-subordination through transforming the relationship between jurisprudence and racial power (Crenshaw, 1995, 2002; Yosso, 2005). In the last few decades, the scope of CRT has expanded dramatically engaging scholars whose work involves racial issues and debates within various fields of humanities and social sciences. Now the academic community of CRT includes scholars in the areas of Asian, Latino, indigenous, LGBT and Muslim studies, growing from the original focus of the Black Americans and the US legal system. CRT has offered a solid epistemological and methodological basis for the works of these scholars (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017, Crenshaw, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2011).

Critical race theorists with diverse academic backgrounds unanimously see racism not simply as the result of individual prejudices and hateful acts, rather imbedded in social relationships, practices, and institutions; systemic racism is still widespread (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Feagin, 2001, 2012; Harvey-Wingfield & Feagin, 2013). Over the last decades, these theorists
have developed more structured understandings of racism – specifically institutional racism that has never ceased to exist. The very racist social structures shape individual minds through various forms of education and acculturation, and those minds deploy overt or covert modes of racism in everyday life (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017; Feagin, 2006).

Critical race theorists do not dismiss the agency of the discriminated or subordinate groups, either. For example, Mitchell and Feagin (1995) argue that subordinate groups can use their own cultural resources or “oppositional culture” which is “a coherent set of values, beliefs, and practices which mitigates the effects of oppression and reaffirms that which is distinct from the majority culture” to resist the hegemony of the groups in power. (p. 68). “Oppositional culture” can help a subordinate or subaltern group not only to offset the influences of the dominant culture, but also to rebuild their own cultural identity which is unique to themselves (Mitchell & Feagin, 1995). However, Mansbridge (2001) assumes that oppositional culture may be manifested as very much apolitical. Thus, emphasizing the political tone, she proposes the concept of “oppositional consciousness”, which is based on oppositional culture, to describe the process in which the subordinate group is conscious about the injustices done by the dominant group, and tries to correct those injustices. This form of consciousness may be cultivated in some special historical movements when “certain political opportunities, certain mobilizing institutions and certain repertoires of action and self-understanding become available” (Mansbridge, 2001, p. 5). The lens of oppositional consciousness has been first and effectively used by Clothey and Koku (2016) to analyze how the Uyghurs in Xinjiang are using digital media as a means to mobilize their community and protect and fortify their cultural identity.

On the same subject, the educational theorist Tara J. Yosso (2005) goes deeper to expose the epistemological power relations that have been intentionally or unintentionally marginalizing the
knowledges of minority groups. Yosso (2005) uses the concept of “community cultural wealth” to challenge the concept of cultural capital which refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable people to succeed in society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Because, the cultural wealth Bourdieu highlights is by default Eurocentric, or White in nature, the knowledge systems of non-White or marginalized groups are automatically perceived as less effective or useless in helping people move upwards in social hierarchy, or even potentially harmful (Yosso, 2005). She critiques Bourdieu as perpetuating racial inequality while intending to explain how cultural capital determines the life chances of people. Community cultural wealth, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance and values of the cultural knowledge of minority cultural groups in terms of their self-concept, identity, and success in life (Yosso, 2005). Such a theoretical lens is for the first time used by Rebecca Clothey (2016) in her study of the Uyghur collective identity within Xinjiang. Meanwhile, how the majority dominant groups or the White middle class perceive the cultural wealth of those minority groups can also have a huge impact on the self-concept of the latter. This can be better understood through the Politics of Recognition which is conceptualized by Taylor (1994).

When we see religious culture as a form community cultural wealth for Muslim communities around the world, everything related to this cultural property has been further invalidated as useless, negative or even dangerous by the West in the last few decades, especially after 9/11 terrorist attack. For this reason, the use of CRT has quickly expanded to include religious background as a racial category, for Muslims who live in the West and who have been subject to the old-fashioned race relationships in politics, culture and economy (Gotanda, 2011; Razack, 2008). Evidence shows that the treatments towards Muslims (or those are perceived as Muslims) have been increasingly similar to those of colored groups who have long been the victims of racism
In Ogbuagu’s (2012) words, they have become the “new Black” (p. 8) after the 9/11. This sort of racialized treatment towards Muslims is, to a great extent, a result of the media coverage that has mostly focused on issues like security, terrorism, and Western identity versus Muslim identity (Said, 1981, 1997; Schumann, 2007). As Volpp (2002) further argues, media coverage has facilitated this process in which all those perceived as “Muslim” have acquired a new overarching Muslim identity as a result of “racialization”, regardless of their hugely diverse backgrounds (p. 1576). Such a process has created “a color-blind anti-Muslim racial discourse” in the West (Kibria, Watson & Selod, 2017, p. 192).

As Saito (2001) describes in detail:

Just as Asian Americans have been "raced" as foreign, and from there as presumptively disloyal Arab Americans and Muslims have been "raced" as "terrorists": foreign, disloyal, and imminently threatening. Although Arabs trace their roots to the Middle East and claim many different religious backgrounds, and Muslims come from all over the world and adhere to Islam, these distinctions are blurred and negative images about either Arabs or Muslims are often attributed to both (p. 12).

In the same vain, Gotanda (2011) contends that racializing Muslims in the US has been similar to the traditional race relationships in the history of America. Even in political discourses, Muslims have been racialized as “brown” and “inferior” in various subtle ways. For example, Gotanda (2011) specifically illustrates how birther conspiracists try to prove Obama was born in Kenya and in a Muslim family, which they obviously see as a serious defect in Obama’s life and
campaign. Moreover, the way in which “Jihadi Jane”\textsuperscript{24} and “American Taliban”\textsuperscript{25} are seen as “racial anomalies” in American political discourse further proves the widespread existence of racism against Muslims in America (p. 193). Razack (2008) further discusses such a phenomenon exposing how the West has been creating and reinforcing the image of inferior, uncivilized or dangerous male-chauvinistic Muslims that oppress their own women vis a vis “civilized”, peaceful, law-abiding Europeans who need to save those “imperiled” Muslim women to justify their political, military, and legal exploitations over the Muslim populations (p. 85). Meanwhile, Razack (2008), too, exposes the racialized treatment of the Muslims in the West, more specifically in Canada, highlighting that such “race thinking” has been the current Western paradigm depriving the rights of the Muslims in the name of protecting national security. She writes:

Uncharacteristically naming race, Canadian news-papers covering the June terror arrests openly referred to Muslims as “brown-skinned” and were at pains to make the distinction between those who were merely “Canadian-born,” as the seventeen accused are, and those who are truly Canadian by virtue of possessing Canadian values, if not Canadian skin (p. 3).

Equally important, the faith of Muslims also has been subject to questioning, despite the fact that those perpetrators follow a very heterodox, divergent and politicized interpretation of Islam, more specifically the distorted interpretation of Jihad or the war in the name of God. While, the religious texts of other Abrahamic religions (such as Christianity and Judaism) also contain similar

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{24}Colleen Renee LaRose, also known as Jihad Jane and Fatima LaRose, is a White American citizen who was convicted and sentenced to 10 years for terrorism-related crimes, including conspiracy to commit murder and providing material support to terrorists. For more information see http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/08/jihad-jane-journey-victim-radical
\textsuperscript{25}John Phillip Walker Lindh White American who converted to Islam at the age of 16, and later joined the Taliban in Afghanistan. He was captured in 2001 by US Army. For more information see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Walker_Lindh
\end{footnotesize}
or even more violent verses, they have largely been immune to the same interrogation (Esposito, 2015; Gagné et. al, 2016). The key reason behind it is the mainstream discourses after 9/11 that have effectively made all “terrorism” “Islamic”, therefore the term “Islamic Terrorism” has been created and started to describe other similar events (Mamdani, 2004, p. 18). As such, Islam has become “a suspect religion” that is potentially dangerous and violent (Tiflati, 2017, p. 2). Consequently, anti-Muslim sentiments in the world have reached an unprecedented level due to the supposed connection between Islamic faith and terrorism, and the imagined incompatibility of Islam with modernity (Afsaruddin, 2015).

As Volpp (2002) contends, the development of the discourses about Muslims after 9/11 represents a “redeployment of old Orientalist tropes” (p. 1576). In such a paradigm all people from the Eastern hemisphere are generalized as the same, inferior and under-civilized and their differences are disregarded as nonsignificant under the name of “Oriental”. As Edward Said (1978) points out, within the discourse of Orientalism, an East vs. West dichotomy was constructed in order to consolidate Western hegemony and “superiority” over Eastern subordination and “backwardness” in every aspect of human life. In parallel with this point, Volpp (2002) asserts that the novel version of Orientalism discourse has created an “Us versus Muslim” dichotomy, which is largely based on imagined backwardness and incompatibility of the Muslim faith with the modern world.

Abdullah (2013) proposes using the term “critical Muslim theory” to discuss the subordination that Muslims face in the West, replacing the “race” in CRT. However, as Gotanda (2011) further argues, Islam as a religion has been racialized along with its followers’ “brown” skin. Thus, broadly speaking, we are still talking about CRT with its new dimensions. Such an expanded version of CRT could be seen to be particularly useful for my study, as Muslims
generally are non-White, and their faith has become another important factor that further subordinates them. Accordingly, CRT, with its religious dimension, could offer an effective tool for studying Uyghur identity in Canada.

This theoretical perspective can also provide me with a useful lens to look at the increasingly marginalized status of Uyghurs in Chinese society where their educational, cultural, and religious rights have been seriously infringed (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Clarke, 2014, 2015, 2018; Roberts, 2016, 2018a,b; Millward, 2018, 2019). As such, their situation in China as an underrepresented and subaltern ethnic group struggling to obtain equality and fair treatment, and their experiences in Canada where they have to face new challenges as a minority Muslim community would generate rich politicized narratives that could be effectively analyzed through CRT and its new religious dimension.

3.4. Aligning Post-colonialism with Critical Race Theory

Post-colonialism is “an engagement with and contestation of colonialism’s discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies” after colonialism ended (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996, p.2). The scope of this definition clearly excludes those who have not yet freed themselves from colonialism, such as Uyghurs, in our post-colonial world. In the past decades, many subordinate nations have gained or regained their independence, yet Uyghurs as a whole “have never benefited from the fruits of de-colonization” (Roberts, 2009, p. 362). However, for the Uyghurs who have the choice to immigrate to the Western countries, migration can be seen as a form of de-colonization process, although it is not a conventional one.
While Chinese political discourse never admits that Uyghurs have been colonized by the Chinese state, that denial itself could reveal the reality that diverse political voices or perspectives are not tolerated within the Chinese context. This exposes the very existences of colonial elements in that locale where for the most Uyghurs, their identity as a colony is always there and has never ended. For many, this perspective may become more vivid after they migrate to the Western countries and begin to reflect on their own situation while being able to enjoy freedom of speech and information, therefore construct alternative viewpoints and develop broader political outlooks. They may also start to notice how post-colonialism unfolds and affects their lives in their new world.

Generally speaking, post-colonial theories aim to expose the ways in which the Western hegemonic cultures create and perpetuate the collective inferior or backward image of the “South” that supports the unequal and subordinate position of the “South” (Thomas, 2000). Under such a definition, there seems to be little need to differentiate colonial and postcolonial times and spaces as their essential elements largely overlap (Tamdgidi, 2012). Thus, as Tamdgidi (2012) further contends, “post”-coloniality is “an illusion, one that merely helps to ideologically hide its essentially continuing imperial/colonial nature” (p.60). The same old hegemonic power relations that reproduce the subordination and stratification of various racial, religious, and cultural groups have never stopped to exist in our so-called post-colonial era (Bazian, 2007).

That said, Tamdgidi (2012) also argues that the modern capitalist system itself is built on colonialism, therefore “racial, gender, religious, and imperial/colonial hierarchies …are not merely additive but, instead, as structurally constitutive building blocks of the capitalist system, necessary components that the system must continually produce and reproduce in order to maintain itself”. In this sense, such a system is not simply “capitalist” in nature, but
“modern/colonial/capitalist/patriarchal” (p. 60-61). Putting post-colonialism within such a broad socio-political, economic and cultural continuity may help us better scrutinize the meanings and implications of such a perspective regarding the identity of immigrants from the global South, especially the Muslims.

Concerning the debates on racism, such a continuity is very much in line with the perspectives of Gloria Ladson-Billings (2015) who regards that recent improvements in the treatment of black communities do not indicate that racism is largely diminishing, but they are the results of mere interest-convergence. Interest convergence means, according to Derrick Bell (1980), decisions regarding equity and civil rights are more likely to occur when a subordinate group can align its interests with those of the dominant group, or when the dominant group sees the benefits of supporting the rights of the subordinate group. Ladson-Billings (2015) declares that she was a critical race theorist before Obama was elected as President, and she remains a critical race theorist after that. She sees Obama’s election as another typical example of interest-convergence, rather than a real evidence that racial relations in the US has been improving. The recent rise of right-wing extremism in Canada and broader North America (Perry, 2017), too, signals the continuity of racism, but in a different fashion, in the form of religious bigotry and intolerance.

In brief, post-colonialism and CRT intersect at the point that they both challenge the hegemony of the powerful (predominantly White) over the powerless (predominantly non-White) that has not ceased but continued in various alternative ways in our post-modern time. For this reason, Bourdieu “theorized colonialism as a racialized system of domination rooted in coercion” (Go, 2013, p. 56).
At such an intersection, Edward Said (1978) exposes in his groundbreaking work *Orientalism* on how the Western hegemonic discourses created a West vs. East dichotomy in which the West or the Occident is deemed as “civilized” and “advanced”, while the East or the Orient is regarded “uncivilized” and “backward”. He highlights that such a dichotomy has long been existing since the time of the Renaissance and is still widespread in the current era. In Ali’s (2005) words, the West is still “the source of powerful knowledge”; the globalization process only has been reinforcing such a discourse (p.11). Theoretically speaking, such “powerful knowledge” can be seen as equal to Bourdieu’s cultural capital which is also White or Eurocentric (Yosso, 2005). Such a post-colonial paradigm on knowledge has been imposing Western “universalism” unto the rest of the world, especially in education scholarship (Takayama, 2015, p. 72). In Harumi Befu’s (2003) words, the non-Western world “is in an uneasy situation, seeking cultural autonomy while having to acknowledge the spell of and its debt to Western cultural imperialism” (p. 11). One of the typical examples of such a phenomenon would be the increasing global dominance of the English language, both as a tool and knowledge, which is “not only a product of colonialism, but also the most potent instrument of cultural control and cultural construct of colonialism”. Such a process, as part of post-colonialism, has been further empowering the already powerful groups, while further disempowering the fragile and marginalized minority ethnic cultures (Guo & Beckett, 2007, p. 117).

Spivak (1988) goes deeper into the epistemological level critiquing the contemporary Western academy’s conducting research on the cultures and societies of the East. She argues that the knowledge about the East is produced for the benefit of the producer – the powerful West. For her, such production of knowledge is also a part of the post-colonial project; the western scholars are largely dictated by a hegemonic paradigm created by the Orientalist mentality. Thus, she questions
the ability of those intellectuals to avoid the similar condescending the White colonizers had towards the colonized subjects when they try to represent the oppressed in their studies.

In sum, post-colonialism and CRT meet at the point of hegemony and unequal power relations where the powerful West, which is predominantly White, dominates the subordinate non-Westerners who are seen as the racial “other”, in various ways. Currently, one of the most subordinate groups are the Muslims whose religion along with their physical appearances have been racialized in the increasingly Islamophobic West (Afsaruddin, 2015; Gotanda, 2011; Stubbs, 2004; Volpp, 2002). At this very conjunction, the Uyghur situation could be observed more vividly, as they have deep and direct racialized and colonial experiences at home that many other Muslims lack. Meanwhile, their experiences as part of the Muslim communities in the West could reveal very common characteristics shared by many other Muslim groups in our post-colonial world. One of those key characteristics is the subaltern status, which is discussed in the next section.

3.5. The Concept of Subaltern Identity

“Since I lack a voice of my own, the voices of others invade me as if I were a silent ventriloquist... I do not possess them; they possess me.”

Hoffman (1989, p. 220)

Ludden (2002) regards that the socio-linguistic root of the English term “subaltern” can be traced back to the late-medieval period when such a word referred to the people from lower ranks such as “vassals and peasants” (p.3). The 20th century concept of “subalternity” stemmed from Antony Gramsci’s (1995) analysis on cultural hegemony, i.e. the ruling class imposition of their worldview as a universal and valid cultural norm on the subordinate groups, through declaring their “social,
political and economic status quo as natural, inevitable, perpetual and beneficial for everyone, rather than as artificial social constructs that benefit only the ruling class” (Bullock, Trombley & Lawrie, 1999, p. 388). Novetzke (2006) believes that although Gramsci might have used this term in the place of “proletariat” to evade the state censorship, this term has become very useful to refer to the even broader social spheres beyond capital and labour. In the current scholarly understanding, as Young (2003) puts, “subaltern” refers to the social groups who have been pushed to the margins and stripped away the agency or right to represent their own voices.

The post-modern development of subaltern studies is based on Edward Said’s (1978) *Orientalism* in which he unmasks how the West tries to represent the East in a hegemonic fashion. For him, the present is the reflection of the past, and the history of the oppressed and the colonizer cannot be studied separately, neglecting the power relations between them. In his own words, “the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (p.5). Accordingly, Bhabha (1995) follows Gramsci’s (1995) line of thought to define the subaltern as any social group oppressed by groups with hegemonic power. Like any minority groups, their presence is essential for the “self-definition” of majority dominant groups (p. 210).

Guha (1997) sees subalterns as any marginalized people such as women, peasant, outcasts, working class, or tribal people. Yet, Spivak (1988) warns against the too broad usage of this term, arguing that labelling any oppressed group, whether they are working class or minority students, subaltern is problematic. When discussing minority students, she suggests that we should look at “what the mechanics of the discrimination are, and since they can speak, … they're within the hegemonic discourse, wanting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse.” Thus, they should not be seen as subaltern (de Kock, 1992, p.48). Spivak
sees Gramsci’s use of subaltern for working class as “metaphoric”, as Gramsci just wanted to highlight the subordinate status of working class, only likening their situation to subalternity without necessarily seeing them as real subaltern (de Kock, 1992, p.46). Moreover, Spivak (1988) tries to link subalternity with colonialism hinting that there would not be one without the other. In the same vein, Said (1978) directly refers to the colonized peoples as subalterns. As Said (1978) further contends, the colonizers do not see the colonized as part their imperial glory, nor do the colonizers regard their subjects as capable of representing themselves.

Spivak (1988) also questions the possibility that the subaltern can be given voice or truly represented. She illustrates British ban on sati, a very traditional and religious rite in Hindu culture, to show “how White men attempted to save brown women from brown men in colonial India” (p.93). By presenting sati as a barbaric practice, the British were able to justify imperialism as “a civilizing mission” and “believed they were rescuing Indian women from the reprehensible practices of a traditional Hindu patriarchal society” (Morton, 2003, p.63). For Spivak, “the subaltern cannot speak”, as any attempt to represent them or offer them voice would make them further voiceless (1988, p.104).

Among many scholars who support her controversial point, Gardner (2006) contends that “strictly speaking - the truly subaltern is not represented and its voice continues unheard” (p.46). They should not be able to speak, “if the subaltern could speak – that is, speak in a way that really mattered to us, that we would feel compelled to listen to, then it would not be subaltern” (Beverley 2001, p. 222). Yet, Edward Said (1978) seems to be optimistic about the subaltern suggesting that they “can speak, as the history of liberation movements in the twentieth century eloquently attests” (p. 335). If we put this in the context of decolonization, we could at least assume that those who
Some others critique Spivak to be self-contradictory, asserting that “namely, by claiming that the subaltern cannot speak, Spivak herself is actually speaking on behalf of the subaltern” (Moore-Gilbert 2000, p. 464). I argue that the question here should be whether the subaltern is free to “speak” to anyone, anywhere, and anytime. If all of these three conditions are fulfilled, then we could say that they are not subaltern anymore. For example, if they are heard by some academics, not by political elites who may pose threat to their safety, then there will be no significant shift in their subaltern identities. Solely being able to “speak” or represent themselves under some circumstances but forced to be silent in other situations cannot make them free from being subaltern.

Guha (1997) contends that capitalism, as a powerful political discourse, has not been able to produce universal and liberal structures in the global South, as it did in the North, which has created many authoritarian and unstable political orders resulting in the gap between class culture of the subaltern and that of the elite which has been retained (as cited by Chibber, 2013). In my view, a similar discussion can be applied to the communist regimes that intended to wipe away capitalists and build so-called classless and equal societies. The failure of such political revolutions has resulted in the creation of some political orders that have maintained and even exacerbated the subaltern status of those at the bottom. The ruling elites have become more powerful and dominant, while the oppressed have further internalized their own subaltern identities, especially those who are not part of the majority ethnicities. While capitalists achieve the ability to speak for all of social classes without any force (Guha, 1997), communists have obtained the same power to represent all people under their rule, but in a more overt and coercive way.
3.6. Are Muslims the New Subaltern?

Edward Said (1998, 2001) discusses how Muslim identity has been seriously misunderstood under the current post-colonial world where Islamophobia, both in the form of public and systemic discourse, has been on the rise. Said’s (2001) critique of Huntington’s (1993) Clash of Civilizations Theory is a typical case in which he defends Islamic civilization and identity from being sabotaged by Orientalist attacks. For Said (2001), the ignorance rather than culture itself is the root of conflicts between different cultural groups. Such ignorance includes all elements that an Orientalist could possess. Yet, Bhabha (1994) maintains that the ignorance or misunderstandings are inevitable especially at the boundaries of cultures, so he highlights the roles of “a third space” which blurs the cultural boundaries and “initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation” (p. 1).

The harsh reality is that Muslims have always been subject to serious misrecognition and discrimination in the last few decades; ignorance has not permitted the creation of a harmonious “third space” for many Muslims in the West. Although, Muslims had not been immune to discrimination in the West prior to 9/11, after those events their image has shifted drastically towards to the negative extremes, and they have quickly been homogenized and become “the most visible enemy” of the West (Saito, 2001, p.15; also, in Jamal, 2008).

For this reason, Turfjell (2008) argues that in our current era, Islamic identity has gained subaltern characteristics under the Western hegemony, both in ideological and socio-economical aspects. Turfjell does not even mention Islamophobia in his analysis in claiming subalternity of Muslims who have been continuously misrepresented by the West. While the Muslims have tried to dismantle the very misconceptions about themselves, they are often using Western vocabularies
that would only work against themselves; this only worsens their voiceless status. Therefore, Turfjell (2008) contends that ‘Islamism is a subaltern voice. Perhaps the strongest in the world today’ (161). In the same vein, the growing Western discourses linking Islamist extremists with the Islamic faith, as Dagli (2015) asserts, is making it difficult for the general Muslims to disassociate themselves from the so-called Islamist terrorist groups. This is a direct result of the growing tendency of conflating Islam as a religion and political Islam as a power in the Western world (Afsaruddin, 2015; Akyol, 2016; Esposito, 2015; Mamdani, 2004). Meanwhile, the global Muslims have been generalized or homogenized and their faith has been essentialized under the assumption that all Muslims follow one static ideology which has a unified, unchanging and innate violent nature (Said, 2001). This process can also fortify the voice of Islamist extremists who attempt to essentialize the Islamic faith and build a wall between the Muslims and the Western world (Mahmut, 2018; Tibi, 2013; Welby, 2015).

This being so, the key question here revolves around to what extent those Muslims are able to represent themselves, and to what extent they can dismantle the distorted images and identities proscribed to them by the West. Furthermore, when we follow Spivak’s (1988) ways of questioning the possibility of Western intellectuals or academics analyzing the subaltern groups without using an Orientalist mindset, the same could be asked regarding the Muslim studies in the Western academia. This question is also for myself as I have been part of the Western academic world for some years as a graduate student. Furthermore, to what extent was my education in China free from such a mindset? These questions have pushed me to become more critical towards my own current research paradigm.

While there has been some growing literature on how Muslim minorities in some countries like India have been marginalized as subalterns (Irikkur & Kumar, 2014), and how under
Orientalist discourses Muslim women have been further subalternized in various contexts (Brohi, 2008; Hasan, 2005; Shirazi, 2010), there is no significant research that looks at Muslim identities in the West directly through the subaltern lens. Moreover, many scholars may have already been engaging in a similar scrutiny while being uncomfortable to use the term “subaltern” in their research. These studies have been briefly discussed in the sections on CRT and post-colonialism.

In this thesis, I suggest that it could be more effective to study Muslim identities directly through a subaltern lens when the growing discourse of Islamophobia since 9/11 has been diminishing the agency of average Muslims to represent themselves, while the Islamist extremists have been trying to silence and delegitimize the mainstream Muslim voices. The common Muslims have been caught in the crossfire. Western media also have been largely ignoring their voices against Islamist extremism, which has been exacerbating their voiceless status (Schneier, 2015; Hassaballa, 2014). Between these two sets of predicaments, the general Muslims’ situation would vividly demonstrate typical subaltern characteristics. In brief, their subalternity may be seen as their growing inability to openly and proudly claim their identity as Muslims, expressing their identity in their own vocabularies, and dismantling the discourses that are further “othering” them from the “civilized” West. Even the wealthy and prosperous position of some Muslim nations cannot enable them to defend or restore the severely tarnished image of Islam and Muslims. In this sense, all Muslims as a group can be seen as new subalterns who have lost their agency to fully, truly and proudly represent themselves. They cannot “speak”.

Meanwhile, various violent extremist groups among Muslims have hijacked Islam for their political purposes (Kundnani, 2015; Mahmut, 2018; Tamdgidi, 2012), which should not be overlooked when discussing Muslim identities. Equally important, the cruel nature of many Muslim rulers and their authoritarian regimes, as well as the long-existing ideological and political
rift between Sunni and Shia sects and the resulting enmity between Iran and the neighboring Sunni
Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia or Iraq have only worsened the negative image of the Muslims
in the West. One recent typical example is the assassination of the dissident journalist Jamal
Khashoggi in late 2018, which was most probably conducted by the Saudi government itself
(Smith, 2018; McKernan, Wintour & Swaine, 2018). All of these factors could only deteriorate
the voicelessness or the subaltern status of common Muslims in the West.

3.7. “Internal Orientalism” (Schein, 1997) and the Uyghurs as a Subaltern Group
in China

The Chinese discourse of excluding and denigrating ethnically different groups as the “barbarian”
others can be traced back to the ancient times (Fiskesjö, 2012, p. 57). Discriminatory statements
about the non-Chinese people who lived within or outside China are widely present in many classic
Chinese historical texts. For example, Wusun 26 people who lived in the West of China were
likened to macaque monkeys being described as “barbarians who have green eyes and red hair”
27. Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD) historical documents reveal that in Tang society the foreigners
were always depicted as the “barbarian” as “an antipode to accepted norms”, and dehumanized

26 The Wusun (Chinese: 烏孫; pinyin: Wūsūn; Wade-Giles: Wū-sūn; literally: "grandchildren/descendants
of the crow/raven") were an Indo-European semi-nomadic steppe people mentioned in Chinese records
from the 2nd century BC and the 5th century AD.
27 Book of Han, with commentary by Yan Shigu; original text says: 烏孫於西域諸戎其形最異。今之
胡人青眼、赤須，狀類彌猴者，本其種也. Retrieved from
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Han
being likened to wild animals (Abramson 2003, p. 146). During that era, racial segregation of foreigners was enforced through laws. Intermarriage between Chinese and foreigners who were seen to have dark skins was forbidden (Gemet, 1996; Lewis, 2009).

Such historical “legacy” within the Chinese discourses on foreigners has now largely been directed to the Chinese minorities. Dwyer (2005) highlights the prevalent universal discourse among Han Chinese elites that deems minorities as “backward” and “without culture” (p. 7). In Chinese popular discourse, the majority Han Chinese generally view themselves as civilized and modernized, while seeing the minorities as stagnated and their life as full of entertainment without serious endeavor or work (Blum, 2001). According to this discourse, Chinese civilization is central and advanced compared to “unassimilated minorities” who “are sexy and in touch with nature and spirituality, while concomitantly of low quality and in need of Chinese civilization” (Blum, 2001, p.8).

In the same vein, Gladney (2004) argues that the way in which the representation of minority identities in China “as exotic, colorful, and ‘primitive’, homogenizes the undefined majority as united, monoethnic, and modern” (p.93). As Eriksen (1993, 1997) contends, through defining the other one can also effectively define the self. Moreover, this could also be viewed as the process of establishing and solidifying the dominance of certain powerful groups through cultural production and reproduction, while marginalizing powerless others (Bourdieu, 1973). Here, one could see how the subaltern status of Chinese minorities would only reinforce the homogeneity and dominance of the Han majority, and vice versa.

Based on such unequal power relations in Chinese society, Schein (1997) uses the term “internal Orientalism” (p. 70) to describe how minority cultures, especially since early 1980s, have been commercialized in an essentialized fashion, and categorized as “female, rural, and backward”,
while the majority “Han urbanite” lead them to “progress” (p.89). Yet, in terms of the religiosities, the members of both majority and minority groups following not only foreign, but also native religions have been affected by the similar paradigm within the irreligious state. As Yang (2011) argues, post-colonial studies have always neglected Chinese contexts where the elites “unwittingly” followed Western Orientalist discourse in treating native religiosities in China. These native spiritualisms actually exist both in majority and minority contexts and such traditions are regarded as an obstacle to modernity and civilization by the state (p. 3).

On the more secular side, in the popular discourse, “‘culture’ is inextricably linked to education, where ‘education’ is understood as: a) mastery of the Chinese language; and b) knowledge of Confucian codes of behaviour (li)”’. In other words, for the Han majority the education in minority languages as well as Islamic education equal to “lack of culture”, therefore Uyghurs are “uncultured (meiyou wenhua)” (Smith Finley, 2013, pp. 125-26). Generally speaking, as Clothey (2016) points out, a deficit lens has long been applied to all minority languages, cultures and knowledge systems. Under such a lens, the Han majority language and culture are viewed as the only best way to reach success for all the minorities who are “uncivilized” or “underdeveloped”. Due to this long-existing discursive lens, some seemingly positive initiatives like the Preferential Educational Policies28 (youhui zhengce) enacted since early 1980s have proved to be a “double-edged sword”, as they have served to confirm the popular stereotypes that minorities are “low quality” and “backward” (Dwyer, 2005, p, 11).

With this background, the Chinese education system has been damaging the self-image or self-concept of minority students (Wang, 2006). For example, Smith Finley (2013) describes how

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28 These policies were regulated to support minority students who attended Han Chinese schools. The most typical example is the addition of a substantial number of points to the results of their university entrance examination.
some minkaohan Uyghur youth developed derogatory views about their own ethnicity as “backward” versus “advanced” Han Chinese who are the vanguards of modernity (p. 352). Clothey’s (2005) study also reveals a very similar tendency among minkaohan students from various ethnic backgrounds, including the Uyghur students. Of relevance here is Taylor’s (1992) concept of misrecognition that could effectively explain how these Uyghur youth’s “false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (p.25) has been created and forcibly internalized.

Echoing such an “internal Orientalism” discourse, Gladney (2004) highlights the need for opening the dimension of subaltern perspective in Chinese social sciences, just as the waves of subaltern study movements that have flourished in the Indian subcontinent and in Latin America during the last few decades. For many reasons, including essentialism, similar research movements have not been able to rise in China. In his study, Gladney (2004) sees subalterns as those who are “less authentic, more peripheral, and further removed from a core Chinese tradition” (p. xv). However, this may only reveal the cultural aspect of subalternity in the Chinese context. Other aspects, such as social, political and economic marginalization of minorities including Uyghurs should also be observed from the lens of subalternism, as suggested by Zhang (2018).

That being said, the Uyghurs, being a Muslim minority in China, have not been immune to the growing Islamophobia within the Chinese society in which the non-Muslim or largely non-religious Han ethnic majority comprises more than 90% of the total population. With the rise of the global “war on terror” rhetoric in the West, and its abrupt and opportunistic application to silencing the Uyghur grievances and resistance in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region since early 2000s (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Roberts, 2012, 2016, 2018a,b), subaltern status of the Muslim Uyghurs within the Chinese state has been further exacerbated (Zhang, 2018). Especially in the last decade, the Islamophobia and hate speech against Muslims have been festering the
Chinese cyber space, which have been condoned by the state as part of its campaigns to justify its harsh crackdowns in Xinjiang (Shih, 2017). As Roberts (2018a, b) contends, in most recent years, Uyghurs, as a whole, have been isolated and targeted as potential extremists or terrorists both by the CCP government and the majority public. Undoubtedly, this could only further intensify the subaltern identity of the Uyghurs in the Chinese context.

3.8. Uyghur Immigrants under Canadian Discourses

As Alba and Silberman (2002) note, in many European countries, the immigration of people from the developing nations to the developed world, to a great extent, has occurred in parallel with decolonization. While the reasons behind this mass migration have been various, the most important ones may include searching for better education and job opportunities and escaping from civil wars or political turmoil (Schmelz, 2009). Being highly educated (skilled) immigrants, my Uyghur participants may have arrived in Canada mostly for the first reason. Yet, the recent political atmosphere that has been increasingly discriminatory and oppressive towards the Uyghurs in Xinjiang (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Millward, 2018, 2019; Roberts, 2016, 2018a,b) may have been making the latter reason more salient than ever before, even though these immigrants are not asylum seekers. In any way, there exists a dynamic discourse among the Uyghurs that, along with Tibetans, they have always been a colony of China, and have never stopped seeking independence (Bovingdon, 2014; Galdney, 1998, 2004; Olivieri, 2018; Stoler & McGranahan, 2007; Wang, 1999; World Uyghur Congress, n.d). As such, Uyghur immigration to Western countries could also be regarded as a decolonization process in a different form, which is further validated during the interviews of my participants.
Yet, immigrating into Canadian society inevitably makes Uyghur immigrants once again a minority, which creates a parallel situation for them who should continue to strive for preserving their collective identity, while facing many other challenges. They would also start to compare their minority status in China and Canada where they may have a dramatically different sense of being Uyghur and Muslim. Moreover, Quebec’s special status in Canada may also generate some unique perspectives and experiences among them as they could more easily identify themselves with the local Francophones who have similar minority background in Canada.

Most notably, interculturalism that gives special rights to Quebec to prioritize its French language heritage in all social settings, including the educational institutions could trigger drastic contrasts among the Uyghurs whose language has been stripped away from educational institutions under the so-called “bilingual” education policies and more recent regulations (Schluessel, 2007; Smith Finley, & Zang, 2015; Sunuodula, 2018). However, the limited freedom regarding the access to the languages other than French in education would create similar uneasiness among Uyghurs. As Bouffard (2015) highlights, such uneasiness related to language of instruction in the Quebec education system has been growing fast in recent years among various immigrant groups. Yet, as Bakali (2015) contends, what interculturalism has been promoting is more than just French language, it is “the White francophone majoritarian culture” – the implicit norm for becoming Quebecois (p.412). As clearly stated by the Quebec government itself, the French language is a symbol of belonging to Quebec society; “[t]o live in Quebec is to live in French”29. French language can represent much more than just itself.

Multiculturalism, on the other hand, seems to be more agreeable and egalitarian regarding
the cultural rights of various immigrant groups. Many scholars point out that Canadian
multiculturalism has been more successful in integrating minorities and immigrants into the
Canadian society than in many other countries. (e.g. Banting & Kymlicka, 2012, Ghosh, 2018;
Ghosh & Abdi, 2013; Kymlicka, 2011, 2012, 2015; Leung, 2015). However, some researchers
highlight certain inadequate or assimilative aspects of Canadian multiculturalism (e.g. Guo & Guo,
2015; Cui, 2015). From a more critical angle, Leroux (2012) contends that the multiculturalism
within greater Canada has been serving as a similar politicized tool as interculturalism;
interculturalism and multiculturalism continue “to centre the experiences of the ‘two founding’
nations or races of Canada in nation building” (p.67). That being said, it would be interesting and
worthwhile to observe Canadian multiculturalism through my participants’ experiences and
perspectives.

Generally speaking, since the 1970s, Canadian multiculturalism has gone through several
evolutionary stages. Currently “we have three distinct dimensions of diversity at work in the
multiculturalism policy – ethnicity, race, and religion” (Kymilcka, 2015, p. 17). All of these
dimensions could create dynamic implications for the identity reconstruction experiences of the
Uyghur immigrants. Yet, religion, as the last and newest dimension of Canadian multiculturalism,
could have most profound impacts on the Uyghur shifting identities. As Omar (2011) contends,
while Canadian multiculturalism protects religious freedom, Islamic identities can face challenges,
as multiculturalism in the Canadian context may not necessarily foster Islamic values and beliefs,
since it has a strong basis in secularism and the culture of European ethnic groups. It would be
interesting to see if or to what extent my research participants’ narratives reflect such a perspective.

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Race and religion intersect regarding the Muslims in the West, as this particular group of people have been racialized as the “other” in our post-9/11 era, as a result of growing Islamophobic discourses among the Western public as well as governments (Gotanda, 2011; Razack, 2008, 2017). Canada is not an exception, although it has been believed to be successfully integrating its Muslim immigrants (McCoy, Kirova & Knight, 2016). Comparatively speaking, this may be the case. However, in the Canadian context Islamophobia has been on the rise in the recent years, especially in Quebec the situation being “unique and quite worrisome” (Amarasingam & Tiflati, 2015; also, in Dwivedi, 2017); Muslim integration in Quebec has been probably more problematic and difficult than any other Canadian provinces (McAndrew & Bakhshaei, 2012; Sarrouh & Banting, 2016).

At the same time, while being appreciated by many Uyghurs, liberalism and individualism which are deeply rooted in many Western countries, including Canada, may also challenge the Uyghur values and traditional beliefs. As twin discourses, Western liberalism as well as individualism are clearly incarnated in The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (Kim, 2001). These discourses may have already found their places in the Uyghur minds and ways of life to some extent, through the globalization process, which is in Schuerkens’ (2003) words, “the movement in one direction might be understood as westernization” (p. 210). Yet, such level of “westernization” may be far from enough in making the Uyghurs feel totally at home in Canada; Uyghurs still tend to highly value collectivism. As Triandis (1995) argues, individualistic emphasis on human rights may not always be welcome in many Asian cultural contexts, most notably China and India. Although, as one of the recent studies indicates, since 1960, individualism has increased by about 12% worldwide, “China showed a nonnegligible decrease in individualism” (Santos, Varnum & Grossmann, 2017, p. 1234).
Albeit, being skilled immigrants, my participants are inclined to highly prioritize finding and establishing careers corresponding to their qualifications. That being so, the relevant opportunities as well as challenges can have great impact on their shifting identities in Canada. One of the key challenges they may face is the devaluation of their cultural capital gained in their home country, as is the case of many other immigrants (Akbari & Aydede, 2013; Chui & Tran 2003; Gulian 2010). Such devaluation can be manifested through various implicit and sometimes overt fashions such as requiring “Canadian experience”, which is a racist or discriminatory discourse or practice (Ku, Bhuyan, Sakamoto, Jeyapal & Fang 2019, p. 291). Such a systemic discourse creates huge challenges for racialized new immigrant workers who want to find corresponding and permanent jobs (Choudry & Henaway, 2016). In the same vein, Guo (2015) goes further critiquing the “skills discourse” in Canada as a whole is racialized, contending that, Knowledge and skills of recent immigrants in Canada are racialised and materialised on the basis of ethnic and national origins. Skin colour is a central basis of social marking. Through processes of de-skilling and re-skilling, a racialised regime of skill has become a social engineering project for manufacturing normative, White, docile corporate subjects who conform to Canadian norms and workplace cultures… skill is not colour-blind; it is coloured (p. 236).

This could be seen within a broader framework of “racialized hegemony that underpins immigration and labour market policies”, which inevitably contribute to unequal power relations regarding the rights of different categories of workers in Canada (Choudry, Hanley, Jordan, Shragge & Stiegman, 2009, p. 16).

In sum, like many other Asian groups, for the Uyghurs, “the discursive, putative West is central to the formation of their cultural identities: it serves as the ‘ultimate other’ against which their particular sense of self becomes constructed and asserted” (Takayama, 2016, p. 50). However, while living in the West, new immigrants also have to interact with other immigrants or non-
Western groups, and their cultures and values, which can be seen as different types of “others”. In this sense, for immigrants, their integration process is not merely a “two-way street”; it is a “multiway street” that constructs their new Canadian identities (Jedwab, 2014, p.13), which is a highly complex process.


When we talk about the phenomenon of identity, we should not neglect its cultural facet which is relatively apolitical. Yet, culture has always been politicized in different parts of the world by many political elites in order to create the world that suits their advantages best (Meyer, 2001; Said, 1978; Saktanber, 2002). This does not mean a relatively apolitical aspect of culture does not exist and cannot be discussed when exploring identity issues, including the integration experiences of new immigrants.

Eva Hoffman’s (1989) autobiography is one of those brilliant works that narrates the cultural integration of a Jewish immigrant family into Canadian or North American life. She focuses on the mismatch between two sets of cultures, which are, of course, affected to some extent by different political systems (yet, this is not the primary focus of her book, while she discusses the political culture of Poland in many sections), and how she and her family would experience and cope with the dilemmas arising between two cultures.

Hoffman’s memoir consists of three parts: “Paradise”, “Exile”, and “the New World”. “Paradise” narrates her childhood years in Cracow, Poland where her family lived as part of the Jewish minority after the World War II. She describes in detail her marginalized yet happy life in communist Poland which was deemed as a terrible place to live by the Westerns. The way she
depicts the reality in Poland in those years exudes a deep sense of love and nostalgia towards her homeland where the future looked tremendously uncertain, politically, economically, and in many other aspects, especially for the Jewish people. Nevertheless, Cracow, Poland of the 1950s was her “paradise” despite anti-Semitism which hurt her and her family relentlessly. She could “feel immediately superior to it” whenever it attacked her (Hoffman, 1989, p. 32). Poland of the 1950s lives within her in a “form of love”, despite her “knowledge of [their] marginality, and its primitive and unpretty emotions” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 74). “It is a landscape of desire, the starting point to which Hoffman can neither return, nor abandon” (Macpherson, 2006, p. 61).

“Exile” is about the journey of migration to Canada during which she and her family would be caught between two cultures. In this chapter, she describes the struggles of her family in a new culture where they would “thrash around like a fish thrown from sweet into salty ocean waters” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 160). The last part “the new World” is on her new life in which she would finally start feeling at home, being fully “translated” into the North American culture. After decades of unsettled life between two cultures, “the sense of the future returns like a benediction, to balance the earlier annunciation of loss” (p. 279). Yet, the very process makes her realize “the relativity of cultural meanings” and enables her not to “take any one set of meanings as final” (p. 275). “Translation” never ends for her as for all other immigrants. “Translation” is just an alternative word for the process in which one reconstructs her or his identity in a new world, which is always in the making.

Hoffman seems to dwell much on the language aspect of culture, yet her dilemmas are “much more than simply linguistic ones; they cut straight to the core of her identity and self-definition” (Pearson-Evans & Leahy, 2007 p. 245). It is the sense of loss in a different culture in which she tries to find herself again. When we see the culture as knowledge, in Riely’s (2007) words, “the
sum total of the information, beliefs, values and skills one needs to share and apply in the society and situations in which the individual lives” (p. 40), it is the deficiency or lack of such knowledge that would make people feel “lost in translation”, which is experienced most commonly by various displaced peoples who encounter a new culture. It could also be seen as part of cultural capital that can help someone move upward in a hierarchical society, which would lead us to the space of political debates; Hoffman does not go deep into this dimension.

In brief, Hoffman’s position on culture, and the ways in which she explores her journey of reconstructing herself within a new culture has provided me with an excellent and valuable lens to better understand how the highly educated Uyghur immigrants are culturally repositioning themselves in Canada. The resemblance between Hoffman and Uyghur immigrants can be seen as multiple. They both are from highly authoritative communist states. Although China has been increasingly seen as post-communist nation, especially in terms of its economic structures (Holmes, 2015), the political reality of the Uyghur region still demonstrates rich communist or totalitarian characteristics. Both belong to minority groups who are marginalized and discriminated by the majority groups in their home nations. Both come to Canada for socio-economically and politically better future. Indeed, the differences between them can also be multiple. Yet, Hoffman’s life story has deeply inspired and enabled me to better tap into the cultural integration experiences of the Uyghur immigrants in Canada, because it resonates so much with the narratives of each Uyghur participant.

3.10. Summary

In this chapter I have briefly reviewed identity politics, CRT, post-colonial, and “Lost in Translation” (Hoffman, 1989) perspectives and tried to demonstrate how the intersectionality of
such theoretical lenses could provide a useful tool for analyzing the highly educated Muslim Uyghur immigrants’ identity reconstruction experiences in English and French Canada. I have also discussed some concepts, such as habitus, culture, religious identity, “Internal Orientalism” (Schein, 1997), and subaltern identity as they are closely linked to the above theoretical perspectives.

I have highlighted that the nature of identity in our increasingly globalized and interconnected world should be well understood in order to effectively tap into the specific identity experiences of a particular group of people. With this basic conceptual background, I have explained how CRT, as an expanding framework, can help us better explore the racialized experiences of the Uyghurs who happen to be a minority Muslim group both in China and the West. Besides, in the province of Quebec, the Uyghurs are a minority within a minority, which is not the case in other provinces. This would create some different experiences or perspectives regarding their identity.

Post-colonialism is also very relevant to the experiences of the Uyghurs, as they see themselves as a colonial subject to the Chinese regime. Equally important, we are all living in a post-colonial world in which the unequal power relations between the North and South have been manifested through the very epistemology of colonialism (Bhabha, 1990; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1984). The experiences of the Uyghurs living in the West cannot be free from such a socio-political atmosphere. In this regard, CRT and post-colonialism perspectives can align with each other as they intersect at the point of exposing the hierarchical relations between the powerful – the White West and powerless – the colored or racialized Oriental groups. This being said, in our post-colonial era, the Uyghurs are part of the global Muslim community who have become increasingly voiceless (Afsaruddin, 2015; Gotanda, 2011) and subaltern (Turfjell, 2008).
With that background, community cultural wealth— the knowledge that is essential to maintaining and strengthening the identity of a minority group (Yosso, 2005), should not be neglected as well. For the Uyghurs as well, in our post-colonial and still racially divided world, their own indigenous culture and knowledge systems can be very valuable for their own collective identity, as discussed by Clothey (2016). Moreover, their reflections over the place and fate of their cultural values within the individualistic and liberal Canadian cultural contexts can be observed through the same lens. Closely related to such a vantage point, cultural integration of the Uyghurs can be observed through the lens of “Lost in Translation” (Hoffman, 1989). Such a perspective can also help us better scrutinize their various dilemmas brought by seemingly “pure” cultural encounters in their journey of integration.

Therefore, I have argued that it is difficult to explore effectively their identity reconstruction experiences in Canada using a single theoretical lens or perspective. As a deeply marginalized ethnic minority from a majoritarian and authoritative communist nation, a Muslim group in increasingly divided and Islamophobic China, as well as the West, a people or nation forgotten or not well known by the world, and a marginalized minority community whose identity or culture has been facing extinction, the Uyghurs possess a highly sophisticated collective identity. This necessitates intersecting multiple lenses in order to more deeply and effectively tap into their narrative identities.
CHAPTER 4: Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA): A Powerful Synergistic Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses my methodological framework based on critical narrative analysis (CNA) - the combination of narrative analysis (NA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA), and how this synergistic framework can work effectively to analyze Uyghur immigrants’ identity reconstruction experiences in Canada. For this purpose, I first briefly review the related concepts and methodologies as well as some relevant debates and then address my own methodological position.

My ontological perspectives fall under the constructivist paradigm in which social reality is neither singular nor objective, but multiple and subjective. The corresponding epistemology for this ontological stance would be interpretivism that seeks to understand the constructed knowledge through a process of interpretation, rather than directly evaluating in a positivistic way. This position implies that my data will be narrative and qualitative rather than nomothetic leading to an experimental design. Such a process also inevitably necessitates discourse analysis that questions the factors behind those narratives. As De Fina (2003) argues, a small-scale qualitative study, especially one based on Narrative and Discourse Analyses, is much more insightful than quantitative methodologies in exploring the subjectivities, voices, and identities of people that cannot be easily analyzed through statistical methods.

That said, I was initially drawn to autoethnographic methodology thinking that I was an insider researcher. However, after finding out that I am actually an “inbetweener” (Milligan, 2016) i.e. I don’t have some typical experiences which the mainstream highly educated Uyghur immigrant have (as mentioned in Chapter 1), I gave up this methodology. Otherwise, my
perspectives would not be very much representative. At the same time, I wanted to include more voices into my study, so I thought critical narrative analysis would be a more suitable methodology for this particular study.

Thus, this chapter specifically aims to discuss how the organic combination of narrative analysis (hereafter NA) and critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) - critical narrative analysis (hereafter CNA) (Souto-Manning, 2007, 2010, 2014) could be used to unpack the highly educated Uyghur immigrants’ identity reconstruction experiences in Canada. This syncretic methodology is also to challenge the “binary of seeing the person as either the autonomous origin of his or her experience or the ideological pawn of social determination”. ‘The autonomous origin’ here means the complete independence of individuals from outside influences, while ‘the ideological pawn’ refers to the domination of social factors in formulating individuals’ narratives and identities (Allen & Hardin, 2001, p.163).

Although, CNA is a new and growing methodological framework, its components are not new at all. This framework is not novel in a sense that it is an organic combination of NA and CDA. It is fresh from the perspective that the synergy between these two methodologies can produce deeper understanding of social phenomena than employing either methodology separately (Souto-Manning, 2014).

As the building blocks of such a methodological framework are the same as those in NA and CDA, I will briefly reflect on the concepts of narrative and discourse to begin with, and then proceed to discuss their functions. Following that, NA and CDA methodologies will be reviewed in order to facilitate our understanding of their synergic product. Moreover, I will discuss why this syncretic methodology is better than using NA or CDA separately. Finally, there will be a short
discussion of some identity studies that employed narrative and discourse analyses and how my methodological framework would fit within that academic trend.

4.2. Narrative and Its Functions

People generally tend to use storied statements to produce accounts of themselves and the world around them. Through those accounts or narratives, they produce and reproduce their identities (Ricoeur, 1991, 1992). So, broadly speaking, the social world, as a by-product of human communication, is itself “storied” (Lawler, 2002, p.242). These stories have myriads of forms and meanings as the reflections of specific contexts and times.

That being so, Barthes (1975) describes the prevalence of narrative in our lives as follows:

Narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, drama, … comedy, pantomime, painting, stained-glass windows, … movies, local news, conversation. Moreover, in this almost infinite diversity of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed, narrative starts with the very history of mankind, and there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative (p. 237).

Riessman (2008) adds “memoir, biography, autobiography, diaries, archival documents, social service and health records, other organizational documents, scientific theories, folk ballads, photographs, and other art work” (p. 4) to this list. In Riessman’s (2008) words, “narrative is everywhere, but not everything is narrative” (p. 4). Moreover, as De Fina (2003) argues, the essential characteristics of narrative can be seen as “temporal ordering, or sequentiality” (p.11), i.e. it should have sequential order within a specific flow of time (Bal, 1985; Genette, 1980). Accordingly, narratives only can exist in specific social, cultural, political, and historical contexts.
(Hardin, 2003). This also means narratives present the quality of sociality, as personal stories also reflect the social conditions under which those experiences are developing (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

That being so, Labov (1972) summarizes the recurring features of narrative as follows:

1. **Abstract** - How does it begin?
2. **Orientation** - Who/what does it involve, and when/where?
3. **Complicating Action** - Then what happened?
4. **Resolution** - What finally happened?
5. **Evaluation** - So what?
6. **Coda** - What does it all mean?

As could be seen, such features are the result of viewing narrative within temporal ordering in which it is organized through different structural components (Labov and Waletzky, 1967). While, this has been seen as a conventional and widely followed model that structure narratives. De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008) propose an alternative form of narrative inquiry that is different from the above. Their model regards “narrative as talk-in-interaction and as social practice” and views analyzing such interaction as the focus of narrative studies. This also prioritizes “the investigation of the intimate links of narrative-interactional processes with larger social processes as a prerequisite for socially minded research” (p. 379). Such model has enabled narrative studies to have wider dimensions in which the construction of meaning can be analyzed both at micro or local and macro or societal levels.

Yet, Riessman (2008) warns against the motives or intensions behind creating a clear-cut definition of narrative that can be applicable to all disciplines. For this reason, she broadly describes it as “everyday oral storytelling” in which the “speaker selects, organizes, evaluates and
connects” the events that s/he perceives important in a sequential order for conveying the intended messages to a specific audience (p. 3).

Thus, narrative functions as a powerful tool in transferring and sharing knowledge, as it involves cognitive, constructed as well as perceived memory (Rogoff, 1990), and it deals with certain targeted audience (Riessman, 2008). As narratives are always subjective, the values within narratives are often non-neutral or biased and they possess “illocutionary intentions,” or the culturally-defined communicative purposes (Bruner, 1990, p. 85).

That said, Riessman (2008) outlines the functions of narratives as follows: 1. Through recounting and rearranging fragmenting memories, narratives provide ways for individuals to make sense of the past; 2. Narrators make their arguments through stories; 3. Closely related to the previous one, narratives are used to persuade and convince the audience about certain reality; 4. Narratives can be very engaging so that the audience and the narrator may easily develop and keep their dynamic relationship; 5. Entertaining; 6. Because the narratives have persuasive power, they can also be used to mislead an audience, e.g. the politicians often use their narratives for this purpose; 7. On the positive side, narratives also can mobilize people to engage in activities for progressive change. At the same time, as Souto-Manning (2014) notes, narratives can be charged with emotions so that they are rhetorically more powerful than other descriptive speech genres. Thus, it is quite difficult to trace the ideology deeply hidden within them.

Thanks to these qualities, narratives can conveniently shape social identities, i.e. “what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character” (Ricoeur, 1992, pp. 147-148). In other words, “story is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.375).
Therefore, accessing the narrative or storied past that is objective is impossible. ‘The past is constantly worked and reworked to provide a coherent sense of the subject’s identity’ (Lawler, 2002, p. 249), which means narratives are not created straightforward or autonomously, rather they are subject to “controlling vocabularies”; they are always composed in a specific history, for a particular audience, and rely on or are influenced by the discourses and views in a particular cultural context (Riessman, 2008, p. 3). That is why they always portray specific experiences of myriad subjective realities in specific times and spaces (Bruner, 1990).

4.3. Narrative Analysis and Human Voice

Scholars in humanities and social sciences tend to debate the definition of narrative inquiry and locate the beginning of narrative study, the ‘Narrative Turn’, in various historical points in the 20th century (Reissman & Speedy, 2007). Broadly speaking, the ‘Narrative Turn’ occurred in parallel with the development of post-modernistic paradigms that questioned the empirical methods under the modernist and positivist philosophical assumptions of rationality and universal truth (Engholm, 2001; Mitchell & Egudo, 2003).

Although, Narrative inquires began to be used in social and human sciences during the early 20th century, such a methodology started to flourish in the mid-1980s as a part of the postmodern qualitative approaches that challenged the realist and positivist paradigms in human sciences (Riessman, 2008). Within this postmodern methodological paradigm, knowledge is constructed; reality and meaning are multi-perspectival; truth is grounded in everyday life and social relations; facts and values are inseparable; and all human activities are value-laden (Wilson, Osman-Jouchoux & Teslow, 1995). As Riessman (1993) puts it, narratives do not simply reflect the world “out there”, but are constructed, rhetorical, and interpretive. Thus, as a qualitative

Apart from the shift from analyzing social relations through macro structural perspective to social theories that highly value human agency and consciousness at the micro level, Riessman (2008) regards the development of communication technologies as another major factor that boosted the evolvement of NA as a solid methodology (Riessman, 2008). Through this process, NA has become an interdisciplinary approach that various social and human sciences can employ (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003; Riessman, 2008).

Based on a constructivist paradigm, NA emphasizes human involvement in constructing subjective realities, so it is particularly useful for exploring human subjectivity and identity building experiences (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003). The narrative experiences within constant social interactions are seen as pivotal in shaping and reshaping social identities (Forgas, 2002). Thus, NA functions as a powerful tool to dig into identity, “as human self or existence is expressed through narrativity” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 151).

Hence, as Connelly and Clandinin (2006) put it, NA is a study of experience as story, and “it is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study” (p. 375). It is also to “critically shape the stories participants choose to tell”, in order to construct the knowledge about their particular experiences (Riessman, 2008, p. 50). Among those experiences, identity always occupies a central space, because people tell stories primarily to present and represent their
identities, and also practice certain types of identity in specific interactional contexts (De Fina, 2003, 2006, 2015; Mitchell & Egudo, 2003).

Accordingly, the analysis of human narratives not only helps us understand the stories themselves, but the reasons, rational, and motivations behind those stories (Riessman, 2008). As Ochs, Smith, and Taylor (1996) explain, “storytelling is a site for problem solving”, so we can further comprehend the human world through scrutinizing those narratives uttered by ordinary people (p. 95). Therefore, narrative is a “legitimate form of reasoned knowing” that offers highly contextual knowledge about specific communities (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 9). Especially during the process of immigration and move, people would have constant definitions and redefinitions (orally or written) of their identities, while living a new social life and interacting with various new communities. It would be difficult to dig into their subjective realities without listening to their stories (De Fina, 2003, 2006, 2015).

This also indicates that the interaction between the researcher and the research participants in NA is much more intimate than in other qualitative methodologies. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note, the central task of narrative inquiries is to obtain and create knowledge through that intimacy and close “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (p. 20). In other words, the “researcher does not find narratives but instead participates in their creation” as a part of her or his project (Mishler, 1986; cited in Neander & Scott, 2006, p. 297). In a real interview for NA, the traditional question-answer mode is replaced by conversation during which interviewees and researcher construct meaning collaboratively (Mishler, 1986). Researchers and participants construct knowledge through mutually responding and reflecting on argumentative points, rather than solely obtaining
the answers for interview questions (De Fina, 2003). In Riessman’s (2008) words, through this process “two active participants …jointly construct narrative and meaning” (p.23).

With that background, Riessman (2008) proposes four different analytic approaches under narrative methodology: thematic analysis, structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis, and visual analysis. Among them, thematic analysis and structural analysis are most popular, and they are often employed together to organize and analyze the spoken and written narratives of individuals (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008).

Offering voice to marginalized or subaltern groups is an important aim of NA as this methodology originated from critical pedagogy and feminist theories (Chase, 2005, 2011; Riessman, 1993, 2008). Accordingly, narrative approaches are powerful tools to discuss, reinterpret and expose “oppressive metanarratives”, therefore facilitate positive social changes (Chase, 2005, p. 668; Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Through narrative studies the researchers can yield research findings that would have positive incentives for building “a better world” for oppressed groups (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.61), such as the Uyghurs whose situation is discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

Moreover, NA differs from both ethnography and textual analysis by “an interpretive thrust” (Bruner 1990, pp. 51), a quality that is difficult to be attained through other qualitative means (Lawler, 2002). This is because NA not only dwells on individual stories and experiences, but also connects them to collective social representations and ideologies (de Fina, 2003, 2006, 2015). In this way, larger institutional structures and discourses can be questioned and problematized or even challenged through this research process (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999).

In sum, with its dynamic power to tap into the everyday lived experiences of people, its collaborative nature, and its social justice pledge for representing the marginalized, NA would best
serve my particular study which intends to understand the experiences of the Uyghur immigrants who have recently gone through some dramatic life experiences through migration. This methodology would be effectively complemented by CDA which I will discuss in the following section in detail.

4.4. Discourse and Its Functions

In its most simplistic definition, discourse is “language in use” (Rymes 2009, p. 248). It is “a unit of language larger than a sentence” (Sawyer 2002, p. 434). In other words, discourse is beyond the words or sentences; it is the grand molds that are shaping and controlling those words and sentences (Brownell & Martino, 1998; Ricoeur, 1991; Woodilla, 1998). While, in a narrow sense, the meaning of discourse can be confined to linguistic features (Woodilla 1998), in its broader application, discourse can “delineate more complex relationships between language and society” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 159; Dijk, 1997).

For Lacan (1978), there is no natural social discourse; no discourse is free from language intervention. Discourse “…can be produced by the existence of language, make some social link function” (p.12). Thus, it is not only what is said, but also the ways in which something is said within a certain social structure (Archer, 2000). In Foucault’s (1972) words “discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence” (p.107) and “in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation” (p.117).

Closely tied to the concept of knowledge reproduction, De Gay (1996) defines discourse as: a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a topic and a way of producing a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. Thus, the term refers both to the production of knowledge through language and representation and the
way that knowledge is institutionalized, shaping social practices and setting new practices into play (p.43).

As such, broadly speaking, discourse “refers to a world which it claims to describe, to express, or to represent” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 145). In a more abstract term, discourse is “an analytical category describing the vast array of meaning making resources available to us” (Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak, 2015, p. 79). Among those resources, very powerful ones, i.e. dominant discourses can be effectively and very easily weaved into everyday narratives people tell (Souto-Manning, 2013).

Based on different theoretical models, Sawyer (2002) illustrates these meaning making resources or discourse as following: “Post-colonial theory: discourse is a system of domination (...) Anthropology: discourse is a culture or ideology (...) Sociolinguistics: discourse is a speech style or register (...) Psychology: discourse is a physical or bodily practice (...) Feminist theory: discourse is a type of subject” (p. 434).

Against this background, no one in society lives outside discourse (Bacchi, 2000). “The individual is both site and subject of discursive struggles for identity” (Richardson, 1994, p.518). More specifically, discourse is everyday social values, attitudes, beliefs, ethics, social identities, and moral orientations that shape identities (Gee, 1996; Rymes 1995). That being so, one can regard Orientalism (Said, 1978; Prakash, 1995), White-supremacy (Stanley, 2011), and most recently, Islamophobia (Ekman, 2015; Standing, 2010) as some forms of discourses that have been shaping, maintaining and reproducing our post-colonial social structures. For example, Edward Said (1978) deems “it useful to employ Michel Foucault’s notion of a discourse, as described by him in The Archeology of Knowledge and in Discipline and Punish, to identify Orientalism” (p.3). Yet, this does not mean that individuals totally lack the power to influence and/or change the
discourses they are subject to. While discourses shape society, they are also shaped by society in which human agency is a dynamic force (Souto-Manning, 2013).

On that basis, Foucault (1972) describes the formation of discourse as the following:

Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation (p. 38).

Our everyday storytelling or communication is situated within that discursive practice (Fairclough, 1989) or founded on socially constructed and shared ideologies, meanings and perspectives (van Dijk, 1998). In Hoffman’s (1989) words, “we can mean something only within the fabric of larger significations” (p. 279), which is the very discursive practice mentioned above. Going deeper, Fairclough (1985) uses the term ‘ideological-discursive formations’ (IDFs) to describe how the institutional discourses are constructed by dominant ideologies and how IDFs “normalize” ideologies (p.739). Therefore, to effectively understand the complex social interactions, structures, and power relations, the role of discourse is paramount (Souto-Manning, 2014).

The discursive practices follow social rules or structures that decide the ways in which narratives are constructed, i.e. they should be built by whom, for whom, and what can be uttered and in what styles, etc. (de Fina, 2003, 2006, 2015). Such a process can be indirect rather than direct depending on how people perceive the “communicative situations” between society and discourse (van Dijk, 2008, 2009, p. X). Van Dijk (2008) uses ‘context models’ to describe these “communicative situations” that are neglected by many discourse analysts who are dealing with the specific elements of discursive formation (p. X).
More in detail, Foucault (1972) attributes the internal mechanism of discursive practice described above to:

an enunciative function that involved various units (these may sometimes be sentences, sometimes propositions; but they are sometimes made up of fragments of sentences, series or tables of signs, a set of propositions or equivalent formulations); and, instead of giving a meaning to these units, this function relates them to a field of objects, instead of providing them with a subject, it opens up for them a number of possible subjective positions; instead of fixing their limits, it places them in a domain of coordination and coexistence; instead of determining their identity, it places them in a space in which they are used and repeated (p. 106).

Accordingly, Ricoeur (1991) argues that there are four special features of any discourse. First, it always occurs in a particular time; second, it refers to people in some ways; third, discourse usually describes something outside the language system; fourth, it is discourse that communicates, not language signs. As such, discourse can only exist and be understood within specific contexts (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 2008, 2009).

The last trait of discourse highlighted by Ricoeur (1991) also reveals how language actually works for conveying the discourses laden on them. Behind those discursive practices are hidden the systems or structures with which statements are reasoned as regular or “normal”. These systems and structures are called “archives” that determine or control what can be said and in what ways (Foucault 1972). In the same vein, Fairclough, Mulderrig and Wudok (2015) propose three broad domains of social life that could be subject to such discursive systems or ‘archives’: representations of the world, social relations between people, and people’s identities (p. 91). Foucault (1972) uses the term “archaeology” to describe the process of discovering those “archives” as well as understanding the discursive formation.
These “archives” or the series of discourses frame our everyday narratives (Souto-Manning, 2014); they decide how we describe our realities while they function in both personal and socio-political domains (Swain & Cameron, 1999) where the interaction between micro (everyday social life) and macro (social structure or system) worlds take place. As such, the power relations in society are maintained and strengthened through the operations of these “archives” or sets of discourses (Foucault 1978). Therefore, people, as Richardson (1994) puts, are “subject to multiple and competing discourses in many realms” where they engage in “discursive struggles for identity” (p. 518). Consequently, social identity, in Marková’s (2007) words, cannot be discussed “without examining public discourses in which different dialogues between the Ego and the Alter take place and through which they generate representations” (p. 219). Such discourses can be seen, in Hoffman’s (1989) words, as “the fabric of larger significations (p. 279)”, only within which can people construct meaning.

For this very reason, Souto-Manning (2014) argues that we are all prone to be controlled or colonized by our institutional discourses. Our everyday narratives or representations are controlled and shaped by those discourses; these narratives actually are ‘a complex weave of individuals’ unique concerns and recycled institutional discourses’ (p.161). Therefore, it could be argued that the power and influence of multiple social discourses still serve as colonizing devices in our post-colonial world (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999).

4.5. **Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Its Use in Post-colonial Studies**

For Foucault (1972), discourse itself is a description of the meaning of a statement that occurred in a particular time and space. It does not involve the interpretation or the search for what is ‘really’ hiding behind what has been said. This task, i.e. exploring the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions
underneath those discursive statements should be conducted through discourse analysis (Sawyer, 2002; Souto-Manning, 2014). In Sawyer’s (2002) words, while “discourse refers to a unit of language larger than a sentence, and discourse analysis is the study of these sequences of sentences” (p. 434).

This necessitates the employment of Discourse Analysis (DA) which considers how unedited text or talk can reflect social members’ particular ways of integrating broader social structures into their lives or resisting such a process (van Dijk 1997; Burman & Parker, 1993). Within this general scope, DA is divided into descriptive and critical studies of discourse (Fairclough, 1985; van Dijk, 1997). While the former explores the discursive process of social interactions neglecting the hidden or “‘naturalized’ ideological representations” in the background, the latter - CDA focuses on “denaturalizing” seemingly non-ideological “common-sense” or “taken-for-granted background knowledge” or exposing the maintenance and reproduction of unequal power relations exhibited through discursive processes (Fairclough, 1985, p. 739; 1995; also in Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). From this classification, I realize that the critical version of discourse analysis would be more relevant to my current study.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), more recently, is redefined by van Dijk (2015) as a “discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 466). The theoretical origins of CDA can be traced back to Antonio Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, and Louis Althusser whose thoughts on hegemony and power had a huge influence on the formation of CDA (van Dijk, 1998).

Billig (2015) attributes the initial formation of CDA, as an independent methodology, to Norman Fairclough (1992) who first outlined “critical approaches” to discourse analysis. Although
CDA first was seen as a form of Critical Language Studies (CLS) or it was believed that CLS laid the foundation for CDA (Fairclough et al, 2015), Fairclough (1995) officially used the title critical discourse analysis for his book (1995) to signal CDA could be regarded as a separate methodology. This also signaled that studying discourse in a way that linguists have traditionally done was largely insufficient and outdated (Billig, 2015). Therefore, with its new and updated methodological capacity to scrutinize the unequal power relations in society, CDA has started to be widely used in various fields like politics, gender, race, and ethnic relations and also increasingly in media studies during the past few decades (van Dijk, 2015) as a response to the social realities in our post-colonial world.

While sharing the basic aims to offer a better understanding of socio-cultural aspects of various discursive texts, CDA is different from other forms of discourse analysis that it particularly “aims to provide a critical dimension in its theoretical and descriptive accounts of texts” (Kress, 2015, p.196). Thus, it is necessary to stress the notion “critical” in CDA, as being critical means the values such as human rights, democratic norms, equality and justice should be the ethical basis of such a methodology (van Dijk, 2015). Moreover, the poststructuralist paradigm in CDA allows us to “move data beyond level of the individual and into historical, social and cultural realms, making critical analysis on a social level possible” (Hardin, 2003, p.544). With such qualities and with its traditional roots in discourse studies, feminist post-structuralism, and critical linguistics, CDA commits to offer voice for the oppressed and marginalized social groups (Rogers, Mlanchanuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui & O’Garro Joseph, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002)

As a constantly evolving methodology, CDA is not a very distinct academic discipline with a fixed set of research methods, rather it is a “problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement” that includes various approaches and models” (Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak, 2015,
Despite its interdisciplinary and diverse nature, CDA universally revolves around “such notions as power, dominance, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race, discrimination, interests, reproduction, institutions, social structure, and social order” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 468, italics by author). Against this background, CDA not only tries to challenge the status quo and “change the discursive practices, but also the socio-political practices and structures supporting the discursive practices” (Kress, 2015, p. 196).

Such visions naturally would make CDA outstanding among similar research approaches, as “it openly and explicitly positions itself on the side of dominated and oppressed groups and against dominant groups, without compromising its social scientific objectivity and rigor” (Fairclough, et al. 2015, p. 80). This explains why CDA especially revolves around political sciences focusing on power abuses and resistance against power abuses. Yet, it has also been increasingly popular in other fields in which domination and dissent issues are prevalent, such as media, professional and institutional power, gender inequality, race and ethnic relations (van Dijk, 2015).

Being “critical” also means disclosing the hidden connotations, links and reasons behind discursive phenomena (Fairclough, 1992). Thus, engaging in truly critical CDA entails addressing the question: “Critical for whom?” (Souto-Manning, 2013). More specifically, “CDA needs to be reflexive and self-critical about its own institutional position and all that goes with it”, without compromising its social justice pledge (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 9). From this perspective, CDA can be regarded as the combination of methodology and theory (Gee, 2014).

This being so, while taking “an explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately challenge social inequalities” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 466), CD analysts are always inclined to focus on “unilateral influence of institutional discourses (also called power discourses) on
everyday lives” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 160). Such unilateral influence comes from the power that is conceptualized as a controlling factor that shapes the structures of context, text, or talk, and thus indirectly of people's minds (van Dijk, 2015).

In the field of education, whether it is formal, non-formal, or informal (e.g. social media), such a controlling factor or cognitive influence may be either positive and useful or manipulative and indoctrinative (Winn, 1983). A very recent specific example of such a process is reviewed by Ghosh, et al (2016) who highlight that education can be used either for countering violent religious extremism or promoting it. As a tool to spread and legitimate relevant institutional or non-institutional discourses, education has been used for or against violent extremism in various global contexts.

In sum, the implications of CDA for scrutinizing the unequal power relations and how institutionally dominant discourses translate into everyday norms and narratives of ordinary people are tremendous. The same is true in exploring how everyday narratives would question, resist and challenge the institutional structures that oppress the voices of marginalized people. Therefore, it would be very beneficial to use this methodology for my particular study in which the institutional discourses and power relations in our post-colonial world could be effectively explored through the everyday narratives of the Uyghur immigrants.

4.6. Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) as a Combined Methodology

With its roots in critical ethnography, and feminist theory, NA is generally committed to giving voice to marginalized and oppressed groups (Chase, 2005, 2011; Riessman, 1993, 2008). While, being “critical” towards the issues of human rights, equality, and justice (van Dijk, 2015), CDA
also tries to empower the underrepresented and marginalized voices (Rogers, et al., 2005). Thus, both NA and CDA, with their social justice vision, can be seen as powerful tools to produce a “positive social change and forms of emancipatory community action” (Lincoln & Guba, 2005, p. 207; also in Chase, 2005; Souto Manning, 2014).

Yet, as Souto-Manning (2014) contends, CDA focuses on “unilateral influence of institutional discourses (also called power discourses) on everyday lives”, neglecting the influence or impact of everyday conversational narratives on systems or institutional discourses (p. 160). NA, on the other hand, primarily looks into human lived experiences expressed by their personal accounts (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Mitchell & Egudo, 2003). Although NA also can be used to question the ideologies or discourses that shape particular experiences and identities (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Du Fina, 2003), that is not its main task. Personal narratives are always analyzed apart from issues of power and/or institutional discourses (Souto-Manning, 2014).

Separating the personal (micro level) from social or institutional (macro level) in social research has been criticized by many scholars (e.g. Cazden, 1988; Hymes, 1996; Ritzer, 1988; Sadan, 1997). Accordingly, Souto-Manning (2014) argues that combining NA with CDA can challenge this dichotomy. Thus, she suggests that such a methodological fusion can allow us to effectively conduct analysis both on personal and institutional levels, therefore construct more comprehensive knowledge about human experiences (Souto-Manning, 2014). Through this synergistic process, it would be possible to link “the ‘micro’ analysis of texts” and “the ‘macro’ analysis of how power relations work across networks of practices and structures” as stressed by Fairclough (2003, pp. 15-16).

For this reason, Souto-Manning (2007, 2010, 2014) proposes the combination of NA with CDA that would produce critical narrative analysis (CNA). The aim is to minimize the limitations
of each methodology and strengthen the analysis of the meaning making experiences of human research participants. As Souto-Manning (2014) contends, this methodological collaboration between macro (discourse) and micro (narrative) levels of analyses would provide fuller pictures about the social phenomena we intend to understand in a qualitative way. This partnership would allow us to observe and discuss the issues both at personal and institutional levels, and how institutional discourses influence and are influenced by personal everyday narratives. It also allows us to “explore the connection between macro-level power inequities and micro-level interactional positionings” (p. 159).

Souto-Manning (2014), following Bakhtin’s (1981) conceptions of heteroglossia, which refers to the coexistence of and conflict between the speeches of different narrators in the modern novel, claims that through everyday conversational narratives, individuals can start questioning their concrete realities, and how their beliefs and practices are shaped by systemic or institutional discourses. This point is also supported by the theoretical assumption that individual agencies also can dispute, influence and even change the macro institutional or systemic discourses that mold their identities (Archer 2000, 2003; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999; Du Fina, 2003; Habermas 1987). In Chouliaraki and Fairclough’s (1999) words, there is an interaction “between lifeworld and systems … in either direction – systems can be shaped by lifeworlds, lifeworlds by systems” (p. 86). Putting differently, everyday “language and the social world are intertwined” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 163).

Langdridge (2007) proposes a similar framework called critical narrative analysis, yet it is an amalgamation of phenomenologically informed narrative methods with critical theory. By “critical theory”, he means interrogating the power relations in society that influence the individual subjectivities and social positions. It uses political critique to scrutinize what people narrate about
their experiences. Although this combination seems to be very useful, it is a mixture of a methodology and a theory. Moreover, its theoretical part is confined within political critiques, so this combination may prove to be less effective than Souto-Manning’s (2007, 2010, 2014) more comprehensive framework. Likewise, in their work on psychology, Emerson and Frosh (2004) used the term CNA for their methodology, but their approaches mostly focused on narrative texts and demonstrated how those narratives can be used for different levels of analysis. Thus, their study too appears to be less emphatic in terms of analyzing discursive aspects of social phenomena.

This being said, the central tenant in CNA that Souto-Manning (2014) wants to highlight and utilize is the mechanism in which everyday narratives or conversational narratives are influenced and informed by institutional discourse, while institutional discourses can be informed and influenced or even challenged by everyday narratives (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). For this reason, Souto-Manning (2014) also acknowledges how her employment of CNA has enabled her to get deep into the issues of power and ideologies revealed from the case study she focused on, which would have been largely unattainable solely through NA. Thus, CNA is a powerful methodology that would help researchers effectively tap into the unequal power relations in society as well as the human agency manifested through everyday narratives.

4.7. Identity Studies through Narrative and Discourse Analysis Methodologies and My Methodological Position

Studying identity through narratives can be traced back to Burke’s (1945) and Goffman’s (1959) seminal works on representation of self in everyday narratives. Their legacy has been carried on and flourished in the post-modern era with the rise of globalization and global migration. Identity in this process has been primarily seen as narrative identity that “are the stories we live by”
Along with this epistemological trend, a growing amount of literature has been dedicated to the study of narratives in relation to social identities (e.g. Bamberg, 2010; Josselson, 1996; Josselson & Lieblich, 1993; Josselson, Lieblich & McAdams, 2003; Somers, 1994). Thanks to its close pertinence to human self-recognition in various social contexts, discursive formation of identities has also gained popularity in academia during the same process (e.g. Bronwyn & Harré, 1990; Koller, 2012; De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2006; Phillips & Hardy, 1997; Wodak, 1997).

In recent years, scholars have been integrating discourse analysis with narrative studies in order to link the personal stories with the broader systemic structures and social modes of life, especially in studying immigrant identities (e.g. De Fina, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2015; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008, 2012; Souto-Manning, 2010, 2014). More specifically, in their studies on narrative and identity, these scholars have demonstrated the importance of connecting local (micro) levels of narratives with societal (macro) levels of discourses. This initiative has effectively merged the analysis of discursive formation of immigrant identities with the everyday narrative identities of immigrants.

Aside from being able to align with each other, as discussed earlier, both NA and CDA are committed to offer voice for marginalized, oppressed and underrepresented communities and groups (Chase, 2005, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Riessman, 1993, 2008; Souto-Manning, 2014; van Dijk, 2015). Such a common vision makes these methodologies powerful tools to conduct research in the fields of post-colonial and critical race studies, both of which also pledge to address and critique the unequal power relations subjugating the racialized and other subaltern social groups (Crenshaw, 1995; Bell, 1980; Gordon, 1999; Spivak, 1988; Said, 1978, 1998, 2001; Thomas, 2000; Yosso, 2005). These shared commitments would, both methodologically and
theoretically, hugely facilitate the studies of the immigrants who have countless stories to tell on their displaced lives and shifting identities. This has been the case in many studies that have specifically focused on the narratives which reflect the particular identity issues of marginalized or underrepresented immigrants whose self-recognition has been influenced and shaped by various dominant institutional discourses (e.g. De Fina, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2015; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008, 2012; Gardner, 2002).

With that said, while, Souto-Manning’s (2007, 2010, 2014) methodological framework tends to bring CDA ahead of NA, i.e. her priority is to analyze discourse through narrative, my methodological position would be studying narratives under the influence of various discourses, while not allowing everything pushed into discursive formation processes. Apart from discourses, there are various other elements that would influence Uyghur immigrants’ identity formation experiences, such as further education, occupation, age, gender, and family or other personal situations. As such, I would position my methodology between Souto-Manning’s (2007, 2010, 2014) CNA and De Fina’s (2000, 2003, 2006, 2015) analytical framework that is not labelled as CNA, yet effectively integrates NA with CDA. Meanwhile, I would like to pay close attention to whether and how my participants challenge the systemic and institutional discourses through their narratives.

4.8. Methods and Data Analysis

Participants

The participants for this study were composed of 12 highly educated Uyghur immigrants who had been living in Canada for more than five years but less than 15 years when I connected with them for this research. The relatively small sample size was due to a number of factors. I used some
strict criteria to select my participants; they should have at least five years of life experience in Canada; they should be skilled immigrants; they should have at least one child as their children’s education and future are among their very important concerns; the samples from Quebec and English Canada should be equal, while Quebec did not have many skilled immigrants during the time of my data collection. At the same time, I thought a smaller sample would help dig deeper into the narratives. And most of the interviews lasted more than two hours. That said, I still would not be able to claim that my study is representative, even I recruited significantly more participants as this is a qualitative study. My participants can only represent themselves – 12 highly educated Uyghur immigrants in Canada.

Their ages ranged from 35 to 46, and six of them were male, while six were female. All of them were born in Xinjiang, China, and came to Canada after finishing their post-secondary education and working for at least eight years in Xinjiang. One of them studied in Europe for two years before immigrating to Canada. They all had finished their higher education before the solidification or even inception of “bilingual” education policies in the early 2000s. In other words, 11 of them were minkaomin and one was minkaohan. They were all fluent in Uyghur including the minkaohan participant who responded to the interview in Uyghur as well. All of them were married and had at least one child during the time of their interviews.

Six participants were living in Quebec while two in Ontario, three in British Columbia and one in Alberta when they were interviewed. No advertisement, letter, flier, brochure or oral script were used for recruitment, as the participants were primarily recruited among my own friends and acquaintances, and through a snowball method.

Table 1: Key information about my participants
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Years in Canada</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Field of employment (Canada)</th>
<th>Field of employment (Xinjiang)</th>
<th>Province</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azat</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Business sector-IT</td>
<td>Business sector-IT</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polat</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Business sector-IT</td>
<td>Business sector-IT</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gülnur</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sattar</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Business sector-telecommuni-</td>
<td>Business sector-telecommuni-</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PhD (obtained in Canada)</td>
<td>cation</td>
<td>cation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramilä</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Government sector</td>
<td>Healthcare sector</td>
<td>Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zöhrä</td>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>Education sector</td>
<td>Alberta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adalät</td>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>Education sector</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolqun</td>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Business sector-maintenance</td>
<td>Government sector</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahirä</td>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>Education sector</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arman</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Business sector-transportation</td>
<td>Healthcare sector</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayshä</td>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Service sector-childcare</td>
<td>Corporate sector</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yashar</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Business sector-finance</td>
<td>Business sector-finance</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedure**

60-90-minute semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in various locations where the participant felt most comfortable and convenient, such as their homes, my home, restaurants that had private spaces, as well as on Skype which was the best choice for the ones who were living far away. All of the participants were given pseudonyms and the information that could potentially
expose their identity was either omitted or altered. All the data was collected between October 2016 and September 2017.

Most of the interviews were not recorded but handwritten in order to assure the participants that they would not feel uncomfortable or uneasy fearing their privacy might be in danger. As discussed in the review of the Uyghur situation, Uyghurs are hypersensitized regarding the topics that have political elements or tones. Even though they trust me very much, they would still worry about the possibility that they might be in trouble in case their voices were heard by the Chinese authorities. For this reason, only two participants’ narratives were audio-recorded as they were my very close friends. I asked those who were not being audio-recorded to slow down a bit or repeat their points when I felt it was too fast for me catch up with what they were saying. My handwriting skill is quite good, so I was able to put down most of the data without losing anything important. It turned out that I saved some time by directly putting down the interview data, skipping the transcription process.

All of the interviews were conducted in Uyghur, and the data were translated into English soon afterwards. Then the qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis. More specifically, I intended to analyze interview data through an open coding scheme (Butler-Kisber, 2010), using thematic and structural analysis methods (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008). A Constant Comparison method is also used when analyzing the data in contrast to the already existing findings or insights from similar or relevant studies, while consistently relying on inductive, rather than deductive reasoning (Silverman, 1993). The following questions were the basis of the interviews, but I allowed my participants to freely narrate their views and stories around and beyond these questions. I did not quickly interrupt them even when they talked about something remotely relevant or irrelevant. This was to make sure that I would not miss any of their unique
and important reference points and perspectives that would emerge from the seemingly trivial details.

I also tried to ensure the trustworthiness of my data through several measures. Firstly, whenever I had doubts about my understanding during the interviews, I asked them to further clarify their points. Secondly, when I felt some of their points needed to be further validated, I asked them about the same issues through different questions. Thirdly, when I had questions about participant narratives during my data analysis, I went back to them to make sure that nothing was misinterpreted. That said, I could not check the reliability of my data, as this is not a quantitative study. As a qualitative researcher, I could mostly rely on the subjective experiences of my participants, which were true and real from their perspectives.

**Ethical considerations**

Before my data collection was started, I was able to obtain the ethics approval from Research Ethics Board (REB) Office at the Faculty of Education, McGill University. I was given one year (October 2016-September 2017) to finish my interviews. Following the REB guidelines, I tried my best to assure the confidentiality of my research participants. I conducted each interview only after the corresponding participant gave their full consent. Except for the provinces they were living in, I did not reveal further details about their locations. All of them were given pseudonyms which will be used in any written report, presentation, or future publications. All possibly identifiable information was omitted. Specific place names emerged from interviews were altered or given generic titles in order to further ensure the participant confidentiality. Only the information related to their gender, duration of living in Canada, residential status, general occupational areas and educational levels were revealed. All the interview data currently is
securely saved in my personal laptop. I will make sure to delete it after 7 years since the completion of this study.

Apart from following these procedures, I have kept in mind that my participants may have become extra sensitive to any political topics or viewpoints related to Uyghurs. Given the reality that my thesis is quite political, I tried to be extremely careful when I was interviewing my participants. Thus, as mentioned earlier, I did not require them to be audio recorded, so that they would not feel that their confidentiality was at risk.

**Research questions**

The following research question and sub-questions are formulated to guide this study.

*How do highly educated Uyghur immigrants reconstruct their collective identity in Canada?*

Sub-questions:

* How are the highly educated Uyghur immigrants perceiving and positioning themselves as Muslim and Uyghur after living in Canada for some years?

* How do highly educated Uyghur immigrants perceive education in Canada (formal, non-formal and informal) as an influencing factor on their collective identity?

* To what extent do their experiences and perspectives differ in the contexts of Quebec and English Canada? (This applies to all the data analysis process).

Based on the above research questions, the following interview questions were constructed:

1. What was your professional background prior to immigration to Canada?
2. Were you satisfied with your career while in China? Why?
3. Are you satisfied with your situation now in Canada? Why?
4. What were the reasons that made you decide to come to Canada?

5. Why did you decide to come to the province of Canada you live in right now?

6. How do you think living in Canada has been affecting your Uyghur ethnic consciousness? Are you becoming more nationalistic or less nationalistic? Why?

7. How do you think living in Canada has been affecting your identity as a Muslim? Do you think you are now more religious than you were in Xinjiang or not? Why?

8. How do you think the formal education in Canada has been affecting or will affect your children’s Uyghur ethnic consciousness as well as Muslim identity?

9. How about informal education (social media, and social environment)?

10. How do you compare these processes with the situation in Xinjiang?

11. Where do you put being a Canadian among your plural identities? Why?

12. To what extent are you aware of the issues of radicalization among young Canadians?

13. Why do you think this has been the case in Canada and other Western countries? Have you noticed any special elements in Canadian education system or society that are causing radicalization of youths?

14. Some Uyghurs are known to have joined the Islamist militant groups such as ISIS. Do you think they can represent Uyghurs or Muslims?

15. How important is Islam in maintaining and strengthening Uyghur identity? Why?

16. Do you think your perception over the importance of Islam in Uyghur identity has changed after you came to Canada? If so, how?

4.9. Translation of Data
The next step was to translate the data into English, which took me nearly a month to finish. This process turned out to be very rewarding as well, because I was able to ruminate on the stories of my participants while putting them into English. In other words, I didn’t just translate the data, but already began to analyze these narratives, although mostly at a cursory level. To me, it was a form of reflective journey, which proved to be very useful for my future data analysis. Therefore, I assume my translation of data as an initial phase of data analysis, which was followed by a more serious sort of exploration.

The same process also made me realize the difficulty in transferring everything conveyed in one language into another without losing any bit of it. In Hoffman’s (1989) words, “in order to transport a single word without distortion, one would have to transport the entire language around it” (p. 272), which requires deep cultural experiences in both languages. Meanwhile, my translation journey also offered me a chance to go back “into language of the subculture within which I happen to live, into a way of explaining myself to myself” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 271). After such “explanation”, I became more self-assured that I could “transport” my participants’ voices more effectively into “the language of the present” from “language of the self” (p. 121). Simultaneously, I admit that there could always be something “lost in translation”, between those two languages which have immensely different cultural backgrounds and values.

4.10. Summary

In this chapter I have sought to present and justify the relevance of the methodological framework – CNA that is an organic combination of NA and CDA (Souto-Manning, 2007, 2010, 2014) to my particular study. Noting that the components of this framework are not alien to any narrative and
critical discourse frameworks, I have first dwelled on the concepts of narrative and discourse, as well as their social functions, before briefly reviewing NA and CDA methodologies. Following that, I have discussed the benefits of CNA compared to using NA and CDA separately. Finally, with some examples, I have highlighted the pertinence of CNA to the analysis of identities of immigrants in our post-colonial world.

I have also highlighted that my study largely depends on such a qualitative and synergistic methodology as the project taps into the lived experiences and meaning making processes of the highly educated Uyghur immigrants, through analyzing their storied lives. Therefore, narrative methodology would be most suitable for this research. However, this approach may prove to be insufficient while ignoring discursive formation of identity experiences of those immigrants. Hence, the amalgamation of NA and CDA, i.e. CNA (Souto-Manning, 2014) will be employed for drawing a more comprehensive picture of identity reconstruction experiences of this particular group of people. In other words, CNA can help me effectively tap into the unequal power relations in society as well as the human agency that would challenge these relations, through its focus on the interactions between systemic discourses and everyday narratives. Therefore, using NA or CDA independently would not achieve the level of analytical depth this thesis intended to achieve.

As discussed earlier, Uyghur collective identity has been influenced and shaped by the various political discourses revolving around Chinese ethnicity and nationhood consistently promoted by the Chinese state in the last seven decades. Other everyday discourses that stereotype and discriminate the Uyghurs as a Muslim therefore “backward” minority group also have influenced how Uyghurs recognize themselves. All of these factors have been creating an increasingly complicated picture of Uyghur identity (Smith Finley, 2013). In this regard, many scholars could be seen as having used critical discourse analysis methodology to some extent (in
the sense they highlight the importance of systemic or public discourses) to explore the identity issues of Uyghurs in different historical periods (e.g. Bellér-Hann, 2000, 2008a; Brophy, 2016; Smith-Finley, 2007, 2013; Dillon, 2004; Millward, 2004, 2007, 2009; Thum, 2014; Waite, 2002, 2006, 2007).

NA also has been used to varied extents by many scholars who intended to explore the Uyghur identity in Xinjiang/China through interviews and ethnographic methods (e.g. Smith, 2000, 2002; Smith-Finely 2007, 2013; Bovingdon, 2010; Clothey, 2005, 2016, Clothey & Koku, 2016; Dautcher, 2009; Rudelson, 1998). In diaspora Uyghur studies (e.g. Dilnur, 2012 a,b; Kuşçu, 2013, 2014; NurMuhammad et. al, 2015; Shichor, 2010, 2013) however, neither CDA nor NA methodologies have been used for exploring the Uyghur identities, therefore this research could be seen as a fresh endeavor in studying the Uyghur identity experiences in the Western contexts through CNA which is a synergistic combination of CDA and NA methodologies. I believe that such a hybrid methodology can effectively help me elucidate the institutional structures and power relations within various socio-political contexts that influence and re/shape the narrative identities of my Uyghur participants, and the ways those Uyghurs reflect and even challenge those structures and relations through their narratives.

This being said, I have clarified my methodological position, which is between Souto-Manning’s (2010, 2014) CNA and De Fina’s (2000, 2003, 2006, 2015) analytical framework. I have also introduced my specific methods of inquiry, including selecting my participants, the process of data collection, transcription, translation, and analysis, as well as some relevant concerns.
CHAPTER 5: Shifting Uyghur Ethnic/National and Religious Identities

This chapter focuses on the emerging themes closely related to the shifting Uyghur ethnic/national and religious identities. More specifically, it dwells on the self-reflections of my participants over the ethnic/national and religious facets of their collective identity in various Canadian contexts. These reflections regarding their experiences in and perspectives on the educational spaces and workplaces are mostly discussed in the following chapters, but this does not mean such experiences and perspectives are not affected by or do not involve their ethnic and religious identities. We should acknowledge that social issues evolve through intersectionality; different aspects of social life or social identity often intersect with one another and produce certain social realities (Collins & Bilge, 2016). As the above scholars put it,

when it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other (p.12).

That being a valid point, the purpose here is more about emphasizing the focal points in different areas of inquiries and better organizing the thoughts on different themes. As such, the following is the sub-thematic analysis over the highlighted theme of the ethnic/national and religious identities of the Uyghur immigrants in Canada.

5.1. Becoming More Conscious about Uyghur Ethnic/National Identity
Many scholars (e.g. Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Brophy, 2016; 2010; Klimeš, 2015; Smith Finley, 2013) argue that Uyghur national or ethnic identity (or both) have become increasingly robust and solidified in recent years, referring mostly to the Uyghurs in China, rather than the diaspora communities, while the current international world is shifting to be more globalized and national boundaries are becoming more fluid. Indeed, the current post-national phase seems to contradict the persistent and growing ethnic or national consciousness of many groups in the world, including the Uyghurs. As Athique contends, (2016), on the one hand, mass media and global migration have contributed to the formation of transnational or global identities. On the other hand, attachment to local, ethnic or national groups have remained as dynamic as ever.

That being so, global migration as part of the globalization process has created some complex conditions for the minority ethnicities whose existence has been challenged by diverse political, economic, and socio-cultural factors. One of those ethnicities is the immigrant Uyghurs, especially the highly educated Uyghurs who may always have been particularly conscious about the Uyghur collective identity. Soon after arriving in Canada, they would begin to experience the identity challenges or dilemmas in their new world. This was the case regarding my research participants who all expressed their deepening concerns over the Uyghur ethnic or national identity, while signaling their growing awareness of or attention towards their collective selfhood vis a vis the other groups in Canada, as well as the majority Han population in China.

It is reasonable to see this tendency. As Triandafyllidou (1998) asserts, identity of a nation or ethnicity is defined and/or re-defined through the influence of the “significant others” (p. 594). In Hall’s (2000, p. 17) words, identity in general is constructed “only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks...”. In Xinjiang, the strengthening of Uyghur ethnic/national identity could be understood as the result of the interaction with the
“significant others”- the increasingly unfriendly or oppressive government (Millward, 2018, 2019; Roberts, 2016, 2018, a,b) and the Han majority public who recognize the Uyghurs through the long-existing and still growing discourse of “Internal Orientalism” (Schein, 1997). Furthermore, as Laitin (1998) suggests, if someone cannot draw self-esteem from her or his occupation or social rank, then that person may place more importance on national or ethnic identities for obtaining that self-esteem. Through this angle, the reality that the Uyghurs have been severely under-represented in the local labour market of Xinjiang (Howell, 2013; Tohti, 2015; Zang, 2011) could be seen as another factor that may have fortified such a trend. Yet, the same reality could also be regarded as a practice that has been othering the Uyghurs from the Chinese state as well as the majority Han who always tend to obtain the best and most jobs.

In Canada, again, the Uyghurs encounter many “significant others”. However, this time, they would not find themselves in unfriendly environments; they would experience so far the most comfortable human interactions in their lives, as Ayshâ from Montreal said “you feel like a human being, equal and valuable human being...you feel warm and respected when people talk to you, not like in wätän30 where we are treated by others [Han population] in cold and discriminatory way... ” Yet, those “others” are still significantly different from the Uyghurs in many ways; culturally, ethnically, and politically, these “others” are very distant from this small and fragile Muslim diaspora community. As such, in this new context, a similar us vs. them dichotomy is still needed to be highlighted for maintaining and strengthening ethnic boundaries or nationalism (Glazer & Moynihan 1975; MacClancy 1996). Yashar from Quebec validated this point through his following narratives:

30 “Wätän” means homeland or motherland in Uyghur. Uyghur diaspora community usually uses this word to replace the term Xinjiang which is not seen positively by many Uyghurs.
Back home we would mostly interact with two different groups of people – Han and Uyghurs. Here in Canada we see millions of different faces every day. I remember when I first landed on this country, I was astonished by the exotic looks and cultures of people on the streets. Soon after I started to think again about being Uyghur. How can we maintain our uniqueness? I feel sad that people don’t know who we are when we introduce ourselves. But that pushed me to learn more about ourselves, our history, our religion, everything...

It seems that not only the increased diversity around them, but also their invisibility or distinctness in Canadian society has been pushing the Uyghurs to become more conscious about their own ethnic/national identity. At the same time, they would see “the others” very different from themselves, or they would accentuate the difference between them, in order not to be seen like them. Equally important, the abrupt disconnection from their home culture, and subsequent nostalgia would draw them back to their own roots, as Yashar remembers his early years in Quebec.

When I was in Xinjiang, I set a rule in my house forcing everyone to speak French and listen to French music. We even tried to decorate our house in French style. We loved so much everything French and even imagined we were in Quebec. After coming to Quebec, one of the first things we did was to make everything Uyghur in our rented apartment. Speaking Uyghur became a norm and we quickly decorated our apartment in Uyghur style. It is so ironic that we are now in Quebec and we do not yearn for anything French; we yearn for everything Uyghur...

Sattar echoed the similar message stating that at home he would often pretend that he could not speak English in order to push his young daughter to learn Uyghur. For him, the Uyghur language lies at the heart of being Uyghur. Azat, again, showed the same sentiment saying “I have read some local novels after coming here. However, only the novels in Uyghur deeply touches my heart. I have not had the same feelings reading novel in English…”. Such a sentiment, in Hoffman’s (1989) words, “is a form of fidelity”. When the Uyghurs “walk the streets of” a
Canadian city, they are “pregnant with the images of” Xinjiang or East Turkistan… It “directs [their] vision inward” (p.115). At first glance, there is not much politics here, but there is plenty of pain triggered by the deep longing for a sense of home, the Uyghur home. It is also “a species of melancholia” (p.115). Such painful nostalgia turns into stress or disappointment when the risk of losing some essential elements of Uyghur identity becomes a looming reality, both in Xinjiang and Canada. Actually, for these participants, it is beyond nostalgia; it involves a deepening sense of identity crisis, too.

Gülnur, as well, expressed an equivalent position stating that she and her husband Polat would only speak Uyghur in her home. If their daughter spoke English, they would not respond to her at all. Dolqun from Quebec was also deeply worried about their children’s alienation from their roots:

In Canada there is no concept of ethnicity. The people are all Canadian, so what should we do to prevent my kids from alienating from Uyghur culture? I have become increasingly worried about them...They will call themselves Canadian, but they should also be Uyghurs ...I have been writing my family history for my kids to read...

According to him, Canada was assimilating all different ethnicities into a single Canadian nationality, thus Uyghur ethnic identity was in danger. Unity within plurality - the ideal vision of Canadian multiculturalism discourse (Ghosh & Abdi, 2013) did not reflect itself in his perspectives; rather he would see the American “melting pot” paradigm in Canada. Being more Canadian could make his children less Uyghur, in his view.

The same perceived reality turns out to be equally discouraging for Zöhrä from Alberta who was especially anxious about the liquidation of Uyghur ethnic identity and culture in Canada.
Although our language rights have recently been stripped away in Xinjiang’s education system, we at least have Uyghur communities, Uyghur neighborhoods, and some Uyghur TV and media there. Here, we have nothing. So how can we maintain our identity, language and culture? How can we make our children Uyghur? These questions are always on my mind now. I have never been so concerned about these issues before...

Zöhrä’s narratives show more conscious forms of self-awareness or on the other side of the coin, the awakening of “oppositional culture” highlighted by Mitchell and Feagin (1995). From her perspective, Uyghur language which is missing in Canadian education system and media is a key element that would maintain Uyghur identity, which is openly suppressed in China. This form of cultural expression is clearly beyond nostalgic feelings. But, as Mansbridge (2001) contends, it may not reveal rich political sentiments. The cultural resistance that is highly political is “oppositional consciousness”, which emerges when the subordinate groups perceive the injustices done to them by the dominant groups and try to rectify those injustices. This comes after the phase of oppositional culture in certain contexts (Mansbridge, 2001). Yet, in the Canadian context, Uyghur oppositional consciousness may have grown stronger mostly regarding the oppressive Chinese state, rather than the Canadian state or society, which is revealed more in detail later in the following themes.

In brief, “the other” plays a key role in formation and strengthening of ethnic or national identities “significant others” (Triandafyllidou, 1998). Yet, as some of my participants conveyed through their narratives, these “significant others” may not be necessarily either “malign” or “benign”, as suggested by Weinreich (2003). The “others” could simply be different. Nonetheless, as Triandafyllidou’s (1998) puts, the differences of those “others” are not negligible, either. For example, being “Canadian” is not certainly a bad thing in the eyes of Dolquin, yet it may make his children alienated from their Uyghur root, if he does not help them learn about Uyghur culture.
Indeed, my participants, as part of the Uyghur diaspora community in Canada, have been perceiving the new “others” in Canada as hugely different from themselves. At the same time, this process has been fortifying the boundaries between them and the new “others”, which is a sign that they have become more conscious about their own ethnic/national identity. Apparently, this has been the case both in Quebec and English Canada.

5.2. **Expressing Stronger Islamic Identity**

As Islam has been an integral part of Uyghur identity for many centuries, it is difficult to separate this religious tradition from Uyghur culture. Being Uyghur automatically translates into being Muslim in the Uyghur popular identity discourse (Brophy, 2016; Kuşçu, 2013). However, migrating to strange lands where the Muslims are not the majority can create various identity challenges and dilemmas among the Uyghurs, who are subject to increasingly harsh oppressions in the Chinese state. Meanwhile, the Uyghurs, as part of the *imagined* (Anderson, 1990) global Muslim community who have been increasingly essentialized as homogeneous, backward, and violent (Afşaruddin, 2015; Said, 1978, 2002; Volpp 2002), could have many similar experiences as many other Muslim immigrant groups. The only difference here is that the Uyghurs are subject to non-recognition and/or misrecognition at home and non-recognition in the West.

There is a very popular Uyghur proverb which says “*Musapir bolmiguche Musulman bolmas,***” which means “One can’t be a Muslim until they become an emigrant.” “*Musapir***” in Uyghur can also be understood as “wanderer” or “refugee”. Two of my participants uttered this proverb while talking about their Islamic identity in Canada. The meaning of this proverb is not to denote that somebody may convert to Islam through emigration, rather, it represents the belief that
a superficial or non-pious Muslim can become more serious about and committed to their Muslim faith through the journey of migrating to a strange land. This form of migration suggests there will be hardships, culture shocks, and various forms of interactions with “the Other”, through which one would recognize oneself better and therefore revisit their own identity more seriously and sincerely. At the same time, the religious dimension of Muslim migration could also be connected to the concept of *hijra* \(^{31}\) (meaning “migration” in Arabic) (Ali, 2010). Yet the historical connotation of this concept seems to be largely overlooked by my participants. None of my participants mentioned this historical event when they narrated their immigration journeys.

Albeit, the message or meaning conveyed through this proverb is very in line with the points of many theorists who argue that (re)construction of identity or knowledge about oneself is a process resulting from “self-other relations” or recognition (e.g. Andreouli, 2010, p.3, Psaltis, 2005, Taylor, 1994). Only through interacting with “significant others” (Triandafyllidou, 1998, p. 594) who are different from us, can we rediscover and redefine our uniqueness and identity.

Within the religious dimension of their new life, Uyghur immigrants now have to encounter multiple other religious, nonreligious, or irreligious groups and diverse cultural values and systemic and public discourses that are significantly different from what they used to interact with in Xinjiang. This would also create the urgency of protecting one’s own religious identity. As Mahirä from Quebec says:

*I was not a very observant Muslim when I was in Xinjiang. After coming here, I have realized how important our faith is. Without Islam, we will be very easily assimilated.*

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\(^{31}\) *Hijra* (hegira) refers to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Macca to Medina in the year of 622 (beginning of the Islamic calendar). It became the turning point of the Islamic history, as from then on Islam started to triumph in the Arabian Peninsula. For more information, see https://www.alislam.org/library/book/book-religious-knowledge/life-holy-prophet-muhammad/hijrat-to-medinah/
into others. One day, one of my daughters said to me “Mom, my teacher says all religions are equally good”. I said to her “no, our religion is the best”. But she didn't seem to be listening to me. So, I have deeply realized that if I am not firm about our religion and do not guide my kids, they will grow up to be following other religions. That I never want to see. My parents were not very practicing Muslims, so I didn’t learn a lot about Islam when I was young. Now I think I should learn about it and follow the requirements seriously.

Mahirä was living in her own Uyghur Muslim community in Xinjiang, so she did not encounter the “significant others”, who would have made her constantly attentive to and protective towards her own faith. Meanwhile, she grew up in the 1980s and 1990s when the religious rights of the Uyghurs were given some tolerance, unlike the last decade or so, during which she has been living in Quebec, Canada. Thus, in her eyes, other religions and relevant cultures in Canada would pose threat to her family’s religious tradition. Moreover, her daughter started to see her Muslim background was not better than or superior to her classmates’ or other people’s religious identities, through internalizing the discourse of multiculturalism advocated within the Canadian educational institutions. Mahirä rejected this very discourse, which intends to dismantle the idea that different cultures have different or hierarchical status and values in Canada (Ghosh & Abdi, 2013). Simultaneously, she expressed the urgency of and her determination to strengthen her family’s Islamic heritage. Although, she was not wearing a hijab, nor praying five times a day, she already started to further realize the importance of the Islamic faith, while disassociating herself from the “others”- the other groups and discourses in Canada. Perhaps, the strict secularism within Quebec, especially the rhetoric of Quebec Charter of Values may also have contributed to her experiences. This possibility is more vividly revealed through Zöhrä’s narratives, as discussed in the section on Islamophobia.
In a similar vein, for Sattar from British Columbia, living in Canada was also a journey of becoming a “real” Muslim. He regretted so much his not being a “real” Muslim in Xinjiang where Islamic identity is not encouraged at all, by uttering the following narratives:

One day, one of my Muslim co-workers said to me “you drink alcohol, but you don’t eat pork, and you call yourself Muslim.” I was not fully aware of that before. I used to drink a lot and was not praying at all. I can say I became a real Muslim after coming to Canada through making friends with real Muslims. Now I pray five times a day, and I don’t drink at all. My wife started wearing hijab a while ago, following my example. I regret so much that I spent my younger years being ignorant about Islam.

His narrative reminds us that identity is also an inward process in which one develops attachments to certain social group/s. While “the Other” plays a crucial role in identity formation, identification or further affiliation with the in-group members solidifies one’s social identity (Marková, 2007; Turner 1981; Weinreich 2003). Sattar interacted with other Muslims who were more deeply committed to Islam, thus he found that he should be more like them in order to become a “real” Muslim. The discourse on drinking in Islam which originated from the verse “O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful” (Quran - 5/90) was not widely shared or internalized by him and many other Uyghur middle-class members in Xinjiang. As Cappelletti (2015) argues, this phenomenon could be attributed to the influence of the Chinese “drinking culture” as well as “a traditionally mild form of Islam, mainly a Sufism belonging to the broader Central Asian Islamic environment” (p. 152). As such, the discourse on being a “real” Muslim made Sattar seriously revisit his Islamic identity in Canada; it made him realize that he had not been a “real” Muslim back home. This could be viewed equally clearly through the words of Ramilä from Ontario as well:
I have actually long been thinking about wearing a hijab. I know I am not doing what I am supposed to do as a Muslim. But I don’t want to wear hijab one day and take it off soon after. I know many people doing so. That is not good. If I wear hijab, I am not going to take it off forever. If I become serious, I will be serious forever...Back home, I was brainwashed, so I didn’t take my religion seriously. Now I am learning a lot about it from other Muslims.

Even though she was still not wearing hijab at the time when she was interviewed, her above narrative explicitly shows her strengthened commitment to Islam in Canada where she was undergoing the identification process with other Muslims who would follow more strict Muslim codes of conduct. She had long been thinking about being a “serious Muslim”, which signals her shifting Muslim identity. Generally speaking, the “true Muslim” discourse among the Muslims in Canada reshaped her narratives on Islam, and her new narratives confirmed and reflected the very discourse about being an “serious” Muslim “who wears hijab”. Ayshä from Quebec echoed Ramilä’s points, too:

I have been living in a Muslim neighborhood in Montreal since I arrived in Canada. There are many Arabs here. Back in China, it was very difficult to follow the requirements as the government is not tolerant. But it is only one side of the issue. We do not take Islam seriously ourselves. We cannot be real Muslims there. Here in Canada we don’t face any restrictions. Yet, still many immigrant Uyghur women do not wear hijab, pray or fast. After living in this neighborhood for some years, I started wearing hijab and praying five times a day. My Arab classmates, colleagues and friends helped me a lot in my transitioning. Now I am part of the Muslim community. I feel I am now much closer to Allah.

Again, like others discussed above, Ayshä went through a “benign” form of identification process (Weinreich, 2003), which made her seriously reconsider her Muslim identity. Such a “benign” form of in-group identification under the discourse of being “true Muslim” which is widely accepted in her Muslim milieu played a key role in reconstructing her sense of belonging.
to an Islamic community or ummah. Here, it should be highlighted that the words “true Muslim” or “real Muslim” Ayshä and some others mentioned are not the same as what Kenny (2017, p.1) called “true believers”, who are the Salafi-Islamists, i.e. the extremists. “True Muslim” or “real Muslim”, highlighted by Ayshä and others, is, in Ali’s (2010) word, embracing the “psychological existence as members of a borderless ummah” (p. 183). For my participants, their use of words such as “true Muslim” or “real Muslim” only suggests that they thought they were not following the Islamic codes of conduct, or they were not doing what a Muslim was supposed to do. Now they realized that they should pray, fast, wear hijab (as a woman), refrain from drinking, gambling, and other forbidden behaviours. Among these conducts, wearing hijab turned out to be the most vivid example of becoming a “real Muslim” among some of my female participants. For them, hijab symbolizes commitment to Islam, and being a free Muslim, rather than being oppressed.

In this regard, Zöhrä from Alberta, Ayshä from Quebec and Gülnur from British Columbia all had their own stories about wearing hijab and becoming more “authentic” or “free” Muslims. Zöhrä talked about her shift from a non-hijab wearer to a hijab wearer as follows:

Soon after coming to Quebec I began wearing hijab. You know we cannot freely learn about Islam in wätän. I was not practicing my faith there due to strict government rules. I was also not taking my faith very seriously… My neighborhood in Montreal turned out to be quite Islamic, which helped me a lot. Moreover, one of my close friends, Ayshä (another participant), was already wearing hijab and praying five times a day, so my transition was quite easy.

Apparently, Zöhrä blamed herself equally as much as the government for her less- than-serious Islamic identity in Xinjiang. Her being among the Muslim communities in Montreal and the presence of her close friend who was “wearing hijab and praying five times a day” pushed her to adopt the more “authentic” form of being Muslim. Again, her case demonstrates the power of
identification with in-group members in solidifying one’s social identity (Marková, 2007; Turner, 1981; Weinreich, 2003). As such, she went through the “transition” smoothly.

Ayşә, as mentioned by Zоhrә, facilitated her “transition” as a role model. Ayşә’s narratives on her hijab were very similar to Zоhrә’s. She, too, had very parallel experiences, and, learned how to properly wear hijab from her Muslim classmates and friends. Through such an identification process, the symbolic meaning of hijab conveniently established or reinforced its place in both of their lives. Viewing from a different angle, hijab, as “a natural(ized) symbol of cultural resistance to Western imperialism” created by conservative Islamist movements in the name of anticolonial and postcolonial nationalisms (Eid, 2015, p.1902) quickly became the part of these two Uyghur women’s lives in Canada. However, for them, hijab not only represented being “true” or “authentic” Muslims and brought them the sense of belonging to the Muslim communities around them, but also manifested the total freedom from the Chinese oppression over their religious rights; they became emancipated at the same time. Meanwhile, though unconsciously, they challenged the Western popular discourse around hijab being the sign of oppression.

However, Gülнur’s identification process turned out to be quite tough and depressing:

After a couple of years in Canada, I had started wearing hijab and continued doing so for some time before my husband strongly opposed my move … I took it off in order not to create friction between us and destroy our relationship. I feel very bad not only for this. You know when I started wearing hijab, people (meaning religiously conservative Uyghurs in British Columbia) said “mashallah, may Allah bless you”, but after taking it off some even said “you should have insisted on wearing it. You regarded your husband higher than Allah… you should divorce him…”… I have been involved in a monthly Qur’an chay (gathering for reading and discussing Qur’an) among some Uyghur women here, and my husband is not very happy with that, either…
From her narrative, too, it could be assumed that increasingly more Uyghur immigrants have started to emphasize the importance of Islam. “Qur’an chay” among the Uyghur women is a very vivid example for such a trend. Meanwhile, the harsh criticism over Gülnur’s taking off her hijab shows how dynamic the symbolic meaning of hijab has become among some Uyghur women. It could be the same among some Uyghur men. As it turned out, Gülnur’s husband – Polat expressed that he opposed her wearing hijab not because he was “lesser Muslim” now, but due to “Islamophobia in the job market”, which is discussed in detail later.

That said, all of these narratives, especially the ones around the above three hijab wearing Uyghur women, reveal the agency of the Muslim women who challenge, in Eid’s (2015) words, the “orientalist framework rests upon a feminist rhetoric [that has been making hijab] an unambiguous symbol of female oppression” (p. 1902). Polat’s voice also represents a resistance against such a framework or discourse, but it was quite a passive one. He was deeply aware of the injustices being done to the Muslims in the West, so he wanted to protect his wife through making her give up her agency or a human right. This being said, he narrated his Islamic identity as follows:

*Generally speaking, my commitment to Islam has not changed much. I have always been the same me. If I say there is some change, my understanding of our religion is deeper now. I used to think some of our customs were part of Islamic culture, which turned out to be wrong...I think my views about our religion are more objective now...Some people become too zealous about their religions after coming to Canada. They find it difficult to mingle with other people while feeling more comfortable within their own religious circles. And they begin to see other people like some kind of monsters, which is too bad...*

Unlike his wife, his older daughter was wearing hijab and even attending an Islamic junior high school during the time of my interview. Regarding this reality, he again mentioned Islamophobia, which his daughter could avoid as she was not yet looking for a job. On his
daughter’s attending an Islamic school, he said “I know that Islam is very important for us. Without it we would long have been assimilated into others. I have realized this reality more clearly than ever before…”, obviously showing his concerns over his daughter’s Uyghur identity. Yet, his “commitment to Islam has not changed much”, contrary to his wife and other participants mentioned above. But, as he said, his understanding of Islam became “deeper” and “more objective”, which means his Islamic identity may have become stronger, too, if not his religiosity. The most important reason behind his strong emphasis on Islamic faith seems to have been linked with the Uyghur collective identity. At the same time, his dissatisfaction with Gülhnur’s attending Quran chay may have also been due to the possibility that his wife would become “too zealous”, or would “begin to see other people like some kind of monsters”, which could create a gap and conflict between them.

In contrast to Polat, Azat from the same province expressed that his devotion to Islam or Islamic religiosity had grown to some degree. “Emotionally I have become a bit more passionate about Islam than before…I think everybody would be more religious when they grow older, especially the immigrants…” he said. Meanwhile, he indicated that he had become much more aware of the importance of Islam for Uyghurs, which is further discussed in the next section. He also added: “I repeatedly tell my daughter that we don’t eat pork, we don’t drink alcohol, and if she does so, Allah will hate her… she is a good girl; she listens to me…”. His daughter was 8 years old during the time of the interview and was attending a public secular school. Although he did not mention he wanted to switch his daughter to an Islamic school, his tireless instructions to her about Islamic codes of conduct shows his growing seriousness over his Islamic faith. Dolqun from Quebec, as well, narrated a similar scenario in his life, yet he highlighted that he had always been “a very religious person”.
I don’t think I have become more or less pious after coming to Canada. My family (meaning his parents) was a very religious one. So, I was raised in a very religious atmosphere. In wätän, I used to pray one time a day, but could not go to the Friday prayer due to the restrictions...Now I am free to practice my religion. I have always been a very serious religious person...In Canada we must give more attention to our Islamic heritage, otherwise our kids will become very different from us, which I cannot imagine, so I always try to be a role model for them...

For him it was difficult to accept his kids’ becoming “different from” himself in terms of their religious identity in Canada. So, he became more emphatic over their Islamic heritage, which he saw as the key component of Uyghur collective identity. Again, this very point is examined more in detail in the subsequent subtheme.

In sum, all my participants expressed that they had become more aware of or serious about their Islamic identity. None of them showed their becoming less religious or more relaxed in regard to their Islamic faith after coming to Canada. Conversely, most of them expressed that they had shifted to be more committed to Islam after coming to Canada, while becoming more visible (mostly females) and practicing in demonstrating their “real” or “authentic” Muslim identity. Such reality also corresponds with the findings of a large-scale quantitative research which reveal that “religiosity positively predicts the acceptance of religious identity expression” (Noll, Rohmann & Saroglou, 2018, p.959). Many of my participants became more emphatic on expressing their Muslim identity, which mirrored their growing religiosity in Canada. However, my participants’ experiences also show that the findings of the above research may not be fully reflected in the context of Xinjiang; generalization is not always acceptable in studying religious phenomena, even in quantitative research, as religion is subjective, contextualized, and it intersects with various other aspects of society (Bae, 2016; Miedema, 2013).
While, three of my participants (two in English Canada, and one in Quebec) demonstrated that their religiosity had not changed very much, they also expressed that after coming to Canada they became more emphatic on the importance of Islam in relation to their collective identity. Encountering both Muslim and non-Muslim “others” in Canada, appeared to have pushed them to revisit, therefore further fortify their Muslim identity. Moreover, the popular discourse about being a “backward” Muslim group in China, along with the strict government policies towards Islamic faith and practices since 1949 and more recent ever-growing “war on terror” rhetoric (Kanat, 2015; Millward, 2018), too, may have significantly contributed to such a process, making the Uyghurs more conscious about their Islamic identity vs. Chinese irreligious society/regime. Meanwhile, the widespread discourse of Islamophobia in the West seems to have further reinforced their self-awareness as Muslims and made them more conscious about and sensitive towards their religious identity. There is also evidence that the same discourse made them more reluctant in publicly expressing their Islamic identity, which is addressed more in detail in the subtheme on Islamophobia.

5.3. Being Uyghur and Muslim are Intertwined

As discussed in the introduction, Islam has become an integral part of Uyghur collective identity, therefore Uyghur ethnic/national identity cannot be imagined without Islam (Brophy, 2016; Kuşçu, 2013). All my participants, through various ways, highlighted the validity of this point and the urgency of preserving and fortifying the connection between those two facets of Uyghur identity. None of them openly or directly rejected the inseparability of them. That said, I did not interview any Uyghur immigrants who converted to other religions (there are some Uyghur immigrants in
the West who have converted to Christianity, for example), otherwise I could have been able to gather some alternative perspectives. However, since they are not Muslims anymore, studying their perspectives would not fit within my scope as I only intend to focus on the mainstream Uyghur immigrants who have always self-identified as Muslims.

Generally speaking, while becoming more conscious about their religious and ethnic identities, those Uyghurs seem to have become more emphatic on the link between these two identities than ever before. The significance of the Islamic religion appears to have gained more dynamics through their Canadian lived experiences. For example, for Sattar from British Columbia, this is a crystal-clear realization.

*After coming to Canada, I have truly realized how important Islam is for maintaining our identity. Back in wätän, I did not take our religion seriously. I knew Uyghurs were Muslims. That was all. But here, I have realized that if we want to say we are Muslims, we must practice Islam. Our children should be exposed to Islam first in order to be fluent in Uyghur culture. One example is our alphabet which is in Arabic. So, if our kids learn reading Qur’an, they will also be able to read Uyghur books... Our culture is so much connected with Islam, thus if we lose our religion, we will lose our identity. Now China is attacking our religion in order to assimilate us. They have become aware of that without eliminating Islam they cannot eliminate us...*

Visibly, while he regretted much saying that he had not “taken religion seriously” before coming to Canada, witnessing the fragile Uyghur identity in Canada, he began to see the importance of Islam in maintaining his group identity and existence. In his view, without receiving Islamic knowledge, Uyghur children could not be cognizant about Uyghur culture. He also emphasized the connection between Islam and Uyghur ethnic identity, citing how China was trying to cut that link so that Uyghurs would become extinct.
Such a heightened awareness led some Uyghurs to take some practical approaches that would save the very link. For example, “I sent my daughter to an Islamic middle school mostly because I wanted her to remember her ethnic Uyghurness (Uyghurluq -Uy.)” said Polat from British Columbia. He continued:

We have been Muslims for a thousand years, so we cannot be Uyghurs without Islam. Islam is part of our identity and culture. We sent our daughter to an Islamic school, not for making her 100% Muslim, but mostly for preventing her from losing her Uyghur identity…Back in wätän, we are increasingly deprived of our rights to follow Islam, therefore our kids are becoming less and less Uyghur. Some of them are accepting other religions like Christianity as well. I personally saw some young Christian Uyghurs when I was in Xinjiang, which is very sad because those Uyghurs lost the most important element of being Uyghur...

As mentioned earlier, Polat didn’t express that he had become more religious after coming to Canada. Yet, concerning the fragile Uyghur identity, he deeply recognized the value and importance of Islam. He revealed the most important reason behind his daughter’s attending an Islamic school – fortifying her Uyghur ethnic identity, rather than just becoming “100% Muslim”. In his view, converting to other religions, such as Christianity would be detrimental to Uyghur identity. His not so pious religious background didn’t make him less empathic on the connection between Uyghur ethnic identity and Islam. Conversely, he saw converting to other religions such as Christianity as a “very sad” issue, which should be prevented. Azat from British Columbia even put a number on the proportion of Islamic component of Uyghur identity by saying:

Islam occupies 80-90% of Uyghur identity. Uyghurs here received influences of local education, media, and various non-Muslim communities. These factors can diminish Uyghur religious identity. As religion is a systematic ideology, and has a strict frame, it is difficult to change it. But ethnic culture has a soft frame, so it is
easily affected by outside factors. This means, if there is no Islam, Uyghur ethnic identity will be extinct in less than 10 years...

Like Polat, Azat didn’t seem to have had a dramatic shift in his piousness, as discussed earlier. But he appeared to have been a bit more emphatic on the importance of Islam in maintaining Uyghur ethnic and cultural identity, considering the high percentage he used to convey his points. It also appeared that he had started to realize the influence of Canadian life on Uyghur religious identity. He also shared his perspectives on the characteristics of religious ideology and ethnicity and how the former could determine the fate of the latter. In his perspective, Uyghur ethnic identity would cease to exist very soon without Islam. On this point, Yashar from Quebec expressed his voice at a different level exposing his heightened anti-Chinese sentiments.

*I was not a true Muslim in wätän... I neglected Islam and lived like a kafir (infidel) Chinese. I thought I was backward. You know they discriminate against us because we are Muslims. So, I used to feel ashamed of some of our religious customs. After coming here, I have realized we are not backward at all. People are very respectful towards each other. They don’t discriminate your religion. They treat you as equal human beings. I don’t want to be seen as Chinese. Only Islam makes us different from Chinese, so Islam is a crucial part of being Uyghur.*

While his narratives showed his strengthened Muslim identity in Canada, they also revealed that in China under the prevalent discourse of “internal Orientalism” (Schein 1997), he had developed some negative self-concepts about himself and his religion. His self-concept as a Muslim had been, to a great extent, shaped by the macro level discourse about religions, especially Islam in China. After coming to Canada, the fresh discourses around human rights, equality and multiculturalism, and the corresponding social atmosphere reconstructed his new narrative identity, which now was much more positive and healthier. At the same time, he would now see his old self
as “a kafir (infidel) Chinese”, which means he may also have been influenced by some conservative religious discourses in a highly pluralistic and liberal country like Canada.

Although, he didn’t specifically explain how Uyghur ethnicity could not survive without Islam, seeing his Islamic faith as a tool to resist Chinese “infidel” identity reveals his way of linking Uyghur ethnic/national identity with Uyghur Islamic identity. The urgency of protecting Uyghur collective identity against Chinese assimilation further pushed him to reembrace Islam in a more passionate manner, which would make him distinct from “infidel” Chinese. Clearly, there are some political elements in his connecting the two facets of Uyghur identity, regarding the threat of the “other” – the Chinese nation.

Closely aligned with Yashar’s points, Dolqun from Quebec uttered his concerns over the threat of a different “other” - Christianity in Canada to Uyghur identity.

*I know some Uyghurs who converted to Christianity in Canada. I am not sure to what extent they can be seen as Uyghurs. I think it may take a very long time before we can call someone a Christian Uyghur. Those Christian Uyghurs have become isolated among the Uyghur community. They are nice people, but they are distrusted or even hated by many Uyghurs as traitors. It would be better not to lose their Muslim identity. We cannot pressure them. Allah knows the punishment for them. But I am sure I don’t want my kids become Christians or non-Muslims. Islam is part of our identity. How can you live with someone from a very different religion in one family? How can you feel you are one family?*

While Dolqun didn’t outrightly reject the possibility that a Uyghur could still be a Uyghur while following Christianity, he highlighted that it might “take a very long time” to be accepted as normal by the general Uyghur community. He was also sure that it was a punishable behavior by Allah, and pointed out how the Uyghurs would “hate”, therefore isolate those converts. Furthermore, he would not want to see his children “become Christians or non-Muslims”; he could not imagine living together “with someone from a very different religion”. He was not ready to
accept the religious diversity within his family, yet. Mirroring the same points, Polat from British Columbia, as well, expressed his resistance against accepting the Uyghur who converted to Christianity saying “I don’t think it is appropriate to call them Uyghurs, as they lost the most important element in Uyghur identity. But we should not discriminate them, nor should we encourage such a thing”. Although, he denied the Uyghur identity of those who converted to Christianity more decisively than Dolqun, his decisiveness was mostly reflected through a secular angle, unlike Dolqun who equally emphasized the possible punishment in the afterlife, which corresponded with his deeper religiosity.

That said, there is also a sign that the Uyghur immigrants have been internalizing some alternative perspectives on being an ethnic/national group with diverse faiths. The following points were uttered by Ayshä from Quebec who expressed that she had become more religious yet more accepting towards the Christian Uyghurs after coming to Canada.

I think a Uyghur can be a Christian and still say he or she is a Uyghur. Yet, I did not use to think that way when I was in wätän. I didn’t know that many Arabs are Christian as well. I thought all Arabs were Muslims, which is not the case. The Christian Arabs are still Arabs, so the Uyghurs can be Uyghurs even though they follow Christianity. I know that not many Uyghurs can accept this kind of perspective, though.

Ayshä was the only one who was quite certain that Uyghurs could be Christians and Uyghur at the same time. However, she began to have this sort of perspective only after coming to Canada, as she clarified. It was the result of her lifelong learning process in Canada; for example, she learned that not all Arabs are Muslim, so the religious diversity among the Uyghurs could be seen acceptable, too. The rest of my participants showed various degrees of disagreement and hesitance over the possibility that Uyghurs could be Christians and still belong to the Uyghur community. It is not well known how they would react Uyghurs’ following religion other than
Abrahamic religions or irreligious groups. However, given the fact that Christianity is the dominant and default religion in Canada, they automatically and quickly expressed their concerns over it, when they were asked about the importance of Islam to Uyghurs. Another reason behind it could be that converting to non-Abrahamic religions is not a noticeable trend among the Uyghur diaspora, while being an atheist is not normally declared by any Uyghur even though their religiosity is non-existent. It seems that their Islamic religiosity is a wide spectrum that is in/directly connected with their Uyghur ethnic/national identity.

That said, converting to other religions has been a relatively rare phenomenon among the Uyghurs since their conversion to Islam as early as in the 10th century, as mentioned earlier. During the subsequent centuries, Islam has been the most prevalent and dominant religious tradition in the Uyghur region, leaving no chance for other traditions to deeply seep into Uyghur world views. The communist regime after 1949 further immunized the Uyghurs against the influences of other religions, through its hardline policies against and censorship over all religious ideologies. At the same time, government restrictions over Islam have only made Uyghurs more attached to their Islamic identity (Smith-Finley, 2013, 2018; Harris, 2014; Leibold & Grose, 2016). My participants’ narratives also revealed that the diaspora Uyghurs may have been more deeply recognizing the importance of Islam for the Uyghurs as a collective. Interacting with the other groups who have different faiths, overall, does not seem to have weakened such a perspective; conversely, the Uyghur immigrants may have become more emphatic regarding the tie or connection between the Uyghur ethnicity/nation and Islam. Only one of them in Quebec clearly exhibited her acceptance of Christian Uyghurs as part of Uyghur community. Other than that, there appears to be no significant difference between the perspectives of my participants in Quebec and English Canada.
5.4. Radicalization and Uyghurs

As introduced in the background chapter, the Uyghurs as a group have become a target of Islamophobia in the Chinese state. The discrimination and oppression due to their Islamic identity has reached unprecedented level since the end of the Great Cultural Revolution (Clarke & Kan, 2017; Roberts, 2018, a,b). Since the phenomenon of violent religious extremism has been increasingly tied with Uyghur Islamic identity (Cook, 2017, Millward, 2018, 2019), the Uyghurs may have become deeply sensitive regarding the narratives related to radicalization and terrorism, compared to many other Muslim groups in the world.

Albeit, my participants appeared to have been largely unaware of the news reports about the young Uyghur ISIS fighters in Syria. Only three of them said they had heard about this. It is also possible that they were not convinced by the news reports or did not want to accept the reality as such. Meanwhile, all of them, whether they said they had known about this issue or not, expressed that those fighters could not represent the Uyghurs or the Muslims. For example, Dolqun from Quebec said:

*I don’t know if there are Uyghur fighters in Syria. Even if it is true, they cannot represent the Uyghurs or the Muslims. We are all seen as terrorists by the Chinese government. The dominant groups will do whatever they can to protect themselves. I don’t want this will happen in Canada.*

His worries about the Canadian government is worth highlighting, as it was a sign that he may have started to doubt the willingness of the Canadian government to fairly treat its Muslim population. The last thing he would want to see in Canada was the repetition of the oppression the Uyghurs faced in China. Perhaps, his lived experiences in Xinjiang may have produced such anxieties or the high level of Islamophobia in Quebec negatively affected his confidence in the Canadian government.
Those who knew about the reality of ISIS Uyghur fighters, unanimously attributed the reason to the Chinese government’s repressive policies regarding the human rights of Uyghurs. The religious aspect of such a resistance was seen as negligible, while the political motivations were highlighted. For example, Azat from British Columbia said:

*Islam is a religion of compassion and love. Only helplessness and hatred lead to radicalization. The Uyghur situation is special... they went there fleeing the Chinese oppression. They are not terrorists. We should ask how much they suffered and why they ended up being there, and why they could not live in China. While the Western world is neglecting the Uyghur situation, they don’t have the right to call the Uyghurs this or that.*

This perspective is highly in line with the speculations of various China and Uyghur study experts who underline the possible negative effects of current Chinese rhetoric and policies in Xinjiang on the disenfranchised Uyghur people (e.g. Botobekov, 2016; Cafiero, 2018; Neriah, 2017; Roberts, 2016, 2018, a,b; Millward, 2018, 2019). Especially the studies by Roberts (2018 a, b) reveal the very reality that those Uyghurs went to Syria escaping the oppression of Chinese government and many of them were trying to seek justice through violence; the Chinese repressive policy is the main factor that radicalized them. Predominantly political rather than religious motivations behind the Uyghur resistance against the Chinese state have been pointed out by many other scholars as well (e.g. Kuo, 2012; Smith Finley, 2018a). While, Azat did not call those Uyghurs who were involved with ISIS “freedom fighters”, he utterly refused to label them as “terrorists”. Therefore, he alluded that they could be seen as part of the Uyghur community, although could not represent the Uyghurs. The Uyghurs as a whole were the victims of Chinese oppression, and there was a valid reason why they would resist, sometimes in a violent way,
according to him. This reminds us of a young man from Quebec who joined ISIS. A friend of that radicalized man narrates the grievance of that man as below:

He considered it necessary to go out of solidarity with the people being massacred in Syria. He seemed to feel that only the Islamic State was concerned about the plight of Muslims. At one point, he said they were the only ones really helping Muslims and that no one else cared about the Muslims being killed in Palestine, Myanmar and elsewhere… In his opinion, that really was the case. And he said that anyway, he couldn’t live here as a Muslim… (Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence, 2016, p. 29)

Most probably, the Uyghur fighters in Syria developed some very similar perceptions over their plight which could be helped only through ISIS, as the world was largely neglecting their oppression under the Chinese regime. Ayshä from Quebec echoed some common points, but warned against the consequences of their choice:

*Although I was first shocked to know that there were some Uyghurs fighting in Syria, later I have come to the realization that they are actually preparing for fighting against the Chinese government, nothing else. But their approach is wrong. They should not go there to fight. They are making things worse. Now some Uyghurs are seen as terrorists by the West too, which is really bad. So, I don’t want to see them as Uyghurs. They are just some lost people.*

Her perspectives are quite striking in terms of how strongly she wanted to disassociate herself from those Uyghur fighters. While she empathized with those people, citing the same grievances that possibly radicalized them, as highlighted by Azat, she was very much disappointed regarding the tarnished Uyghur image in the West, because of those Uyghur “terrorists”. Her subaltern Muslim identity would be exacerbated both in China and the West, if she could not sever the ties between her and them.
However, concerning the radicalization of Canadian youth, my participants showed much more awareness, most of them saying they had heard of the relevant news reports. Especially the participants in Quebec appeared to have been particularly informed about it. Yashar, for example, said:

*I have heard the news about those radicalized Muslim students who joined ISIS. And I know that some Muslims attacked the police here. They are crazy people, you know. They make our name very bad. Yet, I really wonder why they became like this. I don’t blame the Canadian education system. If that is problematic, all people should become like them. Maybe they were misled by some radical people. I really don’t know. I am tired of these things. By the way, we just heard the Quebec mosque attack. It is a terrorist attack too, as Justin Trudeau said. The perpetrator was radicalized as well. He was not a Muslim at all, so this should make people realize non-Muslims can be terrorists too...*

His narratives had some very important points. First, he would regard the Canadian or Quebec education system was not creating some conditions that could radicalize young people; it was highly regarded by him. The problematic factors in such a system or the Western education system pointed out by some scholars (e.g. Ghosh, et al, 2016, 2018) were not spotted by him at all. Yet, he was reasonable to highlight the informal educational factors in the Canadian society, such as being exposed to extremist narratives of radical religious leaders, which are underlined by the above scholars too. Secondly, he felt his Muslim identity was seriously damaged by the Muslim radicalization in Quebec or other Western contexts and revealed his voiceless and subaltern identity that would not allow him to freely and proudly represent himself. Thirdly, He did not mention the exclusion, discrimination or racism the Muslims face in the Quebec society as a push factor that would lead to radicalization among some Muslim youth, which is emphasized, again by Ghosh et, al (2018).
Although, the labeling of the Quebec mosque attack as terrorism by the Canadian Prime Minister alleviated Yashar’s subaltern Muslim identity to some extent, it did not last very long, as the perpetrator was not charged with terrorism by the Supreme Court at the end 32. His lack of voice, as a Muslim, continues as ever.

Polat from British Columbia uttered some very similar points to Yashar’s, yet mostly emphasizing the White people who converted to Islam, rather than the conventional Muslims who radicalized. Obviously, in English Canada, the radicalized Muslims include many White Canadian converts, unlike the Quebec context. He said:

> I speculate that those White people (aqlar33) who are radicalized do not have a deep understanding of Islam. I think they internalized the elements that they deemed right, but actually wrong. Their upbringing and their childhood experiences may have contributed to their being attracted to such a lifestyle. And they approached some extremist Muslims, not the mainstream ones. I don’t think the Canadian education system is anyway responsible for this.

While he expressed somewhat different ideas, he, either, did not question the Canadian education system at all. However, he mentioned the personal upbringing and experiences, although in a very general way, as some possible radicalizing elements, which are also highlighted by Ghosh et, al (2016). Again, like Yashar, he stressed the faith factor in the radicalization process, reflecting the mainstream media discourses around such a phenomenon.

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32 Trudeau called this attack terrorism, but the Supreme Court denied labelling it as such. For more information see: Russell, Graham (January 30, 2017). Québec City mosque shooting: six dead as Trudeau condemns ‘terrorist attack’. The Guardian.
33 In Uyghur, the word “aqlar”, literally meaning the Whites, is frequently used to describe the people who are of White European descendants. In the West, in has quickly become a very popular term, in parallel with the word “qaralar”, which means the Blacks. The specific connotations of these terms from the Uyghur perspective could be further analyzed.
Generally speaking, my participants were not at all concerned with the possible radicalizing elements within the Canadian education system. However, according to a very recent study (Mahmut, Dhali & Ghosh, 2019), the secondary educational institutions in Canada have not been effectively dealing with the topic of radicalization in the classrooms and largely failed in creating a highly inclusive and compassionate environment for all students, which could become a push factor towards radicalization with regard to the marginalized students. These negative elements are deeply prevalent in the education system of Xinjiang, as discussed in the background chapter. Partly because of this reason, my participants probably perceived the Canadian education systems as very much inclusive, egalitarian and compassionate. Their understanding of the Canadian education systems may also have been greatly influenced by the Orientalism discourse internalized by them. These points are examined in the chapter about the education systems of Canada more in detail.

In brief, the Uyghur immigrants were not very much aware of Uyghur radicalization and involvement in ISIS. It is also possible that they were not willing to accept the reality as such. Meanwhile those few who knew about this issue either rejected to label them as terrorists or drew a clear boundary between themselves and those radicalized Uyghurs. Otherwise, the resulting shame would worsen their subaltern status as Muslims, both in China as well as in the West. Yet, many of them expressed their understanding of and compassion towards those very people, pointing out that the Chinese oppression over Uyghur human rights was the main reason behind such a vicious development. This perspective is very much in line with the viewpoints of many scholars who have been working on this particular issue (e.g. Clarke, 2014, 2015, 2018; Millward, 2016, 2018; Roberts, 2016, 2018, a,b; Smith Finley 2018a). However, concerning the radicalization of Canadian citizens they all had some very biased views. They did not question the
Canadian education system whatsoever in terms of this matter. Most of them tended to overemphasize the faith or religious factor behind the radicalization process, reflecting the dominant public as well as systemic discourses (Byrne, 2010, Jamil, 2014a, b), and policy responses around such a phenomenon (Aly & Striegher, 2012; Keeble, 2014). They also generally neglected the possible connection between the socio-economic/political marginalization or exclusion and radicalization of people in Canadian society and beyond.

5.5. Quest for Recognition as a Nation

_They won’t remember the name - Uyghur, anyway. Because we don’t have a country…_  

_It is so painful not to have a country._

--- Azat (participant)

As mentioned in the introduction, Uyghurs as a group had enjoyed two brief periods of partial independence (1933-1934 and 1945-1949), before being incorporated into communist China in 1949. Such memories undoubtedly have been some important factors awakening the quest for independence from the Chinese state in the hearts of many Uyghurs. The independence of the various Central Asian Republics from the former SSSR has significantly deepened such a yearning for a full political autonomy among the Uyghurs (Bovingdon, 2002, 2010). Especially the Uyghurs in the West seem to have become increasingly vocal in pursuing their sovereignty. Yet, the world’s recognition of the Uyghurs as a nation apparently has not shifted to a large degree during the same period, although their existence as a Muslim minority ethnic group in China has been increasingly known in the recent years.
With this background, the Uyghur immigrants, as discussed earlier, have grown more conscious about their ethnic and national identity through their lived experiences in Canada. In parallel with that trend, the quest for being recognized as a sovereign nation vis-à-vis the Chinese state was revealed, in various ways, through my interviews. All my participants, apart from Zöhrä in Alberta, clearly expressed that they would not want to be identified as part of the Chinese nation. Albeit, while Zöhrä responded so, she strongly emphasized that she was not Han Chinese (Hanzu-Uy.), but Uyghur. Like others, she showed a strong cultural boundary between herself and the Han population, highlighting the Islamic identity of the Uyghurs. Accordingly, Zöhrä was wearing hijab, and trying to learn more about Islam whenever she had time and opportunity. She was very happy to be outside of China as she could practice Islam freely in Canada, therefore could preserve her cultural identity as a Uyghur Muslim. “I am Chinese (Junggoluq – Uy.), but we are different from Han Chinese who are non-Muslims and have a very different culture, as you know”, she said. “When people ask where I am from, I always say I am Uyghur and Muslim and from China, and they will be surprised and begin to ask many questions...” she continued.

That being so, people’s lack of knowledge of the Uyghurs as an ethnic group living somewhere in the world, not mentioning their failure to recognize the Uyghurs as a separate nation from Chinese state frustrated all of my fellow Uyghur interviewees. They unanimously expressed that, even after countless times of explanations, for those outsiders the Uyghurs still would reside in “a distant spot, somewhere on the peripheries of the imagination, crowded together with


35 The English word Chinese in Chinese language may have two different connotations. One refers to the overall title for all people who belong to the Chinese state, which is China’s people (中国人 zhongguoren). The other has a narrower scope that only includes the majority Han Chinese (汉族 – Han ethnicity), excluding all minority groups in China. She was referring to the first meaning.
countless other hard to remember places of equal insignificance” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 132). The more they try to distance themselves from the Chinese state or Chinese culture, the more frequently they are left disappointed by the lack of recognition they yearned for. The consequent feeling resembles the one when Eva Hoffman was asked by her classmates “Is Poland part of Russia?” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 132). Obviously, their frustration is much more severe, as the Uyghurs are far less known than the Polish, although recently the Western media sources have been publishing more and more about the Uyghurs.

Mahirä’s experiences in her French class could help us better understand such frustration more vividly:

_When I first introduced Uyghurs to my class, one of my classmates jokingly said “yogourt?” and laughed. You know our name is pronounced very much like yogurt in French. It was kind of offensive... I felt sad, because no one knew Uyghurs. I said I was from northwest of China, but they didn’t believe me thinking that I was joking. They thought I was from Latin America or Eastern Europe. I didn’t want to create some issues where there were some Han Chinese students in the class, so I didn’t say I was not Chinese._

It is a typical narrative about the Uyghurs’ being unrecognized in the West, or Quebec, to be more specific. First of all, the ethnonym Uyghur, accidently reads very similar to yogurt in French, adding more soreness to the already very unknown nature of the ethnonym. Secondly, when she introduced herself as from China, her physical appearance would betray her; the Uyghurs’ unknown status within the Chinese state would be revealed again. Finally, and most importantly, while she wanted to declare her Uyghur national identity vis a vis the Chinese state, she was stopped by the presence of some Han students in the class. Being seen as a separatist or nationalist by the majority Han Chinese would be politically too risky for her, even in Canada. Those Han
students would attack her or even report her to the Chinese government. Her voiceless or subaltern status in China continues in the diaspora.

The similar sentiments were related by Gülnur from British Columbia, but she turned out to be more courageous:

_The most hateful thing for me is to introduce myself. When I started my study, I found my class was full of Han Chinese students and I didn’t want to let them know that I was from China as well...I introduced myself as Turkish. But I didn’t introduce myself to those Han Chinese students. I don’t like to associate with them... You know they would discriminate or even insult you if you say you are Uyghur; they would react badly seeing you as a threat or terrorist. My Korean teacher knew about our situation, and he protected me._

While she was significantly more unafraid than Mahirä confronting the Han students in her class, she, too, exposed her subordinate status through completely avoiding the interaction with them. Meanwhile, through uttering the possible discrimination or attacks she would face from the fellow Han Chinese classmates if she revealed her real national background, she also demonstrated her deep concerns over the political misrecognition of the Uyghurs in China.

Apparently, such unpleasant memories and speculations, which were the results of the popular discourse of Internal Orientalism (Schein, 1997) and more importantly, the treatment of the Uyghurs by the Chinese state as a terrorist threat to the whole Chinese society (Roberts, 2016, 2018, a, b) made her very reluctant to share her identity with those Han Chinese students. Her reluctance was shared by her husband, Polat, who talked about his daughter’s experiences at school:

_One of my daughter’s biggest headaches is the question on her original homeland. We don’t want to say it is China. If we say East Turkistan, nobody will recognize it. There is no such a country on the map. Her school sometimes asks the immigrant kid to draw their national flags. It is really a tough situation for us..._
Here, the historical memories of Uyghur nationhood in the early and mid 20th century were revealed vividly. It is not only the discrimination and oppression under the Chinese state, but also those growing memories, which were reinforced within the same oppressive climate, have been making the Uyghurs more desirous of having a sovereign nation. Meanwhile, talking about the history of *East Turkistan*, which had an intrinsic link with Turkey and the rhetoric of pan-Turkism, some participants appeared to have found it acceptable and convenient to present themselves as Turkish, as revealed in Gülnur’s stories. Simultaneously, the reality that the physical features of many Uyghurs do not represent the typical Chinese facial characteristics may have been greatly helpful in distancing themselves from the Chinese nation. Such factors would give them the second-best way to make themselves known to the world, at least as part of the Turkic world in Eurasia, as Azat from British Columbia more directly narrated:

> My colleagues see me as Turkish. After getting tired of being unrecognized or failing to make people remember the Uyghur people, I just began to tell people that I was Turkish. They won’t remember the name - Uyghur, anyway. Because we don’t have a country...East Turkistan does not exist at all. It is so painful not to have a country. But Turkey can be our second homeland...

Like Gülnur, he found his “second homeland” – Turkey, after experiencing some identity dilemmas in Canada. Nevertheless, it was still “so painful” not being able to represent himself as an independent and recognized Uyghur nation. In any case, Turkey is not the country he was born in; it cannot fully represent his national identity; it cannot end the displacement the Uyghurs are subject to. From their perspective, only through having their own nation, can Uyghurs freely and happily represent themselves, and make others know them and remember them.
Such displacement also reflects itself in the Uyghur children’s schooling experiences, as mentioned a bit earlier. The young Uyghurs as well should face the same identity challenges; whole Uyghur families should experience the identity crises together, as Ramilä from Ontario narrated.

One day my daughter came home saying that she was asked by her teacher to make a presentation about her nation. I helped her collect everything needed to prepare a wonderful presentation about Uyghurs. We included the pictures of famous Uyghur writers, scientists, Uyghur cultural artifacts, cuisines, dance, music, and much more. We took it very seriously. We wanted the class to realize that we were not Chinese... She said her classmates were so much surprised to see the rich Uyghur culture which is totally different from the Chinese...

Ramilä, as well, did not feel uncomfortable or afraid of introducing “the rich Uyghur culture” which is “totally different from the Chinese”. By doing so, she was emphasizing what Smith-Finley (2013, p.130) calls “the symbolic boundary” between the Uyghurs and Han Chinese. Yet, “the boundary” she drew appeared to have been more than just cultural; it was, to some extent, political. She resisted being recognized as Chinese through demonstrating that “[they] are not Chinese”; the sentiment here was already political. Mahirä from Quebec expressed some parallel voices, but in a much more direct way, through recounting her daughter’s classroom experiences, too.

You know it is a headache to present our national background to other people. Our children face the same task very often in their schools. Once, one of my daughters was asked to present about her ethnic culture. I helped her prepare the presentation, with the picture of East Turkistan blue national flag. She showed them Uyghur foods and dresses. Her classmates were so surprised as they all had thought she was a local White Quebecoise girl.
As mentioned earlier, Mahirä has European facial features, so her daughter may have also been recognized as a White local girl. Thus, her daughter’s introduction of herself as a nation currently within Chinese state or a colony of China “surprised” her classmates so much. Presenting the East Turkistan blue national flag already represents their clear-cut position over the status of the Uyghurs in China; they wanted to be seen as a sovereign Uyghur nation. But again, their nation – East Turkistan was not known to anyone in the class prior to her presentation. Yet, through this presentation, Mahirä and her daughter, together expressed their quest for recognition, which seemed to have been much stronger than other participants.

Another participant from Quebec, Ayshä, also narrated about her son’s experiences, highlighting the similar voices.

As you know we don’t want to be seen as Chinese. My son finally made all of his schoolmates recognize him as non-Chinese. He even fought with some students who kept calling him Chinese... He presented about the Uyghurs showing our blue flag in his class. He said we were like Quebec in Canada. We were a different nation from China. We were occupied. He is now very good at explaining that to everyone.

Apparently, her voice was as decisive as Mahirä’s. They both utilized the Uyghur national flag to express their status as a unique nation, unlike other participants who seemed to have been more hesitant in doing so, although they all showed their strong resistance to be seen as part of the Chinese nation. For these Uyghurs, showcasing East Turkistan national flag, which is banned and outlawed in China, could be seen as the most vivid way of demonstrating their deeply politicized identity. It exhibits the highest level of political identity among the Uyghurs. That being the case, the ever-strengthening oppressive government discourse or rhetoric over the Uyghurs in China

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36 To see the flag, go to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_East_Turkistan
(Millward, 2018; Roberts 2016, 2018a,b; Zenz & Leibold, 2017) seems to have made the originally less political and outspoken Uyghur diaspora intellectuals (compared to the Uyghur asylum seekers) more politically conscious and vocal about their collective political identity.

In sum, all my participants, whether they live in Quebec or English Canada, showed their deep frustration or disappointment over the reality that the Uyghurs were not known to the world. While, it is difficult to generalize, my participants in Quebec may have been more outspoken and courageous regarding their national identity compared to other participants, probably, at least partly due to the fact that the number of the Han population is much lower in Quebec than other provinces. Thus, the participants in Quebec may have found it safer and easier to express their voices more freely. They may also have been inspired by some Quebecers who would like to build their own nation and preserve their culture.

Generally speaking, all of them tried to distance themselves from the Chinese cultural identity as well as the Chinese state (apart from one participant, regarding the latter aspect), and that position seems to have been gaining currency over the recent years following the reinforcement of the Chinese government rhetoric that created Uyghur vs. the state dichotomy in the post-9/11 era (Roberts, 2018, a,b). Yet, they still could not represent themselves openly, freely and comfortably in many contexts of Canada; the possible discrimination or threat coming from the majority Chinese public or the oppressive Chinese authorities continues to affect them to a great extent. Apparently, the safest space for them to represent themselves is their children’s schools where “the threat” would be minimal. Unfortunately, all this reality, together with the widespread discourse of Islamophobia in North America, has not allowed the Uyghurs in Canada to fully relinquish their subaltern status they first acquired in China, which is focused more in detail in the following section.
5.6. Experiencing Islamophobia

Islamophobia as a discourse has become increasingly powerful and widespread in the last few decades following the rise of political Islam in the world. Although religion should be the key factor in such a discourse, Islamophobia conflates religious, ethnic, and cultural prejudices (Taras, 2013). This process has homogenized racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of Muslims who are from different origins (Kimlicka, 2015). As Kimlicka (2015) further argues, before 9/11, Muslims more often had been addressed by their ethnic or geographical backgrounds rather than their Islamic identity. Although, Muslims had not been immune to racial discrimination in the West prior to 9/11 terrorist attacks, after those events the perceptions towards them have shifted drastically, and they have quickly been homogenized as the global Muslims who are “the most visible enemy” of the West (Saito, 2001, p.15; also in Jamal & Naber, 2008). Conflating Islam as a religion and the newly emerged political Islam has further exacerbated Islamophobia in the Western world (Afsaruddin, 2015; Akyol, 2016; Mamdani, 2004).

For the Uyghur immigrants who happen to be Muslims, Islamophobia in the West cannot be unheard or unfelt, either. My participants unanimously showed high level of awareness of Islamophobia in Canada or the broader West and narrated different sorts of personal experiences in relation to this phenomenon. Such an awareness seems to have made them more conscious about their Muslim identity and their personal stories revealed their worries and fears in regard to living as a Muslim group in this country. That said, I would like to begin with the story of Gülnur who was living in British Columbia where the Uyghurs first started to settle down and create a relatively large community.
I have not witnessed any Muslim women have been insulted or attacked on the streets of British Columbia. I don’t remember if media has covered something like that, either. I don’t feel being marginalized as being Muslim at all. The only thing I found kind of discriminating was that some people assumed I would not know English when I was wearing hijab. I had started wearing hijab and continued doing so for a short while before my husband strongly opposed my move. His reason was that I would be discriminated so that I could not find a job. I took off my hijab in order not to create tension between us and destroy our relationship. I feel very bad. Moreover, now Muslim women on the streets do not greet me saying “Salamualaykom” when they see me. I have lost that beautiful greeting and instant connection... (She became emotional at this point and tried to hold back her tears.)

While Gülnur expressed that she had not experienced Islamophobia in the streets or on media, she felt it through her husband. Yet, her being recognized as having no English skills while in hijab is indeed a very general type of discrimination any Muslim woman could possibly face in the long-existing discourse of Orientalism as well as the ever-growing Islamophobia in the West. This being so, she experienced the dilemma of how to reconcile her choice over hijab and her husband’s opposition to it, which was the result of Islamophobia he perceived in Canada. As she had not worked yet due to some of her own health problems and because she had to take care of her younger daughter at the time of my interview, it was difficult to know if she would really experience Islamophobia in the job market. Anyway, she very much missed the sense of inclusion and instant connection when she became visible to other Muslims. The pain caused by Islamophobia that pushed her to become an “invisible” Muslim was too much for her to bear. Meanwhile, the feeling that she was not recognized and greeted anymore by her fellow Muslim community was hard to accept. With this background, her husband Polat explained why he was concerned over her hijab as below:
The only thing I fear is that my wife may be discriminated in the job market. I am against her wearing hijab for that reason, not because I am a lesser Muslim than she is. My daughter wears one, but she is still in school, and it is good for her. I know that Islam is very important for us. Without it we would long have been assimilated into others. I have realized this reality more clearly than ever before.

It seems that Polat was deeply affected by the Islamophobia widespread in North America, while British Columbia looked quite immune to such a discourse according to Gülnur. He also tried to defend his Muslim identity, which was very important to him, highlighting that he was “not a lesser Muslim than his wife”. His older daughter was attending an Islamic junior high school and she was wearing hijab, which indicates that he was truly concerned about Islamophobia which may exist in broader society, including the mainstream public schools. This very concern was echoed by another male participant, Azat from British Columbia.

Due to Islamophobia, I cannot openly say I am Muslim. When my colleagues want to eat out in a non-halal restaurant, I always find an excuse to avoid going there. I would say I am allergic to pork, or just say I am sick, or have something to do that day. I have never mentioned to them that I am Muslim because discrimination is not always overt. Your career may be affected; you may not be promoted; your salary may not be raised, or may be cut due to your Muslim background...

As revealed, for Azat, openly expressing his Muslim identity in front of his colleagues was an everyday challenge. His self-concept as being Muslim is suppressed by his perception that his boss or colleagues may not like working with a Muslim so that they would discriminate him. He also expressed his negative experiences with the local media saying “I used to think that the Western media was truthful and unbiased. Now I have realized that they are heavily biased against the Muslims...”. Such a perception over the Canadian media as well further made him feel voiceless. Thus, his Muslim identity was “closeted”. In other words, the misrecognition of his
Muslim identity could be regarded as “a form of oppression” that turns his existence into a “reduced mode of being” (Taylor 1992, p. 25). He could not fully represent himself as a Muslim; his Muslim identity is oppressed; he showed a vivid example of a subaltern identity which could not “speak” for itself.

This form of oppressed identity was exposed more clearly in Quebec where the Islamophobic atmosphere felt by my participants turned out to be particularly intense and less subjective. I would begin with Adalát’s short story as following:

*I went into a daycare one day thinking that it’s time for my son to be there. While I was talking to the manager, I mentioned my son would not eat pork. And the manager said “Oh, this is one of those Halal kids!” His intonation was kind of weird. I did not know what to say and left the school. I never went back to that daycare. I am now further realizing the fact that in Quebec we are not very well accepted. They don’t like us when they know we are Muslim...*

This is another narrative that illustrates the voiceless or subaltern status of Muslims in Canada. Firstly, Adalát could not openly tell the school manager that they were Muslim. According to her she was not wearing a hijab when that incident happened. She was not wearing one during the interview, either, and expressed she had not worn hijab before anywhere or anytime. So, her lack of hijab should not be linked to her fear of Islamophobia, instead it was simply part of her habitus. As such, she was by default an invisible Muslim.

Secondly, when the school manager said those condescending words in a form of microaggression, she could not revolt or express any sort of disapproval or resistance. Microaggression is a subtle form of discrimination which normally may not be detected by the victims, or sometimes by the perpetrators as well (DeAngelis, 2009). But, Adalát seemed to have felt the discrimination here. In this sense, what she encountered was more than just
microaggression. One could imagine how low her self-esteem was as a Muslim solely from this anecdote in which she could not even say a word to protect her Muslim identity. She could only show her resistance through never going back to that daycare centre. According to Campbell and Manning (2018), even interacting with the cultural majority may “cause stress for minorities, perhaps in the form of microaggressions or in feelings of anxiety and isolation that arise just from being different” (P. 80). Therefore, I would argue that most of my participants may have been experiencing microaggression in Canada, especially those who chose to take off their hijabs for any “personal” reasons and because, they were doing so as the result of their interactions with the majority groups.

This reminds us that the subaltern voice of Muslims is “perhaps the strongest in the world today” where efforts in using the western vocabularies to dismantle Islamophobia would only work against the Muslim. (Turfjell 2008, p. 161). As such, Adalāt opted not to say anything. She just left quietly. Ayshā’s following narratives further confirm this form of subaltern identity.

One day, a man directly said to me in a store “madam, take off that thing from your head!” in French. He looked kind of angry. I didn’t say anything, but I felt humiliated... In another occasion, I was with Zöhrā (from Alberta) in the park, sitting. A woman came to us and shouted in French “Don’t you feel hot? How don’t you feel hot inside that veil?” She was clearly irritated by our hijabs... After Quebec mosque shootings, I became very frightened. That winter I tried wearing a knit cap instead of hijab. Now each winter I do the same. This way my head is covered, and I don’t need to wear a hijab. My jacket can cover my neck.

The dreadful memories among Quebec’s Muslims resulting from the infamous Quebec mosque attack in early 2017 cannot be erased for a long time. According to Ayshā, the assaults or confronts she mentioned above occurred sometime before the Quebec mosque shootings which made her even more frightened to be a seen as a Muslim. She became more reluctant to wear her
hijab. Her sense of Islamophobia further accentuates her subaltern status in Quebec. Her husband
Arman reaffirmed this reality by saying:

_I am quite concerned about my wife’s safety. I do not force her to wear hijab. From
time to time, I hear bad stories about Muslim women being assaulted or attacked
because they were wearing hijab or veil. Sometimes, these are on the media,
sometime people talk about it. I was told by one of my Uyghur friends that they had
to move their apartment because the Quebeccois couple living downstairs kept
yelling at them every day “F... Arabs! Go back home!” The landlord couldn’t do
anything saying that even police were not able to handle these people._

It turned out that the Quebeccois couple were alcoholic, therefore aggressive. They became
numb to police interventions; thus, the police finally asked the Uyghur couple to move away,
stating that these Quebeccois were having mental health issues. While this seemed to have been the
case, the existence of hatred towards Muslims cannot be dismissed. Because that “mentally ill”
couple could have attacked anyone, but they solely attacked the Uyghur Muslims in the building.
According to Arman, the inability of the police in handling this problem properly might indicate
the existence of a more serious issue which is at the systemic or macro level, as he also said:

_The police came several times and talked to the couple, but there was no effect.
Finally, the police asked the Uyghur family to move. That was the solution. They
(the police who were White as he highlighted) may have thought that making those
Uyghurs move would be a much easier and safer solution, as those Muslim
immigrants would not be complaining much; they knew their status. They (the
police) protect their own people more than us..._

Such a perception clearly reveals the deepening voiceless position of these immigrants and
their dwindling trust towards the government. Whether or not the intension of the police was good
or rational, it is the sense of exclusion resulting from such a solution that should be taken seriously.
 Obviously, the failure of the police in dealing with this issue led Arman to believe that they were treated unequally or being discriminated by the state. This incident, which may reflect “today’s exclusion and stigmatization of the Muslim ‘other’” in Quebec society (Cornellier, 2017, p. 54), made Arman (possibly the Uyghur couple, too) further internalize the us/Muslims vs. them/White Quebecois dichotomy. For example, Arman called the Quebecois neighbors “their own people”, signaling that he would regard those police and the Quebecois couple as one group -them.

This said, my participants in the neighboring province – Ontario didn’t voice a lot of concerns over Islamophobia in their everyday lives. None of them showed a significant level of anxiety or fear of being discriminated due to their Muslim identity. One of the research subjects, Ramilä, who had lived in Quebec for three years before moving to Ontario in 2009, compared her experiences in Quebec and Ontario in the following way:

_I felt the difference immediately. I regret I wasted so much time in Quebec where I was discriminated in the job market... All the good jobs go to the White Quebecois. As you can see, I don’t wear hijab, but my name is a Muslim name... I did my second master’s degree in Montreal and could not find a proper job in many years... Finally, I thought I should try sending my CVs to Ontario... I got immediate responses, I got two interviews, and one of them gave me a contract job! I always heard how Muslims and other minorities were discriminated badly in Quebec, but I kept staying there. I should have directly come to Ontario. I would have been working since long time ago. Muslims are treated very well in Ontario. I have never felt like an outsider..._

Her story reminds us Karim, 53, from Morocco and Bachreir, 37 from Algeria who were interviewed by Valiante (2017) for her study on the labour market discrimination perceived by the Muslim taxi drivers in Quebec City. Karim, who came to Quebec from Morocco in 1991,
completed a master's at Laval University in 1996 in management. But he has not been able to find a corresponding job. "I sent hundreds of resumes…I got two interviews," he said. Bachreir was a programmer before coming to Quebec in 2011. He obtained a programming diploma in Quebec for strengthening his resume. "We were 25 who started the diploma, and by the end only 12 of us finished…Myself and a Tunisian guy didn't even get an internship. Neither of us have found work in our field," he said about his negative experiences in Quebec’s job market. The narratives of above Uyghur participants who lived in Quebec indicate that the situation may not have changed much over the more recent years. Despite the fact that all of them (Karim, Bachreir, and Ramilä) studied in Quebec, they felt they were excluded from in the local labour market.

This being noted, now, in Ontario, Ramilä was working for the government and expressed that she made a correct choice to move to Ontario. While, many other factors like language and culture may have played significant roles in shaping her drastically contrasting perceptions on Quebec and Ontario, being a Muslim was seen by her as the key element in such a process. Equally important, some political rhetoric and policy initiatives like the Quebec Charter of Values proposed in 2013 by Parti Quebecois may have exacerbated the perceptions among the Muslim immigrants that they were not included in the Quebec society. This was validated by another participant – Zöhrä – who moved to Alberta from Quebec in 2014 right amid the heated debates over the Quebec Charter of Values.

I feel more comfortable in Alberta than in Quebec. Here in Calgary I found that there are more immigrants like us. I feel as if here people are much friendlier towards Muslims. Only once, a White woman who shouted at me “go back your home!” in a shopping mall. Anyway, I just feel here is better than Quebec for Muslims... I was there when they wanted to ban religious symbols. You know I was wearing a hijab during that time as well, so I felt very bad. So, when my husband was accepted by two universities in Quebec and Alberta respectively, we chose
Alberta, thinking that the job market would be much better for us there. I am right. People seem to be more respectful here.

It turned out that the heated xenophobic discourse over the so-called Quebec values vs. immigrant values indeed played a significant role in the decision-making process of Zöhrä’s family over where to live. Their decision to move was the reaction to the deep “conspiratorial belief that Muslims are secretly planning to take over Quebec society was picked up as a regular staple of the Parti Québécois during their Charter of Values crusade” (Green, 2017). As Bakali (2015) further argues, the Muslims in Quebec have become “a threatening ‘Other’”, as the result of the growing anti-Muslim bias permeating political and media discourses in the post-9/11 context (p. 412). More specifically, Antonius (2013) analyses the discourses emanating from two French language newspapers in Quebec: *Le Journal de Montreal* and *La Presse*, and exposes how the link between violence and Muslims has been constructed and how the “conservative” Muslim identity was “presented as a danger to Quebec identity” (p.113). The poll conducted by the Association for Canadian Studies also reveals while all Canadian respondents express that 9/11 events have significantly changed the public views on relations between religious groups in Canada, especially between Muslims and non-Muslims, the Francophone Canadians are most vocal in acknowledging such a negative shift (Jedwab, 2015). This resonates much with the social atmosphere regarding the Muslims in Quebec discussed above.

Obviously, those very discourses shaped the everyday narratives of Zöhrä regarding her identity in Quebec, or her self-concept as a Muslim woman within that time and space. Her family’s decision fits within such an atmosphere, in which the Muslims in Quebec generally regarded the Quebec Charter of Values were overwhelmingly targeting Muslim women wearing the hijab, while it was not solely directed at Muslims (Itani & Sidani, 2018). Meanwhile, her
experiences in Alberta began to reconstruct her self-concept and narrative identity in a more positive way.

Moreover, here, it is important to revisit her statement “…there are more immigrants like us” which was followed by “I feel as if here people are much friendlier towards Muslims”. The message behind it could be that she would identify with other immigrants more than the locally born or White people whom she perceived as the “other”. She was perceived as the “other” by a White woman, which only reinforced her identification with other immigrants, rather than the White Canadians. Therefore, she seemed to have simply dismissed the harassment coming from that White woman, and continued to feel included in Alberta. Ramilä voiced similar feelings regarding her Muslim identity in Ontario where she had “never felt like an outsider”. Their cases could be seen particularly helpful in comparing the identity reconstruction experiences of Uyghur immigrants as a Muslim minority, as they both lived in two distinct contexts under differing political and public discourses about Islam.

In sum, while in British Columbia Uyghur participants seem to have been mostly concerned about being discriminated in workplaces because of their Muslim identity, their counterparts in Quebec were unsettled by more serious or real possibilities like being openly assaulted or attacked in broader everyday life. The perception of Islamophobia could be seen in both contexts, but at very different levels. The participants from Ontario and Alberta expressed minimum degree of concerns over Islamophobia; they showed that they felt much more included in society. Two of the research participants who had lived in Quebec for some years before leaving for English Canada voiced such perceptions in a similar fashion, based on their lived experiences in two different contexts. Yet, the drastic comparison they made between Quebec and English
Canada might also have been, at least partly, the result of their reaction towards the rhetoric of Quebec Charter of Values that dominated the Canadian political atmosphere in 2013-2014.

Interestingly, my participants’ perspectives are highly in line with the speculations and arguments indicating that Islamophobia is more widespread and more deeply rooted in Quebec than in other provinces of Canada (Amarasingam & Tiflati, 2015; Dwivedi, 2017). According to a random sampling of public opinion taken by Forum Research Inc (2016), in late 2016, among 1304 Canadian adults, 48 per cent of respondents from Quebec showed unfavorable feelings towards Muslims, compared to 28 per cent at the national average. This greatly coincides with the voices of my participants who perceived unfriendly public discourses about the Muslims in Quebec where the possible challenges to their Muslim identity would be more significant than in other provinces of Canada. Moreover, there is a possibility that these Uyghur immigrants have internalized or developed an us/Muslim immigrants vs. them/White Canadians dichotomy in various contexts, and the degree of such a gap may vary in different provinces, with Quebec exposing probably the biggest chasm.

5.7. Summary

This chapter has primarily focused on the ethnic/national and religious aspects of Uyghur immigrants’ collective identity. Generally speaking, the narratives of my participants showed a significantly elevated sense of Uyghur ethnic/national and Muslim identities. Canadian life experiences and the recent escalation of political oppression over Uyghur culture and identity in Xinjiang seem to have fortified Uyghur collective identity to a great extent. Most of my participants also expressed that they had become more emphatic over the connection between being Uyghur and Muslim than ever before. At the same time, the quest for recognition as a
sovereign nation from China was expressed by most of them, which is in parallel with their growing ethnic and national consciousness. Overall, the participants in Quebec appeared to have been more vocal than their counterparts in other provinces in terms of expressing such a quest.

Regarding the issue of radicalization, very few of them showed their awareness of the involvement of Uyghurs in ISIS militant groups. Those who knew about such an issue, empathically rejected the religious aspect of the Uyghur resistance or violence against the Chinese state, while refusing to call those militant Uyghurs terrorists. Yet, many of them were aware of the local Canadians’ joining radical Jihadi groups abroad and stressed the faith or religious factors, rather than the socio-political factors behind such a radicalization process, echoing the dominant media discourses around radicalization. Equally important, they generally did not question the Canadian education systems in terms of their possible contribution to the radicalization of the Canadian youth. Overall, there is no noticeable difference between the participants in Quebec and English provinces in terms of these perspectives.

Meanwhile, my participants unanimously revealed their concerns over Islamophobia in Canadian society. However, the level and nature of their concerns turned out to be visibly different in Quebec and English Canada. In Quebec, the participants expressed much more intensified worries and less subjective experiences while living as a Muslim in everyday life than their counterparts who were mostly concerned about the possible harassment or discrimination due to their Muslim identity. Although, all of them seem to have developed an us/Muslim immigrants vs. them/White Canadians dichotomy, such a division may be seen equally political and cultural in Quebec, yet in English Canada it appears to be mostly cultural.

This highly resonates with the quantitative study of Reitz, Simon and Laxer (2017) who compared the integration of Muslim immigrants in France, Québec, and Canada, and found a
similar significant level of Muslim/non-Muslim (including White and other racial groups) gap in social inclusion in all contexts. My participants revealed some varied qualities of such a dichotomy in Quebec and English Canada from a qualitative perspective.

Albeit, the dichotomy does not seem to be one-directional here. As Jamil (2014a, b) contends, the legal concept of reasonable accommodation adopted by the Quebec government since 2008 actually exposes the tone of us vs. them division. Such a tone reveals the anxiety of the White Quebecers who perceive that “‘we’ are in danger of losing ‘our Quebec values’ …while ‘they’ are ‘demanding’ too much accommodation for their religious and cultural beliefs” (p. 2325). There was a consultation process across the province of Quebec before producing the government document on reasonable accommodation, and the majority of the participants to that process were French Canadian who dominated the conversations. Mahrouse (2010) describes the situation as follows:

By and large, testimonies in the citizens’ forums followed a pattern: French-Canadian Quebecers lamented the loss of the mythical days when Quebec identity was untainted by the threat of “cultural differences”; in response, members of immigrant and minority communities were expected to soothe such fears (p. 89).

Nine years after, one of the co-authors of the Report on Reasonable Accommodation, Charles Taylor said that he would no longer endorse those recommendations in the Report, emphasizing that “…from now on, the new ‘we’ in Quebec is much larger … the days when a part of our society, even the majority, can act without considering its marginalized minorities is past”

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37 In 2008, a commission on reasonable accommodation of cultural communities in Quebec was set up by the Quebec government. Under this commission Gerard Bouchard and Charles Taylor released an important report on cultural and religious accommodation of minorities in Quebec society. For more information about this report, see https://www.mce.gouv.qc.ca/publications/CCPARDC/rapport-final-integral-en.pdf
(Ayala, 2017). While, this may be the case, my participants’ perspectives still showed a vivid division between the us/Muslim immigrants and them/White Quebecers.

That said, in English Canada, such a dichotomy seems to be more cultural and less political, while in Quebec it appears to be significantly political. However, the boundary between these two aspects becomes hazy when it comes to the question of whose culture represents the Canadianness or Quebecerness in the Uyghur perspective. In Quebec, the political tone of such a dichotomy reveals itself most vividly around the perceived subordinate positions of my participants in labor market competition, which is discussed more in detail later. At the same time, they regarded Quebec culture as Francophone White culture; the openly-stated intention of Quebec interculturalism, which is to build a Quebec culture that embraces all cultures, did not reflect itself among the Uyghur participants. Such mentality may have been constructed by the Quebec policies that have been preserving “the White francophone majoritarian culture” in the name of interculturalism (Bakali, 2015, p.412), while “attributing inherent qualities which characterize belongingness to the national imaginary, while excluding those who do not possess these qualities” (Bakali, 2015, p. 419).
CHAPTER 6: Conflicting Perceptions of Education in Canada

People from the Global South are drawn to the Global North for many reasons in our post-colonial era. One key reason can be the Western education systems that have long been viewed as the producers of “powerful knowledge” (Ali, 2005, Yosso, 2005). Modernity, in this sense, has been seen as coming from the West, while “the rest” should follow the paradigms set by the Western epistemological systems (Bhambra, 2011, 2014; Go, 2013). Neo-liberalism and commodification of education, as part of such a vision of modernity, seem to have seeped into the long-existing post-colonial legacy (Apple, 2011; Dale & Robertson, 2009; Robertson & Dale, 2015; Gulson & Symes, 2007).

Yet, the agency of the Global South should not be seen as negligible in this seemingly one-dimensional phenomenon. In our increasingly globalized and intertwined world, the voices of the Global South, especially those who are highly educated, can challenge the very epistemologies that situate the East and West in a bipolar fashion: civilized and under-civilized (Yosso, 2005; Tayakama, 2016). With this background, this chapter explores the experiences and perceptions of the highly educated (skilled) Muslim Uyghur immigrants regarding the educational systems they encounter in the Canadian provinces. More specifically, this chapter intends to analyze the evolving complex positions of these Uyghur immigrants in regard with the English /French formal and informal educational spaces.

That said, education in Canada is a provincial responsibility. There is no Federal Ministry of Education. The provinces have jurisdiction over education which is overseen by provincial Ministries of Education. There is no one Canadian education system; there are Canadian education systems. Although the provincial systems have many similarities there are variations among the provinces reflecting regional differences. The greatest difference perhaps is that while all
provinces in Canada provide education in English, in the province of Quebec all students (with a few exceptions) are required to study in the French school system\textsuperscript{38}. However, the English-speaking provinces are required to provide education in French as Quebec is required to provide education in English for those who qualify for it. Across Canada, public education is provided free along with a smaller private sector. Uniform quality is maintained through the pan-Canadian Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) which is an intergovernmental body of ministers of education from each province.

Quebec is a unique province in terms of the national identity of its majority inhabitants who have a French cultural background. Before the Quiet Revolution, Catholicism played a major role in defining the Quebecois identity vs. a vs. the Anglophone Protestants. While after the Revolution the focus has shifted to French language heritage which is protected under the Bill 101 passed in 1977. However, in this secularization process Catholicism has not been totally eliminated from the Quebecois national identity (Zubrzycki, 2017). As Zubrzycki (2017) further argues, “Quebec’s distinctiveness, within the Canadian federation, depends on its paradoxical combination of a French-speaking and ‘Catholic’ landscape with its secular, generally progressive social policies” (p. 146). With this background, the education system in Quebec has become a very explicit tool to bring about “the new social order of interculturalism” that grants priority to French language and culture which includes Catholicism, in contrast to Canadian Multiculturalism that treats all languages and cultures as equal (Ghosh & Galczynski, 2014, p. 38).

Globally, Canada’s reputation in educational achievement is influenced by the OECD rankings. Canada ranks high among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and Canadian teenagers (which includes immigrant and refugee

\textsuperscript{38} For more information, see http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/parents-and-guardians/instruction-in-english/eligibility/
students) are ranked among the best educated in the world (Coughlan, 2017), according to test results. But OECD’s achievement tests are seen by critics as being colonialist with a hidden ideology which identifies education with learning and success in economic terms (d’Agnese, 2015).

While test results put Canada among the world’s best in education, what is the experience of immigrants’ who come to Canada with the school systems of the various provinces? This chapter tries to answer this question based on the responses of the participants to the relevant interview questions.

6.1. The Education in Canada is Empowering

Looking back, the legacy of colonialism saw the West as the source of modernity and progress, while rendering the East a land of absence (Said, 1978). For example, for Weber, “Europe represents the cradle of civilization and culture,” and the “signs of evolutionary advance and universal validity” were created only within Europe (Rodríguez, Boatcă & Costa, 2010, p.55). Post-colonial theorists do not see significant change in the epistemology of colonialism after colonialism ended (e.g. Ashcroft et al, 1998, 2007, 2013; Bhabha, 1990; Fanon, 1963; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1984-5). While, in the early years of post-colonial discussions in academia, Nandi (1983, p. xi) famously stated “the West is now everywhere, within the West and outside,” one can imagine how little has changed since then during the next few decades. That said, “it is naive and politically self-defeating to expect a critique to arise from the ‘outside’” (Prakash 1993, p. 205), the non-Western public. The East, as general, is still far from relinquishing its voiceless or subordinate status when it comes to challenging the legacy of colonialism.
The subsequent globalization process has further validated modernity as coming from the West and as a paradigm for the rest of the world. As Ali (2005) argues, globalization has a deep Enlightenment orientation which is the paradigm of post-colonialism. The “imagined totality of human culture” implicitly or explicitly directs the West as the source of powerful knowledge (p.11). This sort of epistemology in the Western academia “locate[s] the observed subjects in a particular way, to interpellate them as Europe’s others” (Ashcroft et al, 2007, p. 80). The development of various social theories in the last few decades as well has not fully freed itself from such a post-colonial paradigm when looking at modernity (Bhambra, 2011, 2014; Go, 2013).

Global migration as one of the byproducts of globalization can hardly avoid being affected by the current epistemology or discourse of modernism. As such, the orientation of global migration mostly has been westward or northward in our post-colonial era. The West is still the source of enlightenment and prosperity, while the rest of the world is supposed to form their development strategies based on the Western models. The Western education systems, in this regard, are the factories or designers of such blueprints. Under this post-colonial or post-Orientalism discourse, the developing world learners are naturally drawn to the Western educational institutions much more than to their own.

As one of my participants Mahirā narrated:

_I had always been thinking about studying abroad when I was back home. Canada was one of those countries I wanted to go. I wanted to experience the Western education which I thought to be very high quality. I still think that way. You know our education system back home is based on rote learning. We need Western education system to fortify ourselves as a nation. Of course, I thought about my future children’s education. But during that time, I mostly thought about my own. Because directly coming to the West as a foreign student was very difficult for me as I could not afford the financial expenses, so I chose to become an immigrant._
But I wasted so many years in order to do that. Now I am in my 40s, but I still want to go to university here.

Mahirä saw the education in Canada as advanced and beneficial to empowering Uyghurs as a group, while the education she received back home in Xinjiang lacked such elements. Obviously, such internalized Orientalism pushes not only Uyghurs but also many other highly educated developing nation citizens towards “more civilized and advanced” West. In other words, this is part of post-colonialism which thrives within the discourse of Orientalism (Said, 1978). Thus, Uyghur immigrants who had already received higher education in China could reach their national prosperity only through seeking Western education. This point was further emphasized by Ayshä from Quebec as well.

One of the most important reasons why I chose to come to Canada was its education system. You know our education system is a dead one. We waste our time learning so much rubbish, mostly the political stuff that is useless. Plus, there is no Uyghur education anymore. Our kids should attend Chinese education which will erase Uyghur identity. Do you remember how much homework we would need to do when we were kids? We had to spend 10-11 hours in schools. We could not enjoy summer and winter vacations because of heavy home assignments. The worst part is teachers can insult or even beat students. I cannot forget those violent teachers who abused me when I was in my primary and secondary schools. I don’t want those happen to my kids.

While Ayshä’s points reflect the same internalized Orientalism Mahirä expressed, they also reveal the socio-political reality of Xinjiang where the education in Uyghur language has been increasingly losing its existence. Such a situation seems to have made the education in Xinjiang even more unfavorable by enhancing the values of the Canadian education system. Her narratives were more politically charged than Mahirä’s, openly declaring the Chinese education as very harmful to Uyghur collective identity. Yet, she did not question the Canadian education system on
the same identity issue. She was also concerned with the excessive workload the students were subject to in China, bringing up her own memories when she was a young student. This point was also highlighted in a similar way by Gülnur from British Columbia, who added “they kill our free-thinking skills...you must do assignments after assignments, but you learn nothing useful... you just learn for getting good grades, or not being punished by your teachers...”. Moreover, the narratives about the verbal and physical abuse of students by teachers, which is a widespread phenomenon in China\textsuperscript{39}, show another important reason why she chose to leave China for a good education in Canada. This indicates that their admiration towards the Canadian education is not solely due to Orientalism. Indeed, there is a real problem with the education in Xinjiang and broader China, which should be objectively acknowledged.

As a follow-up for the above narratives, Yashar from Quebec expressed his amazement, seeing how his children were enjoying their schooling in Canada:

\begin{quote}
When I first saw my kids coming home in the early afternoon, I thought they were skipping school. Soon I knew that they were not. In the beginning I thought they were not learning a lot, and I felt a bit disappointed because I had been thinking that the Canadian education would be very strict. Later I thought to myself this system should have a reason for that. My kids are happy; they have more time to play, unlike my childhood during which I missed a lot of sleep due to heavy schoolwork
\end{quote}

Children’s future, indeed, is one of the key reasons why many adults migrate to another country. In the case of the Uyghur immigrants, such a concern is tightly linked with the education in Canada, through which they firmly believe that their children would be empowered and become very successful in the future, as conveyed by Sattar from BC, too:

\begin{quote}In a study conduct by Gershoff (2017), 58% of Chinese students said they had been subject to corporal punishment by their teachers.\end{quote}
I had always dreamed about studying abroad, but it turned out to be very hard for me to fulfil that dream. As we all know education in Canada is one of the best in the world... I was not able to enjoy this education, so I hope my kids will be benefiting from it. That is one of the most important reasons why I am here. I was aware of all the hardships of living as an immigrant before coming here, but when I thought about my kids’ future, it all looked worthwhile to me. Equally important, they would not be discriminated because they were Uyghurs in our region where we are now second-class citizens...

For him, his children’s access to Canadian education which “is one of the best in the world” would make all the hardships he would go through, as a typical immigrant, trivial. While he himself was not able to enjoy such an education, he could feel equally happy seeing his children doing so. Moreover, he emphasized his strong belief that they would not face, in Canada, systemic discrimination which has become increasingly overt in recent years in China (Millward, 2018, 2019; Roberts, 2018a, b). That is one key reason why he was deeply sure that his children’s future would be very bright in Canada.

While further exploring the powerful knowledge discourse behind the voices of my research participants as discussed above, another layer of unequal power relationship revealed itself in Quebec. Despite the reality that Quebec is part of Canada, its French language background was seen less desirable to its English counterpart. For example, Adalät from Quebec uttered her relevant accounts as below.

_We really wanted to send our kids to English schools, but unfortunately it is not possible, I did not know this educational policy before coming to Quebec, otherwise I would have gone to Ontario or British Columbia. Now I am forgetting my English_
which is more important than French in the world. And I know my kids will be stuck in Quebec as they cannot speak English well enough to find good jobs in the English-speaking world which is far better than here.

Adalät expressed her regrets over coming to Quebec, as she deemed French education was less powerful than English. When she thought about her children’s future, such a perception made her even more anxious. Her anxiety would only grow as she was forgetting the most important language – English, while living in Quebec. Zöhrä in Alberta blended more emotions into her perspectives when she, too, talked about such a hierarchy.

_I hate the French language. It is too difficult to learn, not like English which is much easier. I was so happy when we left this province. By the way, I did not want to limit myself with this language. English is the world language, while French is regional. English educational institutions are more excellent than the French ones. So, I thought that my kids should receive English education in order to become more successful in the future. Moreover, many people say that the Quebecois are not very welcoming towards immigrants._

Zöhrä came to Quebec in 2012 following her husband who had immigrated to Quebec as a skilled immigrant from China more than a year ago. She didn’t speak any French before arriving in this province. Moreover, she did not have any motivation to learn French, either, as she was not planning to stay in Quebec for good. While the perceived difficulty of learning French could be very subjective, her position over the status of French language and education vs. the English one seems to be one of the key factors that killed her passion towards French and eventually pushed her away from Quebec. That said, for her the world language - English was much easier to learn. Meanwhile, she firmly believed that her current status would be best improved through English education, which was at the top hierarchically, rather than French.
The narratives uttered by Yashar signaled similar messages, but in a more condescending way.

_The most important reason why I came to Quebec was that the immigration process was faster, and the province had better policies regarding new immigrants, like free adult education, loans and bursaries for students, lower tuition fees in higher education, as well as its more affordable housing and lifestyle. Otherwise who would come here? This province desperately needs people. I only wanted to get some benefit from it and move to English Canada after some years. So, I went to an English college here in Montreal. As we all know getting English education is always better than a French one, as we will have better opportunities in the future._

Actually, this sort of positioning oneself in Quebec was quite common among my participants. For them, Quebec was like a bridge through which they could obtain some benefits before commencing their new lives in English Canada, which was their ultimate and ideal goal. While, Ramilä, who had lived in Quebec for three years before moving to Ontario in 2010, initially did not have such an intention, her failure to find a job corresponding to her master’s degree in biology obtained from a French university in Europe made her think twice about her condition in this province. This is discussed more in detail in the next chapter. Meanwhile, her experiences also made her worried about the future of her daughter who was receiving French education. Now, she is exceptionally happy about her decision to leave Quebec. “_Now my daughter writes poems in English! She has got some awards as well!_” she said with pride. She continued:

_I am so glad that we moved from Quebec where my daughter would have been speaking very good French but very poor English, which would make her useless outside of Quebec. Now she speaks both languages perfectly, so she has a bright future in Ontario…_
That being so, those who had never left Quebec still showed their strong preference towards English education to French one. “We are sending our two kids to English private schools, for them to be more successful in the future” said Mahirä. For her and her husband who were financially not affluent at all, such an endeavor only means how deeply they believed in the potential of English education compared to the French one.

The perceived less-than-perfect status of Quebec’s French language education, at the macro level, can further highlight the unequal power relations among different groups in our post-colonial time. In Welikala’s (2008) words “we find that English has the innate power of creating the most valuable kind of ontologies and epistemologies with their colonial experience in other cultures” (p. 161). Uyghur culture, as one of those “other cultures”, can only witness and be subject to such an Orientalist stance over itself vs. the education in the English West. The education in French Quebec could lose much of its attractiveness only when compared to its English counterpart, yet it still holds a very dynamic position as part of the Western culture. Uyghur education could not compete with either of them.

Overall, the education in Canada was seen as a highly positive and powerful system by all of my participants. They were attracted to the Canadian education as they perceived the West as the source of powerful knowledge; in their eyes, the Western knowledge was highly necessary for and beneficial to all humanity (Ali, 2005). However, the education systems in English and in French Canada were not regarded as equally dynamic. The Uyghurs in Quebec or those who had lived in Quebec before moving to English Canada revealed their preference for English medium education to the French one to a great extent.

At some points, several of my participants also showed their identification with the Francophone people in Quebec. More specifically, two participants from Quebec expressed some
shared experiences and feelings with the Francophone Quebecois, but none of the participants from English Canada showed a similar identification, directly or indirectly.

I realized that the Francophone Quebecois were just like us in China. Although our autonomy is just on paper. French language and culture are protected. The Quebecois can send their kids to French schools which are 100% French speaking. Contrary to this, our education back home is becoming strictly mono-lingual making Uyghur language obsolete... We cannot show our national flag openly while the Quebecois have their flags everywhere openly. – Ayshä, Quebec

Ayshä, on the one hand, admired the position of French language and culture in Canada, on the other, she further realized the subaltern status of her ethnicity in the Chinese state. Quebec’s strictly regulated and protected French education system was seen by her as a highly positive factor within the Canadian context. Unfortunately, the same privilege could not be replicated in her home region.

Yashar went one step further showing his sympathy with the francophone communities in Quebec.

I deeply understand the hearts of the people of Quebec. They want to keep themselves. They do not want to be assimilated into the English dominant world. Whenever a Uyghur says he or she is unhappy with some realities about Quebec, I say to them “don’t you think we are on the same boat?” We always tend to forget to see the commonalities between us and the Quebecois.

For him, even though the Francophone Quebecois looked very powerful in Canada, they were still very fragile in the North American continent. Their situation should be seen through the Uyghur lens; the Quebecois and the Uyghurs have very similar political or cultural realities. Such an identification process seemed to have been making him and Ayshä closer to Quebec than other participants.
In sum, my participants unanimously expressed their appreciation of and high regards towards the Canadian education system, while underlining the negative or unfavorable aspects of the education system they had in Xinjiang. Aside from political elements (including language policies), the quality of education in Xinjiang was further questioned, in contrast to the “powerful knowledge” (Ali, 2005) the Canadian education system was producing and reproducing. They appeared to have deeply internalized the discourse of Orientalism that regards the West as the source of modernity and civilization, while rendering the East as backward and outdated (Said, 1978). Moreover, accessing English language education was deemed much better than the French one, exposing the different layers of unequal power relations within the Canadian context. Yet, the narratives on the excessive schoolwork and corporal punishment in Xinjiang schools indicate that not everything should be observed through the lens of Orientalism, as this problem is very real and objective.

6.2. The Education in Canada is Disempowering

The Uyghur immigrants’ negative or not-so-positive perceptions of the Canadian education system could be reasonably understood when we acknowledge that ontological and epistemological diversities among different cultures can influence people’s approaches to learning and knowledge (Schommer, 1998; Welikala, 2008). Cultural capital, in this context, the Canadian cultural capital, which is produced and reproduced by the Canadian educational institutions, is stemmed from the ontology and epistemology of the Western or Anglo-Saxon White culture (in Quebec, the French culture). In Yosso’s (2005) words, such cultural capital is intrinsically Eurocentric or White. For this reason, it does not fully match the cultural knowledges of the “other”, including the Muslim
immigrants from the developing world. At the same time, those immigrants would soon start to realize or recognize the values of their own “community cultural wealth” (Yosso, 2005), which could help them build more positive self-concepts and become more successful in their host country.

As such, while all my participants, in various ways, expressed their admirations towards the Canadian education systems and highlighted the advantages it could bring to the Uyghurs, many of them also revealed that over the years, they had become skeptical about the benefits their children could gain from the same education systems. A very typical example would be the concerns of Azat from British Columbia who said:

*I think Canadian education will destroy Uyghur identity. We cannot overcome the influence of this education system. Some days my 7-year-old daughter comes back from schools uttering some words like ‘boyfriend’ and ‘girlfriend’. Some words I cannot even mention. Why would they teach her the words like “penis”, “vagina”, and “sexual assault”? Math problems are way too simple. I am not advocating Chinese education. But they teach too much about human anatomy. They emphasize sex too much that it disgusts me...They teach the kids what parts of their body their parents cannot touch. In wätän, the emotional bonding between parents and kids is very strong. Parents and kids should be very close; they should hug each other a lot; they should be able to sleep next to each other.*

Although, Azat highly regarded the quality of the education in Canada, he also recognized the negative impact of it on the Uyghur culture and collective identity. His story about his daughter’s schooling could be seen as a very specific example on how this sort of “destruction” would unfold, from his point of view.

Azat’s frustration is understandable when observing the situation through the lens of Uyghur perspective or in a broader scope – traditional Muslim perspective. Regarding sex, the
notion of honor (*nomus*) and shame (*ayip*) have special status in Uyghur cultural discourse, like the greater Muslim world (Bellér-Hann, 2008b). When it comes to females, such notions turn out to be much more emphatic and serious (Mahmut & Smith-Finley, 2017; Smith-Finley, 2015). These notions are part of Uyghur cultural values and collective identity, so they should be protected, in the eyes of Azat. Accordingly, Polat from BC also stated that one of the key reasons why he sent his daughter to an Islamic secondary school was the “too liberal” nature of the Canadian mainstream schools. “We cannot agree totally with the concept of freedom in White culture. We are scared of it...” said he. Obviously, here he was equating White culture to Canadian culture, which he was not fully willing to internalize.

Zöhrä from Alberta, as well, revealed a similar sort of anxiety, while emphasizing the value of her Islamic heritage.

> Canadian education is too open (bâk ochuq- Uy.). I fear that my kids will be too open, and too Westernized. In wätän, only secular courses are taught; no sinful things are in the curricula. Here, schools themselves teach things against religion or Islam. I have heard some Uyghurs said that the education in wätän was better. This is true in some respects...

She saw that the education in Canada was “too open” or too liberal to the extent that it was teaching “sinful things” to the children, which was against the Islamic codes of conduct. In this regard, she even showed her preference to the Chinese education system which at least would not teach “sinful things”. All this made her revisit the values of the Canadian education, which were supposed to be empowering. This kind of perspective might have become increasingly prominent in her mind, as she was becoming more religious over the last few years, which she indicated in a different part of the interview. That being so, she was using her religiosity as a form of “oppositional culture” (Mitchell & Feagin, 1995) to defy what she saw as the secularism or
liberalism within Canadian multiculturalism that marginalizes the minority cultural values (Azmi, 2001).

Yashar from Quebec also narrated similar perceptions about education in Quebec. “They teach the kids homosexuality is a natural thing. They even offer condoms to the students! How can we accept these?”, he said, clearly showing his strong disappointment and resistance. Possibly, many other participants had the same specific concerns, but they may not have wanted to discuss them in detail, probably because they felt uncomfortable. As the Uyghur intellectuals generally tend to be more secular than the rest of the population in Uyghur society (Smith Finley, 2013; Zang, 2012), one can imagine how the less educated or more traditional/religious Uyghurs would consider the influence of Canadian education on their children.

Going back to Azat’s points, his mention of “way too simple” math problems is worthwhile discussing separately, as well. The perceived problems were not only limited to the concerns about morality or values. His negative opinion over the quality of math education in Canada may have been shaped by his childhood memories about his schoolwork filled with complicated science assignments, which was seen as a positive factor by him. In other words, he was comparing his own primary education with his daughter’s and could not accept the differences between them. Sattar resonated Azat’s points by saying:

*The school does not discipline pupils. The assignments are too few. They emphasize playing games too much, instead of making them seriously learn something. So, the students will end up having very loose foundation when they finish primary school.*

Likewise, Sattar was concerned with the light workloads that his daughter’s school was assigning for her. It was unacceptable for him as this might hinder his daughter’s progress and
eventually negatively affect her future. In the same vein, Azat revealed his transformation regarding his views about Western philosophies:

> When I was young, I used to overly admire Western thinkers and philosophers, while seeing our Eastern thinkers as some backward people with turbans. Now I regard the Eastern philosophers as more profound analytical thinkers. I see them one level higher than the Western ones...Eastern philosophers are much deeper in comprehending and exploring humanity. The West is a lot backward in this regard...

Clearly, he was now questioning the quality of the very foundation of Western knowledge systems, not only the tip of the iceberg – the schooling experiences of some Uyghur children. He used to be an internalizer of the discourse of Orientalism, “overly admiring Western thinkers,” just like many other people from the Global South. Living in Canada made him more critical towards the Western knowledge systems, while offering him more positive self-images as part of the Oriental world. In other words, he turned out to be the most ruthless critic of the Canadian education systems, among all of my participants. He was openly challenging the discourse of Orientalism through his narratives. As a culmination, he concluded his arguments by saying: “I used to think the Western world was a just world, like many other people. Now I disagree. If you are lucky you will get justice, otherwise you are doomed...”.

Coming back to his earlier narratives, Azat was also concerned with the bonding between him and his daughter, which, according to him, should have been much more intimate than it is now. His daughter’s school was creating a gap between them, in the name of protecting the children against the possible pedophiles. He could not accept such a learning experience his daughter was having, and strongly emphasized the importance and value of the Uyghur family culture which would tighten the connection between parents and their children. Accordingly, Dolqun from Quebec voiced his concerns over the education system uttering: “the teachers here do not teach
the kids respecting and being compassionate towards their parents and elders...”. Obviously, he was worried about the possibility that his kids may become less caring towards and alienated from their parents as the result of receiving the local education.

Apart from the above factors, some of my participants also expressed their serious concerns over the cultural or religious aspect of the education in Canada. For example, the Anglo-Saxon culture in the hidden curriculum in Canadian schools was interrogated by Gülnur from British Columbia:

*Through games, they teach them about religious days like Christmas. I remember my daughter used to ask us why we would not celebrate Christmas, why we would not put a Christmas tree in our house during the Christmas season. Recently she has started giving us valentine’s cards, saying everybody celebrates Valentine’s Day. She celebrates Thanksgiving...What will happen if she continues to be like this? That is why we sent her to an Islamic school. The admission would usually take up to four years, but it only took one week in her case. I said to the school “I was raised in a kafir state, so please give me a chance to learn my religion with my daughter”...They celebrate Eid Holidays in classy ways, they don’t hold Christmas parties...*

Obviously, these are some of the very common dilemmas most Muslim immigrants would have regarding their children’s education in Canada or the broader West. Gülnur, as one of those immigrants, was now seriously questioning the influences of the Anglo-Saxon culture, as part of the cultural capital transmitted by the Canadian schools, on her own cultural identity. In her view, Thanksgiving, Valentine’s Day, and Christmas, which are conveyed through the Canadian education systems could not and should not be part of Uyghur culture which is based on Islam. Therefore, she saw the hope in the Islamic school where her daughter, according to her, could become culturally much closer to her parents.
However, religious education in Canada, as well, was not seen as flawless by the same participants. While they generally showed they had realized the importance of Islam in maintaining Uyghur identity, they also grew cautious about immersing their children solely into religious education. For example, Polat says:

*Our daughter has been attending an Islamic school for some years... We will transfer her to a public high school when she finishes her junior high. We don’t want her to be isolated from the reality which is complex and multifaceted. We don’t want her to develop a mentality that she is special or unique. There are many different sorts of people in society. If she cannot get along with those people with diverse backgrounds, even if she studies very hard, she cannot be a successful person in the future...*

Apparently, Polat realized the potential risk of sending his daughter to an Islamic school only. According to him, the unidimensional learning experience and exclusively interacting with people with the same religious background would not make her well-prepared for the diverse and complex Canadian society. Moreover, he might also have been concerned about the possibility that she would become susceptible to extremist religious groups or ideologies if she only received religious education. Sattar from the same province echoed his concerns, while revealing his intention to send his daughter to an Islamic school. He said:

*I am worried that my daughter won’t be able to catch up with the time if we send her to an Islamic school only. Since she won’t be exposed to the broader society, she may become more susceptible to change (meaning morally) in the future as the Canadian society is very complex and too free.*

Evidently, he was seriously gauging the advantages and disadvantages of sending his daughter to an Islamic school, while showing his dissatisfaction with Canadian society (apparently including Canadian mainstream schools) which was “very complex and too free”. He was
questioning the Western liberalism in the same way Azat and Zöhrä critiqued the Western education which was “too open”, in their views. Yet, for Sattar, Islamic education would not be enough to make his daughter fully prepared for Canadian society, which is very complex and diverse. He should find the right balance between these two very different learning experiences.

In brief, while my participants began to recognize the negative or not-so-positive elements in the Canadian education systems, they also started to more deeply appreciate the values of their own “community cultural wealth” (Yosso, 2005), which is closely linked with their religious or cultural backgrounds. Through such a lens, Clothey (2016) reveals how the educated Uyghurs in Xinjiang have been highlighting the values of their cultural wealth in protecting and strengthening their collective identity. Many of my participants, too, showed such a process of reevaluation and seemed to have deeply realized the importance of their own traditional cultural wealth, while starting to question the cultural capital or the Western culture produced and reproduced through the Canadian educational institutions. Regarding these findings, there seem to be no significant differences among the participants in Quebec and other provinces.

### 6.3. Summary

Generally speaking, while the positive aspects of the Canadian education systems have been unanimously highlighted by my participants, they also started to question the negative aspects of such systems. On the one hand, as adults, they themselves were not very much able to enjoy the Canadian education they highly regarded, they were equally happy to see their children doing so. Meanwhile, they all tended to devalue their own education system back in Xinjiang, China, revealing their deep internalization of the discourse of Orientalism. Their narratives also reflect the unequal power relations between the East and West in terms of knowledge production and
consumption in our post-colonial era (Ashcroft et al, 2007; Bhabha, 1990; Rodriguez et al, 2010). The globalization of education has only reinforced such a mechanism created and reinforced by the Western colonial legacy still existing today (Ali, 2005; Takayama, 2016).

On the other hand, the Uyghur immigrants clearly started to appreciate their own cultural values, while perceiving the potential threats or harms of the Western cultural capital to their collective identity. Looking through Yosso’s (2005) lens, they began to realize the values of their own community cultural wealth – their own alternative knowledges or epistemologies that could empower themselves. Meanwhile, their voices demonstrated their agency to counter the effects of the Euro-centric Canadian education system; they challenged the discourse of Canadian multiculturalism as well as interculturalism that have been serving as a politicized tool “to centre the experiences of the ‘two founding’ nations or races of Canada in nation building” (Leroux, 2012, p.67). The same narratives also challenged the discourse of “global citizenship” within the same framework that has been reinforcing “notions of Canadian gendered and racialized nation-building and nationalism” (Roman, 2003, p. 269).

Such a process may also have created a “hysteresis effect” which takes place when old habitus meets new situations that are not in parallel with the original or traditional upbringings; old habitus cannot catch up with the new conditions or positions which are built on some unfamiliar habitus, resulting in delay (Bourdieu, 1990, p.78). Such a phenomenon occurs “when environmental contexts change in a way that leaves actors without an ontologically complicit relationship to institutions as scaffolds of action” (Strand & Lizardo, 2016, p. 164). My participants clearly showed they experienced this effect which resulted from the mismatch between their old habitus and the habitus they encountered in Canada for the first time, the former being
the product of their education in Xinjiang, the latter, the outcome of the Canadian education systems, to a great extent.

Post-colonial researcher Takayama (2016) contends that for Asians, “the West serves as an object of simultaneous desire and resentment, a common response of the colonized vis-à-vis the ‘advanced’ West” (p. 50). It seems that my participants’ interaction with Canadian society has started to create some positions similar to what Takayma (2016) highlights above. While showing their desire towards the education in Canada, they also expressed their resentment at or resistance to the very education, through highlighting their own religious and cultural wealth as a form of “oppositional culture” (Mitchell & Feagin, 1995), and challenging the discourse of Orientalism. For them, there exists a dichotomy between the knowledge systems in Canada and their own cultural wealth and values. Some participants even voiced political opposition against the knowledge systems of the West that could sabotage Uyghur identity. Therefore, these concerns would be seen more than just as “oppositional culture” (Mitchell & Feagin, 1995); they could be viewed more as “oppositional consciousness” (Mansbridge, 2001, p. 5), that would represent the agency of my participants at a political level to a great extent.

Such politicized voices could be heard both in English Canada and Quebec. Yet, in the latter context, the perceived lower status of the French education vs. the English was very much detectable among the participants, which revealed a different set of unequal power relations in the North American cultural capital market. Nevertheless, the French education in Quebec was still seen as damaging to Uyghur values and identity; the Uyghur resistance or politicized voices could again be noticed there.
CHAPTER 7: Experiences in the Canadian Labour Market and Workplaces

One of the top concerns of skilled immigrants who come to Canada through the point-based system is undoubtedly finding jobs corresponding to their skills. They arrive with high hopes of securing suitable careers, which should be guaranteed to a great extent, as they were regarded qualified for the Canadian labour market during the rigorous selection procedures. However, the reality has been quite challenging and unexpected for many skilled immigrants. While, the job-hunting process of Canadian skilled immigrants is affected by diverse objective factors, as reviewed by Kaushik and Drolet (2018), the relevant stories of the Uyghur job seekers could also reveal their unique and subjective lived experiences and voices. This is because many of these experiences and voices could be tightly linked with the particular socio-cultural and political background of the Uyghur immigrants. Moreover, they may have had dramatically distinctive job searching and work experiences or cultures in the labour market of Xinjiang with their marginalized status, which would make them confused or disoriented in the new market. Meanwhile, their experiences around employment in Canada, not only in Xinjiang, seem to have been heavily affected by their religious and ethno-cultural backgrounds. This is the main reason why I included this chapter into my study. That being so, their voices exposed some quite contrasting elements and tones between Quebec and the English provinces as discussed below.

7.1. Contrasting Narratives and Perspectives around Employment

My participants indeed uttered quite diverse narratives regarding their job-hunting and workplace experiences in different Canadian contexts. Probably, this theme, along with the subtheme about
Islamophobia, showed their most dissimilar experiences in, and perspectives on Canada. In other words, their stories revealed a spectrum ranging from a very positive to a very negative extreme.

Having said that, it would be great to start with some positive voices or experiences, which are in line with the spirit of my study – always looking at the bright side. However, within those positive voices, there may always exist some invisible or hidden darkness. Let’s see what Azat from British Columbia had to say.

*I am quite satisfied with my current job. Everything is good. My pressure is not heavy. I have well-paid vacation days. Unlike in China, here I don’t need to gauge my boss’s mood or opinion in everything. Nevertheless, I do not like the process of finding a job. Maybe we really don’t know White people’s ways of doing things. They ask for many stupid questions like what are your shortcomings? Why do you choose this company? This is silly, as I just want to find a job from whatever suitable company. If you tell them the truth, they won’t hire you, so you are pushed to tell them lies…Anyway, I have worked two jobs and for getting them I lied a bit…and I have been working excellently...(laughing)*

Azat came to Canada in 2005 and started to work in the IT sector soon after his arrival in Vancouver. He was previously doing a similar job in Xinjiang. Although he expressed his satisfaction with his new jobs in Canada, deeply appreciating the much more egalitarian relationships or interactions between employers and employees in Canada compared to Xinjiang, he didn’t like the job hunting and hiring processes in Canada. The job market culture obviously seemed strange and ridiculous to him, and he could not see the advantages for immigrants in such a system. In his view, for new immigrants like Uyghurs, it was unfair to go through these processes. Again, he directly associated this culture with the White people who would represent the Canadian upper middle-class or Canadianness. Apart from these dilemmas, he didn’t signal that he had felt any sort of significant difficulty or discrimination in finding his new jobs. However, as discussed
in the section about Islamophobia, he revealed his concerns about possible discrimination in his workplace if his Muslim background was exposed.

Yet, he expressed another point which was very critical towards the “mentality” of Canadian employers.

They have this stupid “Canadian work experience” requirement. How can you have Canadian work experience without working in Canada? They try to show that some jobs cannot be done without Canadian experience. Actually, those are not very complicated jobs... In the beginning, they gave me some very simple projects. After some years, I solved some problems they deemed impossible to solve... I would not say this is discrimination, as it is not based on race... America and Canada have their bright images in the world in terms of technology, so they tend to forget other people have the same technologies and skills. This is a risky mentality...

Although, Azat expressed he didn’t feel any discrimination in his job-hunting journey in Canada, it was obviously the legacy of the old-fashioned Orientalism (Said, 1978) he was facing. He wrongly or naively understood discrimination would only occur among different races; he didn’t think he was dealing with racism. The multi-ethnic atmosphere of his workplace may have misled him to assume that the above “mentality” was just a misconception about immigrants. He was not alone regarding his position, as many immigrants tend to see such a phenomenon as exclusion, not racism (Ku, 2012). Indeed, “‘Canadian Experience’ (CE) is a paradox for many immigrants in Canada” and it is a racist “discourse that places the responsibility of immigrant labour market integration on immigrants themselves and constructs their experiences of exclusion as non-racial”; it is not a “post racial” strategy (Ku, et al, 2019, p.291). Moreover, while he was successful in getting his dream jobs, his being assigned for “some very simple projects” is enough to reveal the devaluation of his cultural capital that he had gained in the developing world. His skills, in Guo’s (2015, p. 236) words, was “racialized” based on his immigrant background from a
racialized world. Yet, he was soon able to convince those who discriminated him that he was actually more skilled than many others in his workplace. He dismantled the very discourse of Orientalism in his workplace through his competency. He demonstrated his agency to “fight back” (Choudry, et al, 2009), in his own way.

Unlike Azat, Polat, who was also living in British Columbia, felt his initial job searching process as not very pleasant.

At first, I thought it would be an easy thing, as Canada needs IT sector workers. Those three months were very painful. After three months of job searching, I found my first job in Canada. It was not an easy process for me as I had never searched for a job that long. My wife worked as a hotel hostess to support our family. My first job came as a blessing after sending out countless CVs to many different companies. After three years I got laid off, but after several months I found a new job again. That process was not as hard as before... I have been working there since renewing my contract each year, and I like my work very much. I am now very confident about myself.

Polat, as well, expressed his dislike towards the job-hunting culture in Canada, probably in a more intense way, underlining the lengthy and tedious process. He started his career in Xinjiang right after his graduate study and worked there without any risk of losing his job. The competition there was not challenging to him at all, as he had a degree from a top university and his field was in high demand. Thus, he found the job searching process in Canada very difficult and painful, although it lasted only three months. Obviously, he went through the “hysteresis” effect (Bourdieu, 1990, p.78) during the time, as his old habitus was challenged in Canada. However, after finding his first job, he became more familiar with the relevant job-hunting culture, and even after losing his first job he was not dismayed much and stood up again. Like, Azat, he didn’t mention any single instance of being discriminated in the job market. His objection against his wife’s wearing
hijab was the only scenario in which he expressed the possible discrimination in the job market of Canada, as discussed under the theme of Islamophobia.

The third respondent from British Columbia, Sattar, also uttered similar voices, narrating his initial hard job-hunting months during which he had to take up some unrelated jobs before progressing towards more suitable positions for his level of expertise, which was within the field of telecommunications. Although, he too expressed he had faced minimum discrimination in his job searching or workplace related to his field, he mentioned he had been discriminated by a Chinese boss when he was working in a factory, saying,

> In the beginning the Chinese manager didn’t know I am Uyghur. Things changed after he knew my background. He began giving me more tasks, finding errors from my work and yelling at me for nothing. I felt so humiliated. Finally, I quit. Luckily, one of my friends in the factory helped me find a different job.

It turned out that his manager was a Han Chinese man from mainland China, and obviously, was heavily influenced by the discourse of “Internal Orientalism” or Han Chauvinism widespread among the majority Chinese (Schein, 1997). The government rhetoric on the Uyghurs as terrorism suspects or the enemy of the Chinese state (Roberts, 2018 a,b) may have made him more resentful towards the Uyghurs. Technically speaking, the unpleasant experiences of Sattar could not be counted as discrimination in the Canadian job market. Rather it is more like the discrimination the Uyghurs have been facing in Xinjiang. However, his stories highlight the real and underexplored phenomenon of immigrants discriminating against other immigrants in Canada. Similar unequal power relations can be seen here as well.

Gülnur from British Columbia had already done several jobs when she was interviewed, and she also expressed that she had not been concerned about the discrimination in the local job market. Conversely, she showed her appreciation of the treatment she received in her various workplaces
and said she had made two very good White friends in the last few years, through those jobs. “They are really nice people. We can chat about many things, and I feel very warm when I hang out with them. I have learned so much from them about Canada”, she said, responding to my question over her job searching experiences. Moreover, as discussed earlier, she was not as concerned as her husband Polat over discrimination based on her Muslim identity in Canadian workplaces.

Her narratives about her two White friends should be revisited, as she highlighted their race without being asked about it. As discussed earlier, Whiteness was seen as the norm of being Canadian by many of my participants, including Gülnur. Thus, her being treated warmly by those White people could signal their highest level of satisfaction with their situation in Canada. Meanwhile mistreatment or discrimination by non-White people may not seem to be very much of a concern to them.

Before moving to the stories of my participants from Quebec, it may be useful to dwell on the narratives of those two Uyghur immigrants who had previously lived in Quebec before moving to English provinces. Ramilä, now in Ontario, had lived in Quebec for three years prior to her moving, while Zöhrä had spent two and a half years in Quebec before starting her new life in Alberta. In this regard, they could be seen as representing both groups of Uyghur immigrants. Searching for the balance, I tried to find some Uyghur skilled immigrants who moved from English Canada (after living for some years there) to Quebec, but I found none.

The mobility from English Canada to Quebec generally does not seem to be occurring among the Uyghur skilled immigrants. The opposite trend has been most visible among them, as for many other immigrant groups in Quebec, in recent years (Serebrin, 2018; Shingler, 2017). Obviously, the two participants mentioned above were part of this phenomenon. That being said, their personal stories could be regarded as the best first-hand data for investigating the factors
behind such a trend in interprovincial migration. For this purpose, let’s look at the following narratives of Ramlä first.

*I did my MA in biology in Europe (in French) before immigrating to Quebec. First, I thought I would be like a fish in water, but it was wrong. I regret I wasted so much time in Quebec where I was discriminated in the job market. As you can see, I don’t wear hijab, but my name is a Muslim name... I did my second master’s degree in biology in Montreal but could not find a proper job for many years... All good jobs go to the local White people. The Muslims get the lowest jobs. Finally, I thought I should try sending my CVs to Ontario. I got immediate responses and interviews... Soon after moving to Ottawa, I found a great job in a company. Now I work for the government. Looking back, I think I did a right thing to move out of Quebec. Muslims are treated very well in Ontario. I don’t feel like an outsider...*

Some relevant narratives of Ramlä on the Islamophobia in everyday life are discussed above in chapter 5. Focusing specifically on how she perceived her position in the labour markets of Quebec and Ontario would reveal some deeper and more concrete subjective realities. As she recounted, her high hopes of finding her dream job was shattered by her failure to enter the Quebec job market as a qualified skilled worker. She highlighted her Muslim identity as the main factor that made her subordinate to the White Quebecois in the local labour-market. Her narratives are very similar to a research participant’s in Ogbuagu’s (2012) study that analyses the labour-market integration of 32 Muslim skilled immigrants from Montreal and Ottawa (yet, no regional comparison is made). A participant from Montreal says:

*eh I speak English and French fluently and of course my native language in Africa, you know? I am now tired of applying for jobs after 4 years of trying. Of course, my names are French because of colonization... so you will not know that I am not White Quebecois. So, when they invite me for interview, and I attend, and they see...*
oh’ am Black… they are shocked and surprised and immediately they will tell me that the position has been filled…it’s so unfair (p. 7).

While, Ramilä is not black, in Ogbuagu’s (2012) words, she became a “new Black” (p.8); being Muslim is very akin to being a racial “other” or black in the post-9/11 era (Gotanta 2011; Stubbs, 2004). Moreover, she had a non- “White name”, unlike the above research participant, adding another layer of challenge to her job-hunting journey, which was the case regarding my other participants, too. That being the case, she emphasized the widespread discrimination of Muslims in Quebec’s job market, which was in parallel with the concerns of many scholars (e.g. McAndrew & Bakhshaei 2012; McCue, Blackett, Tessier & Suleman, 2017). Conversely, her experiences in Ontario made her feel much more included; she did not “feel like an outsider” again there. She regretted she did not come to Ontario earlier; she felt bad for wasting three years in Quebec. Again, in her eyes, local “White people” and the Muslim immigrants were divided clearly along the racial lines in the job market of Quebec. Unlike the participants from British Columbia, she deeply sensed the racism in the local employment spaces.

Echoing the voices of Ramilä, Zöhrä from Alberta compared her life experiences in Quebec and Alberta. Unlike Ramilä, she was not yet working or searching for a job at the time of the interview. Meanwhile, her husband was pursuing his undergraduate degree in Alberta. Thus, they didn’t have any direct experiences in job-hunting in any Canadian context. However, she expressed her perceptions or presumptions she had shaped through her lived experiences regarding the labour markets of Quebec and Alberta as below:

The main reason why my husband chose Quebec was because it was much easier to be accepted as skilled immigrants in Quebec and Quebec’s good policies in terms of education, like loans and bursaries... Many people said to us it was difficult to find good jobs in Quebec, because those jobs mostly would go to the local White
Quebecois, and we saw the reality as such... Therefore, we chose to go to Alberta, thinking that the job market would be much better for us there... Now my husband is doing his undergraduate degree here in Alberta, and hopefully he can find a good job... I feel much more comfortable in Alberta than in Quebec. Here I found that there are more immigrants like us. I feel as if here people are friendlier towards Muslims. I just feel that here it is much better than Quebec for Muslims.

First, she revealed why they came to Quebec rather than other provinces of Canada as skilled immigrants. Like my other participants from Quebec, she explained that they chose Quebec because of its simpler and faster immigration processes and better policies related to education. Yet, no one among my participants expressed their thorough satisfaction with the Quebec job market, apart from Mahirä. It seems that the most unsatisfied were the ones whose education level was at the top, like Ramilä who moved from Quebec to Ontario. None of the Quebec participants was able to find fully corresponding jobs to their former work experiences validated by the Quebec immigration agency. This may have at least partly shaped Zöhrä’s perception over “the reality [of the Quebec’s job market] as such”.

Again, she highlighted that good jobs would go to White people in Quebec, like Ramilä did. Besides, she felt herself “more comfortable living in Alberta than in Quebec. [Because] there are more immigrants like [herself]” in that province. She identified herself more with other immigrants rather than the local White people and hinted that the presence of more immigrant population would equal to more egalitarian job market competition, therefore a more just society. More specifically, her life experiences in Quebec where the Muslim immigrants are most excluded in the job market (McAndrew & Bakhshaei, 2012; McCue et al, 2017) may have created or fortified such an us/Muslim immigrants vs them/White locals dichotomy in her mind.
Accordingly, the Uyghur participants who had always lived in Quebec expressed some very similar voices in terms of Quebec’s job market. As mentioned earlier, none of them were doing their “dream jobs” at the time of the interviews. They had either to switch to unrelated jobs which were highly in demand, or do some low-level jobs partly connected to their previous work experiences in Xinjiang. Arman turned out to be the most unsatisfied one among them.

*I was a medical doctor back home, but now I am doing (a physical work)– the best job I could find. Many immigrants are facing the same fate here. Speaking about the French people, they are like the Chinese. They didn’t give anything back to the people they colonized, unlike the English who at least offered something to their colonies... All the good jobs here in Quebec are for Francophone White people. English Canada is very different. The French Quebecois don’t give you a well-paid job easily, especially if you are Muslim.*

His failure to obtain a corresponding job in Quebec is not uncommon among the skilled immigrants. However, his perceptions over the colonial history are quite striking. It is not known how he developed or internalized that kind of position over the French and English colonial past. Anyway, his comparison of the French with the Chinese colonialism reveals how much he was disappointed with his situation in Quebec. He was obviously very happy with his employment in Xinjiang. Indeed, he was deeply aware of the labour market discrimination based on ethnicity in Xinjiang, as he was indirectly signaling through his “Chinese colonialism” narrative. Many China Scholars have also pointed out the labor market discrimination based on ethnicity in Xinjiang. For example, according to some quantitative studies, the Uyghurs earn around 30% less than Han Chinese in Ürümqi, Xinjiang, while such an effect of income was independent of education and work experience, indicating the existence of a severe labour market discrimination on the basis of ethnicity (Howell, 2013; Zang, 2011). The employment rate of Uyghur university graduates was
merely 15% in 2015 (Tohti, 2015). However, he once again perceived being discriminated in Quebec by the majority group – the White Quebecois; he felt the majority vs. minority dichotomy in terms of unequal power relations, once more, like Ramilä and Zöhrä did.

Mahirä and her husband Dolqun had been living in Quebec for about seven years, yet neither of them was doing corresponding jobs at the time of their interviews, either. Mahirä was a computer lab technician at a university, while Dolqun was an administrative staff in a government organization in Xinjiang. Surprisingly, during their interviews, Mahirä turned out to be quite optimistic about her future job opportunities in Quebec, highlighting that she had never felt discriminated while searching for jobs.

I think there are plenty of opportunities for me if I do a degree here. Actually, I was accepted by a company here as a computer technician, but I thought I should pursue my bachelor’s degree in accounting for finding a better job. So, refused the offer and started preparing for my university. This fall I will be a university student again at xx University (English university), for which I am very excited. I believe that as long as you try your best you will be successful in Quebec or anywhere else in Canada....

Mahirä was at home taking care of her young children, when she was interviewed. Soon before she had had some sporadic periods of job-hunting experiences, which she perceived as very promising. Meanwhile, she expressed she had not faced any sort of discrimination, unlike other participants from Quebec. Or, she did not share the somewhat popular and negative Uyghur perspectives on Quebec’s unfair labour market competition discussed above. However, her husband revealed his pessimism in this regard, saying:

I know it is very difficult to get a good job in Quebec. How can I compete with local Quebecois with my poor French? Even if my French is very good, I don’t think it will be easy to find a good job....when I work near some beautiful houses, I always
see White people sitting and enjoying their lives in them... So, like many other Uyghurs, I am preparing for driving a truck. It is a difficult job, but you can earn some good money. You have to make money for your family...

Although, Dolqun didn’t yet directly experience discrimination in the job market, as he was not looking for a corresponding job, his narratives show that he was already affected by the perceived discrimination in the Quebec labour market. He was doing a menial job in a private company and he would not expect to be able to find a good job. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, two of his children were attending English private schools, and his wife Mahirä was going to attend an English university, so there was a possibility that their stay in Quebec might not be very long, either. Mahirä also uttered that her older sister and her husband were running a successful business in Ontario, and they were asking them to move there. All of this makes sense when considering their tendency to prioritize English education in Quebec. For them, Quebec might have been solely a bridge to other provinces or a better future.

Closely aligned with these voices, another truck driver, Yashar who was working in a financial company in Xinjiang, briefly narrated his job-hunting experiences as below:

I attended an English college here for one year to gain a diploma, and I was so lucky that I got a job immediately upon graduating. Of course, it was an English-speaking private company. I don’t think I could find a job like that even if I went to a French college. I know many jobless or deskill ed Muslim immigrants who graduated from French colleges... It was a very low-paid job, and there was no future prospect of promotion. I missed so much my university job in wätän, where I was a middle-class man...After some years of doing the same job, I quit. I have become a truck driver for making some more money. I need pay my mortgage...

Similar to Mahirä, he didn’t pursue French education, probably, at least partly, because his English was already much better than his French. Besides, he may not have had enough confidence
in himself to be successful in the French milieu, as is the case of Dolqun, a Muslim immigrant. Their French was enough for them to pass Quebec’s immigration interview, but after coming to Quebec they didn’t continue to improve their French for educational purposes. Obviously, they were discouraged by some negative assumptions about the Francophone labour market. Both of their narratives indirectly signal that they, too, developed, to some extent, an us/Muslims vs. them/White Francophone Quebecois dichotomy based on unequal power relations in the local job market.

Ayshä from Quebec, who had very low skills both in French and English before coming to Canada, expressed her perspectives on the job market in Quebec, from a somewhat different angle.

*I was not satisfied with my work back home where I was doing a menial job. I hated that job so much! Now I am pretty happy with my job at XX. But this job came after many years of being out of the job market. I don’t blame anyone for this. Because neither my French, nor my English was good when I came to Quebec... After that, I enrolled in a French class again. I got some good amount of bursary for attending that class, which helped me a lot. After a year, I had some training at an adult education centre. After the training, I tried to find an internship, but I was refused by many workplaces. One of them even treated me rudely. Finally, I found a job in a daycare run by a Muslim couple. No one else gave me a job.*

Unlike others from Quebec, Ayshä was not happy with her job in Xinjiang. Although she had a bachelor’s degree in economics, she was doing a menial job. She was the only one among all the participants in Quebec who was not satisfied with their job in Xinjiang. Coming to Canada turned out to be liberating for her. Yet, she had to go through the lengthy language learning journey for obtaining the job she was currently doing. Obviously, some good adult education policies greatly helped her to improve her language skills. She didn’t feel any pressure till she intended to
find a job in Quebec. As mentioned earlier she was a hijab wearer, and it seemed that her job-hunting experiences had been negatively affected, to some extent, by her Muslim background.

More specifically, she faced “rudeness” and possibly discrimination in some instances when she tried to find an internship. Her being accepted by a workplace run by a Muslim couple may have further reassured her perception that she was excluded by White employers or simply non-Muslim employers in Quebec. During the interview, she made this clear, saying the one who rudely treated her was South American-looking. While her experiences, too, appeared to have created or reinforced the same us/Muslim vs. them/Quebecois dichotomy in her mind, “them” here seemed to have referred to other racialized non-Muslim groups, as well. This would make her feel more isolated from Quebec society.

Generally speaking, all participants, but Mahirä, were very direct and vocal in voicing their sense of discrimination and exclusion in Quebec’s labour market. In particular, Zöhrä and Ramilä, who had lived both in Quebec and English provinces, expressed their drastically different experiences in two different contexts. Apparently, the participants from British Columbia didn’t experience exclusion from the job market, but they sensed their original cultural capital was devalued compared to the cultural capital rooted in Canada. However, as discussed in the section about Islamophobia, Azat and Polat in British Columbia, as well, revealed their fear that they would be discriminated in the job market or workplaces if they were open about their Muslim identity. That being so, their concerns were much less serious than the participants’ in Quebec, given the reality that they both were very content with their careers in Canada.

The discussions in this section reveal some findings very in line with the similar studies conducted by many scholars (e.g. Itani & Sidani, 2018; Ghosh, et al, 2019; Jedwab, 2015; McAndrew & Bakhshaei 2012; McCue, et al. 2017). All of my participants, apart from Mahirä
from Quebec, openly showed their deep discontent regarding the job market and workplaces in Quebec. Generally, the residents of British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario revealed much less anxiety and fewer concerns over being discriminated, compared to their counterparts in Quebec, most of whom were being very open and vocal about their marginalization in the job market.

This being the case, as Itani and Sidani (2018) assume, for the Muslims who happen look like White Europeans, thanks to their light skin color, “few problems could emerge as their religiosity is not ‘visible’”. Those who are visible in terms of religiosity and ethnicity may face the most serious discrimination (p. 341). Interestingly, Mahirä looks European, as mentioned earlier, and she didn’t express that she had felt discrimination in her job searching process. Conversely, she revealed that she was very optimistic about her future in Quebec. I am highly cautious in making some generalized speculations here, but I have some misgivings.

7.2. Summary

This chapter has revealed some vivid disparities between the participants in Quebec and English Canada in terms of to what extent they felt excluded from the local labour markets and workplaces. In this regard, my participants in Quebec expressed their deepest dissatisfaction with and frustration over the Quebec labour market, primarily highlighting the discrimination based on their Muslim background. This was most clearly emphasized by two Uyghur immigrants who had lived in Quebec for some years before moving to other provinces. Generally, the voices of my participants largely echoed the findings exhibited by other studies (e.g. McAndrew & Bakhshaei 2012; McCue, et al, 2017; Patriquin, 2017).

That said, many of those participants from Quebec clearly stated that the primary reason why they chose Quebec was its more favorable educational policies, affordable living, and faster
immigration procedures. For some of them, Quebec was not seen as their permanent destination, which resonated much with the ever-growing outward mobility of workforces from Quebec to other provinces of Canada that has been occurring in the last few decades (Serebrin, 2018; Shingler, 2017), while showing no sign of the opposite trend. Moreover, these participants appeared to have developed and further internalized an us/Muslim immigrants vs. them/White Quebecois dichotomy through their labour market experiences, which revealed the deep unequal power relations based on racism.

This is not to say that the Uyghur immigrants in English provinces did not express their concerns over discrimination resulting from their racialized Muslim identity. Yet, most of their concerns seemed to have been revolving around their worries over possible discrimination or exclusion, rather than the actual discrimination in the labour market or workplaces. More specifically, while the participants from British Columbia expressed such concerns, these were not their real-life experiences. Like them, the participants in Alberta and Ontario showed their high degree of satisfaction with the job market and much optimism about their future. Although, the participants from English Canada, too, seemed to have developed an us/Muslim immigrants vs. them/White Canadians dichotomy, such a division appeared to have been more cultural rather than political. For example, the job-hunting culture in Canada was seen as part of White culture by some, yet it was not seen as oppressive or discriminatory towards immigrants. The same is the case regarding the “Canadian experience” discourse, although it could be seen as a form of racism and discrimination (Ku, 2012; Ku, et al, 2019).

Speaking about racism, the race dimension (in terms of skin colour) of this chapter seems to have exposed some probabilities similar to Itani and Sidani’s (2018) points, which highlight that White-looking or “invisible” Muslims in the West could evade Islamophobia or discrimination to
a great extent, compared to their “visible” counterparts. One of my participants’ experiences and perspectives appeared to have confirmed such a possibility. Yet, it is not safe to generalize their experiences, as we need a larger sample and deeper investigations in order to obtain more reliable findings. That being said, this chapter too has revealed an us/racialized Muslim immigrants vs. them/White Canadians/Quebecois dichotomy internalized by many of my participants, which vividly manifested itself in their narratives over their daily lives, especially their job searching and workplace experiences. Such an internalization seems to have been most salient in the Quebec context where the division seems to expose much stronger political tones than the one in the English Canada.
Chapter 8: “Lost in Translation”: The Cultural Facet of Uyghur Shifting Identity

“As long as the world around me has been new each time, it has not become my world; I lived with my teeth clenched against the next assault of the unfamiliar.”

(Hoffman, 1989, p. 278).

Eva Hoffman’s autobiography *Lost in Translation* (1989) tremendously inspired me while I was first ruminating over the initial ideas about this chapter. It was her stories that planted the seeds for this chapter. I find that her personal stories on her identity reconstruction journey in Canada as well as the USA resonate so much with the narratives of the Uyghur immigrants in Canada; the sense of being lost she experienced has mirrored, to a great extent, the identity dilemmas the Uyghurs faced in their new world. That said, before focusing on those dilemmas, some common and different backgrounds of Hoffman and my participants are worthwhile mentioning, in order to better explain the rationale behind choosing Hoffman’s memoir as a frame of reference for this chapter.

Eva Hoffman’s family, as part of the Jewish minority, was living in Poland, a Soviet satellite state, after the World War II. Their migration to Canada was largely triggered by the reality that Poland was not safe enough, both politically and financially, particularly for the Jewish population who were still experiencing deep anti-Semitism after the WWII. That was the main push factor which made them emigrate to Canada in 1959.

Uyghur migration to Canada started by the end of 1990s when communism ceased to be a major “ideological threat” to the Western democracies, following the end of the Cold War. Yet, Xinjiang has not experienced the similar level of political liberalism other regions of China have
enjoyed, apart from some limited autonomy during the 1980s and 1990s (Bovingdon, 2014; Millward, 2004; Waite, 2006, 2007). The recent developments have shown increasingly intensifying political authoritarianism and oppression that has culminated with the creation of a Uyghur vs. the Chinese state dichotomy after the 9/11 incidents (Roberts, 2016, 2018). The current political situation in Xinjiang can be seen as the most serious since the end of Great Cultural Revolution (Zenz, 2018).

In brief, both Hoffman’s family and the Uyghurs wanted to emigrate as a result of their quest for political freedom, equality and future economic prosperity; all factors seem to have great importance for them. They all had had rich life experiences in their home countries prior to beginning their new lives in Canada. They all would experience the sense of being lost in their new worlds where they would “thrash around like a fish thrown from sweet into salty ocean waters” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 160).

However, a difference between the Hoffman family and my research participants should be noted, too. My interviewees all but one (she didn’t learn English before coming to Canada as a dependent of her husband who was the principal applicant) had high levels of English language skills, unlike the Hoffman family who didn’t even possess basic English. Yet, there is some sort of similarity in terms of language skills that two of my participants did not speak any French when they landed in the province of Quebec. Both of them were just accompanying their partners who had passed the French interviews as principal applicants before beginning their immigrant life in Quebec. Among those who went through the French interviews, only one had professional French skills. As such, the Uyghur participants in Quebec could be considered somewhat comparable to Hoffman family regarding their host country language competencies.
Albeit, Hoffman (1989) seems to be solely dwelling on the language aspect of her identity reconstruction journey. Yet, it is incorrect to see the memoir that way; “Lost in translation” occurs beyond the sphere of language or linguistic communication itself; the sense of displacement in the new world Hoffman tries to relate takes place between different cultures; it is the product of an “intercultural contact” (Frittella, 2017, p.370). Through Bourdieu’s lens, it could also be seen as the phenomenon of “hysteresis effect” which emerges when old habitus meets new situations that are not in parallel with the original or traditional upbringings (Bourdieu, 1990, p.78). While Hoffman does not use such academic terms in her memoir, the stories she tells reveal countless “hysteresis effects” she and her family experience in their new world. Thus, I thought it would be particularly useful to understand my participants’ narrated identities through the lens of Lost in Translation. This has enabled me to analyze their experiences through the following themes and subthemes.

8.1. **Estrangement from Local Culture and Politics**

“...they have hardly entered into the web of Canadian life”.

--- Hoffman (1989, p. 141)

Eva Hoffman, here, writes about her parents who came from Poland to Canada in their 40s, roughly around the average age of my participants. Yet, “cultural distances are different” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 146). More specifically speaking, the cultural distance between Poland and Canada is not the same as the gap between Xinjiang/China and Canada. However, the accelerated phase of globalization since 1980s may have made that gap quite negligible. Anyway, this is not my focus.
The main goal here is to explore to what extent the Uyghur immigrants have been feeling at home in Canada. Hoffman’s stories and the ways she explores her own journey have shown me how to digest my participants’ narratives on their cultural experiences in Canada.

Generally, listening to my participants’ narratives, I too sensed very limited enthusiasm about Canadian culture, which is, to a great extent, in parallel with Hoffman’s parents’, illustrated in the beginning of this chapter. Not surprisingly, in responding to my question on Canadian identity and culture, many of them talked about their positions over Canadian sports, the entertainment industry, celebrities, and general social life, showing their lack of interest in those elements in Canadian life. For example, Dolqun from Quebec said:

*I don’t know any Canadian celebrity apart from Celine Dion. I knew she was from Canada when I saw Titanic [the movie] 20 years ago. I knew she was from Montreal only after I came to Quebec. I haven’t thought about following any Canadian celebrity. I am not interested in them. Of course, I know the political leaders like Steven Harper and Justin Trudeau. But I don’t know singers or movie stars. I don’t have time for that. By the way I have to make my kids know about Uyghur celebrities.*

Dolqun is one of those hardworking skilled immigrants who wants to feed his family well first. While “having no time” seems to be a valid reason for not knowing or not being interested in knowing the Canadian celebrities, that is not enough to justify his lack of interest in his surroundings. By the way, he made it clear that he had no intention of following any Canadian celebrity, which may not change easily. Another main factor could be the perceived urgency to protect the Uyghur identity, as he expressed in his last sentence. The same concern was demonstrated by Yashar from Quebec, more vividly. However, in his case, before leaving for Quebec, such a concern was totally submerged by the perceived urgency of internalizing Quebec’s
French culture in order to become more prepared for the life in Canada, which was accompanied by his admiration and love towards “everything French”, as he uttered:

*When I was in Xinjiang, I set a rule in my house forcing everyone to speak French and listen to French music and that situation continued for about a year. We even tried to decorate our house in French style. We loved everything French so much and even imagined we were in Quebec. After coming to Quebec, one of the first things we did was to make everything Uyghur in our rented apartment. Speaking Uyghur became a norm and we quickly decorated our apartment in Uyghur style. It is so ironic that, after many years, we still do not feel we are Quebecois or French; we want to be Uyghur...*

It appears that nostalgia made Yashar do what he did to his family right after arriving in Quebec. At the same time, his immense love towards French culture and lifestyle was eclipsed by his renewed ethnic consciousness in diaspora. Yet, just like Dolqun’s case, the urgency of preserving Uyghur culture and identity which is unrecognized or under-recognized in the West may have pushed him further to defend his own national heritage. Moreover, in both narratives, stressing the importance of native heritage excluded the Canadian or Quebec culture as “the other” from their family spaces. These two sets of identities became mutually exclusive; similar us vs. them dichotomy emerged again.

For Polat from British Columbia, as well, it was difficult to feel like a Canadian after a decade of living in the country. He uttered:

*It is only on the government’s paper that we are Canadian. Emotionally it will take a long time before we will feel like a real Canadian. But I can say now I feel more Canadian than before. I have grown some attachment to Canada, but I am still not that much interested in Canadian politics...We cannot agree totally with the concept of freedom in White culture. We are scared of it...*
Obviously, he was highlighting the “concept of freedom in the White culture” as the primary hurdle stopping him to wholeheartedly accept Canadianness. Put differently, he was equating “the White culture” to Canadian culture; being Canadian meant to internalize that “White culture”.

Accordingly, Azat from British Columbia expressed the similar sentiments, while showing much less enthusiasm towards being Canadian:

While I know many Western or Hollywood movie stars, I am not interested in Canadian celebrities or culture. For example, I really don’t understand Hockey (laughing). It is a tiny ball, and you can’t even see it well. I don’t like it at all. I know the Canadians are crazy about it. But I don’t think I will like it one day… Apart from Celine Dion, I don’t know other Canadian celebrities. I don’t know the names of the Canadian prime ministers before the current and previous one. I am not interested in politics… In my workplace, as well, I cannot be as social as others. I say good morning, hi, good-bye and don’t know what else to say to them… I don’t understand White people’s jokes; they have no effect on me, although my English is good. I don’t know how to make friends with them. I have some good friends who are also immigrants. Although some of my locally born colleagues are not White, they are like White. Most of my friends still are Uyghurs. So, I cannot yet feel I am fully Canadian…

For Azat, his sense of being lost seemed to have come from inside, as in the cases of Dolqun and Yashar, which is his own lack of knowledge about the local culture, and the perceived distance between his own and local “White” culture. He did not feel he was very much included in his workplace, either, partly because of his lack of Western culture. His “closeted” Muslim identity, discussed earlier, was seen by him as incompatible with the Canadian “White” culture, too. While his English was very good, he still could not fully enjoy the jokes uttered by those local White colleagues, which made him feel less Canadian. He longed to be comfortably mingling and making friends with those White Canadians or locally born non-White coworkers who were “like White”.
But he found that he could only be intimate friends with his fellow Uyghurs or other immigrants like himself. All this “reality” made him feel that he was not “fully Canadian yet”. On the other side of the coin, his narratives suggest that only through becoming fully versed with the “White culture”, could he feel like a Canadian. Being Canadian, in his view, was more directly linked with being White Canadian or being like them (locally born non-White people), rather than non-White immigrants.

Dolqun, as well, hinted that the reason why he could not become involved in the local culture. “Their friendship exists only when you get together in some parties. After those parties, you cannot find it. The White people mostly want to be by themselves; they tend to be self-centric….”, he said, referring to the White Quebecois. For him, the barrier was the personality or the mindset as a form of culture of “the White people”, which prevented him from becoming more intimate with them. Meanwhile, he was still consuming the word “friend” in a sense of “strong loyalty and attachment bordering on love”, while being unable to internalize its “good-natured, easy-going sort of” connotation (Hoffman, 1989, p.148) in the “White culture”. Therefore, he could not feel part of Quebec society.

Many other interviews revealed the same “dislocated centers” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 155) the Uyghur participants were at; they could not yet feel truly at home in Canada. “Their love is oddly isolationist: they are not interested in Canadian politics, or the local culture…” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 141). After living in Canada for many years, they could at most name some very famous Canadian celebrities whom they probably had known long before coming to Canada. And among the political leaders, they could only name those who were on the front pages.

That being so, my Uyghur participants seemed to have felt how being Canadian truly meant, through their own children who were born and/or growing up in Canada. This as well made them
feel the growing cultural gap between them and their next generation, as Gülnur from British Columbia recounted:

*About Canadian celebrities I don’t know much. But my daughter knows them so well... She watched the Olympics with excitement. She cheered and jumped when Canadians won medals. You cannot imagine how ecstatic she was while watching the games. Seeing me sitting like a dummy, she asked me why I would not show the same enthusiasm. Looking at her, I realized how it was like truly belonging to a nation. Canada is her motherland. For me, Canada is still a country that hosts me. Do you remember when we all watched 2002 World Cup in your place in Ürümchi? When Turkey beat China, we all cheered for Turkey, rather than China. Now I deeply understand why we did that. We longed for belonging to somewhere as our homeland. And China never will become our homeland.*

Gülnur’s words resonate so much with Hoffman (1989) who writes “I sincerely try to appreciate them [TV shows] too …that instead of being cheered up, as I am supposed to be, I feel a sort of mopeyness, a lowering of my own pulse, coming upon me in response” (p. 140-141). The local culture widely available through mass media can only make them long “for belonging to somewhere” else; somewhere they imagine for themselves. For Gülnur, it was not Canada yet, but her daughter’s vibrant identity as being a Canadian would amuse her, and at the same time would remind her how difficult it is for herself to have “the same enthusiasm” her daughter showed. It may also have been a painful process. The pain could only grow given the reality that their children were alienated from their cultural roots as expressed by Ayshä from Quebec:

*When my kids talk about the famous people in Canada, I cannot be part of their conversation. I always try to let them know about our Uyghur celebrities, but they don’t seem to be very interested in them. They feel more Canadian than I do, I mean much more than I do. I should say, they are becoming real Canadian. They have*
seen our homeland twice, but that is not enough for them to develop an interest in our national celebrities. I feel so sad about it.

Echoing the same voices, Mahirä from Quebec said:

I don’t think I will be 100% Canadian one day. I always miss my hometown X. I belong there. My kids are becoming more attached to Quebec or Canada. Here is their home. We always try to make them watch Uyghur music, dance and shows as much as possible for them not to lose their Uyghur identity and alienate from us...

On the same issue, her husband Dolqun said, “even though we urge the kids to watch Uyghur dance and music, they don’t seem to be very much attracted by them...”, showing his deep worries over his children’s identity. These specific concerns over the alienation of the Uyghur immigrant children from their root culture reflect the assumption that the more the immigrant parents hold on to their original cultures and values, the more they may find it difficult to adjust to the host country (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000). This may also widen the gap between them and their children, which is discussed further in the next subsection.

Moreover, unlike Jewish communities, under the current political situation, Uyghurs may have to strive much harder to make their younger generations cognizant about and fluent in their national culture. For example, in Montreal there is a strong Jewish community who have several institutions that protect and strengthen their culture and heritage. Hoffman (1989) virtually shows no fear of losing or urgency of strengthening her Jewish identity in her autobiography. She and her younger sister would go to local Jewish heritage school during the weekends and that would be sufficient for them to maintain their Jewishness. It is very different for the small number of Uyghurs in Canada where they are not very visible and have no big community. There is no valid rationale to compare Jewish and Uyghur identities in that respect. This being said, the worsening
political repressions over Uyghur identity in Xinjiang may have made the Uyghurs more inward-looking when encountering diverse and exotic cultures in Canada. The sense of identity loss may have pushed them to more attentively focus on their own cultural heritage rather than learning about or developing a strong interest in the mainstream or ‘White’ culture in Canada.

Regarding the more political aspect of the Canadian “White” culture, Azat even expressed his growing “dislike” or frustration.

*I have grown in me dislike about the Western politics which is very much money-oriented. They hold elections after elections, and the economy still does not improve. I am paying so much tax, and I don’t believe that I can afford a house even my income is pretty high. At my age (he was 42 at the time) my mortgage would be very high, and it is difficult to get, as the banks are afraid of me. I am very disappointed with the Canadian politics.*

The above narratives demonstrate that the Western free market economy and its influence on political spheres could create dilemmas among the Uyghurs who had lived in a highly centralized political regime in which the economy is under the direct control of the government, rather than vice versa. Yet, this could be seen as such mostly in Xinjiang, rather than in the interior of China where the Western form of market economy is gaining dynamism in recent years. Therefore, while Azat, like many other middle-class Canadians who have been facing the same financial challenges, questioned the system, the reasons behind his interrogation were tightly linked to his lived experiences in Xinjiang where there is no free election system, which seemingly could save time and money from his perspective. The taxation system in Canada only looked like robbing him off, and all the politicians appeared to be working for the banks, while in China
personal income tax has been as high as 45% in the last 15 years, but it is not transparent to the public at all\textsuperscript{40}.

In sum, both in Quebec and English Canada, the Uyghur immigrants seemed to have been experiencing what Hoffman (1989) terms “oddly isolationist” (p. 141) form of love towards the local Canadian culture, very similar to the scenario of the Hoffman family. They have not yet acquired much interest in the cultural ways of life widely shared and enjoyed in the host country. However, unlike the Hoffman family, the Uyghur participants showed an increasingly strong sense of collective identity crisis, which may have been pushing them to be more inward-looking or conscious in regard with Uyghur collective identity. This process may have contributed to their limited passion about being Canadian. Moreover, the life experiences under the highly centralized authoritarian system in Xinjiang, where many economic and political processes are not transparent, may have created in some Uyghurs apathy or suspicion towards the Canadian political culture as a whole.

Equally important, for many of my participants both from Quebec and English Canada, Whiteness was equal to being Canadian; they perceived “White culture” as “the norm” for being Canadian or Quebecois, revealing a serious mismatch with the discourse of multiculturalism or interculturalism, both of which highlight the diverse ingredients that make up Canadian or Quebec identity (Ghosh & Abdi, 2013). To a great extent, this may have been the result of what Stanfill (2018) calls “default-White media” (p. 305) that has been shaping the narratives on race and nationhood among the general populations in the West and the Global South. Thus, as immigrants from a developing nation that have been heavily consuming the Western media in the last few decades, my participants could voice being Canadian mostly in that way. Probably they won’t

\textsuperscript{40} For more information on personal income tax rate in China, please check https://tradingeconomics.com/china/personal-income-tax-rate
easily change their perspective very soon as Whiteness is still overrepresented in the Canadian media. For example, it is estimated that in Canada 90 per cent of the public broadcasters’ staff is White (Mochama, 2017). Generally speaking, dominance of White representation in media at the expense of other races have always been maintaining itself in our post-colonial era (Griffin, 2014; Kendall, 2013).

8.2. Growing Inter-generational Distance

What is our Alinka turning into? ....my sister pains us with her capacity for change, with becoming so different from what she was. She is leaving us abruptly, leaving us to find her own pleasure.

(Hoffman, 1989, p.143)

Eva Hoffman here is describing her younger sister who came to Canada at the age of nine. Therefore, Canada virtually is the primary venue where her early life experiences take place. She does not have significant or conscious memories about her life in Poland that could have made her more resistant to the Canadian ways of life. So, “her capacity for change” turns out to be astonishing and difficult for Eva and her parents to accept. Similar scenarios were reflected through the narratives of many Uyghur parents I interviewed, who, too, sensed the ever-growing gap between them and their children. Such a growing distance they perceived seemed to be cultural or emotional, or both.

At the cultural level, it appears that some lifestyle factors would often cause frictions among the Uyghur parents and their young children, as Ramilä from Ontario recounts:
My daughter likes to dress up like the local kids, which I don’t like, as it is too open. When we say she should not be like that, she will become angry, saying that we are out of date. We don’t want to create more tension, so we just accept it. But we feel bad.

While, Ramlâ did not require her daughter to wear a hijab, as she herself was not wearing one, she was not happy to see her “dressing up like local kids” who were too liberal. The culture her daughter was adopting from Canadian society was seen alien to their Uyghur cultural tradition which emphasizes modesty, especially regarding women (Smith Finley, 2015). Accordingly, several Uyghur parents expressed their concerns over their daughters’ dressing styles during my interviews. They generally accepted the reality but felt very disappointed.

The gap could also be emotional. For example, some Uyghur parents felt their children should have been emotionally closer to them. It seemed that they, like Hoffman, realized “the familial bonds seem[ed] so dangerously loose here” in Canada (Hoffman, 1989, p. 145). Azat from BC narrated his concerns as such:

The teachers want children to be independent from their parents, not to be close or bonding with them. They teach the kids what parts of their body their parents cannot touch. In wätän, the bonding between parents and kids is very strong. In our culture, parents and kids should be very close; they should hug each other a lot; they should be able to sleep next to each other. So, I hug my daughter a lot. The first thing I do when she wakes up in the morning is to give her a long hug...I think this is also a societal issue. I found that it is difficult to be friends with the local Canadians (meaning White Canadians). There is a wall between us. They don’t easily show intimacy. They seldom gather with their friends and have fun... I don’t know how to make friends with them. I have some good friends who are also immigrants. Although some of my locally born colleagues are not White, they are like White...

Azat perceived the same “reality” Hoffman (1989) describes, while highlighting the bonding between parents and children in Uyghur childrearing culture. As Zang (2017) finds in his study on
Uyghur conceptions of family and society, the parent–child relations among Uyghurs are “more affectionate, more equal, and more consistent and interdependent than those among Han Chinese” who heavily rely on Confucius way of parenting which advocates strict discipline and hierarchy, while stressing filial piety. As one of Zang’s (2017) informants said, the Han Chinese parents are “stern and stress discipline; they don’t show as much affection for children” (p. 48).

Although Azat didn’t compare Han Chinese with Uyghurs in this aspect, his above narratives are in line with the findings of Zang (2017), in terms of how Uyghurs value affection in intergenerational relationships. In Azat’s view, the very Uyghur way of life was defied by the Canadian “White culture” reproduced by the Canadian education. Azat clearly didn’t want to see the widening emotional distance between him and his daughter. For him, as well as for many other Uyghur immigrants, there should be no such a gap between parents and children.

He sensed the possibilities that his daughter would become alienated from him as the result of her exposure to the Canadian education and broader society, if he did not act immediately. Yet, it seemed to have been very difficult for him to prevent it from happening as he “realized that it [was] a societal issue”. The White people had such a culture that would make anyone “cold”, like “some of [his] locally born colleagues [who became] like White”.

Eva Hoffman’s mother and Azat, who both happened to be living in Vancouver, felt the same unpleasant distance between them and their daughters, and could not be comfortable about it. Similar to Hoffman’s mother who did not want her daughter – Eva to turn into “English” or “cold” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 146), Azat didn’t want the bonding between him and his daughter become loosened in the future. He expressed his worries, highlighting the situation among the White Canadians, specifically describing how he found it very difficult to be close friends with the White people in Canada.
Ayshä from Quebec, voiced her concerns more vividly, similar to the points of Azat:

*I really don’t want to be like the Quebecois people (White people as she made clear later41) who end up living alone and miserably at the old age. But I have a feeling that my children, especially my son is drifting away from me. I want to chat with them on many things, but they don’t want to sit with me very often. I remember I was so much attached to my parents when I was their age. They socialize with their friends, much more often than with us…*

The sense of growing distant Ayshä sensed between her and her children is indeed a painful one. She again highlighted the inter-generational bonding in the Uyghur culture, through her own childhood memories, while comparing it with the Canadian or Quebec one, in which the elderly White parents would “end up living alone and miserably in their old age”, far away from their children. Meanwhile, she expressed her deep hope that her children would not become alienated from her in the future. In other words, here, the similar “cold” nature of inter-generational connection in the “White” Quebec society was perceived and rejected at the same time.

That said, the Canadian “cold” way of familial bonding, at least partly, may have been the result of the growing discourse of individualism in the West. Collectivism, as a competing discourse, is dominant in Eastern societies (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). As members of the Jewish cultural community, as well as having come from Poland which was a satellite state of the former USSR, Hoffman’s parents express their rejection of individualism, in a similar way as my research participants who have an Oriental/Muslim background which intersects with the Chinese style of communism or socialism; both highlight collectivism. As Ahmad (2011) contends, in Islamic philosophy, the collectivism needed for building a civilized society is strongly

41 During many other conversations, it became clear that by saying Quebecois, the Uyghur participants meant White people in Quebec, rather than the racial others who were born in Quebec, too.
highlighted at different levels. At the family level, the obligation of the children is emphatically stressed. For example, the Qur’an says:

“Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him and that ye be kind to parents, whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life. Say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them but address them in terms of honour” (Qur’an, 17:23).

As such, the growing inter-generational gap perceived by my participants indeed reflects their concerns over their children’s becoming “cold” in Canada where individualism may have been one of the major root causes of such a phenomenon. The Uyghur way of family life which is based on a strong emotional connection between parents and children does not very well match with the Canadian “cold” and “White” one, which is deeply affected by the discourse of individualism. Thus, both in Quebec and English Canada, the Uyghur participants voiced very similar concerns about the growing inter-generational distance, highlighting the collectivism that has been at the core of the Uyghur family space. More specifically, familial bonding and filial piety, as stressed in the above Qur’anic verses, were seen as at stake in the Canadian “White” and “cold” society.

8.3. “Hysteresis” Effect and Shifting Habitus

“And how much more figuring out what that place might be, where on earth I might find a stable spot that feels like it’s mine, and from which I can calmly observe the world”.


Bourdieu (1990) highlights the existence of a “hysteresis effect” which takes place when old habitus meets new situations that are not in parallel with the original or traditional upbringings;
old habitus cannot catch up with the new conditions or positions which are built on some unfamiliar habitus, resulting in delay (p.78). Such an effect may help individuals change their habitus or creatively adapt to the new contexts while modifying the original ones (Kerr & Robinson, 2009). Accordingly, more and more scholars in recent years have argued that habitus, as the way of life, is becoming more flexible in our increasingly globalized and interconnected world (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Horvat & Davis, 2011; Lee & Kramer, 2013).

Coming back to *Lost in Translation*, while Hoffman (1989) does not use any specific lens at a theoretical level to describe her identity dilemmas in the new world, her narratives reveal the very “hysteresis effect” she experienced when encountering the new ways of life in the North America. Recalling the early years of her new life in the new continent, she writes:

> The more I come to know about America, the more I have the dizzying sensation that I am a quantum particle trying to locate myself within a swirl of atoms. How much time and energy I’ll have to spend just claiming an ordinary place for myself! (p.160).

Yet, towards the end, she also puts: “eventually, the voices enter me; by assuming them, I gradually make them mine. I am being remade, fragment by fragment, like a patchwork quilt; there are more colors in the world than I ever knew” (p. 220). Obviously, after going through a “hysteresis” effect (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 78), she gradually starts adapting herself to the fresh sets of habitus in the new world, and beginning to see the beauty of her new home, while feeling that her “sense of the future returns like a benediction, to balance the earlier annunciation of loss. It returns in the simplest of ways” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 279).

Indeed, habitus is transformable at a conscious or unconscious level, and such a process can be reflective, too (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Horvat & Davis, 2011). As Hoffman illustrates in her memoir, people may be able to transform their habitus while adapting to their new social
contexts in our increasingly interconnected era (Byrom & Lightfoot 2012; Horvat & Davis 2011; Rosenberg, 2011).

As such, Hoffman was able to build her new self after many years of struggling between two sets of cultures or habitus. The narratives of my participants, as well, indicated that the identity is not immutable; it changes as habitus can adapt itself to new contexts. At the same time, the old sets of habitus are questioned regarding their validity in the new world. Yet, before coming to the stories of my participants, it is important to note that in our highly globalized world, people may have been experiencing habitus transformations without even moving to exotic or fresh contexts.

For example, in 2016, soon after somebody shared a short video of an extravagant Uyghur wedding in Xinjiang, the Uyghur Internet was bombarded by the narratives mocking and criticizing the lavish ceremony that showed off wealth and fame. While, as Byler and Kadir (2016) argue, displaying wealth and elaborate music and dancing during weddings were indeed part of traditional Uyghur culture, in our current globalized world, the Uyghur mass have already started to break away from their old mindsets or habitus. In the authors’ words, “mocking Ms. Munirä’s wedding was a way of identifying what they did not want to be”. The strong intention to pull oneself away from those characteristics is already a sign of feeling uncomfortable within one’s own culture or habitus.

Obviously, living in Canada can create even greater influences on the Uyghur habitus, which would be subject to more direct and powerful stimulations and long-lasting impacts. As such, we could see the vivid signs of “hysteresis” effect my participants experienced in their new Canadian contexts. These could be clearly observed from the narratives of Azat from British Columbia.

>You know, it is difficult for me to feel like a Canadian even though I have a Canadian passport now. I still cannot understand the White people. They are
difficult to approach. I try to be close to them, but they always seem to want to keep some distance from me. I don’t understand the way they treat people. They call you a friend, but you don’t feel you are friends.

Evidently, he was experiencing the clash between his original habitus with the new one he encountered during his interaction with the local White Canadians. More specifically, the habitus within social interactions in Canada didn’t match with his habitus adopted through his life within the Uyghur community. It is like Eva Hoffman (1989) being seen as “English” and “cold” by her mother, while Eva Hoffman learned from her teacher how to interact with others in a Canadian way (p.146). Moreover, Azat saw White people as a unique category - the representatives of Canadians. He would not feel like a Canadian, because he could not “understand the White people”. The similar narratives were voiced by some other participants, too, like Yashar from Quebec who said: “The White people are too materialistic; they want to enjoy life as much as they can; they don’t save money. They don’t want to get married and have kids. I cannot imagine myself living like that.”

Dolqun, too, expressed his similar perspectives by saying:

They (White Quebecois) don’t show their respect towards the elderly people, as we do, as there is no age difference between two generations... Their friendship exists only when you get together in some parties. After those parties, you cannot find it. They mostly want to be by themselves; they tend to be self-centered.

These narratives indicate that the Uyghur immigrants were experiencing “hysteresis” effect as the result of the mismatch between their original habitus and Canadian “White” culture. These voices resonate much with the narratives of Hoffman (1989) who is “an incompletely assimilated immigrant, [who is]...always confronting ‘the Culture,’ [which] is becoming... more celebrity obsessed, more materialistic, more sentimental (p. 220)”. That is her perception of “the Culture”
she has not yet been able to adjust to. Here, she uses a capital “c” for culture, most probably highlighting its prominence or power in her new world. The Uyghurs would not feel otherwise about some aspects of Canadian culture – the “White” Culture, either. Such a representation could be more of a reality, rather than just a perception in Hoffman’s time of 1960s or 70s or even 80s during which the White people were the overwhelming majority in Canada. However, Hoffman does not stress her Jewishness contrasting it to Whiteness based on Anglo-Saxon root. Instead, she seems to give more attention to the communist and collectivistic culture she came from, comparing it with the North American, highly individualistic, materialistic “cold Culture”.

That said, Hoffman’s (1989) lack of concern or reflection over “Whiteness” in becoming Canadian or North American is most probably due to her own racial invisibility within North America. As Jacobson (1999) puts it, “like other non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, Jews gradually became Caucasians over the course of 20th century” (p. 172). Thus, the main struggle she experienced between Anglo-Saxon and Jewish/East European identities is cultural rather than racial. However, the advantages bestowed to Anglo-Saxon culture are undoubtedly predictable and “natural”. These are among the series of invisible privileges that the White people can enjoy in the West, as illustrated in McIntosh’s (1989) list42; they can still be as prevalent as before in our social media driven post-colonial world (Griffin 2014; Kendall 2013).

Echoing such hidden power relations, many of my participants implied that Whiteness would directly represent the Canadian identity; being White is being Canadian; Whiteness is “the norm” in becoming Canadian; Canadian culture is White culture. They most often would compare

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themselves with the White people and their culture when they were asked about their Canadian identity.

Yet, just like Hoffman (1989) who gradually adapts to the local ways of life, my participants also highlighted similar tendencies in their stories. For example, Ayshā’s narratives could reveal such a development very well.

*Although I cannot feel yet I am Canadian, I feel I am different from who I was before. My perspectives were too narrow. I used to think people were either good or bad…you know, we were taught or raised that way, both in school and at home. We judge people according to their look or clothes. When I first arrived here, I was astonished to see how casually people were dressed, and how non-judgmental they were towards each other...*

This was another response to the question on being Canadian, and she clearly tied her points with the Canadian ways of life she perceived through her lived experiences. Now she was questioning her old ways of thinking and behaving, while revealing her acceptance of the new ways of life in Canada. She was breaking away from some of her original habitus, while adopting some new ones into her life. Yashar from Quebec was more direct in expressing his voices in parallel with Ayshā’s by saying “I don’t think now I can live as comfortably as before in the city I was born in. Many things seem to have changed in me. I am more comfortable here”. Likewise, Sattar from British Columbia, uttered similar points, recalling his visit to his hometown in 2015, “I realized that there was a large gap between me and my old friends. When we chatted, our points didn’t match well anymore. Our world views became different. I think I am becoming more Canadian? Maybe.”

The above three participants had two common points. First, they had now new outlooks on life which were quite different from the old ones. Second, they appeared to have already started to
appreciate their new worldviews and lifestyles that they had internalized in Canada. They were signaling that their overall habitus had begun to shift; they had become “more Canadian”.

Ramilä from Ontario expressed some equivalent positions, but from a more overtly political angle, relating her memories when she went back to Xinjiang last time in 2015:

*I feel that now I cannot live in wätän without feeling a lot of stress. You are either supposed to support the government or you are the enemy of the people. And I can’t stand anymore how the Han Chinese treat us in the stores, in government offices, everywhere. After coming to Canada, I felt the equality, especially being women and minority...I feel more like a human being and Canadian. Many things in wätän are too much for me to accept now...*

Here, Ramilä pointed out the everyday discrimination the Uyghurs face in Xinjiang, as well as the political habitus people have become used to over the years. Now she could not feel the old ways of life in Xinjiang as normal, while starting to appreciate the new sets of habitus in Canada, during which she would become more “like a human being and Canadian”. She was also questioning the habitus at the macro level in Xinjiang society, like Hoffman (1989) who does by revisiting her original home context:

*The System over there [in Poland], by specializing in deceit, has bred in its citizens an avid hunger for what they still quaintly call the truth. Of course, the truth is easier to identify when it’s simply the opposite of a lie. So much Eastern European thinking moves along the axis of bipolar ideas, still untouched by the peculiar edginess and fluidity created by a more decentered world (p. 211).*

Hoffman’s (1989) above description over the political habitus in Poland can help us better analyze of the ideological or political habitus in Xinjiang exposed in Ramilä’s narratives. As a highly centralized region, Xinjiang, under the current political regime could only produce such epistemological mindsets among its inhabitants who would only follow “the truth” or be easily
regarded as the supporters of “lies”, which refer to everything regarded as the threat to the Chinese state. There is only good or bad, friends or enemies; there is nothing in between. In other words, the Uyghurs should recognize the relationship between themselves and the Chinese state in a “bipolar” fashion; they can either be allies or enemies; there cannot be other identities, which is accompanied by the government’s similar bipolar or deeply hierarchical treatments towards the Uyghurs and Han population. Through such a process, the Uyghurs also have to internalize, in Taylor’s (1992) words, their “reduced mode of being’ (p.25).

This being highlighted, Ramilä now started to highly appreciate her new way of life in Canada where she was adapting to the new sets of habitus hugely different from the ones in Xinjiang. Meanwhile, the gap between the political cultures in two very distinct contexts may most probably have produced some “hysteresis” effects in the beginning. But she soon started to adjust and make herself comfortable in the fresh Canadian context. Like many other participants, her habitus transformed in a way that would make her feel more at home. Simultaneously, Xinjiang could no longer give her the same sense of comfort, belonging and normality.

Obviously, the “hysteresis” effect and habitus transformation journeys have not terminated at all but will continue among the Uyghur immigrants in Canada. Hoffman (1989) spends three decades to feel at home, to make sure that “this is the place where [she is] alive”; no other space can replace it (p. 280). Only time can tell if my participants will have a similar future. Their incomplete translation into the local Canadian or Quebec Culture will not stop there. But no one can guarantee that they all will achieve equal outcomes. Because, again, “cultural distances are different” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 146), and we are all different as individuals who are all subjective beings.
8.4. Summary

“Lost in translation” (Hoffman, 1989) is reflected through the narratives of my participants in three main aspects: lack of interest in local politics and culture, widening inter-generational distance, and “hysteresis” effect and shifting habitus. All three facets could represent some very typical identity crises among many immigrants who have certain levels of cultural distance from the Culture of the host society. The Uyghur participants, as being a marginalized Muslim group from China, also revealed some unique identity dilemmas through their everyday narratives.

Their lack of interest in local politics may have been the result of the highly sensitive nature of political matters in China, especially in regard with Uyghurs, as discussed earlier. As such, my participants may still have been maintaining their old habitus that would keep them away from political topics. Speaking of the local culture, my participants again generally expressed that they had not yet developed strong enthusiasm towards the Canadian “White” Culture, while becoming more emphatic over their original cultural heritage. Albeit, their children’s passion towards and fluency in the local culture would amuse them, but at the same time, it created frustration or anxiety in them, as they perceived their children were alienating from their roots. Moreover, the tendency of seeing the local culture/s through the “White” lens seemed to have been quite widespread among my participants. Their perspectives over being Canadian and “Whiteness” only reinforced their sense of being lost. The discourses around multiculturalism or interculturalism had not yet become the part of their epistemology or the way to look at diversity in Canada. They are not only lost in the relatively apolitical local culture, but the much politicized “White” culture hidden in the discourses around nation building which continue “to centre the experiences of the ‘two founding’ nations of Canada” (Leroux, 2012, p. 67).
Meanwhile, the worsening political repressions over Uyghur identity in Xinjiang may have made them more inward-looking. The sense of identity loss may have further pushed them to emphasize their own cultural heritage rather than develop strong interests in the mainstream White cultures in Canada. Meanwhile, some of them revealed their increased distance from their original ways of life or worldviews, which is a sign of habitus transformation.

That said, the perception of the growing inter-generational distance turned out to have been quite common among my participants, as well. More specifically, the gap was easily recognized when two generations of family members tried to have conversations on the local society and culture. Furthermore, the widening inter-generational distance was also perceived by many Uyghur parents who felt their children were becoming “cold” or emotionally alienated from them. Again, they tended to associate their perception of loose inter-generational bonding in Canadian society with the White people and their culture. They rejected the discourse of individualism, highlighting interdependence of parents and children, obviously relying on the discourse of collectivism, constructed and maintained by Islamic culture and probably reinforced by communism. Therefore, some sets of Canadian habitus did not make their ways into their mentalities and lifestyles.

This being so, many of my participants in all contexts demonstrated some vivid signs of adaptation to or integration in the Canadian ways of life, while experiencing dilemmas and challenges illustrated above. The dilemmas and challenges could be seen as the result of the “hysteresis” effect or “cleft” habitus (Bourdieu, 1990, 1999). The local culture, more specifically the “White” culture again created various challenges among the Uyghur immigrants; they found it difficult to internalize some sets of habitus within the local “White” cultural space. Nevertheless, many of them started to adapt to and appreciate the local ways of life and feel more at home in diverse Canadian contexts. They would most probably continue transforming their habitus through
their deepening interactions with the local modes of life. In our increasingly interconnected world, habitus transformation that leads to effective integration is becoming more and more achievable (Byrom & Lightfoot 2012; Horvat & Davis 2011; Rosenberg 2011). Obviously, their “translation” into Canadian Culture is still a work in progress, unlike Hoffman’s, which is completed and fully sufficient to make her feel truly at home in the North American Culture.
CHAPTER 9: Final Remarks

9.1. Conclusion

Overall, the Uyghur immigrants I interviewed were undergoing very complex and multiple layers of identity reconstruction experiences. For this reason, I strongly believe that the multiple theoretical lenses have offered me a very effective tool to explore their sophisticated lived experiences in various Canadian contexts. Using any one those lenses separately or without intersecting them with one another would have yielded a very partial or even misleading picture about their identity reconstruction journeys. To meaningfully understand their identity experiences demands crisscrossing the perspectives of identity politics, post-colonialism, critical race theory, and the cultural lens – “Lost in Translation” (Hoffman, 1989). I was aware of this when I just started writing my theoretical chapter, and I have deeply convinced that I moved towards the right direction.

Methodologically, critical narrative analysis, a synergistic combination of critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis (Souto-Manning, 2010, 2014), has enabled me to tap into the power dimensions of my participants’ narratives, through which I have been able to analyze how systemic or macro level discourses shaped the everyday narratives of the Uyghur immigrants and how their narratives reflected those discourses. Meanwhile, I could see how some Uyghur immigrants were able to challenge the systemic discourses via their narratives. Through such a hybrid methodology, I could also analyze how the politics of unequal power relations in our post-colonial era would manifest itself through the integration processes of an immigrant group from a marginalized and racialized (ethnically and religiously) background.
Generally speaking, the findings of this comparative study revealed both similar and different experiences and perspectives of the Uyghur immigrants in Quebec and English Canada. Regarding the educational culture and spaces, they expressed very common voices and concerns over the nature of the Canadian education systems, especially its perceived positive and negative influences on the identity of their next generations. On the one hand, they unanimously showed their admiration and high regards towards the Canadian education systems, signaling that they had heavily internalized the legacy of the post-colonialism and Orientalism that locates the powerful knowledge and modernity in the West, while the East is seen as backward or lacking modernity (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1984). On the other hand, many of them also started to see the unfavorable or harmful aspects of the Canadian education system in regard with their identity and traditional cultural values. Most importantly, the discourses of liberalism and individualism reproduced in such an education system began to clash with their original cultural values and aspirations.

At the same time, they started to realize the values of their own traditional knowledge system or in Yosso’s (2005) words, “community cultural wealth”, which is excluded from the Eurocentric or White education systems or the scope of cultural capital in the West. While, the Uyghur participants’ narratives reflected the systemic discourses surrounding the powerful knowledge in our post-colonial era, many of them also challenged such discourses highlighting their negative effects. This was the case both in English Canada and Quebec contexts, yet, in the latter, the perceived lower status of the French education vs. the English was very much noticeable among the participants, which revealed a different set of unequal power relations in the North American cultural capital market. Although, Quebec’s minority status within Canada affected the attractiveness of its education system, its special rights in relation to language and education were deeply admired by my participants while comparing to Xinjiang.
Looking primarily through the lens of “Lost in Translation” (Hoffman, 1989), my participants in both contexts again demonstrated very similar voices and sentiments. In this section, I tried to present my participants’ narratives along with the story of Eva Hoffman (1989) on her and her family’s integration journeys in the cultural spaces of Canada as well as in the USA. Probably, the method of constant comparison was most vividly utilized in this chapter. That said, the narratives of both sides, i.e. my participants’ and Hoffman’s resonated so much with each other under three broad themes: estrangement from local culture and politics, growing inter-generational distance, and the “hysteresis” effect and shifting habitus.

Overall, two common and striking elements stood out through their narratives. Firstly, most of my participants tended to perceive Canadian or Quebec culture as White culture, showing the lack of internalization of the declared aims of Canadian discourses around multiculturalism and interculturalism that highlight the equality of all cultures in the mosaic of Canadian identity and Quebec identity, with the exception of prioritizing the French language. Or looking from a different angle, their experiences or perspectives would expose the “the inconsistencies of the Canadian multicultural story” or the “new-liberal multiculturalism and exclusive national discourses” (Ku, 2012, p. 33), or the hidden dominance of “two founding” White nations in the discourse of Canadian diversity (Leroux, 2012, p. 67). In the name of secular inclusiveness, Canadian multiculturalism marginalizes the cultures and religions of the non-White minorities, especially the Muslims (Azmi, 2001). Yet, Hoffman (1989) virtually does not mention Whiteness in her autobiography, most probably due to her invisible racial background in North America; her narratives do not include elements around race. Nevertheless, she is too affected by the cultural dominance of “the founding nations” of Canada, which first demonstrated itself pushing her to acquire the new name - “Eva”, in place of the original “Ewa” (p. 105). From then on, she faces
countless challenges while trying to adapt herself to “the English Culture” (obviously White) in the North America. Actually, her Jewish background is racialized, too, though it is a very subtle process, unlike the Muslims whose racialization has been much more overt in our more recent post-colonial era. Thus, exposed here is a hidden White privilege which could be seen as a critical addition to the McIntosh’s (1989) list, from the Uyghur perspective or beyond.

The second common point among my participants is that they unanimously revealed their incomplete translation into the Canadian Culture, while Hoffman (1989) delightfully shares her sense of being truly at home; “this is the place where [she is] alive”; no other space can replace it (p. 280). They would still need much longer time to complete their journeys of being fully translated into “the Canadian ways of life”. In brief, writing this chapter hugely helped me in exploring the lived experiences of my participants by means of Hoffman’ insights which are highly relevant and meaningful.

That said, the reconstruction of the ethnic/national and religious identities of my participants revealed some parallel as well as different characteristics in Quebec and English Canada. Generally speaking, the Uyghur immigrants in both contexts expressed a much more fortified form of Uyghur ethnic/national and religious identity. More specifically, the emerging themes in this section manifest six noticeable tendencies among my participants’ identity: increased consciousness about being Uyghur, stronger Islamic identity, inseparability of being Uyghur and Muslim, biased views over radicalization, quest for recognition of their homeland as a sovereign nation, and experiencing Islamophobia. The first tendency could be regarded as the result of their encountering the “significant others” (Triandafyllidou, 1998, p. 594), or their interaction with “the Other” who are different from themselves (Hall, 2000, p. 17). Equally important, the long-existing discourse of “Internal Orientalism” (Schein, 1997) and the
intensification of the political oppression coming from the Chinese government represented by the majority Han Chinese (Millward, 2018; Smith Finley, 2013) may have been further othering or alienating the Uyghurs, including the diaspora communities from the Chinese state, as a “malign” form of identification process, as theoretically suggested by Weinreich (2003).

The growing sense of Islamic identity cannot be understood without considering the above factors, as being Uyghur is automatically seen as being Muslim in the Uyghur popular discourse (Brophy, 2016; Kuscu, 2013). Yet, there is some evidence that the Uyghur immigrants in Canada may have started to consume these two identity markers separately, as a few of my participants expressed hesitation in denying the ethnic or national identity of the Uyghurs who converted to other religions, namely Christianity. That being said, most of my participants revealed their lack of strong awareness or seriousness over their Islamic identity prior to immigrating to Canada, while exhibiting the growing sense of belonging to the global Muslim community. The reason behind it could be partly related to the above-mentioned identity politics that further differentiated them from the “others”. Meanwhile, many of my participants learned being a “real” Muslim from other “real” Muslims in Canada, which was a process of identification to other more “authentic” Muslims. These “real” Muslims, in Weinreich’s (2003) words, as “others”, were seen as benign, so they would “aspire to their characteristics, values and beliefs (a process of ‘idealistic-identification’), rather than malign, therefore they wish to dissociate from their characteristics (a process of ‘defensive identification’)” (pp. 54-55). In this respect, the increasingly oppressive and irreligious/anti-Muslim Chinese state would typically represent the “malign others”, from whom the Uyghurs want to disassociate themselves, as mentioned above.

Furthermore, the reality that the Uyghur ethnic/national identity is becoming increasingly fragile and in danger (Bovingdon, 2010, 2014; Roberts, 2016, 2018a) may have been pushing
many Uyghurs to embrace Islam more willingly and passionately. Concurrently, the widespread public as well as systemic discourses around Islamophobia in the West seem to have further reinforced their self-awareness as Muslims and made them more conscious and emphatic over their religious identity. The similar trend in Xinjiang, as a form of resistance, has also been attributed to the increasingly Islamophobic and oppressive policies of the Chinese government (Smith-Finely, 2013, 2018; Harris, 2014; Leibold & Grose, 2016). All of this reality may have been enriching the Uyghur social capital more in terms of bonding (within their own group) rather than bridging relationships (with other groups) (Putnam, 2000), especially with the non-Muslims.

In terms of the phenomena of extremism and radicalization, the Uyghur participants unanimously expressed that they had not seen anything problematic within the Canadian formal education systems that could make young students more vulnerable to radicalization. While being relatively unaware of the existence of Uyghur militancy in Syria connected with ISIS, they were very much knowledgeable about the radicalization issue among local Canadians. At the same time, all of them, including those few who had heard of the Uyghur fighters in Syria, denounced the terroristic motives behind the Uyghur involvement in violence, while highlighting the radicalizing factors created by the Chinese oppressive policies that have been marginalizing and disenfranchising the young Uyghurs. This point has been specifically highlighted by many scholars who work on Xinjiang too (e.g. Roberts, 2016, 2018a,b; Smith Finely, 2018), and could be further validated by Bélanger and his colleagues’ (2019) recent psychological research that confirms a positive correlation between social alienation and intention to join a radical group or ideologically-based violence.

However, my participants generally did not seem to have noticed any radicalizing factors within the Canadian society or education systems, apart from some informal educational spaces.
In the Canadian context, including Quebec, they tended to highlight the religious or faith factors behind the phenomenon of extremism or terrorism, reflecting the dominant discourses that link Muslim identity or Islam directly with violence and terrorism, revealing the legacy of Orientalism (Hilal, 2017; Mamdani, 2004; Volpp, 2002). Most likely, this is partly the result of the biased media coverage in the West regarding Islam and Muslims, as scrutinized by Edward Said (1981, 1997). A typical example of such a media coverage is Silva’s (2017) very recent analysis of 607 New York Times articles from 1969 to 2014 exposing that the US news media has been employing “strategic discursive strategies that contribute to the conceptual distinctions that are used to construct Muslims as an ‘alien’ to the West” (p. 138). Consequently, their voiceless or subaltern identity as Muslims would become more salient when they dwelled on such a controversial and sensitive topic.

That said, their voicelessness was further accentuated through two sorts of serious concerns they emphasized: Islamophobia and the lack of public recognition of Uyghurs as a separate nation. Both of these were the continuation of the already-existing concerns within the Chinese state. Although, comparatively speaking, the former was hugely alleviated in Canada, it demonstrated itself still quite vividly in Quebec, while the latter was equally intensified in both contexts. The unknown status of the Uyghurs as a distinct ethnic group, let alone a nation, dismayed all of my participants to a great extent. Meanwhile, almost all of them expressed their strong quest or desire to be recognized as a nation separate from China. Again, such a quest may have been reinforced by the increasingly discriminatory and oppressive Chinese government policies that have made the all Uyghurs enemies of the state (Roberts, 2018a). In other words, the Chinese government’s intensified “othering” of the Uyghurs may have further estranged from the Chinese state. Even in Canada, many of them could feel such “othering” coming from the Han Chinese immigrants whom
they would perceive as hateful and discriminatory towards the Uyghurs. In other words, the “self and other” dichotomy (Marková, 2007, p. 209) formed in China continued in Canada; the Uyghurs further drifted away from the Chinese state and the Han population.

Albeit, my participants voiced or perceived significantly different levels of discrimination due to their Muslim identity in Quebec and English Canada, while expressing their equally deep awareness of the existence of Islamophobia in various parts of Canada. As mentioned earlier, they were already very much conscious about their Muslim identity and its implications in Xinjiang, yet coming to Canada has not ended their fears, if alleviated them to a great extent. Indeed, the recent rise of hate crimes against Muslims in the West, including Canada (Fry, 2018; Nakhaie, 2018), may have further contributed to their worries regarding Islamophobia and the subsequent discrimination they may have to face in Canada. That said, the participants in Alberta and Ontario expressed that they had experienced very low levels of discrimination or Islamophobia, while in Quebec they revealed the highest level of dissatisfaction with the everyday treatment they received as Muslims, particularly in the local labour market. In British Columbia, the concerns mostly revolved around the possible or perceived discrimination or exclusion, if not their actual experiences.

All of this greatly coincides with the findings of various other studies revealing that the challenges the Muslims face in Quebec may have been significantly more difficult than in other provinces of Canada (e.g. Amarasingam & Tiflati, 2015; Dwivedi, 2017; Forum Research Inc. 2016). Accordingly, the poll conducted by the Association for Canadian Studies in 2013 shows that the opinions of Muslims among the Francophone Canadians turned out to be “especially low”, compared to other non-Muslim groups in Canada (Jedwab, 2015, p.109). Moreover, there is a possibility that these Uyghur immigrants have
internalized or developed an “us/Muslim immigrants vs. them/local White Canadians” dichotomy in various contexts, yet again the degree of such a gap may vary in different provinces, with Quebec exposing probably the biggest chasm. This is again largely in parallel with Reitz et al’s (2017) quantitative study that reveals a gap in terms of social integration between the Canadian Muslims and non-Muslims (White or non-White). Apart from the social integration aspect, my participants’ perspectives expose the contextual and racial dimensions of such a gap through their everyday narratives.

More specifically, in English Canada, such a dichotomy seems to be more cultural and less political, while in Quebec it appears to be equally political and cultural. However, the boundary between these two aspects becomes hazy when it comes to the question of whose culture represents Canadianness or Quebecness from the Uyghur perspective. In Quebec, the political tone of such a dichotomy demonstrates itself most vividly around the perceived positions of my participants in labor market competition. At the same time, they regarded Quebec culture as a Francophone White culture; they did not show their internalization of Quebec interculturalism that emphasizes the social cohesion based on inclusion of and respect towards various minority cultures as valid components of Quebec society, while giving special priority only to the French language, nothing more (Bouchard, 2011; Ghosh & Abdi, 2013). Ironically, the Uyghurs in China including my participants want the same linguistic and political assertion that Quebecers enjoy within Canada.

As such, my participants seemed to have developed a conception that would put them in subordinate position compared to the White Quebecois or “French people”. This also resonates greatly with a recent study revealing that many Muslims in Quebec perceive the schools and society spread the very discourse that being White and ethnically French were key to be seen as
Quebecois (Ghosh, Tiflati, Chan & Helal, 2018). Meanwhile, the division between the Muslim immigrants and White Quebecers can be a two-way street; for example, as Jamil (2014a) argues, the tone of the Report on the Reasonable Accommodation of the cultural minorities in Quebec reveals the anxiety that “‘they’ [Muslims] are ‘demanding’ too much accommodation for their religious and cultural beliefs, and ‘we’ [White Quebecers] are in danger of losing ‘our Quebec values’”(p. 2325; also see Mahrouse, 2010). The White Quebecers see the Muslims as the “other” whose culture and values are fundamentally incompatible with theirs (Jamil, 2014a). On the other, the participants in Quebec see the Quebecers as being the “White others”. Yet, in English Canada, such a dichotomy seems to be largely a one-directional phenomenon: the Uyghurs → “White others”; it is mostly the perception my participants developed about the “White other”, not vice versa. In other words, this is largely self-imposed. In Quebec, it is both imposed and self-imposed. In contrast, for my Uyghur participants in general, in China the “us/Muslim Uyghurs and them/Chinese state and Han majority” dichotomy is two directional, too, but the othering is very openly imposed by the state. Moreover, this dichotomy cannot be compared with the exclusion felt in Quebec or English Canada, in terms of their depth and magnitude.

Overall, Canadian identity was seen as a form of White privilege in the eyes of Uyghur immigrants in all contexts. Here, Whiteness represents itself, as Kobayashi and Peake (2000) put, as “a location of social privilege” (p. 394) that makes the White people the central representatives of Canadian identity. After living in Canada, both in Quebec and English provinces, most of my participants still did not feel fully included or at home, because they could not appreciate the cultures of local White people. Many of them were not able to make a substantial effort to be included and unanimously expressed their resistance to the dominant White cultures in Canada through highlighting the values and importance of their own cultural wealth, as mentioned earlier.
More specifically, in English provinces, such a resistance appears to have been unfolding in the form of “oppositional culture” (Mitchell & Feagin, 1995), which could be quite apolitical (Mansbridge, 2001), while in Quebec, it may have been manifesting itself at the level of “oppositional consciousness”, which can be significantly political (Mansbridge, 2001, p. 5).

The lens of “Lost in Translation” (Hoffman, 1989) also exposes White privilege in becoming Canadian. Many participants equated Canadian culture or Quebecois cultures to White Canadian or White Quebecois cultures, while revealing their inadequate understanding of or interest in those cultures. Therefore, they would not feel they were Canadian or Quebecois yet, even though they had obtained Canadian passports, as Polat from British Columbia directly uttered. Meanwhile, when they expressed that they had not developed a strong enthusiasm towards the local culture, they meant White culture, rather than all cultures, including the indigenous cultures that should be equally represented under the discourse of multiculturalism and interculturalism. Perhaps, here we could more vividly see the assimilative, rather than egalitarian or integrative aspect of Canadian multiculturalism regarding various minority ethnic cultures (Guo & Guo, 2015; Cui, 2015), or confirm the perspectives of Leroux (2012) who contends that the multiculturalism within greater Canada has been serving as a similar politicized tool; interculturalism and multiculturalism continue “to centre the experiences of the “two founding” nations or races of Canada in nation building (p.67). Thus, they are lost in White Culture. The worst scenario would be that in my participants’ eyes, being Quebecois was both an ethnic/racial and cultural trait, which could not be fully obtained by them, even through assimilation.

All of the above themes indicate that essentializing identity is indeed a widespread phenomenon whether in the formation of systemic and public discourses around certain groups of people or the identities of those people. Indeed, essentialism, especially its strategic form, seems
to be very crucial to the creation and solidification of group identities, (Spivak, 1988). My participants indeed demonstrated such a tendency in their voices and narratives around being Uyghur and Muslim in various Canadian contexts. The “essential” or “key” characteristics of their identity were imagined and reimagined within the climate of Canadian discourses around being Canadian and “true” Muslim.

Viewed from a different angle, many were experiencing the “hysteresis” effect (Bourdieu, 1990, p.78), while trying to make themselves more at home in Canada. At the same time, they showed vivid signs of habitus transformation; they started to adapt to and appreciate the local ways of life in various contexts of Canadian life. This is one of the main reasons why I put “Lost in Translation” chapter at the end, as it represents optimism, hope, as well as a happy ending, contrary to the apparent meaning of its title. Eva Hoffman feels truly at home in North American society after 30 years of ups and downs and countless times of feeling “lost” or out of place. Now I deeply believe that my participants are going towards a right direction; they are feeling more and more at home; they only need more time and deeper interactions, and of course, more dilemmas and challenges are inevitable within their journeys. I also believe that Canadian life will offer them more safety and comfort in the long run, especially concerning the ever-worsening political oppressions their families and friends have been facing as Muslim Uyghurs in China.

Although, their newly found freedoms for cultural and religious expression have allowed them to be more rooted in a reconstituted Uyghur identity, these freedoms go along with new forms of marginality they have to deal with in everyday life. Such marginality exposed itself most vividly in their experiences of education and labor market participation, while other aspects of their everyday lived experiences also brought them numerous challenges. In other words, their increased opportunity for freedom in Canada has been accompanied by dilemmas, tensions and new forms
of displacement, which have rendered them outsiders again after living as “strangers in their own land” (Bovingdon, 2010) – Xinjiang/East Turkistan for about three decades. Such form of double displacement or twofold experience of alienation/estrangement has, to a great extent, shaped the process of the reconstitution of Uyghur identity in Canada.

9.2. Limitations and future prospects regarding this topic

As mentioned earlier, this is a fresh endeavor to explore the diasporic Uyghur identity through critical narrative analysis. Thus, various new possibilities and directions can be expected and visualized in terms of the scope and focus of such a topic. Gender, occupation, social class, religiosity (not religious identity), or even the age factor can be some new dimensions to look at. That being so, during my candidacy defense, it was specifically suggested that I consider the gender aspect of my participants’ experiences, as well. However, I thought it would be difficult for me to go deep into that layer, as comparing the ethnic/national and religious facets of their identity in two contexts would already be a tremendous task. Thus, while my participants were equally divided as male and female, I did not try to find out how their gender identity would influence their identity reconstruction journeys. Another reason is that I did not assume the gender dimension would yield some rich and significant data, as the Uyghur intellectuals generally tend to be more secular than the rest of the Uyghur population (Smith Finley, 2013; Zang, 2012), therefore quite egalitarian regarding gender related issues. However, it is obvious that being female, especially being a visible Muslim woman could add significantly more challenges to the Muslim life in the West, as briefly revealed in this thesis through the narratives of my participants. Again, the Quebec context seems to have been the most difficult in terms of living as a Muslim woman. Apart from this point, I have avoided further dwelling on the gender dimension.
Occupation, as well, could be seen as a very particular aspect to explore while studying immigrant identities in the West. As mentioned, my participants had diverse occupational backgrounds, but I have largely neglected the potential influences of their career backgrounds on their identity experiences. This could be seen as another limitation of my study; I may have done some weak generalizations at some points, although I have tried my best to avoid doing so. Indeed, different career paths can have significantly different impacts on immigrant identities (Hall, 2002; Zikic, Bonache & Cerdin, 2010). Moreover, I have not focused on the race dimension of my participants in terms of how their diverse racial or facial characteristics would affect their identity experiences in Canada, apart from mentioning a European looking participant who felt very much included in Quebec society. Over this anecdote, I also showed my hesitance to deduce some sort of argument or deduction.

Finally, I have to acknowledge that seeing Quebec and English Canada as dichotomic blocks can be problematic, as neither part of Canada is homogenous nor generalizable. Even different cities like Montreal and Quebec within the same Quebec province would be different in many aspects. This point was first highlighted by the conference audience during my introduction of my research plan at The 18th Annual CEETUM Colloquium at the University of Montreal, in 2016. Since then I have several discussions over this perspective during some other occasions, including the meetings with my supervisor. While, I have not given up “the duality” of the Canadian context following these conversations, I have become much more aware of the tricky nature of such a clear-cut dichotomy. That said, I have mostly tried to emphasize the language aspect of this division, which is reasonable due to its paramount importance for defining Quebec society and societal institutions like education.
At the same time, I have intended to totally rely on the subjective experiences and perspectives of my participants in various Canadian contexts, while attempting to find out some noticeable differences between these two linguistically distinct spaces. Their subjective experiences are their realities. This way, my participants’ subjectivity, rather than my own assumptions, presumptions or deductions, yielded some comparable results, through an inductive fashion. My participants constructed their own English and French Canada via their narratives, as part of their reconstructed identities, and I simply learned about and shared their journeys. If we see the English and French Canada dichotomy as a public or systemic discourse, not necessarily a fully logical reality, the Uyghur immigrants’ narratives simply further reflected as well as challenged such a discourse.

9.3. Policy Implications and Recommendations

9.3.1. Implications for Canada

At the ideological level, this study reveals how distorted and problematic the notion of being Canadian or Quebecker is in the eyes of my research participants. The highly-regarded ideals around the discourses of multiculturalism and interculturalism within the Canadian contexts did not reflect themselves in the narratives of the Uyghur immigrants who could not consider their own culture as part of the Canadian or Quebec cultural mosaic. While it is a fact that 77.7 percent of the population of Canada (Census 2016) is of European descent, the policy of Multiculturalism gives equal status to all cultures and all ethnicities. Yet, Whiteness was seen by the participants at the center of the Canadian or Quebecois identity. In this sense, the government policy makers and
various NGOs may need to revisit their existing relevant rhetoric, policies and practices, in order to identify as well as remedy the hidden issues in such identity politics.

That said, the Canadian educational institutions seem to have heavy responsibilities in creating the gap between the new-comers and the so-called Canadian culture, both through official and hidden curriculums that prioritize the Euro-centric and liberal cultural values, while neglecting the cultural wealth of the new immigrants, especially the Muslims. Equally important, the public media, particularly the public TV stations should pay serious attention to the ethnic diversity of their staff members. This study shows that the current situation could negatively affect the self-concept of the new-comers from non-European, especially Muslim backgrounds. Eventually, this may only contribute to the alienation of the Muslim immigrants from the Canadian society and their next generations as well.

At the practical as well as the concrete level, the integration of Muslim immigrants into Canadian society, especially Quebec has been quite problematic and challenging in the last few decades (e.g. McAndrew & Bakhshaei, 2012; Sarrouh & Banting, 2016). This study, as well, reveals similar challenges a Muslim immigrant group – the Uyghurs - have been facing in Canada. The comparative dimension of this study exposes the similar subjective realities regarding the integration experiences of the skilled Uyghur Muslim immigrants living in Quebec and English Canada. That said, the research reemphasizes the growing need to better facilitate the integration of the skilled Muslim immigrants in Canada, most notably in Quebec society.

According to 2018 census, Canadian immigrants are more educated than the average Canadians43. Yet, as reported by Statistics Canada, they are earning less than the average

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43 For more information, see https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171129/dq171129a-eng.htm
Canadians. While, non-Muslim skilled immigrants have long been facing devaluation of their skills and foreign credentials, this study shows that Muslim skilled immigrants may have been subject to deeper or more complex challenges in integrating into the Canadian labour market; being Muslim creates one more obstacle for them to successfully integrate into Canadian society. This study further confirms this probability through the lived experiences of the Uyghur immigrants. That said, learning from their voices and experiences can be very helpful in designing better integration policies regarding the skilled Muslim immigrants and beyond. Since the continuous prosperity of Canada will increasingly depend on new skilled immigrants, including the immigrants from Muslim backgrounds, the voices of those new comers should not be taken lightly. Most notably, the Quebec government and NGOs should pay particular attention to this issue, as it is continuously losing its workforce to other provinces (Montreal Economic Institute, 2018).

9.3.2. Recommendations

a. As Kaushik and Drolet (2018) highlight, the availability and effectiveness of services and existing supports for the skilled immigrants offered by government and non-government agencies need to be reevaluated. As, Muslims face more challenges in the Canadian labour market, they may need such supports more than any other immigrant groups.

b. The so-called “Canadian work experience” that has always been the main proxy for the Canadian employer in hiring new employees (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018; Ku, et al, 2019; Sakamoto, Chin & Young, 2010) should be decolonized and be treated by the Canadian

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44 For more information, see https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/immigrant-wages-canada-1.4421783
employers as an asset rather than a primary criterion for being seen as qualified for a job. Meanwhile, foreign work experiences and credentials should be given equal treatment.

c. Regarding Muslim skilled immigrants, while the growing discourse of Islamophobia in the Global West is very challenging to curb, the Canadian government and NGOs should formulate and facilitate specific and effective measures and routes to assist the Muslim immigrants to better integrate into the Canadian labour market and broader society. For example, some incentives could be given to the employers to pay special attention to treat Muslim skilled immigrants equitably. This is extremely important in the Quebec context, as Islamophobia has been much more serious in this province compared to other provinces.

d. When it comes to the Uyghur immigrants, various Canadian policy makers and NGOs should create more support systems that could facilitate the preservation of the Uyghur language and culture, which are on the verge of extinction under the current Chinese regime. These should include funding and supporting the Uyghur language or heritage schools, Uyghur cultural centres, and community organizations. Ultimately, this will truly demonstrate the ideal essence of Canadian multiculturalism and Quebec interculturalism.

e. The Canadian government and NGOs should try to put pressure on the Chinese government over the Uyghur related issues in Xinjiang, so that the Uyghur situation can be improved soon. When the family members and friends of diaspora Uyghurs constantly face discrimination and marginalization in Xinjiang, that will create a negative impact on their mental health and productivity. Thus, this should be taken seriously.

9.3.3. Implications for China

As revealed from this study, the Uyghur situation in Xinjiang, China has only been deteriorating in recent years due to the increasingly discriminative and oppressive policies and practices
targeting the Uyghurs and other Muslim groups. This could be seen as one of the key factors causing the Uyghurs to seek to immigrate to other countries, including Canada.

With such a background, as my research participants and many Uyghur study scholars pointed out, the socio-political realities in Xinjiang could only make the Uyghurs further alienated from the Chinese state and intensify the already long-existing inter-ethnic tensions in Xinjiang. Even in the Canadian contexts, many Uyghur immigrants cannot comfortably approach or interact with the Han immigrants whom they perceive as the hostile “other” and vice versa in some cases. This can be seen as the result of the systemic as well as public discrimination towards the Muslim Uyghurs deeply seeped into all forms of education in China.

In other words, the current Chinese education system has been encouraging Han majority chauvinism as well as “Internal Orientalism” (Schein, 1997). The very recent application of the global “war on terror” rhetoric in Xinjiang’s context has only reinforced the us/Chinese state vs them/Uyghurs dichotomy (Millward, 2018; Roberts, 2018 a,b), which apparently has been internalized by many Han majority public who highly identify with the Chinese state. As such, contrary to the intended goals of the state efforts to assimilate Uyghurs, the quest for recognition as a separate state has been continuously and increasingly dynamic among the Uyghurs, especially those who are relatively free to express their voices. However, the authorities do not seem to be concerned with such a reality. Considering that my participants are not asylum seekers, therefore would be politically much less active in showing their political resistance, it could be seen how much China is losing in terms of the trust and loyalty of the Uyghurs.

Equally important, the sense of being discriminated and oppressed as a Muslim group could even radicalize many young Uyghurs in Xinjiang and the West. This has been pointed out by some of my participants as well as many Uyghur study experts. Whether the Chinese government is
intentionally or unintentionally targeting the religious culture of the Uyghurs as the root cause of violent religious extremism and terrorism, the evolving reality and the perspectives of my participants show that the government policies can only exacerbate the existing problems. Oppressing a minority group will never yield a positive result. History has taught us this reality again and again.

9.3.4. Recommendations

a. First of all, the current discriminatory policies and practices in Xinjiang should be seriously reevaluated and quickly reversed. Religious culture should not be equated with religious extremism and radicalism, and normal religious ideologies and practices should be tolerated and respected. As Millward (2016) rightly points out, those mainstream Islamic traditions are exactly what the extremist groups like ISIS, Al-Qaida and Taliban want to eliminate, in order to fortify their own radical and violent interpretations. As such, the Chinese government has been unconsciously helping those radical groups.

b. The Chinese education system should become more positive, inclusive and equitable in regard with the minority cultures and knowledges. The current education system has only been fueling Han chauvinism and othering the minorities, especially the Muslims as backward and uncivilized groups. This applies to non-formal and informal education settings as well. More specifically, the Chinese media should stop fueling Islamophobia and tarnishing the image of Uyghurs.

c. Uyghur and other minority languages and literatures should be respected and given a proper space again in the educational institutions in Xinjiang, as in the 1980s. Marginalizing the
Uyghur language will contribute to the loss of Uyghur culture, therefore lead to forced assimilation. This is not an acceptable practice in the 21st century.

d. The government should facilitate the employment of the Uyghur university graduates who have been increasingly excluded from the local labour market due to the systemic and public discrimination. It should monitor and punish the employers that have been openly discriminating the Uyghurs and other minorities. If such an unfair situation continues, it will lead to more social and ethnic tensions.

e. The restrictions over the mobility rights of the Uyghurs should be removed or alleviated. For example, recently, it has been virtually impossible for the Uyghurs to apply for passports or keep their existing passports with themselves. Meanwhile, it has been increasingly difficult for the Uyghur Canadians to obtain Chinese visas to visit their families and friends in Xinjiang. Even if they can get visas, these are only given for a maximum of three months on the single-entry basis, while the majority Han Chinese Canadians can obtain 10-year multiple-entry visas. Moreover, the Uyghurs in Canada cannot freely communicate with their families back home, due to various restrictions. The Chinese government should reverse these policies, offering equal treatment to the Uyghurs. Otherwise, these policies will further alienate the Uyghurs from the Chinese state.

9.4. Suggesting Topics for Further Research

In this study I have focused on the highly educated/skilled Muslim Uyghurs immigrants’ identity reconstruction experiences in Canada. Similar studies could be conducted in various other Western contexts where the Uyghur diaspora communities have been fast growing. That said, in
recent years, the number of Uyghur refugees who may not have had post-secondary educational experiences prior to coming Canada and the broader West has been increasing, due to the worsening political oppression in Xinjiang. This group of immigrants would have quite different perspectives and experiences regarding their integration in their host countries. Therefore, it would be very interesting to focus on this segment of newcomers.

Meanwhile, it would be very worthwhile to compare the diaspora Uyghur experiences in different Western countries which have diverse socio-cultural, linguistic, political and religious characteristics. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, gender, occupation, social class, and religiosity (not religious identity) can be considered as new dimensions to look at when exploring the Uyghur diaspora identities. Especially, focusing on the identity experiences of Uyghur immigrants who have converted to other religions, such as Christianity, would be very interesting as this is a brand-new area of research. As noted in this thesis, Christian Uyghur diaspora has been flourishing quickly in the West, yet no substantial study has been conducted on this topic yet.

Research on Uyghur international students is another understudied area, while the number of Uyghur university students in Western countries, including Canada, has been fast growing in recent years. Although this group is very different from skilled adult immigrants in many aspects, their experiences also can be analyzed within the broader scope of international migration.
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