# Walking out of the Mountain: Cultural Identification and Education of Rural Migrant Muslim Students in Northwest China

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**Abstract**

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Rural Migrant Muslim Students in Northwest China

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The economic boom in China has brought major changes in its geographical and cultural landscapes. Significant among these is the magnitude and directionality of demographic mobility. It is estimated that 170-180 million rural populations come to the cities to find jobs and live their lives. Hui (10.6 million), one of the largest ethnic minority groups in China, and Dongxiang are very much a part of this mobility of migrating from rural to urban areas in Northwest China. After moving to the urban environment, communication with other ethnic groups, predominantly the Han (the majority ethnic group in China), becomes inevitable, even though the Hui and Dongxiang tend to live in separate communities in the cities. Hui and Dongxiang children attended mostly mixed-ethnicity rather than single-ethnicity schools. Contradictions of rural-urban differences, ethnicity and religion sparkle wide attention and discussion. This study explored this migration phenomenon from the perspectives of the education, social adaption, and identity development of a small group of Hui and Dongxiang students who have migrated to the city from rural communities. The seven participants in the study went to seventh and eighth grades attending a middle school in Lanzhou. Qualitative research analyses of data generated

from narrative stories, thematic photos, group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and field observations produced four major findings. These were: 1) Islam and its denominations are deep influences on migrant Hui and Dongxiang students' identification, and caused some notable conflicts with the urban and school culture. They penetrated in many aspects of their lives such as clothing, dietary restrictions, and religious practice and literacy. 2) There are some salient differences in the education of and adaptation to urban life of male and females. The roles of females in family, marriage and careers resulted in pressures and motivation on their education and adaption to urban life. 3) Rural migrant Hui and Dongxiang students are strongly attached to their rural identity even as they adapt to the urban life and culture. They developed complex and reflective response on their urban and previous living. 4) Hui and Dongxiang students also experience heavy pressures from standardized testing and urban schooling. Based on the results, some recommendations for further research and practice were suggested. These included addressing multicultural education in educational policies; developing a system of differentiated citizenship for Hui and Dongxiang migrant students to ensure more educational equity; and continuing to study Hui and Dongxiang students in greater numbers, in a variety of educating settings, and in different stages of their entering and adaption to living and learning in urban cities and schools. Other ethnic minorities in China should be similarly studied. The results of such research could contribute significantly to advancing the cause of educational equity, justice, and excellence (as well as national unity among diverse group) for ethnic minorities in China.

## Dedication

To my parents Depu Wang and Qiaoling Hu

my younger brother Cong Wang

and my wife Chang Liu

**Acknowledgements**

This work grew out of research I conducted over the last five years. I started my research in the area of rural migrants in China. Through my master project and Research and Inquiry project (a College of Education requirement), I worked on the marginalized experiences of rural migrant students studying in Chinese urban schools. As my exposure to ethnic minority education and multicultural education increased, I incorporated the categories of ethnicity and rural migrants in China. This research is part of my desire to improve educators' understanding of the experiences of migrants.

The evolvement of this research project resulted from the enormous support and encouragement that I received. I am deeply grateful for having Professor Geneva Gay as my advisor throughout my master's and doctoral study. Many ups and downs happened in my graduate study, especially when I first came to the United States and Seattle. She was always there to support me, even my desire to interrupt studies for half a year. She listened to my ideas and thoughts and encouraged me to continue my genuine interest. She taught me how to think out of the box and be myself in the academia. She is the person I feel completely safe in discussing my academic questions, life issues, and future plan.

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# Chapter I Introduction

Compared to globalization and international migration, internal migration attracts far less political attention, but produces much more social and cultural consequences in its society (Castles, 2009). China has experienced a recent economic boom that has resulted in several significant changes in employment, communication, distribution of goods, centralized administration, and urban living. Paralleling the recent trend of globalization and international migration, a huge movement of internal migration also started in China after its open-up policies and economic reform in the 1980s. Thousands of factories in Southeast and East China became a major destination for rural migrant workers. The development of cities create more jobs in the tertiary industry, particularly in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. For example, it is estimated that eight million residents migrate to Beijing and live in the city of 21 million population (Beijing Bureau of Statistics, 2014); 9.9 million migrants are among Shanghai's 24 million population (Shanghai Bureau of Statistics, 2014); and half of the 16 million residents in Guangzhou are migrants (Guangzhou Daily, 2014). In the construction of cities, the progress in railways, highways, and waterways facilitates the large-scale migration of rural populations. The transportation, as well, accommodates the migration within regions of China.

Rural residents also move to small or middle size cities in the same region. The migrants of intra- and inter- regions constitute the whole urbanization spectrum in contemporary China. In 2012, urban residents reached 53 percent of the 1.34 billion population in China (National Bureau of Statistic of China, 2015). These voluntary migrants are also accommodated by institutional advancement. In 2014, the Chinese government announced its first official plan on urbanization for the 2014-2020 period to facilitate the move of 250 million rural residents into

towns and cities (Xinhuanet, 2014). By moving rural populations to the city, the Chinese government intends to develop the economy through stimulating consumption and construction.

**Migrants in the Era of Urbanization**

Of the 1.34 billion population of China approximately 674 million are rural residents. In this group, 170 to180 million commute between village and city (National Bureau of Census, 2011). With the rapid urbanization in China, upscale social influx has accelerated. More and more rural people come to the metropolis to find jobs and live their lives. Besides the three megacities, most migrants moved to urban areas of the Pearl River Delta (Southeast China), Yangtze River Delta, and Jingjinji Delta (Beijing City, Tianjin City, and Hebei Province). Increasing numbers of rural migrants bring their children to the cities. The number of these migrant children had reached 35.81 million in 2010 (All-China Women's Federation, 2013); 80.35 % (28.71 million) do not have urban *hukou* in the cities. Because of China's *hukou* (household registration system), these rural migrant children are not classified as urban residents, which means limited access to education, housing, healthcare, and social security. Moreover, 72.6 percent of migrant children (25.99 million) are school-age attending school in urban centers or private migrant schools (All-China Women's Federation, 2013).

Among the vast migrant population of China, a certain portion is ethnic minorities, some of whom have their own specific cultures and religions. It is estimated that more than 10 million ethnic migrants left their hometowns and worked in other places in 2011 (Xinhua Net, 2011). The migration of the Muslim population is happening in many cities in China as well. The huge gaps between urban and rural places intertwine with conflicts among various ethnicities. Scholarship rarely mentions cultural experiences from the perspectives of ethnic minority groups among rural migrants. Yet, the reality has responded in a cruel and harsh way. For example,

Uyghur Muslim separatists were suspected of being responsible for a terrorist attack on February 26, 2014 at Kunming (Southwest China) train station, which left at least 29 people dead and 143 wounded. Even though motives behind this attack are still not clear, it is suspected to be connected to conflicts between Uyghur Muslims and Hans. Although there is no compelling proof that more of these riots will happen and among ethnic migrants, it is likely that the existing ethnic conflicts are also migrating to the city, particularly in Northwest China.

The Northwest makes up one third of China's land mass and the population is 91.72 million, which comprises 8 percent of the total Chinese population. There are 45 ethnic minorities in this region, with 16.8 million populations, which make up 18 percent of the Northwest population. The Muslim population of the Gansu Corridor is a little over 5 million, three-fourth of whom are classified as Hui (Garnaut, 2007). The other three ethnic groups—Dongxiang, Baoan, Salar—make up the remaining quarter of the Muslim population of Gansu Corridor. Each of these ethnic groups has its own spoken language, yet all three languages have been heavily influenced in both grammar and vocabulary by Mandarin and Tibetan. Today young people of these ethnic backgrounds are as conversant in Mandarin as they are in their native languages.

**Rural-urban Divide and *Hukou* System in China**

Rural migrants move to and work in the cities for economic reasons. The huge gaps between the countryside and cities are the influences behind the great migration. One crucial perspective for understanding rural-urban differences is the existence of the dual structures (*er yuan zhi* 二元制) and the *hukou* (户口) system in China. Two basic determinants that should be considered in understanding the Chinese social system are the administrative hierarchy and the restriction of population mobility (Chan, 2010). Multiple top-down hierarchies of the central

government, provincial-level units, prefecture-level units, county-level units, and towns and townships, make decisions about the appointment of key personnel and the distribution of fiscal resources. Compared to urban sectors, rural sectors, particularly those in remote areas (in county- and town-level unites), receive much less resources than urban sectors. Therefore, these systems have produced a bias against the rural sector and inequality in power, economic development, and culture development since the 1950s. This hierarchical structure of governments has promoted industrialization and urbanization by adopting an "incomplete urbanization" approach (Chan, 2009a), which gives priority to developing the industrial sectors and monopolized profits through unequal sector exchange in the city. Chan (2009b) argued that this unbalanced growth strategy exploits agriculture (rural sector) and the peasantry, and widens the socioeconomic gap between rural and urban sectors.

The *hukou* system (household registration) further reproduces the inequity of the dual structure by impeding population and social mobility in the long run, especially for migrants from rural areas to urban areas. A *hukou* is a residency identity in the Chinese household registration system. All citizens of China are categorized according to two related classifications: *hukou* type and residential location (Chan, 2009a). The Guidelines of Household Registration Systems in the People's Republic of China (1958) group people into agricultural *hukou* and non-agricultural *hukou*. In the 1950s, the *hukou* was originally assigned according to the agricultural and non-agricultural occupations of holders. As the systems evolved, the *hukou* type distinction gradually deviated from the relationship with occupations (Chan, 2009a). For instance, children born in rural areas, and even in urban areas within agricultural *hukou* holder families, were automatically assigned an agricultural *hukou* no matter what career they chose in the future. Once assigned *hukou* status remains with individuals even when they move to other occupations

or to the cities unless they can convert the *hukou* status. Along with dual structures, interpretation should focus on rights and privileges to understand why *hukou* divisions should be taken seriously. The agricultural and non-agricultural status distinction defines people's relationships with the state and eligibility for state-provided welfare. People with state-provided jobs are assigned a non-agricultural *hukou* and simultaneously state-provided welfare. On the contrary, populations with an agricultural *hukou* receive fewer appointments as key personnel and less fiscal resources.

Another factor that needs to be considered is the residential location of *hukou* registration. Each individual is assigned an official and permanent residence with respect to an administrative unit (Chan, 2009a). The state-provided welfare also is deeply connected to the residential location of each individual. Within specific units, each individual is assigned social rights and corresponding welfares. The significance of residential location resulted from the administrative hierarchy of China. When individuals move from remote home units to urban places, the rights and privileges remain with their original unit, unless their *hukou* are converted to the places where they moved. For example, when migrant workers move from Sichuan Province to Guangdong Province voluntarily for factory jobs, their social rights and welfare remain in Sichuan Province instead of moving to Guangdong Province. In this way, privileges and social welfare are tightly tied to the permanent residence. Even though these two classifications mean different things, *hukou* type and residential location worked together to cement the control of mobility.

The government first issued the Guidelines of Household Registration Systems in the People's Republic of China in 1958. This law substantially abandoned the article on freedom of movement in the constitution. Migration was then restricted to movement between rural and

urban areas without national distribution, which was rare. An invisible wall was built in-between (Chan, 1994). The population landscape started to change as strict migration policy was modified. In 1984, rural populations were allowed to enter the city with their self-supplied food. In 1985, the Chinese government started to allow 0.02% rural population to convert to non-agricultural population. In the same year, the national system of Residence Identity was created to determine the citizenship status of all populations in China, which accommodated the social and economic needs.

It was not until the 1990s that a dual *hukou* system created a qualitative change that allowed rural populations to convert to urban *hukou* in small towns under certain circumstances like state-relocated job, real-estate purchases, and family reunions. The loosing of restrictions on migration resulted from labor needs. As economic reform and the development of a market economy occurred, labor-intensive and export-oriented industries were gradually developed in the Pearl River Delta (Southeastern China) and the Yangtze River Delta. Long existing surplus rural labor started to migrate from rural areas to work in urban cities like Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Beijing. Since the 1980s, there are about 270-280 million migrant workers moving to the cities (National Bureau of Census, 2011). Currently rural migrant labor also supplies almost all of the low-end services in urban areas. In coastal centers such as Shenzhen and Dongguan, migrant labor now accounts for the greater part (70 - 80%) of the labor force (Chan, 2009b). However, serious issues still exist for them.

Although more migrants are moving to urban areas, permanent change in *hukou* status (conversion to urban *hukou*) is minimal, particularly in mega-cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Traditional discriminations against agriculture and peasants persist. For the diverse economic structure, differentiated social insurance system, and rigid residence policy (people

without resident identity in a province cannot enjoy education and social welfare benefits as residents), there is an obvious rural-urban divide for migrants entering urban places. The path of social mobility between different socio-economic levels, as a result, gets blocked in China.

Though the household registration (*hukou*) system reproduces inequity by impeding population and social mobility, the government is taking action to initiate reform to solve the problem. In August 2014, the State Council of China issued Guidelines of Further Reform of Household Registration System to adjust the household registration transfer policy, improve population management, and safeguard the legal rights and benefits of rural people who have moved to cities and other permanent residents (State Council of China, 2014). The guidelines indicate that the government will remove limits on *hukou* registration in townships and small cities, relax restrictions in medium-sized cities, and set qualifications for registration in big cities.

According to the guidelines, the classifications of *hukou* type (agricultural versus non-agricultural) were dropped and the entire population is categorized as residents of the People's Republic of China, no matter whether they are living in rural or urban areas. But this does not mean the end of the *hukou* system. Cities and urban residents within the top-down hierarchical administrative structure still dominate the appointment of key personnel and the distribution of fiscal resources. The other salient feature of residential location still exists with its associated social welfare and benefits. Though small cities are open to migrants in terms of *hukou*, strict residential requirements remain for people living in big cities, where more migrants generally relocate. Rural migrants are still treated differently from local permanent residents and receive limited resources.

## Citizenship of Rural Migrants in the *Hukou* System

The internal migration in China and migrants' living in the cities challenge conventional notions of citizenship, citizenship rights, and education issues. Analysis of these challenges requires understanding the concept and model of Chinese citizenship. To facilitate this understanding, Turner (1993) suggested social membership and the rights to resources (rights and privileges). The Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster, 2014a, para.1) dictionary defines a citizen as "a person who legally belongs to a country and has the rights and protection of that country; a person who lives in a particular place." From the same dictionary, citizenship is defined as "the fact or status of being a citizen of a particular place and the qualities that a person is expected to have as a responsible member of a community" (Merriam-Webster, 2014b, para.1).

On the enacted definition of citizenship among different countries, membership of the nation is defined based on two main principles: "*jus soli* [law of the soil], according to which anyone born in a territory could belong; and *jus sanguinis* [law of blood], according to which belonging was based on descent from an existing citizen" (Castles, 2004, p. 20). Countries such as Germany and Japan applied *jus sanguinis* as their dominant principle and other countries like the United States and United Kingdom utilize the principle of *jus soli.* In China, the enacted concept of citizenship builds from a vague concept of legal citizenship, defined as "All persons holding the nationality of the People's Republic of China (PRC) are citizens, equal before the law, and enjoy the rights while performing the duties prescribed in the constitution and the law" (National Constitution of China, 1982, para.1). The recognition of nationality is primarily based on the law of blood; children will be recognized as citizens of PRC based on their parents' citizenship. Law of the soil works, yet, has been applied to few Chinese citizens who have children outside of China and decide to regain their Chinese citizenship.

One big challenge from internal migration in China is that the formal criteria for the boundaries of nation-states could not illuminate the complex status of rural and urban residencies. As Holston and Appadurai (1999) pointed out, "formal membership in the nation-state is increasingly neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for substantive citizenship" (p.4). For rural migrants in China, formal membership as citizens of China does not match their citizenship rights in the city. Hence, it is imperative to reexamine the complex relationship between formal membership and substantive rights in culturally specific contexts. Under the scrutiny of some scholars, migrants are referred to as second-class citizens (Chan, 2009b) or second-class Chinese nationals (Liu, 2007). Also in analyzing the specific citizenship situation of rural migrants, scholars have used urban citizenship (Zhang, 2004; Fan, 2002), social citizenship (Liu, 2007), and entitlement (Zhang & Wang, 2010).

All of these statuses are connected to the *hukou* system in China. Rural migrant are citizens of China by birth; they are nationals of China. Yet, the concept of citizenship is also segmented with rural and urban entitlements, and explicit spatial and social hierarchies (Zhang, 2004). Continuing the division of *jus soli and jus sanguinis* of the *hukou* assignment, children born in rural areas of China are assigned rural *hukou.* The assigning of entitlement also follow the rule of blood, in which new born children receive the entitlement of their fathers (before 1998 the entitlement followed the mother). Because of spatial and biological features, huge socioeconomic differences followed these rights and privileges, mostly for an entire lifetime. The urban entitlement of citizenship comes with a package of rights and privileges with legal residency in the city, such as access to state-subsidized housing, grain, medical care, and virtually free education for children (Zhang, 2004; Solinger, 1999). By these privileges, social hierarchies were built when rural people migrated to the city without urban *hukou*.

Differences of social entitlements sometimes even count more than wealth and occupations. In some extreme cases, migrant entrepreneurs like Wenzhou businessmen in Zhejiang Village in the 1990s earned wealth and economic status in Beijing. The lack of an urban *hukou* still made them inferior in daily living and business operations (Zhang, 2004). However, not all rural migrants in China are denied opportunities for urban *hukou* conversions. One exception is those migrants relocated by the state. Fan (2002) found that a hierarchy existed between non-migrant urban natives (urban *hukou*), permanent migrants (urban *hukou*, sponsored and selected by the state), and temporary migrants (*rural hukou,* migrant workers). In fact, permanent migrants are the most privileged and successful elite in terms of human capital attributes, mobility resources, and labor market entry and shifts. Temporary migrants ranked the lowest. In this way, resident status (*hukou*) in host cities is creating a new stratification in social order between urban *hukou* holders and rural *hukou* holders. Also increase in social order is possible if rural migrants with human capital are granted the same entitlement as urban inhabitants.

Another challenge of the urban entitlement is how group identity as rural and urban citizens may influence individual identity. Since these categories mandatorily differentiate people by rural and urban areas, group identity has a strong influence on individual identity. Gutmann (2003) differentiated group and individual identity in citizenship education and noted that identity groups often try to force their identity on individuals. However, they can also enhance the freedom of individuals by helping them attain goals that are consistent with democratic values that can only be attained with group action. In Gutmann's dichotomy of group and individual identity, group identity was perceived as collective and particularly positive memberships. Nevertheless, group identity can also be socially, economically, and culturally

exclusive and discriminative. In this situation, group identity as rural people might cause generally negative effects in the daily lives of those who migrate to Chinese cities.

Self-assigned group identity, in the postmodern view of self, could critically challenge conventional assignments of citizenship entitlement and identity (Davis, 2011). In other words, group membership and identity as rural population might be transformed from inferiority into a weapon for reform, and might unify and help rural migrants fight against powerlessness and inequality. This corresponds to Silva and Araujo-Olivera's (2009) argument that citizenship education should prepare citizens to work against injustice for the benefit of all people (in the group of rural population).

## Education of Rural Migrant Children

As more and more migrants bring their children to the city, their limited rights are transmitted to the younger generation. One significant problem for rural migrant children in their daily lives is access to urban schools. In fact, many have been excluded from opportunities to get an education (Lin, 2006). Migrant children are much less likely to be enrolled in school compared to local children. Temporary migrants with less than one year of residence in cities suffered the most (Liang & Chen, 2007). Rural migrant children may have to pay higher tuition fees than local urban resident children in public schools. Education achievement gaps widely exist between rural migrant and urban students. Research suggests that higher levels of family and school social capital are associated with better academic achievement of migrant children (Wu, Palinkas, & He, 2010). A longitudinal study conducted in Beijing (Deng, 2010) found that urban and migrant schools varied significantly in initial reading achievement and growth rate.

Compared to tangible education access and achievement, cultural integration and identification of rural migrant students in China are relatively less studied. Wang (2010) found

that migrant children could consciously recognize the rural-urban difference, regarding urban impressions and urban images. Liang and Wang (2011) found most migrant children envy the life style of city dwellers, which is sharply different from theirs. They also reported that most migrant children have intense feelings about the impersonal social environment of the city. Rural migrant students are sensitive to discrimination from city residents and are reluctant for others to know about their countryside background because of self-esteem. These students demonstrate a coexistence and intersection of confidence and low self-esteem (Shi, 2005). An empirical study in Shanghai (Xiong & Yang, 2012) showed that compared to marginal students in private migrant schools, migrant children in public schools feel more strongly about discrimination from the mainstream society. This demonstrates that simplified educational inclusion without cultural awareness has a marginal effect on migrant children's social integration in urban society.

Another major area regarding cultural experience and sociocultural identity is the psychological well-being of rural migrant students. The Stressor Scale for Middle-school Students and the Coping Style Scale for Middle-school Students (Qu, Zhong, Yan, & Yang, 2008) showed that the stress of migrant students is more serious than that of urban students. Rural students also lack positive coping styles to overcome stresses. Significant differences were identified in four subtests of stressors. These were stress of learning, home environment, friendship, and society culture. Compared to urban youth, rural migrant youth show more problem behaviors especially in internalizing problems (Li, Zou, Jin & Ke, 2008). Other scholars, such as Feng (2012), revealed a negative correlation between family function and problem behavior of migrant children. That is, the better the family function, the less problem behaviors occurred. Also, lower function in roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, and behavioral control lead to problem behaviors in rural migrant students.

## Research Focus

The reform of the dual structure and *hukou* system is evolving slowly in contemporary China. As rural migrants continue bringing their children to the city, the education of migrant children, including Han and ethnic minorities, stands out as a critical issue of social and cultural integration. Scholars from sociology and political science have been researching rural migrants for about a decade. Education scholars have examined institutional barriers, policies, educational opportunities, and other external factors. However, few studies looked deeply at the cultural influences of the rural-urban structures, especially on ethnic minority groups. Even though ethnicity and identity issues are of concern to China and other countries, less research has been done on cultural experience and identity development of rural ethnic migrants in China, especially those who practice Islam.

This study focused on the educational experiences of Chinese rural ethnic migrant students in urban public schools. The specific population of concern was Muslim students studying in Lanzhou middle schools. Despite scholarship on rural-urban differences and education, little is known about the rural ethnic migrant students, especially from Muslim groups such as the Hui and Dongxiang, and their educational experiences in China. The major purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the cultural and educational experiences of rural migrant Hui and Dongxiang students and their cultural identification in a heterogeneous urban school environment (middle school). The intersections of rural-urban difference, ethnicity, and religion in their cultural identification were examined. The following specific questions guided this study:

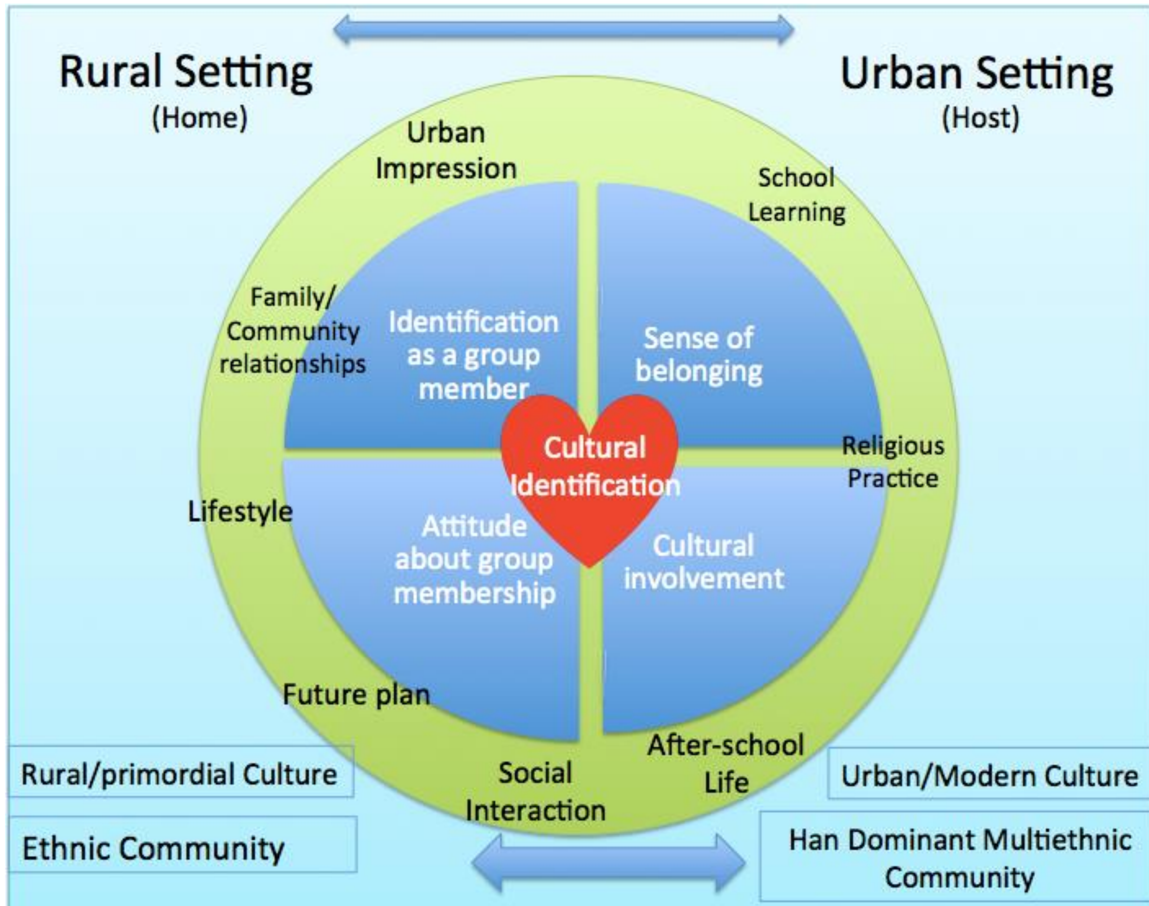
- What kind of different urban city and learning environments do rural migrant Muslim students experience?

- What kind of changes does this new setting bring about in their lives (study, lifestyle, social interaction, and relationship), and how do they interpret these changes?
- How do Muslim students self-identify in relation to their values, personal identity, and future goals?
- How does the intersection of rural-urban difference, ethnicity, and religion, shape identity development for rural migrant Muslims?

## Conceptual Framework

The main focus of this study was the cultural identification and educational experience of students who migrate from rural to urban settings, mono-ethnic to multiethnic society, and rural primordial to urban modern cultures. The conceptual framework (See Figure 1) used to guide this study was adapted from Cote's (1996) framework of "culture-identity link" and Phinney's (1989,1990) components of ethnic identity development. According to Cote (1996), individual identities are formed within the process of cultivating outside environments. Macro-sociological factors link through micro-interactional ones to psychological factors that form individual identity. In this study, rural migrant students live in their home environment for years before they move to the environment of urban cities. Rural and urban environments form contexts and serve as marco-sociolgical factors (identified as the upper peripheral factors in Figure 1) for students' identification development. As the participants in this study, migrants, moved from rural to urban contexts, they transitioned from rural (primordial) to urban (modern) cultures, and from monoethnic to multiethnic communities. To reach a deeper understanding of students' identity and education the culture traits (symbolized by the lower peripheral factors in Figure 1) of rural and urban environments must be examined along with marco-sociological factors.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Cultural Identification




Cultural identification (the center section of Figure 1) in this study consists of self-identification as a group member, sense of belonging, attitude about one's group membership, and cultural involvement. The cultural identification of rural migrant Muslim students was explored through perspectives of self-identification as rural/urban persons, sense of belonging, attitudes towards rural/urban memberships, and cultural involvement (social participation, cultural practices and attitudes). All these perspectives are interactive and intertwined. Phinney's (1990) idea of ethnic identity has been widely tested and applied in studies within Western contexts, but few studies have applied it in qualitative research on ethnic minority groups in China. This study contributed to filling this void by examining ethnic identity and culture

identification of rural ethnic migrants within the context of rural-urban cultural differences. The hybridity of identification may reveal more components for the analysis of cultural identification.

In Cote's (1996) theory of culture-identity link, micro-interactional factors connect and serve as mediators between macro-sociological and psychological factors. The primary group of concern in this study was adolescent Hui and Dongxiang students in middle schools. To connect rural-urban contexts and students' identification, the micro-interactional factors based on students' behavior and activities that are most frequently researched and concerned were examined. The specific examined issues (identified as factors between the peripheral and core factors in Figure 1) were urban impressions and responses, study adaption, after school life, social interactions, value change, and roles in relation to how rural ethnic migrant students self-identify when they transition from rural and a traditional culture to a modern and urban culture, when previous monoethnic environments are replaced by multiethnic environments, and when they live in contexts that are predominantly non-Muslim. These presumed culture-identity interactions also corresponded with Simmel's (1971) statement that culture is formed through external differences in social structure, modes of production, and lifestyles.

## Summary

This chapter introduced the background of internal rural-urban migration in contemporary China. In the Era of urbanization, rural populations including those from ethnic minority groups moved to the city. Because of the existing rural-urban divide, rural migrant students experience inequity as rural residents and encounter problems in education. This study looked specifically at Hui and Dongxiang migrant students. With the conceptual framework of culture-identity link and categorization of cultural identities, this study focused on identity and education of these rural migrant Muslim students.

## Chapter II Review of Selected Literature

Four types of scholarship helped frame this study. The first type is differences in rural and urban culture, especially related to the social context and cultural personality of rural and urban inhabitants. The second part of this scholarship review focuses on the definition, components, and theoretical and empirical analyses of identity and cultural identification. The third part of the chapter looks at migration, migrant children, and cultural experiences. This type of research helps to understand general issues related to rural-urban migration such as city living, education, and social interaction. The fourth type of research and scholarship reviews the culture and education of Hui, Dongxiang, and related Muslims realities and problems.

### Differences in Rural and Urban Culture

Scholars from different disciplines have discussed differences in urban and rural culture. Culture, as Simmel (1971) stated, refers to "the cultivation of individuals through the agency of external forms which have been objectified in the course of history"(p. 6). The external differences in social structure, mode of production, and lifestyle between urban and rural places and people form different cultural norms and patterns, that are embodied as values, ideologies, and actions of people. Durkheim (1893/ 1997), in his *The Division of Labor in Society*, explained the concepts of "mechanical solidarity" and "organic solidarity," that stand for different kinds of social ties in rural and urban cultures. He suggested that in the early stages of development of a society, mechanical solidarity, where people act and think alike or with a collective or common conscience, is predominant. It allows social order to be maintained. In more advanced, industrial, and capitalist societies that require a complex division of labor, people are allocated and rewarded according to merit in society, and social inequality reflects natural inequality. This is the basis of organic solidarity. Similar to Durkheim's distinction of mechanical solidarity and

organic solidarity, Fei (1998), in the 1920s, identified the Chinese rural society as one based on ritual and customs (*lishu*, 礼数) and urban society as one based on law and reason (*fali*, 法理). He further described the construction of traditional and rural China as a society of *cha xu ge ju* (差序格局, the pattern of difference sequence) in which the social network of individuals constitutes the whole social order. *Cha xu ge ju* captures the essentials of the current rural society in China.

Simmel (1971) expressed concern for the intensification of emotional life. He proposed, due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli, that urban psychology involves intellectualism, development of a protective or rational barrier, blasé outlook, accomplishments, rationality, and the accruement of knowledge. He also stated that an individual in an urban setting is freed from the kinds of prejudices and boundaries that one might feel in political or religious communities. This urban freedom is illustrated when juxtaposed to rural life, where city residents may feel trapped or suffocated. Fei (1998) also believed that rural and urban people could be classified according to two types of culture personalities—Apollonian and Faustian. As an Apollonian personality, rural people accept the comprehensive order in the universe which is beyond human control. Therefore, people have to obey the natural order, live with it, and sustain it. The Faustian personality, as exhibited by urban people recognizes contradictions and conflicts as the foundation of existence. Life would be meaningless without conquering the difficulties, and the journey of one's life is an endless process of creation and change.

Wirth (1938) concluded urbanism as a way of life that is a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of heterogeneous individuals. The urban personality is a consequence of the three variables of large population size, density, and heterogeneity, and is characterized by a

reserve, blasé outlook; indifference; sophistication and cosmopolitanism; rationality; relativistic perspectives; tolerant, competitive, self-aggrandizing, and exploitative attitudes; feelings of friction, irritation, and nervous tension bred by frustration; acceptance of instability and insecurity; tolerance of eccentricity and novelty, and approval of efficiency and inventions; and marked degrees of personal disorganization. Based on Wirth's theory of rural and urban differences, Fischer (1975) proposed a subcultural theory of urbanism that included four main propositions: (1) the more urban a place, the greater its subcultural variety; (2) the more urban a place, the more intense its subcultures; (3) the more urban a place, the more numerous the sources of diffusion and the greater the diffusion into a subculture; and (4) the more urban a place, the higher the rates of unconventionality. Greenfield (2009) concluded that movement from rural residence, informal education at home, subsistence economy, and low-technology environments to urban residence, formal schooling, commerce, and high-technology environments is essentially a movement from community to society. He also suggested that adaptive processes are required in movement of any ecological variable in a society, cultural values in an individualistic shift direction, and developmental pathways move toward more independent social behavior and abstract cognition.

The divide of rural and urban society in China reflects salient differences in social class and culture experiences. Bourdieu (1984) found that the environment in which a person develops has a large effect on his or her social class. The culture of the upper social class is oriented more toward formal reasoning and abstract thought. The lower social class is geared more towards matters of facts and the necessities of life. For example, children from the lower end of the social hierarchy are predicted to choose "heavy, fatty fattening foods, which are also cheap" in their dinner layouts, opting for "plentiful and good" meals as opposed to foods that are "original and

exotic" (pp. 177, 179).

Anyon's (1981) research in five schools with different social classes, revealed that teaching working-class children was more mechanical, involving rote memory and very little decision making or choice. Lareau (2003) reported similar results from the perspective of childcare. She described two different ways of raising children. One was the concerted cultivation among middle-class families that incorporates scheduling many structured, and organized activities for children. The other occurred mainly in poor or working-class families and included a natural growth style of childrearing that did not include organized activities, and there was a clear division between adults and children. Children usually spent large amounts of their day creating their own activities. These two types of childrearing affect children's self-image and personality that, in turn, influence daily social life and status. Rogoff (2003) also argued that individuals develop as participants in their cultural communities, engaging with others in shared endeavors, and building on cultural practices of prior generations.

Urban education involves different issues in contemporary China and U.S. There is a concentric body of literature, especially from sociology, from the 1920s-1930s of the United States, when the country was experiencing large scale urbanization and great migration. After the appearance of urban decay and the development of suburban areas, the focus of urban education centered on the lower social class and ethnic populations living in the inner city. Urban education in China is much more privileged considering the ongoing and still early stages of urbanization. With visible differences in institutions, behaviors, social interactions, and psychological dispositions, rural-urban differences are rooted deeply in cultural differences (Guo, 1994). In the process of urbanization the cities start to embrace modern culture and form urban culture. The formation of China's cities and urban culture involve more features of Western/modern culture.

In this rural-urban bifurcation, rural culture evolves slowly as cities evolve quickly.

Some scholars have suggested that the modern city is the result of industrialization and urbanization, with market economy playing a central role. So citizen rights, laws, pluralism, and openness constitute the basic cultural characteristics of modern urban societies (Zhang, 2005). At the same time, rural-urban differences exist in cultural traits, social structures, and life styles. In the urban context, formal social institutions take the place of informal ones in daily social life; competition is present in every thread of urban life; social interactions are characterized by broadness and plainness; the main bonds for social connection are economical ties instead of kinship or territory relationship; and lifestyles are more open, pluralistic, and multiple in values (Jiang, 2003). Song (2005) pointed out that there are three kinds of cultural conflicts: family-community ties versus individual effort and competition; bonds of kinship and relationships versus market-oriented rationality; and equal culture versus prejudiced urban sub-cultures. Personal urbanism could be a useful concept in understanding adaptations to urban development (Meng & Deng, 2009).

These studies summarize in theory differences between rural and urban cultures that create borders for rural migrants who now live in the urban settings have to cross and how these crossing are mediated. Yet, these theoretical ideas have rarely been tested and applied in empirical studies on people's substantive feelings and perceptions of rural-urban cultural differences. More studies applying cultural theories to understanding patterns of human behaviors among migrants also are needed.

## Mainstream and Marginal Cultural Identity

Culture identity is frequently defined as attachment to a particular group, including thoughts, beliefs, and sense of belonging. The group could be one's ethnic group or nation. In

other words, cultural identity can be ethnic identity, national identity or bicultural identity (Liebkind, 1992; Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). Banks (2012) extended the stages of cultural identity and stated that individuals' cultural identity further commit to multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. He proposed that individuals' cultural behavior might go through stages of cultural psychological captivity, cultural encapsulation, cultural identity clarification, biculturalism, multiculturalism and reflective nationalism, and globalism and global competency. Lewin (1948) asserted that individuals need a firm sense of group identification in order to maintain a sense of personal well-being. Tajfel and Turner (1986) contended that simply being a member of a group provides individuals with a sense of belonging that contributes to a positive self-concept. According to Erikson (1980) adolescence is a time of searching for a new sense of continuity and sameness," or "identity versus identity diffusion, (p. 94)" in which the psychological integration takes place in the form of the ego identity which is more than the sum of the childhood identifications. This is a major stage in development where the child has to learn the roles he or she will occupy as an adult. It is during this stage that adolescents reexamine their identity and explore exactly who they are.

One approach to studying cultural identity proposes that it should be analyzed through its components. Tajfel (1981, p.255) defined ethnic identity as the ethnic component of social identity that is "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." Phinney (1990) concluded in her review of research on ethnic identity in adolescents and adults that a person's identification at a given time is conceptualized through analyzing self-identification as a group member, a sense of belonging to a group, attitudes about one's group membership, and ethnic involvement (social participation, cultural

practices and attitudes). Among these components, ethnic involvement is the most widely examined but problematic indicator of ethnic identity. For instance, language, friendship, social organizations, religion, cultural traditions, and politics are frequent topics of study. Empirical studies have generally explored cultural identities through parenting and socialization, contextual and individual differences, internalized oppression, social identity change, and cultural renewal (Cross, 2012).

A second approach to understanding how individual form and develop different ways of living in multicultural societies is through processes of acculturation and cultural identity formation. Early research of acculturation could be traced to Park's (1950) typology of race relation that included competition, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation. In the beginning, individual contact is followed by competition and conflict. Over time a hierarchical order develops among individuals. In this situation, one race usually is dominant and others are dominated. Assimilation then happened in the end of the cycle. A similar early model was developed by Marcia (1980) and Phinney (1989,1990) who expanded Erikson's (1980) theory of the tasks of exploration and commitment and four identity statuses including foreclosure (individuals make a commitment without exploring alternatives); diffusion (individuals neither explore nor make commitments across life-defining areas); moratorium (individuals are in the midst of a identity crisis); and achievement (individual identity has been experienced and worked through). Gordon (1964) devised a theory of assimilation that included the seven stages of assimilation: acculturation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation, identification assimilation, attitude reception assimilation, behavior reception assimilation, and civic assimilation. Berry (1980) developed the two-dimensional model to identify various cultural identities. This model distinguished four types of acculturation attitudes within dominant and

non-dominant groups that included marginalization, separation, assimilation, and integration. Other researchers (Zhou, 1997; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) defined this process in studies of minorities as segmented assimilation with strategies of consonant resistance to acculturation (perpetuation of ethnic culture), consonant acculturation (integration into mainstream culture), dissonant acculturation (socialization to the underclass), and selective acculturation (socialization to middle-upper class). In the process of assimilation, Ramírez and Castañeda (1974) pointed out that ethnic minority students are more field sensitive compared to ethnic majority group members who are more field sensitive.

Conflicts between national and ethnic identities have been widely discussed in scholarship about ethnic migrants and immigrants. One approach to understanding these conflicts is to dichotomize ethnoracial identity and ethnoracial assignment (Brodkin, 1998). Ethnic minority groups may be assigned national or ethnic identity/status from the nation. The virtual form of ethnic identity is self-imperative based on their cultural experience and identification. In other words, the national assigned identity is not necessarily consistent with ethnic or cultural identity. Huntington (1993, 1996) conveyed the controversial idea that ethnic identity might be incompatible with national identity when the national civilization has conflicts with ethnic civilization. Ethnic minority groups will form stronger ethnic identity and a weak national identity when they feel excluded, oppressed, or marginalized. For example, the evolving Uyghur identity comes from their disadvantaged position in education and employment in China. Howell (2011) reported that Uyghurs are concentrated in the lower economic sector, and that ethnicity is the most important variable accountable for labor market disparities. Minority students failed in Uyghurs, Mandarin, and English language compared to majority students (Tsung & Cruickshank, 2009). Unified ethnic identity can form imagined communities (Anderson, 2006) of the same

ethnic group members within or even beyond national borders. The Uyghur diaspora has generated conferences, press releases, printed materials, and cyberspace communication to form a unified ethnic identity (Kuscu, 2014).

Some other scholars have pointed out misunderstandings of ethnic culture and compatibilities between national and ethnic identities. Contrary to the individual self in western scholarship, Said (1979, 2001) posed the existence of a collective self. An empirical study by Mamat et al. (2014) suggested that the attitude toward group membership was probably from the consciousness of collective self. Uyghur rated collective self as the most important interdependent self-construal. Deaux (2006) argued that ethnic identity and national identity are compatible and mutual supportive. An instance (Gibson, 2006) can be found in the positive correlation between ethnic identification and the importance and pride associated within being a South African. Gladney (2004) also used the case of Hui in China to exemplify the compatibility of Muslim identity and national identity. He argued that Hui adopted some elements of the dominant culture throughout the history of interaction with Han and accept the co-existence of Muslim and national identities.

The existence of a collective identity also implies the group and contextual impact on the formation of individual identity. According to Mead (1964), self-conception mediates a society's influence on the individual, and the self is constantly modified by interactions among individuals. The development of the individual self relates to the social structure and experience. Vygotsky (1978) use the concept of sociocultural mediation to examine cultural and historical resources as empowering and constraining tools for identity formation. He investigated how child development was guided by the role of culture and interpersonal communication, and how children cultivate the meaning and knowledge of their culture through speech patterns, written

language, and other symbolic knowledge. Redfield (1960), in his anthropological research in a village of Latin America, explored the formation of group identity within small isolated community through bonded human relationships, beliefs, and practices. Gordon (1992) also had the same idea that culture is a mediator of learning, and it shapes belief systems, cognitive styles, morals, ways of doing things, and helps define a person's identity.

Tajfel's (1974) paradigm of social identification and Chinese dual structures, social categorization and self-identification, and comparison of the two, are widely studied by Chinese scholars. Social categorization refers to the awareness and identification of rural-urban differences. Using analysis of narrative texts on impressive/influential stories and urban adaptation, Liang and Wang (2011), and Xiong (2009) found some rural migrants perceive urban people as cold and indifferent, and have intense feelings about the impersonal environment of the city. Rural migrant students are personally affronted by negative stereotypes and morality. Researchers have reported a common perception among rural migrant students that urban people look down on rural people. They often perceive urban people as rich and rural people as poor. Thus, the lower socioeconomic status of rural populations and long existing prejudices toward them lead to rural migrant students being stereotyped because of their social and economic status (Wei, 2009; Xiong, 2009).

In coping with these stereotypes and discriminations, rural migrant students are reluctant for others to know about their countryside background. Migrant children's comments on their identity are both positive and negative, which may indicate partial urbanization (Liang & Wang, 2011). These students demonstrate a coexistence and intersection of confidence and low self-esteem (Shi, 2005). More specifically, migrant children have complicated feelings about regional involvement and social segregation, which are displayed through a sense of belonging to the city,

yet separation and estrangement from urban people. This is why some researchers describe them as duckweed-like people (Sun, 2007), and as having a stranger-acquaintance relationship (Liang and Wang, 2011). These coping strategies and resulting identities are quite similar to the ideas of marginality as characterized by western scholars. Values, future plans, and expectations are salient topics of self-identification. Shi (2005) investigated career expectations and self-identification of second-generation urban migrants and found that the majority of 15 cases choose to stay in the city. However, compared to urban youth, rural migrants still had lower expectations of their futures and were more pessimistic (Xiong & Yang, 2012).

Theoretical research on the marginal person have examined and forecasted potential psychological problems, and qualitative and quantitative research have studied the general psychological well-being and problems of migrant children. Also, significant differences have been reported between migrant youth and urban youth in seven subtests of copability (i.e., problem-solving, seeking support, reasonable explanation, patience, emotional display, fantasy, denial). Shao (2011) argued that stress of learning is the primary problem of junior high school students in grade seven. Another notable pressure is from the family. Chen (2005) stated that the hardships parents suffer from work and daily urban life strengthen their hope of change for the next generation, but their high expectations cause pressure and stress problem for rural students.

Ye (2008) compared the psychological well-being of migrant students and local middle school students in Shanghai, and found that migrant students had more anxiety, loneliness, and hostility. They have more serious emotional problems. On the basis of another evaluation of the Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL) list in five provinces, Wang (2009) found that the rate of mental problems was 18.73 percent for rural migrant children. The four most significant factors on the SCL-90 were interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, depression, and paranoid ideation. Moreover,

migrant rural students had significantly higher mean scores on factors of interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, depression, paranoid ideation, obsessive-compulsive, and psychoticism than the corresponding norm of certain urban samples. Another study conducted by Liu (2006) indicated that migrant youth scored higher on the tendency of self-blaming, and feeling lonely, study-caused anxiety, and terror. Sense of belonging and insecurity also have been frequently mentioned in psychological studies of migrant children. For them, a sense of belonging to the city is far lower than that of local urban peers. While they feel more belonging to the city than to their hometown, the attachment tends to diminish as time goes by and their stay in the city increases (Sun, 2007). Instabilities in living condition and parents' work cause frequent change in schools and housing, and difficulties for rural students in adapting to newer environments and friendships.

Pan (2012) also found the existence of negative behavior habits, such as lateness and lack of attention, which are related to family education, school education, social impact, and students characteristics. Guo (2008) reported that the self-consciousness of migrant children is not very optimistic. In his study, the self-consciousness of 55.8% of 273 migrant students was well beyond normal range (19.6% of the high and low of 36.2%) of 44.2 percent. Other research (Shao, 2011) findings suggest that there is a difference in self-esteem between migrant and local urban children, and a significant correlation between self-concept and self-esteem. Furthermore, migrant children have a much lower standard of self-consciousness than their urban peers, as revealed by scores on separate scales of intelligence and school conditions, behaviors, extent of happiness, and satisfaction.

**Migration, Migrant Children, and Cultural Experiences**

Migration and large amount of migrants lead to cultural and social change in both the originating and receiving areas (Castles, 2009). The marginality of migrants has been presented in social science scholarship since the early 20th century. For example, in 1903 Simmel (1971, p.324) stated that, "The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life." Park (1928) introduced the concept of "marginal man" in an article entitled, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man". He argued that in the process of migration and mobility, original customs are broken and individuals are free to form new cultural ties. He also pointed out that migration is a social phenomenon involving change of residence and breaking of home ties, which leads to personality changes. In the process of acculturation and assimilation, the same individuals who strive to live in two diverse cultural groups become cultural hybrids and form a personality type where conflicting cultures meet and fuse. Du Bois (1897) also addressed marginal experiences and identities in his idea of "double consciousness." He described it as a "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 194). It is as these individuals vie themselves through two mirrors presenting different images. In analyzing the life-cycle of introduction, crisis, and adjustment of different cultures, Stonequist (1935) concluded that marginal personality characteristics include ambivalence, excessive self-consciousness, restlessness, irritability, moodiness, and lack of self-confidence.

When discussing the problems and difficulties marginal people face, Park (1928) described the moral dichotomy and conflicts that occur as old habits are dropped but new habits

are not yet fully formed. He called this an inevitable period of “inner turmoil and intense self-consciousness” (p.893).  Stonequist (1937) also pointed out that social status affects marginal personality characteristics, and identified two general types of social situations. The first is racial difference. He used biracial people as an example and argued that their status is somewhere between the parents races. The second issue is cultural difference. Green (1947) disagreed with Stonequist's claims, and stressed culture conflict as the basis of personality characteristics of the marginal person. He contended that group antagonisms and not the disparity of cultures are the source of the personality difficulties these individuals encounter.

Recent scholars also developed theories to understand the challenges of being migrants. Bourdieu (1984) described three types of capital that place a person in a certain social category. These are social capital (the value of social relations and the role of cooperation and confidence to accomplish collective or economic results); symbolic capital (resources available to individuals on the basis of honor, prestige or recognition that function as authoritative embodiments of cultural value); and cultural capital (any advantage people have that gives them a higher status in society, such as education, skills, and any other form of knowledge). Cultural capital is the only capital that rural students can claim from their backgrounds. Gordon (1992) suggested that at-risk students experience cultural dissonance. He stated that people whose culture is different from the dominant one may not have their developmental needs met, as their needs may not match those of the dominant reference group. Culture, cultural interchange, and cultural dissonance influence behavioral adaption. Gordon added that social status can be viewed as a factor that puts certain people at risk. In some situations, at-risk may also result from societal-individual interactions, or failure of the surrounding environment to meet a person’s individual, cultural-influenced needs.

According to research by some Western scholars, experiences of marginal people always produce negative effects. Diver-Stamnes and LoMascolo (2001) examined the experiences and attitudes of African American, Latino American, Asian American, Native American, and European American students at one university with very little ethnic diversity. Minority students reported greater dissatisfaction with the university's curricula and diversity, and more experiences of severe university-based marginalization than did the White students. The researchers also created a model for analyzing marginalization to determine the severity of the experience, the frequency with which the participants reported that they had experienced marginalization, and the context of the experience. Cheng and Lively (2009) developed testable hypotheses that underlie patterns of multiracial-monoracial differences as a form of social marginality reported in public health scholarship by using national representative data. They found that self-identified multiracial adolescents had comparable or more negative psychological and behavioral profiles than associated monoracial groups. However, their educational performance and expectations fell in between those of their monoracial counterparts, or was similar to the groups with more negative educational profiles. Their subjective evaluations of social relations and participation were less positive. Cheng and Lively also explored the potentially positive effects of being multiracial. They reported that the social relational outcomes of multiracial individuals were generally more positive than, or indistinguishable from, monoracial groups with more active social interactions and participation.

Many scholars have conducted research about the adaptation processes of rural students to new environments. Lawrence (1999) found that students in a Maine high risk group experienced cognitive dissonance as they sought higher education, and some succumbed to the pressures not to continue. She urged educators to use the strengths of rural culture, the family,

and community as leverage for change to encourage students to pursue higher education, and return to build and revitalize local communities. Pietarinen (1998) conducted a study in Finland of students' transition from a small rural primary school (grades 1-6) to a larger village secondary school (grades 7-9). Results indicated that many rural students were disappointed with social relationships in the classroom or with the teaching, and faced social or cognitive problems. The change from the teacher-dominant learning environment of the primary school to the subject-centered, learning environment of the secondary school demanded a considerable amount of adaptation from the students. The secondary school learning environment was more impersonal, formal, and competitive, and teachers were more controlling at the time that the adolescents were seeking more autonomy. The students' achievement did not necessarily correspond with how well they had adjusted to their new school. Estell, Farmer, Irvin, Thompson, Hutchins and McDonough (2007) examined the academic grades and substance use of 447 (184 males and 263 females) African American ninth grades adolescents from two rural counties in a state in the southern region of the United States in relation to different level of adaptation. Results indicated that students with consistently positive patterns of adaption across middle school had higher grades and lower rates of substance use compared to individuals with persistent difficulties or those who transitioned to problem behavior. Some students who improved their patterns of adaptation had high academic grades, but also rather high rates of substance use in the ninth grade.

Theories of marginality are exemplified with empirical studies on rural migrant students in China as well. In an ethnographic study of rural migrant children in Nanjing, Wang (2010) found that the attitude of urban residents toward migrant peasants were reproduced as negative attitudes toward their children. He also found a gap between expectation and reality in social

interaction with urban residents. But there was less of a gap between expectation and reality during interactions with rural peers. On social recognition, Wang reported that migrant children realized the rural-urban differences, but still showed uncertainty on self-categorization (rural resident, urban resident, or neither), and complexity of emotional belonging. Rural migrant students tend to encounter problems of anxiety, self-accusation, loneliness, low self-esteem, stress, and unhappiness (He & Zhang, 2007; Zhang, 2007). Guo (2008) reported that the self-awareness (e.g. behavior, feeling of happiness) of rural migrant students was significantly lower than their urban peers. The level of self-awareness has a significant correlation with parental rearing patterns (family relation, family education background) of junior high school students.

Hu and Li (2009) described the moral shock of rural people moving to urban areas through lens of custom, educational environment, and life style. Wang (2007) interviewed two rural college students with questions about gaps between rural and urban places, self-identification, perceptions and emotions of rural background. He concluded that what rural background means to rural students differ based on perspectives of disadvantaged family, equal personality, life experience, and feelings. He also examined the compensative mechanisms between these four factors. For examples, while a disadvantaged family may be stressed about purchasing housing, marriage, and depression in life experience, it also inspires individuals to be tough, independent, and at mental peace.

Another significant perspective to the marginality of migrant students is the problem of limit education access and resources. To overcome obstacles to receive quality, and compulsory schooling in the cities, some migrant families have to use social networks and personal connections (*guanxi*) (Yiu, 2014). Those who cannot afford the tuition fees attend migrant schools of inferior qualities (Wang & Holland, 2011). Migrant children who aspire to attain

higher education also face institutional barriers such as discriminatory examination laws and education resources (Koo, 2012). According to an investigation by the Research Center of the State Department, the shares of the village, the county, and the province in contributing to the compulsory education fund is 78%, 9%, and 11%, respectively, with the central government's share being the lowest amounting to only 2% (Shao, 2005). In 1986, the National Compulsory Education Law declared that the central and local governments were responsible for compulsory education funds, and that the central government allocated funds to local areas according to the number of registered children (Ministry of Education, 1986). A 1992 Detailed Rules for National Compulsory Education Law of China prescribed in more detail that the local government should take more fiscal responsibility for compulsory education (Ministry of Education, 1992). Since the central government only allocates educational funds to urban *hukou* holders in the city, migrant children are considered as liability to host cities. Many migrant children are unable to enjoy compulsory education funding in the host city, despite the 1996 policy of the Ministry of Education about accepting rural migrant children in public schools. In 2003 the State Council published a regulation to improve the education situation for the children of rural laborers in cities and requested local governments to ensure rural migrant children will receive compulsory education.

Without sufficient education resources, rural migrants might be expected to experience achievement gaps. The difference in education achievement correlates with the type of school migrant students attend. Migrant children in isolated migrant schools have lower achievement than similar migrant students enrolled in regular urban public schools (Lu & Zhou, 2013). These results are similar to research in host countries that the second-generation educational disadvantages are significant, and migrants lag behind native-born youth without a migration

background (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007). The theory of cultural reproduction argues that curricula in urban schools are embedded in an urban orientation that places rural migrant children at a disadvantage in the classroom (Yu, 2004). Failure to address rural knowledge in instruction and lack of cultural awareness in teachers and students also cause difficulties for rural students in identifying with classroom content. More studies of how rural migrant students' achievement might be affected by their identification and psychological well-being are needed.

An alternative research approach is to study the positive side of migration. Moving to the city also helps migrants realize the possibility of education and knowledge. Most migrant students demonstrate strong study motivation and desire for knowledge (Ma & Wang, 2009). Migrant students usually consider study as the accumulation of cultural capital, which could be transferred to economic capital and social capital in their lives (Ai, 2005). As rural students stay longer in the city, their sense of belonging to rural society fade away and their belonging to the city grows stronger. They also developed fewer stereotypes of urban people (Sun, 2007).

## Education and Migration of Hui and Other Muslim Groups in China

Since the 1990s, topics studied by Chinese scholars about Hui include the source (Zhou, 2003), evolution (Tang, 2006), and spirit (Ma, 2008) of their culture; religious education in terms of curriculum (Ma, 2005), position, and function in modern society (Jiang, 2009; Zhang, 2009); formal education in Northwest China-Qinghai (Liu, 1988; Chen, 1998; Ma, 2002), Gansu (Gao, 1991; Ma, 1991; Ming & Zhang, 2009), and Ningxia (Qian & Chen, 1994; Wang, 2003); issues of culture delivery, marriage values, and Muslim beliefs about educating girls (Ding, 1992; Yang, 2007); and migration (Wang, 2003). Scholars from the United States and other countries also have conducted some ethnographic and historical research on the Hui community (Dillon, 2009),

Hui integration (Gladney, 1991, 1998), and Hui history (Lipman, 1997). These studies have build a foundation for understanding the general situation of Hui education and migration from the perspectives of realities, policies, and proposals.

Gladney (1991, 1998) detailed expressions of Hui identity in different dialectical areas of China. For Hui communities in Northwest China, Islam is considered the most fundamental determinant of their identity--"to be Hui is to be Muslim"(Gladney, 1998, pp. 321-322). The meaning of *qingzhen* for these Hui is expressed in Islamic ritual purity. On the integration of the Hui to Han-dominant society, Gladney (2004) argued that the Hui evolved through hundred years of history and became more compatible compared to Uyghur Muslims. However, Lipman (1997) called them "familiar strangers" (p.226) due to established categories, stereotyped characterizations and generalizations about the Hui. Hui migrants and their children are migrants in dimensions of time, region and culture (Wang, 2008). Moving to the city geographically, they shift from traditional to modern society, from ethnic to Han dominant multiethnic communities. Wang (2008) described the marginalization of ethnic rural migrants from urban and Han-dominant society as double marginalization. In an empirical study (Gao, Xhang, Yu, & Song, 2011) in Lanzhou that examined the social adaptation of migrant, the researchers found that their overall level of urban social adaptability was very low. Among the indicators of adaptability, "self-identity" was the lowest, followed by "city-destination," while "identity-determining" was the highest. Different from the idea of marginality, Gillette (2000) suggested that Islam can be compatible with modernization and modernization was considered by Muslims in Xi'an City as part of the Quran. In addition, Muslims are producing modernization as they adapt to modernization, while making tradition an asset.

Some scholars have also studied ethnic migrants in Lanzhou. Tian (2000) described the present migration of the Hui population in Guyuan District and analyzed the causes and features. He identified different types of migration including vertical, generational, structural, and free. They help to explain that migration is complex with different causes and effects. The identity of the Hui has been shaped at local levels by social imaginings, the derivative discourses of ethnicity, and nationalism in China. Hou (2013) found that Hui and Dongxiang migrants have poor living environments, occupations, and social welfare, and integration into urban culture in Lanzhou. Their poor living conditions resulted from institutional discrimination, unbalanced labor market, education background/social capital of rural migrants, language barriers, and prejudice and discrimination from urban populations. In the relationship with urban communities, Bai and Chen (2008) analyzed the mutual influence and interaction between migrant Muslims and urban Hui communities. Their influence was apparent in strengthening the religion atmosphere; material support for mosques; effective society management; compensation for lack of Muslim food; and change in the culture landscape.

Looking specifically at the children of ethnic migrants in Lanzhou. Ma and Wang (2009) summarized four main problems of their social integration. These were adaption of ethnic culture; learning problems (weak foundations and improper study habits); family education environment (socioeconomic effect on study plan, inferiority in social interaction, and family responsibilities); and age (overage, age beyond usual level). On the adaption of ethnic culture, Wan and Yang (2012) reported that Hui students have higher religious identification (religious behavior, belonging to religions, and religious experience) than Han students in grade 7-12. Their learning problems could be traced to their experience of being left behind (at hometown when their parents worked in the city) before their parents settled in the city. There are about 5422 left

behind rural students and 80 percent of them live in the mountainous area, where most students drop out of school in third or fourth grade (Wang, 2008).

## Summary

Because of the rural-urban dual structure, institutional and cultural differences exist between rural and urban populations. Scholars from sociology, politics, and education have been researching rural migrants in China for about a decade. Education scholars studied this population from the perspectives of institutional barriers, policies, educational opportunities, and other external factors. However, few studies looked deeply at the cultural influences of rural-urban structures, especially on ethnic minority groups. Even though ethnicity and identity issues are of concerned in China and other countries, relatively little research has been done on the cultural experiences and identity development of rural migrant Muslim students and thorough descriptions of their experiences in city schools. Without describing their exact experiences, further improvement of their education will be impossible.

# Chapter III Methodology

In this chapter, reasons for using qualitative methods are first discussed, as this study engaged ethnographic methodologies to explore rural migrant Muslim students' cultural identification and education experience. Next, the setting and selection of school and participants are introduced. Research questions and purposes are followed by data collection, data analysis, and ethical issues.

## Rationale for Qualitative Methods

Ethnographic methodology was used in this study to explore rural migrant Muslim students' cultural identification and education experience. Wolcott (2001) defined ethnographic research as "inquiries into the social behavior of particular culture-bearing groups of people" (p.197). The ethnographic methodology asks the question of culture, which was fundamental to topic of Muslim migrant students in urban schools. Ethnographic research focuses how things are and how they got that way, which served the purposes of this study. Particularly, ethnographic methodology produced detailed descriptions of the experience of rural migrant Muslim students and important related information. More than passive understanding of their experience, this form of qualitative research emphasizes "the importance of seeing the world from the perspective of those who are seldom listened to… or 'giving voice' to points of view of people marginalized in the society" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 10). In this study, detailed experiences are narrated and described, based on data derived from observations, interviews, and visuals, to explain identity conflict and the education of Muslim migrant students in the city. The exploration and understanding of rural migrant Muslim students give voice to them, raise awareness, and possibly produce transformative action.

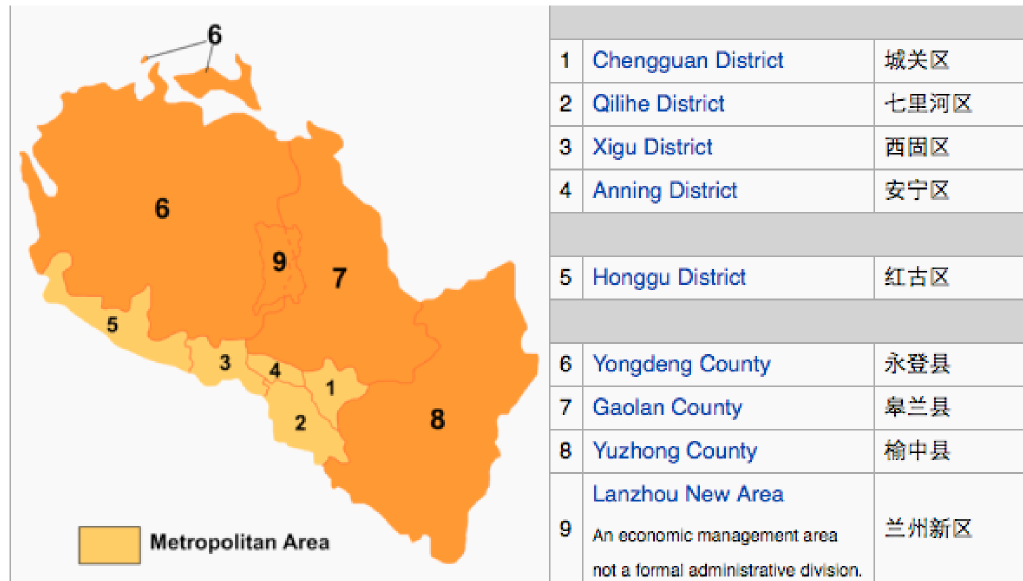
Qualitative methodologies include several features that fit well with the purposes and intentions of this study. First, narrative inquiry asked students to write about their personal experiences and identities. Gee (2012) stated that people express their sense of who they are and their identities though language. Thus several "language tools" commonly used in ethnographic studies and other forms of qualitative research methodologies were employed in this study. A narrative on students' migrant experiences and cultural identities provide time and space to process thinking about important issues. Second, focus group discussions were conducted to explore students' initial ideas of moving to and living in the city. These discussions provide in-depth explanations about their experiences and identities, and how they react to each others' ideas. Third, semi-structured interviews were designed to talk with students privately, especially on personal and sensitive questions. Interviews allowed the researcher more space for probing reduced the likelihood of missing important data. The researcher also used interviews for exploration and confirmation of the participants' ideas. Fourth, photo projects in this study provided participants with freedom and a creative means to express their identities and experiences. When participants brought cameras back home or to some other daily occasions, the photo projects made it possible to cover less visible experiences of students. Fifth, observation in this study allowed the researcher to directly observe participants' behavior without having to rely on what they said they did. It also provided access to contextual factors operating in natural social settings. Observation complemented other methodologies for participants with varying verbal skills, especially those who did not speak Mandarin fluently. In general, the qualitative methodologies used in this study made it possible to "achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience" (Merriam, 2009, p.14).

**Setting**

This study took place in Lanzhou city of Gansu Province, which is located in Northwest China (See Figure 2). The northwest area makes up one third of China's total area and has a population of 91.72 million that comprises 8 percent of the country's entire population. It is also a region with multiple ethnic minorities and cultures. There are 45 ethnic minorities in this area, with a population of 16.8 million. This is 18 percent of the northwest population. Gansu Province is less urbanized compared to eastern provinces. It had 38 percent urban population in 2012, while the national average was 52.57 and an eastern province like Shanghai is 89.30 (National Bureau of Statistic of China, 2013). Lanzhou, named Jincheng (Golden City) in ancient times, has a history of more than 2000 years. It is now the capital of Gansu Province. Lanzhou covers an area of 1631.6 square kilometers, and is the largest key city located in the upper reaches of the Yellow River. Five districts (See Figure 3), including Chengguan, Qilihe, Xigu, Anning and Honggu, and the three counties of Yongdeng, Yuzhong and Gaolan, are under the jurisdiction of Lanzhou, which links together 61 towns, 52 street offices, 399 communities and 731 villages. It spreads many miles along a thin valley, sandwiched in by hills and the Yellow River.

Figure 2. Location of Lanzhou in China

Figure 3. Administrative Divisions in Lanzhou




| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Chengguan District | 城关区 |
| 2 | Qilihe District | 七里河区 |
| 3 | Xigu District | 西固区 |
| 4 | Anning District | 安宁区 |
| | | |
| 5 | Honggu District | 红古区 |
| | | |
| 6 | Yongdeng County | 永登县 |
| 7 | Gaolan County | 皋兰县 |
| 8 | Yuzhong County | 榆中县 |
| 9 | Lanzhou New Area<br>An economic management area not a formal administrative division. | 兰州新区 |

Lanzhou, with a total population of 3.82 million, is a multiethnic and multicultural city. There are 127,000 ethnic minority people from 36 groups living in Lanzhou. They constitute 3.89 percent of the population. The seven most populous groups are the Hui, Mongolian, Tibetan, Dongxiang, Tu, Uyghur, and Tujia. Approximately 88 percent of the whole ethnic population practice Islam in Lanzhou (Wang, 2012). As a newly developing city, Lanzhou is also experiencing rapid urbanization, with a vast migrant population. In 2010, Lanzhou had 0.59 million floating (migrant) population. It is estimated that there are 60,000 Hui migrant in Lanzhou every year (Yang, 2010). Another noticeable Muslim group is the Dongxiang migrants.

The name Hui is an abbreviation from "Huihui,"(回回) which first appeared in the literature of the Northern Song Dynasty (AD 960-1127). The Hui is descended from the Arabic and Persian merchants who came to China during the 7th century. They moved from central Asian and settled in China during the early years of the west expeditions of Mongolian troops in the 13th century. During the period of Republic China (AD 1911-1949), Hui referred to all Muslim populations in China such as contemporary Hui, Uyghur, Dongxiang, Baoan, and Salar.

The ethnic classification in the 1950s placed the Hui into different ethnic groups. As one of the 10 Muslim ethnic minorities in the People's Republic of China, Hui (回族) make up over half of all Muslims in China, and they live in every provinces and city across the nation (Gladney, 1991). There were 10,910,000 Hui in 2011 (Guo et al., 2014). Mandarin is their native language. Islam plays a significant role in their daily lives. Almont every Hui community has a mosque. As one of the largest minority group concentrated in northwest China, there were approximately 1.26 millions Hui in Gansu Province in 2010 (Ningxia Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Most of the Dongxiang (东乡族) inhabit the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture and surrounding areas of Gansu Province.  Some historians state that they are descendants of Monglian troops in the Hezhou area (now Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture) as Genghis Khan (A.D. 1162-1227) marched to the west (Guo et al., 2014). According to the 2010 census, their population was 621,500. The Dongxiang speak the Dongxiang language, a member of the Mongolic family. They do not have written language, but they do have a rich tradition of oral literature, and use the Arabic alphabet. As a result of the language shift, some 20,000 people in several villages in the northeastern Dongxiang County now speak the so-called Tangwang language, a creolized version of Mandarin with a strong Dongxiang influence, particularly in its grammar. Most of the Dongxiang can speak and write in Mandarin. The Dongxiang have practiced Islam for several hundred years. Even though there are differences in classification of ethnicity, there is not a large social distance between the Hui and Dongxiang.

Along with the process of urbanization, increasing Muslim populations are moving to cities. Mobility became a noticeable description of the Hui because they move around for business. The Dongxiang is another ethnic minority group with high mobility. There are about 300,000 migrant populations every year in Lanzhou, among which 60,000 are migrants from

Muslim-dominant ethnic minorities (Wang, 2012). Voluntary collective living in specific areas is a salient feature of the Hui and Dongxiang. Xiaoxihu area (小西湖, little Westlake) in Qilihe District is one of the voluntary collective living areas of Muslim migrants. In selecting an administrative and school district for this study, the percentages of migrant Muslim students and social context where religion and ethnic attachments are available, such as mosques, Muslim restaurants, clinics and schools were essential. After primary fieldwork in 2012, I acquired an understanding of multicultural demographics in Lanzhou city. During my pilot study of the cultural identification of migrant Hui students, I was guided to the Qilihe District where there are multiple ethnic groups and ethnic migrants.

As one of five urban districts in Lanzhou City, Qilihe district is a multiethnic administrative region with 29 ethnic minority groups. It is a historically residential area of the Hui who have lived in Lanzhou for centuries. It connects Lanzhou city and nearby ethnic autonomous regions and provide residential spaces and conveniences for migrants. The geographic distribution of Muslim migrants and Muslim communities is characterized by combination of large dispersions and small residential areas. This characteristic could be perceived as "dots, lines and areas." With dispersed Muslim restaurants and individual stalls as dots, migrant Muslims are concentrated in certain streets and areas, such as Gonglin Street, Pingliang Street, and Xiaoxihu area (Hou, 2013). The formation of Xiaoxihu area is a good example of "dots, lines, and areas". It includes the Great Mosque of Gonglin Street, Middle Mosque of Gonglin Street, and Small Mosque of Gonglin Street. Other nearby mosques such as the Jiangouyan Mosque, Baishuxiang Mosque, Middle Mosque of Baishuxiang, and Xihu Mosque, are connected to others on Gonglin Street. Because of their need to pray five times daily,

Muslim migrants live close to these mosques and form large Muslim neighborhoods (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Landscape of "Dots, Lines, and Area" in the Xiaoxihu Area

Ethnic migrants in Lanzhou have been disadvantaged in education, employment and social welfare. A survey found that 98 percent of female ethnic migrants are illiterate. Approximately 2000 migrant students entered schools in Lanzhou between 2003 and 2013, but 40 to 50 percent of them dropped out (Wang, 2014). Rural migrant children also have poorer education facilities compared to urban children. According to Tang (2010), 61.5 of these students do not have individual study space; 30.8 percent do not have a study table; and 98.1 percent do not own a computer. Most ethnic migrants concentrate in service sector jobs, such as construction, hotels, transportation, and restaurants. Around 10.5 percent of migrants are self-employed or own small business (Wang, 2012). Because of the high price of real estate in Lanzhou, they usually rent or live in houses with poor conditions or illegal paperwork. One

student in this study lived in a shantytown right next to the railroad (See Figure 5). Inhabitants walk on the railroads as their neighborhood trails when trains do not pass. His neighbors are butchers of chickens. Chicken blood and entrails were placed on the sides of a trail right after butchering. Another student lived in a 22-floor apartment building with dominant Muslim migrants. This building was built without legal title and amenities. Habitants usually paid less to purchase this apartment but risk demolition by the government.

Figure 5. A Butcher's Shantytown Five Feet Away from the Railroad in Lanzhou

**Selection of School and Participants**

After moving to urban environments, communicating predominantly with Hans and some other ethnicities is inevitable, even though the Hui and Dongxiang still live together in Xiaoxihu area and Qilihe District. Hui and Dongxiang children are sent to ethnically mixed classrooms rather than monoethnic classrooms. The contradictions of rural-urban differences, ethnicity, and religion come into public talk and discussion. Schools with mixed ethnic groups were selected

for this study. Another criterion for selection was the migrants' access to the schools. Many schools in Lanzhou do not accept migrant students since they generally do not have Lanzhou *hukou*.

The school chosen was located in Xiaoxihu area and accepted both ethnic minority and Han, and local and migrant students. Xiaoxihu Middle School has about 1000 students in grade 7-9. Approximately 800 of them are from ethnic minority groups, 60 percent of whom are Dongxiang. Hui students constitute the majority of the remaining 40 percent. In addition, about 70 percent are migrant students who do not have Lanzhou *hukou*. The migrant students are very mobile due to changes of parents' employment. More than 100 students leave school every year; females make up the majority of them. Most drop out of school after leaving instead of transferring to other schools. The principal reported that the quality of new students had decreased year by year, except for the recent school term.

Because of the high percentage of the Hui and Dongxiang students in the school and few intergroup differences between them, both were selected as participants in this study. An initial group of 13 participants were selected from grade seven and eight. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select an initial group of nine participants from grade seven. To maximize the variation and reduce bias all had to meet the criteria of ethnicity, migrant status, and gender balance. All of these students moved to Lanzhou within the last five years and most of them lived in Lanzhou for two to three years. In grade seven, five of the nine participants selected were male and four were female. Three cases from the initial group in grade seven were eventually selected based on typicality and intensity of information (Patton, 2002) to be the targeted participants. The selection of participants in grade eight occurred after selecting the cases for grade seven. The selection did not apply purposeful sampling because of these students'

higher study demands. Instead, their head teacher provided information from their records, and classroom observation were conducted. Four individuals (two males and two females) from grade eight were eventually chosen considering their ethnicity, gender, academic performance, and migrant status. All of them were target cases for more thorough analysis. Thus a total of 13 students participated in this study, seven of whom served as targeted or focal cases for analysis. During the selection of the final seven targeted cases, male and female students were equally chosen to compare gender differences. Variation in the length of urban experience was included to examine the impact of urban experience on the formation of cultural identification. A demographic summary of the final participants selected for this study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Seven Focal Students

| Names | Grade | Age | Gender | Ethnicity | Length of City residence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lin Ma | 7th grade | 16 | Male | Hui | Three Years |
| Ying Wang | 7th grade | 14 | Female | Dongxiang | Seven Years |
| Yue Wang | 7th grade | 15 | Female | Dongxiang | Three Years |
| Ming Ma | 8th grade | 15 | Male | Dongxiang | Four Years |
| Li Dong | 8th grade | 15 | Male | Hui | Three Years |
| Yan Wang | 8th grade | 16 | Female | Dongxiang | Eight Years |
| Ping Ma | 8th grade | 16 | Female | Dongxiang | Five Years |

As indicated in Table 1, seven students were eventually selected as targeted participants. Four of them are females and three are males. Their ages ranged from 14 to 16, which coincides with Erikson's (1980) diffusion vs. formation stage of identity development. Participants were

chosen from two grades to compare possible age differences. Three participants were from a class in grade seven and the other four were from a class in grade eight. The participants in each grade knew others in the same grade. The choices of ethnicity reflected the demographics of Hui and Dongxiang in Xiaoxihu Middle School. Two of participants are Hui and the other five are Dongxiang. Participants were also chosen based on their length of city residence to compare their identification toward rural and urban identities.

## Research Questions

The major purpose of this study was to explore the cultural and educational experiences of rural migrant Hui and Dongxiang students, and their cultural identification in heterogeneous urban middle school environments. Intercultural and adaption questions also were examined, that is, how rural migrant Muslim students live within and between two cultures, and how well they deal with their crosscultural situations. The following specific questions guided the design and data collection:

- What kind of different urban city and learning environments do rural migrant Muslim students experience?
- What kind of changes do these new settings bring about in their lives (study, lifestyle, social interaction, and relationship), and how do they interpret and negotiate these changes?
- How do Muslim students self-identify in relation to their values, personal identity, and future goals?
- How does the intersection of rural-urban difference, ethnicity, and religion shape identity development of rural migrant Muslims students?

## Data Collection

Data for this study included narrative stories, group discussions, visual documents, semi-structured interviews, and field observations. The data sources were organized based on the constructs of cultural identification (Phinney, 1990) and elaborated in conceptual framework. The data were triangulated (Denzin, 1978) with textual, visual and verbal documentations (See Table 2). These strategies were chosen to improve understanding of the cultural and educational experiences of rural migrant Muslim students. In total, this study included 34 narrative stories, 1297 photos, 49 videos, three field visits, eight audio recorded group discussions, 21 semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002), nine family visits, and three months of classroom observations.

Five 60-minute focus group conversations were conducted on urban impressions, learning differences and life experiences, social interactions and school activities, values and identification, and intersections of ethnicity and religion, among the 13 initial group of study participants. Separate group discussions occurred with the seventh and eighth grade participants. Four rounds of these discussions were conducted. Within the group discussions, students publically talked about their experiences living and studying in Lanzhou City. Questions address included their first impressions of Lanzhou city; thoughts about the differences between studying in prior rural schools versus current urban schools; regular leisure activities after school and during the weekend; relationships in school with classmates from rural and urban backgrounds; identification as a rural resident, urban resident, or someone else; and maintaining as Muslims in Lanzhou (See Appendix B for the complete group discussion protocol).

Table 2. Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

| Phase | Constructs | Data Source | Frequency | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Phase One** | Rural-urban differences;<br>Changes happen to me;<br>Self-identification (value, future plan) | Narrative Stories | One time | 13 Muslim students |
| **Phase Two** | All constructs of cultural identification | Group discussions | 4 weekends,<br>one month | 13 Muslim Students |
| **Phase Three** | Impression of the city and schools:<br>“Lanzhou and # School in your eyes” | Photo project (Photos+ Notes) (teacher’s notes if necessary) | 2 photos each,<br>in 2 weeks | 11 Muslim Students (from initial group) |
| | Study:<br>“One day in # school: My backpack” | | | |
| | Afterschool Life<br>“My life after school” | | | |
| | Lifestyle: “My clothes in a week” | | | |
| | Relationships (with family, friends and teachers)<br>“One day in my family ” | | | |
| | Social interaction: “With my friends” | | | |
| | Religion “One day as Muslim” | | | |
| **Phase Four** | Social interactions, Values, Future Plan, Ethnicity, Religion, etc | Semi-structured Interviews | 3 times,<br>one per month | Selected 7 Muslim Students |
| | “My life as Muslim in Lanzhou City”<br>(Family life, religion, ethnicity) | Photo Project (Photos + Notes) | 15 photos in addition to previous photos | |
| | “Being a Muslim” | Narrative Stories | One time | |
| **Phase Five** | Field Observation<br>All constructs<br>(Check with finding from Phase one to four) | Observation Notes | One month | All 13 Muslim Students |
| **Phase Six** | At and after school Observation<br>All Constructs | Observation Notes | Two months | Selected 7 Muslim Students |
| | Interview | Semi-structured Interviews | 4 times in two Months | |

Eleven participants from the initial groups took thematic photos to record their lives after school, family lives, social relationships, and religion to symbolize their experiences moving to the city, and to annotate the photos. Some topics and titles were suggested for labeling the photographs including, This is where I live; My life after school; My clothes in a week; With my friends; One day in my family; and One day as a Muslim. Notes were required to explain the purpose and content of each photo. The targeted seven participants took more pictures to represent their experiences more deeply. They were instructed to take photos to represent their identities as Hui and Dongxiang students and Muslims. For example, they took photos on their praying rituals, making ethnic foods, socializing with relatives, and hanging out with Hui, Dongxiang, or Han friends (See Appendix C for more instructional details).

Three to four semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002) were conducted with each of the targeted participants. These interviews took place either at school, at the students' residences after school, or in public locations such as cafeterias and parks. Each participant was asked during interviews to check the authenticity or his or her stories, discussion records, and photos. The main purpose was to further probe their stories and interpretations during private one-on-one interviews. These targeted participants talked about their memories and difficulties adjusting to the city, gender differences, relationships with families, social interactions with teachers and friends, conflicts and confusions of values and future plans, and religion practices in the city. Each interview lasted between one and two hours. The interview protocol is presented in Appendix A.

The seven targeted participants also were observed in the classroom, as well as in social interactions and involvement in school affairs. These observations were triangulated with the participants' self representations of these experiences. Class observations occurred during

activities and involvements in Chinese Literature, English Literature, and Social Studies. The researcher sat in the back of the room, rather than participating and interacting during observation. Sometimes, the researcher asked the participants some casual questions during recess time, for instance, in class observations focused on the topic of the lessons, how students engaged with the materials, how teachers and students interacted, and how much these students were recognized, involved, and engaged in the classroom work and activities. Out of class observations concentrated on leisure activities, conversations during the break and recess time, attendance at school activities, and friendships and interactions with rural and urban peers. These observations also included both school and class events. The focus was on how these events were organized and what kinds of participation they encouraged or allowed. Also, a total of nine family visits among seven participants were made to observe the participants' lives outside of school, including family relationships, community involvement, and social interactions. For example, I observed the location, environment and climate of students' families and homes, conversation between students and families, and behaviors during the summer break (see Appendix E for more details).

Two fieldtrips to the participants' hometowns were made in the middle of the data collection time frame. The purpose was to understand their previous cultural lives, living conditions, and educational settings. The first trip was to Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture (临夏回族自治州). This prefecture is called the "little Mecca" (小麦加) for its history of Chinese Islam and influence on the development of various denominations of Islam. Many rural Hui migrants in Lanzhou come from this area. I visited the Laohua Mosque (老华寺) and several other famous religious institutions. A group discussion with local students and residents was conducted to talk about their beliefs, understanding of education, and ethnic differences. Another

conversation with local religious scholars dealt with the influences of modern culture on the development of Islam. All these observations and discussions provided background information for understanding the lives of Hui students in Lanzhou. The second field trip was to Dongxiang Autonomous Prefecture (东乡自治县). During this trip, the researcher visited two primary and one middle schools, observed classes in both urban and rural areas, and talked to local principals. The main purpose was to understand the lives and education of Dongxiang students before they migrated to Lanzhou. Data from observations in Linxia and Dongxiang Autonomous Prefecture were triangulated with the descriptions of their own previous lives provided by the participants in this study.

The duration of this study was six months. In the first three months, a pilot study was conducted to collect narrative stories of rural migrant Hui students in an urban school. The purpose was to test the typicality and intensity of information from a single school site. The selection of Qilihe District, Xiaoxihu area, and Xiaoxihu Middle school was advised and assisted by the Center for Northwest Ethnic Minority Research (教育部西北少数民族研究中心) at Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou. The Department of Education has several affiliated research centers in ethnic minority regions. This center has been researching ethnic minorities in Gansu Province, Qinghai Province, and Xinjiang Autonomous Region for two decades. It also has a long academic cooperation and relationship with local school districts and educational administrations. The director of the research center provided the demographics of Lanzhou and recommended Xiaoxihu area based on his research on the Hui, and knowledge of ethnic education in Lanzhou.

Before data collection began officially, the principal of Xiaoxihu Middle School was asked for suggestions on the selection of grades and classes. A head teacher each in grade seven

and grade eight was suggested. Both taught English and were in charge of the whole class. This advice offered access for collecting narrative stories and conducting group discussions during the first and second months of data collection. Even though these teachers were not Hui or Dongxiang, they had served as head teachers for more than five years, and developed knowledge of ethnic differences and cultures. Their experience and knowledge of Hui and Dongxiang students contributed to understanding the participants locally and contextually. In the middle of the study, the seven targeted students were selected and the collection of interview data, narrative stories, photo projects, and family visits began.

## Data Analysis

All conversations in this study were conducted in Mandarin. Audio recordings of group discussions and semi-structured interviews were transcribed with the assistance of an outside transcribing group in China. The transcriptions produced by the transcribers were reviewed and edited by the researcher and an initial coding scheme developed (See Table 3). The first round of coding was developed based on the conceptual framework and interview protocol. These codes included urban impressions and responses, study adaption, after school life, social interactions, value changes, and roles. A summary of these conceptual constructs and initial codes is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Initial Coding Scheme

| Conceptual Constructs | Codes |
| --- | --- |
| • Self-identification as a group member<br>• Sense of Belonging<br>• Attitudes towards rural/urban memberships<br>• Cultural involvement | Urban impressions and Self-reflection |
| | Study adaption |
| | After school life |
| | Social interactions |
| | Value change |
| | Roles |
| | Future plan |

Following the conventions of Krippendorf (2010) and Gee (2011), the data were then subjected to textual and discourse analyses. Gee (2011) stated people convey who they are and their identities though language. Therefore, in analyzing the data collected in this study it was important to determine what identities the participants were enacting and what they wanted others to see, as well as what language was used to talk about other people's identities related to their own. More than language, the big "D" discourse tool (Gee, 2011) was applied to analyze the data from observations. Interpretations were made on how students use certain acting, interacting, believing, valuing, clothing, and other various objects to enact a specific social recognizable identity. A second round of analysis of the transcriptions produced more codes that were added to initial ones (See Table 4). In the revised coding schemes, participants' behaviors were further organized and summarized in different categories. For example, codes of teaching and learning styles were characterized to analyze participants' study adaption in the city.

The second rounds of data analysis were made to examine specifically participants' language and behaviors. But these codes were too descriptive to make claims and assumptions on their identities and education. The third round of coding was made to summarize participants' languages and behaviors and emergent codes for data presentation. There were organized according to various salient identities, conflicts, and education that participants conveyed (See Table 5). These were religious, ethnicity, rural-urban, gender identities and conflicts, and education and social integration in the city.

Table 4. Revised Coding Schemes

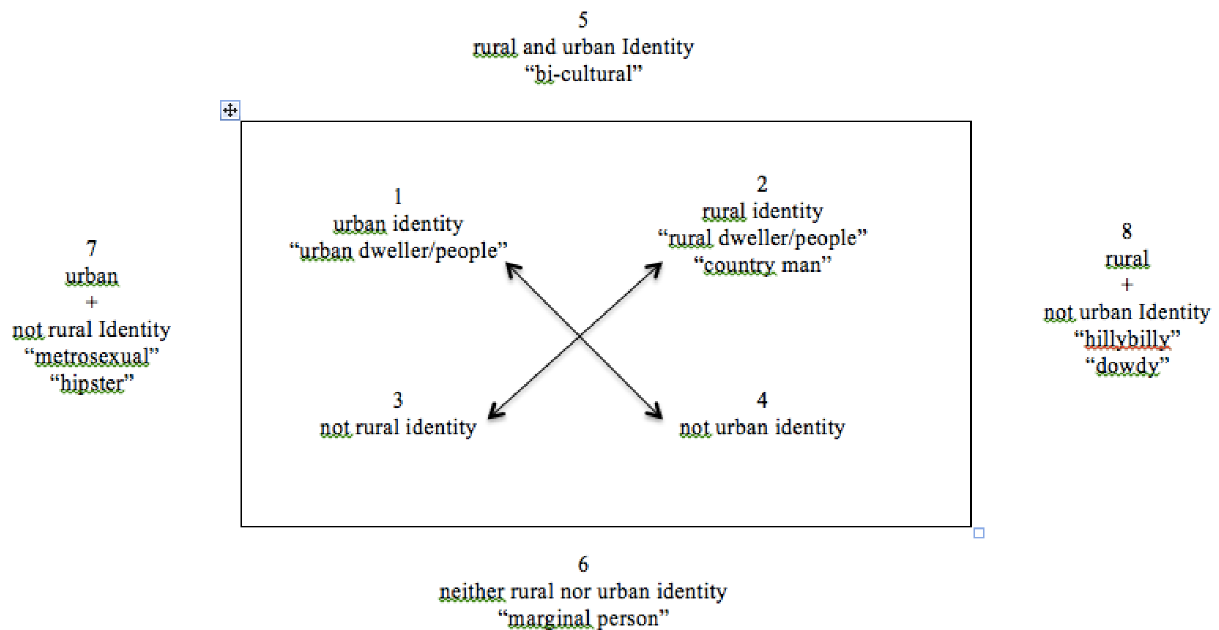
| Conceptual Constructs | Codes |
|---|---|
| • Self-identification as a group member<br>• Sense of Belonging<br>• Attitudes towards rural/urban memberships<br>• Cultural involvement | Urban impressions<br>• City Impression<br>• Urban School Impression<br>• Impression on urban people<br>• Self-reflection |
| | Study Adaption<br>• Teaching style<br>• Learning style<br>• Learning content<br>• Extended Content<br>• Reflection on extended content<br>• Learning adaption<br>• Academic achievement |
| | After school life<br>• Activities after class in the weekday<br>• Activities in the weekend<br>• Students' association |
| | Life and Habit<br>• Life habit<br>• Consuming habit; Monthly expense and use |
| | Friend-making and Social interaction<br>• Judgment and choice (rural or urban friends)<br>• Attitudes toward rural and urban friends<br>• Engagement in Friend-making<br>• Difficulties in engagement<br>• Rules of friend-making |
| | Relationship with home community and culture<br>• Times of going back to home<br>• Activities at home<br>• Conversation with parents<br>• Relationship with parents<br>• Relationship with home friends (social distance) Attitudes towards home community |
| | Future Plan<br>• Expected and dreamed work<br>• Stay in the city or rural places |
| | Value Change<br>• Personality change<br>• Temper |
| | Identification<br>• Marginality |

Table 5. Coding Schemes for Data Presentation

| Conceptual Constructs | Themes and Codes |
| --- | --- |
| • Self-identification as a group member<br>• Sense of Belonging<br>• Attitudes towards rural/urban memberships<br>• Cultural involvement | Religious identities and conflicts<br>• Religious practices<br>• Conflicts with school education<br>• Religious denominations<br>• Impact of family and community |
| | Ethnic identities and conflicts<br>• Minority and Han<br>• Dongxiang and Hui |
| | Rural-urban identities and conflicts<br>• Moving experiences<br>• Rural-urban choices |
| | Gender identities and conflicts<br>• Roles and expectations<br>• Study pressures |
| | Education in the city<br>• Achievement debt<br>• Standardized tests |
| | Social integration to the city<br>• Relationship with home and host places<br>• Cultural capitals |

A semiotics strategy was used to analyze the various identities of the participants. Semiotics is concerned with identifying signs and understanding the processes by which they come to have meaning (Hebert, 2007). Through opposition and tension, relationships between the sign and the signified are examined to understand the meanings of signs and what they are not. In this study, a particular identity was analyzed through opposition and tensions with related identities. For example, the semiotic square technique was used to analyze the complex positions of rural and urban identities and how these identities were formed in the ways they were, rather than conversely (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. Semiotic Analysis of Rural-urban Identities




The idea of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) also was used to analyze the multiple identities of rural migrant Muslim students. Intersectionality describes the ways in which multiple variables of diversity intersect and interrelate. Crenshaw (1991) described intersectionality as a concept that links various forms of oppression (racism, classism, sexism) with their political consequences (e.g., global capitalism, poverty, large numbers of incarcerated youth of color). Knudsen (2006) concluded that these interconnected factors create systems of oppression that reflect intersections of multiple forms of discrimination. In this study, the identity development of rural migrant Muslim students was analyzed through dimensions of differences, such as ethnicity, religion, rural-urban status, and gender.

Some potential ethical issues were noticed in data collection and analysis. None of the proposed research activities were given to the participants as class assignments. The researcher entered the field with a brief school observation. Informal talks were conducted with potential participants by introducing research purposes and activities before the researcher asked for their

willingness to participate in the study, rather than through their teachers. Regarding the major concern of privacy in photo taking, the researcher used the photo as part of visual evidence to demonstrate cultural experiences of rural migrants. In this case, the researcher kept the photos for research use only. The researcher also asked the participants if they were willing to share these photos. The researcher only used photos that contain no identifiable information. For photos that contained possible identifiable information, the participants were asked for permission to use them. Even these photos were edited with mosaic techniques or deleted after the researcher kept field note records on them.

## Summary

In this chapter, the multiethnic contexts of Northwest China, Gansu, and Lanzhou were described, including how they have been affected by the process of urbanization and rural migration. Certain areas in Lanzhou,, such as Xiaoxihu, are heavily populated by rural migrants, especially Hui and Dongxiang. The demographics of Xiaoxihu Middle School made it a viable site for this study. A variety of sampling strategies were used in selecting the participants for this study. Data were compiled for narrative stories, thematic photos, group discussion, semi-structured interviews, and field observations to explore how rural migrant Muslim students experienced education and identity development in urban areas.

# Chapter IV Findings

The findings of this study were derived from data collected through narrative stories, group discussions, photo projects, semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documents. Seven major themes emerged from these data. They are religious identity and conflicts; rural-urban identity and conflicts; ethnic identity and conflicts; gender identity and conflicts; study adaption to the city; and social integration to the city.

## Religious Identity and Conflicts

### Salient Religious Identity Compared to other Identities

Participants in this study owned multiple identities regarding ethnicity, gender, religion, rural-urban difference, and regions. But the way they interpreted and weighed their identities differed because of their own state of awareness. Religious identity stood out above all other identities. One question during the group discussions asked students to rank multiple identities. Some supportive comments were:

> ZSJ: Muslim, then the Dongxiang, then *Laojiao Zhangmen* (老教 Old denomination, 张门 Zhang division)
>
> Ying Wang: I am Muslim. Through the last discussion, I thought I am Dongxiagn, but in two seconds, I thought I am urban people, then *Laojiao,* then students, a person
>
> Yan Wang: Muslim, rural people, then *Xinjiao* (新教, new denomination)
>
> Bing Huang: Muslim, *Laojiao, Hongmen* (洪门, Hong division), Lanzhou people, the Dongxiang
>
> YJ: Muslim, the Dongxiang, *Xinjiao*, Lanzhou people…
>
> Yue Wang: Muslim, half urban half rural, then *Saitaijiao* (三台教, Santai division), then daughter to my parents [laugh]…

Ming Ma: First I am a Muslim, then I am a pure rural people, what they called the Hui or the Dongxiang is just the name… I will use the title of Dongxiang

Li Dong: First Muslim, then the Dongxiang, Hui people, rural people

Yan Wang: First Muslim, then the Dongxiang, the Hui, wherever I go I come from rural area, I am still the Dongxiang

It is clear that all participants claimed themselves first as Muslim, a religious identity. Like Lin Ma wrote in his story on moving to Lanzhou, "although I am a student, I am first a Muslim…. My belief is my whole life. If I will choose between life and belief, I will choose belief ." Then they assigned themselves other identities such as rural-urban, regional, and denominational identities. Along with their self-assigned religious identity, topics of religion occupied major portions of narrative stories, thematic photos, group discussions, and interviews. The interpretation of religious identification relies on both extrinsic religious practice and categorization, and intrinsic evaluation, belonging, experience, and admiration. Students' behaving, interacting, believing, valuing, and dressing also enacted their religious identity (Gee, 2011) and intertwined with identification conflicts. The enactment of religious identity and identification are arbitrarily separated for data presentation.

**Clothing.**

The emergence of salient religious identity stemmed from close connections between Islam and different aspects of the students' daily lives. One fundamental requirement in Islam is to cover *xiuti* (intimate part) of the body. A common practice of Northwest China Muslims is to require male Muslims to cover areas from the shoulders down to the knees, and for female to cover the entire body except the face and hands. Northwest male Hui and Dongxiang usually wear a small white hat as the symbol of Muslim (See Figure 7). Northwest Hui and Dongxiang

females wear a hijab (veil) with casual clothes in daily life. They wear a full-body cloak for special religions occasions (See Figure 8).

Figure 7. A Hui Student Back From *Huili* in *Kaizhaijie*

(*Eid al-Fitr, also called* Feast of Breaking the Fast)

Figure 8. A Dongxiang Family Wearing White Hats, Hijabs, and Cloaks

**Dietary restrictions.**

Another important expression of religious identification is dietary restrictions. Prohibited foods include pork products, blood, carrion, and alcohol. All meat must come from animals slaughtered in the name of Allah by a Muslim. Eating regulations require them to go grocery shopping in certain stores or markets. Small markets and stores exist in the *Xiaoxihu* area for Muslims living in neighborhood communities. These community markets basically serve everything needed for daily life. When they eat at home, specific cuisine and food are made. Tea is usually served as daily drink and for guests. When students eat outside, they are required to dine in restaurants with the sign of *qingzhen* (清真, halal food). *Qingzhen* is the Mandarin translation for Islam and its derivates, such as 'Halal' food, that is the food permissible by Islam precepts. Beef noodle soup is an extremely popular food in local communities and has becomes a famous cuisine for Han in and beyond Northwest China. During my fieldwork, I ate beef noodle soup everyday at a *qingzhen* chain restaurant.

During festivals, such as *Kaizhaijie*, Muslims prepare special food to celebrate and entertain guests. The Hui and Dongxiang usually prepare snacks of *youxiang* (油香, salted cake fried in sesame oil), *youguo* (油棵, another salted cake fried in sesame oil with different shape), and *sanzi* (馓子, deep-fried noodles in a twisted pyramid shape). Ying Wang and Yue Wang learned from their mothers and grandmothers how to make these foods (See Figure 9). Diet might seem irrelevant to the formation of their religious identity. But food and diet constitute one significant extrinsic part of their religious identification. When they are consuming religious permissible food and dining in their own community, they are reminded of and reinforced with their identities of being Muslim. Students also take seriously when other people break the taboo. Ming Ma told me a story that one of his uncle's friends wanted to eat a pork leg before dying.

That friend was treated well in dining, living, and clothing. After the tabooed request, his family considered it as a big trouble and a disbelief of Islam that they even did not even bury him in a Muslims cemetery.

Figure 9. A Dongxiang girl cooking *youxiang* and *youguo* at home

Diet is even a factor that students need to consider for their future college education and careers. Their choices of cities and schools depend largely on the demographics of the city and the food they supply. This is one reason why Lanzhou is the city that students in this study chose to study and live in. When asked their choices of university, Ming Ma answered,

Researcher: If you will attend the university, will you go to other cities?

Ming Ma: Not necessarily… If I go to other places where there are few ethnic minorities, it means I will cook by myself.

Researcher: But it is hard to cook in a university dormitory, right?

Ming Ma: There is no way to… I probably could eat outside…but eating outside is still difficult for me…

Eating out always reminded these students of their religious identity, especially where Muslims are not the dominant ethnic group. Ming went to visit his cousin who lived in a Han-dominant city during the summer vocation. After playing basketball, he felt thirsty and wanted to drink water badly. Without his cousin, he walked to the outer boundaries of the field and found a water dispenser with cups. Before he drank, he took the cup to the outside and washed it carefully. His habitual action brought the attention of other players and he was asked whether he was Hui. Suddenly, he was reminded of his ethnicity and differences.

**Religious practice.**

Religious practice is a fundamental aspect of religious identity. There are five pillars of Islam that are considered mandatory by believers and are the foundation of Muslim life. They are *Nian* (念), *Li* (礼), *Zhai* (斋), *Ke* (课), and *Chao* (朝). *Nian* means that Muslims have to publicly declare there is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is Allah's Messenger. *Li* refers to ritual of Muslims praying five times a day. *Zhai* means Muslims must fast and practice self-control during the holy month of Ramadan. *Ke* stands for donating 2.5 percent of one's earnings to the poor and needy. *Chao* refers to pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime if one is able to. Practicing *Nian,* many students in this study are able to recite the quote "*Wanwu Feizhu, Weiyou Zhenzhu,* Muhammad *shi Zhenzhu De Shizhe*" (There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is Allah's Messenger). This quote is also commonly seen in students' homes. For example, a plaque with this quote was used to decorate Ying Wang's house (Figure 10).

Figure 10. A Plaque with Quote "There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is Allah's Messenger" in a Student’s Home

To facilitate religious practice, there is at least one mosque in every Hui and Dongxiang neighborhood of Lanzhou. *Xiaoxihu* area has more than ten mosques, each of which could serve a few hundred to a thousand people. Muslims go to the mosque in their neighborhood and pray five times everyday. If not enough time is allowed, they pray in their homes or working places. All students in this study had one mosque they often attended in the *Xiaoxihu* area. Li Dong described how he engaged in religious practices weekly:

> Currently, I pray at home. There is only one pray I could not do [everyday], or I was outside… [I go to the mosque] every Friday. I often see many of my old classmates there… The mosque is not far and is located in the neighborhood. [During the service] *Ahong* (阿訇, akhoond) gives lessons, and teaches us how to practice [our] beliefs, something we did wrongly, and things like that…

Students also indicated that young children are often sent to mosque to receive religious education before they receive formal school education or during summer vacation. Through his

16 years, Lin Ma has attended classes in mosques several times. Every summer or winter vacation, he was sent by his parents to mosques to learn religious classics as a *Manla* (满拉, the student in the mosque). He usually lived in the mosque for a month or two during the break. After years of training, he was able to read part of the Quran in Arabic, and recite the teachings the Islam. He also described the origins, rituals, schedules, and requirements of Ramadan. Of the several denominations of Islam in Lanzhou, Lin Ma had practiced *Xinjiao* since he was young. Some others in his class practiced the denomination of *Santai*. He explained general differences associated with attending mosques, taboos, and ritual, but not specific ones and their origins.

**Religious literacy.**

Strong knowledge of and training in the Quran earn people respect among the Muslim community members. Ming Ma attended classes in a mosque for several summers. If something came up and he was not able to attend the classes, he joined the seniors and learned from them. Li Dong complimented Ming's recitation of the Quran during the group discussion. He said he "has good experience [education] in the mosque…it is something you don't speak but recite. Reciting Arabic Quran has long and short sounds, which are extremely hard to recite properly. I think his [Ming Ma] recitation is quite standard. " Ping Ma's father was an *Ahong* in her hometown and started a small business in Lanzhou. With knowledge of the Quran, her father was known and admired by other participants in this study.

When Min Ma was interviewed and attended group discussion, it happened to be Ramadan (*Zhai Yue,* 斋月). According to the religious requirement, fasting is obligatory for adult Muslims, except those who are suffering from an illness, travelling, pregnant, breastfeeding, diabetic or females going through menstrual cycles. Middle school age students as those in this study are considered as adults in the practice of Islam and are obligated to fasting during

Ramadan. From dawn until sunset Muslims students refrained from consuming food and drinking liquids. Ramadan in 2014 happened to occur at the same time as the final exams for the spring semester at the *Xiaoxihu* Middle School. Lin Ma fasted for a whole month. He ate at 2:00 a.m. every morning, did the first prayer, and slept until 7:00 before he went to school. After the morning session of classes, he went home around 12:00 p.m., did noon prayer, and took a nap. The afternoon classes were from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.  He did homework before he went to the mosque around 8:00 p.m. He usually ate at the mosque with others and stayed there for lectures until 11:00 p.m. After going home for the night, he took another nap before he got up and ate at 2:00 a.m.

Even though these students do not earn their own money, they already understood and experienced the pillar of *Ke* in various daily occasions. There are many beggars along the streets of *Xiaoxihu* area, which is quite different from other districts in Lanzhou. These beggars always wear white hats or veils to show that they are Muslims. Lin explained that Muslims are obligated to give back and help vulnerable populations. Because of the Muslim practice of giving and donating, beggars gather and are concentrated in the populous markets. During the *huili of Kaizhaijie,* Lin also pointed out sites to make donations toward building a new mosque. This kind of donation site is also visible outside the mosques students usually visited in their neighborhood. (See Figure 11)

Figure 11. A Donation Site Outside of a Mosque

During my second visit to Li Dong's family, his parents were hosting their older brother and other relatives in Lanzhou. Li Dong's uncle (around 50 years old) was to begin his pilgrim to Mecca a few days later. According to the Dongxiang custom, people who are going to Mecca are hosted by their relatives and blessed before they leave. Li Dong added that people want to say goodbye before they take a long trip. In some extreme cases of few decades ago, some people might meet accidents during the pilgrimage and could not return home. Li Dong's relatives would be gone for around 40 days and stay in Mecca for around 30 days. Upon their return, the uncle will host a big gathering, bring them Allah's blessing, and share religious gifts. Through these gatherings, Li Dong began to understand why he needed to go to Mecca at least once in his life, under what circumstances he could leave for Mecca, what he should prepare for the trip, and that as a faithful Muslim it was his personal obligation to make the pilgrimage.

**Areas of Conflicts**

With these religious practices, students gradually internalized values and beliefs of Islam and turned them into behavioral creeds in the secular society. To illustrate, Ming Ma said, "every time when I decide to do something, I always think whether this conflicts with my beliefs. If

there is conflict indeed, I will try to prevent it from happening." However, moving from their rural monoethnic hometown to a multiethnic urban Lanzhou, students often encountered many areas of conflicts in and outside of school.

Under the religious policy in China, the spread of religion is only allowed within religious institutions. Religious symbols are not legally allowed in public spaces, especially in educational institutions. Towns with major Hui and Dongxiang populations allow students to wear small hats or hijabs in either ethnic minority schools or public schools. In Lanzhou with a predominant Han population there are few ethnic minority schools. Lin Ma attended the public non-ethnic school in his neighborhood, which does not allow students to wear ethnic clothing. Li Dong criticized this policy in noting that, "Our middle school is a school with a multiethnic population. But it doesn't correspond to ethnic characteristics. Wearing a white hat is one symbol of us. If we don't wear it, people might consider you a Han." Yet this does not cause major controversies among students since uniforms are compulsory in this middle school and most other public schools in Lanzhou. There were some rare cases when students skipped classes to avoid punishment because of not wearing their uniforms. In some way, the uniform required by the school unintentionally met the Islamic religious requirement of covering intimate body parts, for five days of a week. During the time out of school Lin Ma routinely wore his white hat, especially when he prayed in the mosque and attended other religious rituals. He also had traditional winter and summer gowns for special religious occasions.

However, wearing religious apparel outside of school became a more obvious issue after students moved to Lanzhou. The Han dominant Lanzhou forms a secular context where most of the people (Han) do not wear Muslim clothing. Female students reflected that they were stared at by Hans when they wear their veil in other districts of Lanzhou. Li Dong commented that Hui no

longer follow the dress requirements as faithfully as in his hometown. One frequent phrase these students mentioned is "*Genzhe shidai zou*" (follow the trends). Li Dong said that he would follow the trends and keep a certain hairstyle, which is often judged by his parents. Yan Ma answered that, "Every season has its style. Even though I still have many clothes and they are still new, I just want to buy and follow what others consider as good-looking. " In criticizing the design of these so called "modern" clothes, Ming stated, "to be honest, we are still in middle school. Those so called popular clothes are too mature…too exposed". A common situation students reflected on was Muslim girls wearing veils and mini-skirts in public. One participant shared through social media a photo depicting a donkey wearing female clothes and leaving large part of its body exposed. The comment following the image said, "Do you really think this is beautiful, girls?"

Another conflict involved dietary restrictions. In Lanzhou, food from different ethnic groups could be found on the street and in restaurants. The Han do not have a taboo on eating pork. Most Hans consume pork as their main meat. Because of food customs, the Hui only eat at home or at the restaurants with the sign, *qingzhen*. Ming's family usually grew edibles they needed in their hometown. After moving to the city, they have to buy all supplies or dine out. A large number of *qingzhen* restaurants and food markets existed in the *Xiaoxihu* area and *Qilihe* District. But the large concentration in one area, in some way, segregated Hui from Han life in Lanzhou. It is even harder for students to follow the requirement when fake *qinzhen* food happens. Ming Ma remembered hearing rumors that pork was in some products even labeled as *qingzhen* food. It was hard for him to trust the sign of *qingzhen*. Actually the existence of fake q*ingzhen* food is real. A famous chain of *qingzhen* pastries company in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (Northwest China) reported that some items contained pork products. Some

students still stick with q*ingzhen* meals, but it is hard for them to resist the temptation of snacks. Yan Ma said,

> All food I ate [before I came to Lanzhou] was *qinzhen* food. In the beginning, I still read whether it was *qingzhen* and was very careful. Gradually I didn't pay much attention to whatever snacks I bought. I ate them and didn't care too much about it.

Yet, eating with family is easier for Yan Ma. But eating outside, especially with Han classmates, is a big challenge. During the last day of observation, the teacher and I invited Lin Ma and Ying Wang out to lunch. We ordered some food without pork. I put some food into his bowl and told him to eat more (It is a customary in China for older individuals to put food in young people's bowl). He hesitated and exchanged eye contact with Ying Wang. I was curious and asked why he hesitated. The teacher encouraged me not to worry about it. Suddenly, it occurred to me that these Muslim students would not eat food touched by other people's chopsticks, especially when they are Han. They believed that the saliva in a Han's chopsticks might contain part of tabooed pork.

The principals and teachers of *Xiaoxihu* Middle School tried to understand and care for the multiethnic students in classroom teaching and school activities. Conflicts still existed because of institutional neglect and their lack of cultural knowledge. Visitors entering the campus could not avoid noticing the huge figure of Confucius printed on the background wall of the stage. Hui and Dongxiang students faced the stage when they stood in the playground at every morning and afternoon recess. This background figure was designed and displayed as a part of teaching Confucius and traditional thoughts. *Xiaoxihu* Middle School facilitated this campaign to develop campus culture. The Chinese government considers Confucius thoughts as *Guoxue* (国学, national scholarship) and promotes them throughout the entire country. The

student participants in this study said they agree with most Confucius thoughts. But further worship requirements created conflicts. Ming Ma said,

> Among Confucius thoughts, being devoted to older is the prior goodness, some other virtues of being a good man…are what we wouldn't disagree…But worshiping Confucius in ritual definitely poses conflicts, because we Hui and other ethnic minorities can't even kneel to anyone, not even our parents; only the Allah… Even though we did it [bowing before the Confucius figure], we still were very unwilling to do it. If there are similar activities, I think they shouldn't make us participate…. they could find people who could do it…our school has so many Dongxiang students like us.

Li Dong also reflected on the neglect of religious requirements in other school activities. Last year, the school organized an Arts Festival. Girls performed some ethnic or modern dances. Li Dong noted that,

> [Some performances] required the exposure of arms. Girls lifted up their sleeves. They expose shanks, and even thighs. In our mosques' or parents' education, that is absolutely restricted. But schools just required them to do this…

Another conflict arises for ethnic students in public non-ethnic schools during daily religious practices and religious holidays. Students mentioned that they usually missed one or two prayer session because of classes. Ming hoped that the school would allow more recognition of their beliefs and let them have a short break to pray. Hui Middle School in Lanzhou did not have classes during the religious holidays. But other non-ethnic schools like *Xiaoxihu* Middle School, do not have permission from the local council of education to honor religious holidays. It failed to consider the multiethnic demographics in the school. During *Guerbang Jie*(古尔邦节, Corban Festival), the Hui and Dongxiang have the custom of *huili* (public prayer) and other

practices. Students have to fulfill their obligations by attending these events. Without permission to leave, students often missed classes intentionally. Ming Ma complained that,

> Because of our school, I didn't attend events of *Guerbang Jie* for many years. I hope school can give us more rights and I would say religious freedom….I admit I didn't do quite well as a qualified Muslim. But I would fulfill responsibilities as a Muslim if I could have these freedoms."

Islam also affected students' study in Lanzhou. Their religious beliefs sometimes conflicted with school study. The fundamental pursuit of *houshi* (后世, later life) interfered with Lin Ma's positive engagement with school education in *jinshi* (今世, current life). On *jinshi* and *houshi* he explained that,

> We minorities [Hui] pay more attention to *houshi*. It means that we don't pay much attention to *jinshi* and consider it as an ordeal. Many people have forgotten the ordeal. I didn't considered too much about *jinshi.* I can go through my life at ease. A fair living would be enough. The most important thing is to prepare well for *houshi. Houshi* means eternity for us. *Jinshi* is only a matter of time. But *houshi* doesn't have any time limit. Heaven and hell are two final results for two kind of persons [who prepare and who don't].

But this does not mean that students had no motivation or were not interested in education. Lin disagreed with dropping out because of religious beliefs and practices. He admitted, "now the times are different. If I don't receive education, it is hard to survive in the society. It is also hard for myself. At least, I need a life. " A senior Muslim from the Linxia Autonomous Region explained that the Quran says education is from birth to tomb. He criticized some Muslim

parents and children for using religion as an excuse to avoid schooling, and for misinterpreting the Quran.

Some contextual conflicts between education and religion still existed beyond intentional excuses. One conflict was the scientific worldview in curriculum and teaching. Students in eighth grade take courses in Physics and Chemistry. They reflected how these subjects changed their mind and posed conflicts for them. Ming Ma explained:

> When we went home and chatted with parents, we started to talk about science. We usually would avoid talking about these kinds of topics, or I would be blamed that I started to believe in science after moving to the city…For example, eyeball, the inner structure of eyeball. When I talked to them about it, they would question how do I know what is in my eyes? I said myopia is a disease. They would say how do I know what it is… For contemporary society, it is Han culture and scientific culture. Even though Islam doesn't recognized science, science is … built on certain principles. So they say science still lack [understanding of] the knowledge about Islam. On the culture, it [science] still don't quite understand other ethnic customs.

Another conflict was the virtues privileged in the classroom. Teachers commonly encouraged students to be more outgoing and active, especially when it comes to school activities and social interaction. Li Dong was concerned "the mismatching part between school education and our belief is its over-openness, especially on interactions between males and females." His concern was validated by real examples. Ying Wang joked that, "I [went from being] a quiet girl to a crazy girl now." In a letter to her friend Lin Ma, Yue Wang called herself "*nanrenpo"* (男人婆, masculine woman). She further revealed that her personality was double-sided at home and school. At school, she was *nanrenpo*, managed the students as their leader.

Teachers in her class complimented her management skills and talent. She was lively and talkative during the interview. At home, she claimed she was "quiet as a rabbit." During the visit to her family, she walked and talked slowly, and carefully added tea for the guests.

Description of these conflicts is not to assume that the school should not teach students knowledge of science and positive personality. But the school and teachers assumed a secular position in their curriculum and teaching, and failed to help students bridge their religious beliefs and secular society. Discussing this conflict between school education and religious belief, Ming Ma said,

> Researcher: Do you think, if you go to university in the current school education environment, the education will be against your belief?
>
> Ming: It is not that the school education goes against it… But this [school] ideology is some thoughts you have to maintain [in the school]… I can't resist any more. Upholding this thought is changing all of my thoughts into Han thoughts…It is too frightening…
>
> Researcher: Are you saying, you are concerned if you go to high school and university, you would lose your self-control?
>
> Ming: Yes, it is looser in self-control… then my own thoughts would not make me a qualified Muslim.

Parents were concerned that their children who lost their religious beliefs these students were more likely to drop out of school, especially when they failed their studies or exams. Even though Yue Wang did a good job with her two-sided personality, her parents still noticed her over-activeness through her active engagement with class affairs and interactions with other students. When she failed math during the final exam, her parents forced her to drop out of

school and transferred her to an Arabic language school, in which she will systematically study the Quran in Arabic. Lin Ma also mentioned his thoughts about dropping out of school several times during conversations with the head teacher, Ms. Stone. There was a high drop out rate at Xiaoxihu Middle School, especially for female students. In one grade, there were approximately 330 students but only 200 remained at the end of the second year. Dropping out of school means students no longer have the chance to receive a formal education, probably throughout their life. Only in rare cases, such as with Yue Wang, parents compromised between religious beliefs and public education, and chose an alternative religious education by sending their children to Arabic language schools or religious schools.

A major conflict between Islamic beliefs and secular education was students' study during Ramadan (*Zhai Yue,* 斋月). Refraining from food and drink, and limited sleep made it very difficult for them to concentrate on studying. Lin Ma, Ming Ma, Li Dong, Ping Ma, and Yue Ma observed the fasting requirement. But Ying Wang, and Yan Ma did not implement fasting for a whole month. The decision about implementation raised controversies during group discussion.

Researcher: Did you all fast recently?

Ying Wang: No, no fasting during finals.

Lin Ma: Missing one day, making up 60 days.

Ying Wang: Making up is fine,  [I will] make up gradually.

Yue Wang: YOU do it, then do it. What do you understand? [talking to Lin Ma]

Ying Wang: Right, what do you understand? [talking to Lin Ma]

Lin Ma: You just said that you don't have time during these days.

Ying Wang: Don't bother girls' stuff.

Me: Who else is still fasting?

Lin Ma: Me.

Yan Ma: Me, Jie Ma.

Ying Wang: I haven't been fasting for five days.

Researcher: I am wondering, do you think fasting has an impact on your study during finals?

Yan Ma: No.

Lin Ma: Being late.

Ying Wang: It has an impact on someone. For example, the weather is so hot in the afternoon. [They] feel sleepy, then fall asleep and do not listen to the class. ..but people who are strong do not [fall asleep]…

Ying Wang: I am that kind of person; I never sleep.

Researcher: What do your parents think?

Ying Ma: Umm, they don't let me do fasting…not during the finals

Yan Ma: You must do fasting.

Yue Wang: You must do fasting.

Lin Ma: You must do fasting… MUST…DO…FASTING!

Bing Huang: My parents ask for my opinion.

Ying Wang: My mom is like; don't do fasting. If you have sin, mom will bear it for you. Then you don't do fasting; you study.

Lin Ma was resolute about fasting. Even if preparing for the high school entrance examination, he said,

> I will continue fasting. My family is always like this…even though families who believe in *Xinjiao* now inculcate [religious] ideas less than before. They feel less concern about that [Islam], and gradually give up fasting…but in other countries, even those in war like Pakistan, people there still insist on fasting…For me, those Arabic countries still keep fasting even in war. We are in peace, still fairly comfortable; I think I should [fast].

Yet fasting was not easy especially for students from eighth grade who had more homework and a heavier load of studying. Ping Ma and Ming Ma presented different scenarios about study during Ramadan. Ping Ma said,

> Especially in this month, I get up at 3:00 a.m. After 4:00 a.m. I can't eat anything. I have one prayer at 4:30 a.m. After that prayer, I become sleepy and I'm not in the mood for studying or other things. I go to sleep until 1:00 p.m. Then I get up for another prayer at 2:00 p.m. I will then do homework and read in the afternoon. Sometimes it is boring and I don't want to do homework. Then I just kill some time.

Ming Ma added,

> I totally had no time for homework…My family paid more attention to the belief that all members have to pray and implement rituals. They kept asking you to follow them. Then I got too sleepy for praying and went to sleep. So I didn't have time for homework. It was too early to write homework at 3:00 a.m. when I finished breakfast. Then I couldn't do homework.

During Ramadan, students were frequently late for school. Teachers generally understood what students were doing. But it was becoming a dilemma. They also wanted students to achieve on the finals. Some teachers suggested they to talk to their parents and take one or two days break from Ramadan fasting. For example, one student was sick and the teacher was concerned

about his struggle of illness, finals, and fasting. But all teachers were not necessarily be culturally sensitive and agree with what students were doing. Some teachers would try to convince students about the importance of studying and finals. Ming Ma complained that one of his teachers brought a water bottle to the class every afternoon. It was getting tough for them looking at something that they could not drink. One fortunate condition is that next year's Ramadan will be ten days earlier. The high school entrance examination will be over when Ramadan starts. It will be much earlier for participants who are going to ninth grade.

Students also experienced conflicts in associated with a modern and urban life. Since China society at large is developing and embracing modern culture, the whole fabric of youth life is changing. Reflecting on valuable traditions inherited from the family. Ming Ma declared that,

> Good traditions are basically quite few now…Girls in my hometown look no different from urban girls. Boys keep long hair, dyed with this color or that, just like this long [point to his neck]. For us [Muslims], we shouldn't keep the hair over [one inch]. And being respectful toward elders, we should learn from elders… They [students] are becoming too mature. They are pursing what we called uniqueness/personality. But I don't think this is uniqueness; I don't like my hair dyed or keep some hair style…

When asked what traditions should be kept or changed among the Hui and Dongxiang, he answered, " I would say girls' wearing traditional [dress] should be kept. Those rules on no exposure should be rarely changed. … Though it might be unfair for girls to make less friends outside." On some occasions, students were not aware of conflicts with their religious thoughts until being reminded. A large portion of Jun Ma's summer life was playing a shooting game on computer according to the photos he took. Killing and shooting were the main content of this violent game. Li Dong commented on this game that, "even though that is fake, that is still

killing a person. What did our [religious] education teach us? We can't use a knife to threaten or scare anyone; we can't point a gun at others. Those actions are all not allowed." Ming also reflected that, "living in a Han society for too long, we have fainter beliefs. We become fond of having fun. We might follow the times. But we are basically doing what Islam prohibits, such as listening and singing pop music."

**Religious Denomination as a Significant Marker**

One explanation of variance in religious identification comes from the religious denomination. Denomination itself is a significant maker of religious identification. Students usually mentioned the denomination that they belonged to. Hui and Dongxiang Muslim practice Sufism in Northwest China. Two major denominations evolved as *Xinjiao* (new denomination) and *laojiao* (old denomination) over the last hundred years. Further divisions developed within these denominations. The participants in this study often identified with both these denominations and divisions. For example, Jun Ma categorized his denomination as *laojiao* and division as *zhangmen* (Zhang division). Yue Wang claimed herself as *Santaijiao* (Santai denomination).

Religious denominations become a significant indicator of religious identification and their different requirements of religious practice. Different denominations and divisions formed their own groups. Students in this study went to different mosques to pray in the *Xiaoxihu* area according to their denominations. Members of these groups formed various rules for their own behavior. For example, Lin Ma said one friend in his class had different rules on the order of fast breaking and praying in the mosque during Ramadan: "They broke the fast after praying. We first broke the fast.  We cut the watermelon, then the bell rang, we started to eat. It usually took two minutes; then we started to pray." Yan Wang explained that,

> The denomination Ping Ma belongs to is the one that has very strict requirements. My denomination isn't that strict. Ping …when she goes out, she can't expose too much. Her father is so strict. He actually doesn't even allow her to go out a lot. Compared to her denomination, mine's is better in requirements.

Students from different denominations had different attitudes toward Ramadan and other religious practices. Ying Wang kept mentioning that their denomination had fewer restrictions on fasting and daily practices. But Yue Ma's denomination of *Saitaijiao* had more strict requirements on religious practices, such that she kept fasting throughout the whole month of Ramadan.

Differences in denominations also caused conflicts among Muslims. Li Dong's father explained that the fight between different denominations in his hometown was cruel and unnecessary. Members of different denominations were stubborn about their rules of religious practice and protection of denominational property. When he got tired of the denominational controversies, he found peace in Lanzhou, where people rarely mentioned denomination in public. He worked as an accountant for more than ten Muslim restaurants in the *Xiaoxihu* area and learned to interact with others through universally accepted social interaction rules—keeping it shallow. He also taught Li Dong to avoid denominational arguments with his friend and classmates. Other students also seem to learn or find clever strategies to avoid denominational conflicts. Lin reflected, "I don't have this intention,  I don't talk on this. If two denominations talk too much on this [difference], the more they talk, the more contradictories they will have. It will eventually cause conflicts… This happened a lot before…" Even though students in seventh grade studied in the same classroom and made friends with each other for more than one year, they did not know each other's exact denomination until it was discussed in the group. Their

comments during the group discussion demonstrated their reasons for different behaviors but denominational differences did not have a major impact on their relationships.

**Impact of Family and Community on the Formation of Religious Identity**

Looking at students' religious identification, one should take the impact of their families and communities into account. Family plays a key role in the formation of beliefs in the beginning years of being Muslim. Family and parents are the first religious educators in religion for Hui and Dongxiang children. Parents not only model the beliefs, but also urge their children to engage in religious practice. Lin Ma started reciting scriptures when he was seven or eight years old. He remembered,

> I didn't want to go, but my family pushed me… They cajoled me to go. If it didn't work, they threatened or beat me…My mom threatened me that she would ask my dad to beat me, or not let me eat. I was quite young at that time. They used this kind of methods to drive me to the mosque.

Li Dong's parents convinced him with gentleness. He recalled that,

> I followed my relatives and parents. They clung to the belief. On the other hand, they let me know believing in Islam is good for us. When I was young, my parents talked to me about smoking. They told me it is bad for health, so is drinking. Meanwhile, they taught me that our religion doesn't allow us to smoke and drink….

Despite parental influence some of participants were not always convinced about or obeyed the religious requirements. For example, Ping Ma said,

> Sometimes, I might be lazy. I might think about praying, or not. Then my dad criticized me that if I didn't practice what I would do after marriage. I am the youngest child in my

> family, and he rarely criticized me. Usually it was my mom. When he said that, I didn't feel well. I feel I am OK in belief. I don't have to be so [firm in faith].

Students had stronger religious identification when some of their family members or relatives worked in the mosque. Ping Ma's father was an *ahong* before he moved to Lanzhou. Her father continued the requirement of practicing Islam, even though he started a small business and no longer served as *ahong*. Ping Ma depicted her father as a strict person who restricted the practice and behavior of the whole family. Hui and Dongxiang families usually restricted girls from going out. She remembered one day last semester that she wandered around with friends after exams and went home late. To the displeasure of her father, now she is cautious about going out and staying late. She missed a scheduled interview because of fear of her father. One of Li Dong's uncles is an *ahong* in the mosque. He met his uncle every four or five days. His uncle has two sons going to college. He learned how to balance school education and religious practice from his two cousins. Li Dong explained that, "His two sons did very well in belief. They finish praying at 5:30 a.m. and then go to school at 6:30 a.m. They also pray at noon. They might miss praying at 5:30 p.m. but keep attending to prayer at 8:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. This made a great impact on me." He also indicated the reciprocal relationship between school education and religious practice that,

> The status of being a student has something in common with being a Muslim. School teaches us how to be a good person, so does Islam. People with pursuit and dream [of education] is great. But without beliefs, he might become one of unsavory elements.

Another important educator of Islam practice and knowledge is neighborhood mosque. Ping Ma began going to the mosque in the age of five or six. *Ahong* served as the teacher in the mosque and teach the children like students in school five days a week. Since children now need

to go to secular schools, they only receive mosque education during vacation time. Ming Ma, Li Dong, and Lin Ma all attended summer classes in the mosque before. Informal and formal education in the mosque complement the religious education in the family, especially those who have less religious knowledge. Lin Ma said his parents had limited knowledge of Islam. His dad had little contact with Islam. Because of busy work, he knew only a little about Islam, but practice prayer. He said his mother knew more but still not enough. Mosque then became one main pathway to religious knowledge for him:

> When I was young and went to the mosque, *ahong* taught us what is the time of Ramadan and told us something to remember, such as what is the exact time to start fasting. *Ahong* emphasized what we need to memorize and taught us knowledge of Islam that we rarely reach in daily life. What I know about Islam basically came from *ahong*. Other people rarely taught me. If you teach correctly, it is all right. You will have sin if you teach wrong knowledge.

The community environment also had a contextual impact on the formation of these youth religious identification. The building Li Dong lives in is inhabited by mostly Muslims. With Muslims from both *xinjiao* and *laojiao*, Islam is highly visible in his neighborhood. He said, "There are some uncles living on the fourth and fifth floor. We usually did some chit-chat on beliefs or we say *sailiangmu* (赛俩目, most common greeting among Hui and Dongxiang Muslims) to each other when we meet."

# Gender Identity and Conflicts

## Gender Roles

### Gender roles in the family.

Gender roles are fundamentally different in Hui and Dongxiang communities. Gender roles may be a means through which individuals express their gender identity. In this section, gender roles are described in the contexts of family, marriage, and work. Women are expected to serve the role of mothers and caretakers in Hui and Dongxiang communities. Females are considered as mature individuals and women starting from the age of nine. For example, girls are required to wear a veil after nine years old. According to Ping Ma, traditionally, when girls are little they are allowed to enter and study in the mosque. After nine, many of them are not longer allowed. There are very few mosques specifically for females. They continue to pray at home but not at the mosque. They usually stay at home and take care of parents or elders. At the age of 14, Ping Ma's cousin in her hometown took care of all the housework, including cooking, laundry, and others. When she went back to her hometown, her cousin cooked for Ping and the whole family. Ping's mother complimented her cousin's cooking a lot, which put Ping who knew little about cooking in an awkward position. Recently, she started to help clean the pots and dishes.

By the age of 15, Ying Wang had been taking care of her family for many years. In a daily schedule, she got up early to cook for her parents and brother, and then go to school. When she went back home in the afternoon, she again cooked the dinner (See Figure 12). During the weekend, she was usually asked to clean the family's living quarters. Her classmates also brought up her cooking skills several times during the group discussion. During the family visit, she prepared dumplings, a difficult food to make. Another girls in this study, Yan Wang, also learned how to make noodles by herself. When complimented for her cooking, she said,

> Actually those girls in my class, they are very good at cooking. They also live a hard life taking care of family. Mine is nothing compared to theirs. There is one of my friends in the class; her parents and younger sister rarely do housework. After she finishes school, she needs to do grocery shopping and buy Chinese bread. She has to finish cooking first and then do her homework. I was in the same primary school with her. She started cooking when she was in primary school. Now she is ninth grade and her parents…rarely move and help her.

Figure 12. A Dongxiang Girl Cooking for Her Family

Gender differences were further evident in the relationship between male and female siblings. Girls usually have a lower status then boys in the family. This comes from the different future expectations of males and females. Yan Wang complained that her mom was biased in favor of her brothers:

> My mom often points to me this or that, and sends me to do this or that. I think it is so unfair…When we all are at home, my two brothers sit there and I work. They even don't bother to move when they pour the water. My mom usually sends me to pour water for them. I wonder why they can't do it themselves. They are grown up. My mom sends me everyday and spoils them too much. Some mothers just like boys. Boys can be relied upon when they grow up. But girls are like water that parents will splash when they get married and they won't even recognize their parents any more. My parents often say this.

Under preferential treatment in the family, some male participants also reinforced their masculine identity. In Ming Ma's mind, boys can work outside and rely on themselves when they grow up. Girls still go home and ask for money even after marriage. He criticized one of his cousins that "every time she went back to her parents' house, she left and took money and some stuff. When she saw some spare meat, she would ask for some to take home. I could not endure this."

Expectations for the younger generation of girls come down from their mothers' and sisters' roles in the family. Yan Wang complained about women's lack of status in the family. In her family, males always made the decisions. Her father also runs the family financially. Yan Ma added that, "In my grandmother's age, women were entirely nothing. Now times [have] changed. But they still have that mindset and still fail to change." Her mom also reinforced the role of women in daily conversations. Yan Wang explained that her mother told her that,

> At my age, [that] she had already taken care of everything. She kept saying that when she was at my age, she had already gone to the field and worked. She worked until very late and got up very early. She earned everything for her family such as clothing and food.

This was the same situation for Ping Ma. Her mother reminded her that she will eventually marry and become the wife of "others". Her mother often teased her that her cooking skills do not qualify for marriage and her in-laws will drive her home after they taste her cooking. While studying in school, some girls were relieved from taking care of the family. For example, Ping Ma said, "My mom did all the housework and I rarely did, possibly never. Before my sisters got married, my oldest sister did most of the housework. Then my second sister did the housework."

**Marriage.**

The descriptions and requirements of female identification connected to the established expectations of women's role and destiny in marriage. Hui and Dongxiang girls are expected to get married around the age of 17 or 18 in Gansu Province. For example, Ping Ma's oldest sister is 25 years old and has four children already. Ming Ma's second oldest sister is 19 years old and has one baby. When some girls passed 20, people worry and gossip about their marriage options, and even their manners. Some girls are promised to a future husband at a very young age. Their mothers and fathers arrange the matches. After marriage girls soon take the role of mother and caregiver. The testing of qualification starts from the wedding ceremony. Yan Wang described the custom of testing bride's cooking skills on the wedding day. In the evening, the bride prepares dinner for the whole family. No one is allowed to help. The whole family waits and watches how well the bride cooks. One usual food tested is making noodles without the assistance of any machinery. Yan Wang said that she has not learned this noodle-making skill.

To escape from their destiny, there are often runaway brides. Ming Ma said this happens quite frequently. These brides ran away either before or after the wedding. When asked about possible reasons of runaway brides, Ming Ma responded:

> It happens a lot. Some girls just like to *lang* and roam around. When they stay in their hometown, they wander in the fair everyday! Nobody can stand it and be with her everyday. They usually call out some of their friends. It is not just the problem of money. No one takes care of the elders at home. When they are running outside everyday, people judge what kind of wife our family married, and the wife is like a shrew.

The term *lang* (浪) was often used to describe people playing outside and strolling around. In Mandarin this term means debauching. It is a way of teasing about people's activities outside in Lanzhou. Referring to the question of females' personal freedom, Ming declared, "you go out and *lang*, then you can't get married. Let's see what you can do then."

**Careers.**

Girls also have stereotyped job types in Hui and Dongxiang communities. Most females work at home as housewives. Those who work outside usually do so in places where they have little contact with men. Ping Ma noted,

> Girls usually find jobs when they don't need to work outside or show up. In my uncle's family, two girls both have jobs. If the working institute doesn't check on them, they won't go to work. They stay at home and get paid. My parents also think I should stay at home if possible. Girls should not go out frequently and it is also not good. But I don't want to.

Many Hui and Dongxiang students work part-time during the weekend and break. One student in Lin's class worked at a construction site for two months during the summer. Ping Ma once brought up the idea of working outside to pay the tuition for supplementary classes. After her parents refused her request, she thought, "I just want to rely on my self. I rely on myself, not

others, to do what I want. Even parents are possibly not reliable. Sometimes some causal words of theirs hurt me a lot."

**Study Pressure and Motivation**

Educational requirements and expectations of students differed significantly by gender. One significant difference is the support of boys' education among Hui and Dongxiang communities. Usually, male students are expected to receive higher education than females. Girls are not supposed to go to school after the age of nine. It is commonly expected in Lanzhou Muslim community for female students to finish their education at middle schools, or even drop out to get married at 15 or 17. The situation in their rural hometown is even worse. Many female students do not even finish primary school. In Ping Ma's hometown, many of her friends dropped out of school after finishing primary school and she was the only one who went on to middle school. Ping experienced much pressure from her family and relatives. When Ping Ma finished her primary school in Lanzhou, her father was concern about whether she should continue schooling. She only went to middle school after she and her mother insisted. Even after she started middle school, her father still was concerned whether he made the correct decision, especially when relatives criticized his decision. Ping said, "Not many people in my family encouraged me to go to school … My aunt [tried to] persuaded me to quit school and get married. One of her daughter dropped out of school in grade five…." Yan Ma explained that parents wonder what girls need to go to school for. After all, "girls get married when they grow up. If boys are well brought up, they will take care of parents when they grow up."

Some parents are more strategic and pragmatic about educating their female children. More and more younger parents let girls continue in school if they are willing to and if they achieve well. After all, education benefits girls in their future development. Li Dong suggested

that, “Even though elders are still quite conservative, younger parents think about their children and love their children. As long it is good for their further life, they will choose it [more schooling].” But one significant condition is they have to achieve well. Opportunities for receiving more education come with conditions, and what students need to strive for inspires both pressure and motivation. The passive attitudes of community members create huge pressures for female students. Ping explained some effects of these external pressures on her study:

> If it is just study, I can concentrate. Even if I fail, I tried my best at least and I won’t feel regret. With this external reason [pressure], it means more pressure. You always remind yourself to achieve. If you fail, how could you deal with these questions [of why you are going to school].

School failure in study always means challenges and questions on why they should continue. Only achieving well will earn girls more opportunities to further their education. As Ping explained,

> For example, I didn’t perform well this time [final exams]. Then my dad said ’I don’t think you even have the chance of [going to] high school’. When he said that, I felt very [sad]…I felt like even my parents didn’t support me. Though I failed this time, I still have a chance, and I still have one year [for high school entrance examination]. They should encourage me… rather than just saying I have no chance to go to high school. I felt extra pressure when they did this… I guess my brother had less pressure than me when he was at middle school. He only needed to study. Not like me, he didn’t need to think about both sides of relatives’ saying and studying. If I was a boy, I wouldn’t have this problem.

> If boys fail at study, they can still work outside. If girls fail at study, they have to go home…

There existed a stigmatization that girls in Hui and Dongxiang communities will eventually failed in study. Similar stories told by other female participants and during family visit depicted stubborn female students who continued their study in middle and high school but eventually failed the College Entrance Examination. Then they felt pressure to marry and look for jobs, and often had an unhappy ending. Ping shared her impressions of this dilemma as follows:

> Each time when they [relatives from hometown] visit us, they first ask about my grades, and say something about it. Sometimes my grades were slightly lower, they said I am worse than last time. What happened? They further question why would I go to school. They would say, I spent so much time in school and still failed eventually.

As this stigmatization of girls' education spreads, one possible result is dropping out of school. It is hard to tell the exact reason why Yue Wang dropped out of middle school at the end of the academic year when this study was being conducted. But one possible contributing factor was her unsatisfactory performance on the final exams. She was concerned about her performance in mathematics, and mentioned her plan to register for a tutoring class in the summer. During the parent-teacher conference, she was complimented for her talent at managing the class as the head student. But her father commented directly on her academic performance. Yue Wang still attended the tutoring class in the summer but did not register for the following academic year.

When Ping Ma was told Yue's story of dropping out of school, she asked who she is. Without being revealed, she smiled slyly and said she knew who she was. But it turned out the

name she gave was not Yue's. Girls dropping out of school is quite common. During a school visit, two girls were overheard talking to their head teacher about their ideas of dropping out of school. The head teacher had talked to their parents but failed to prevent these students from dropping out. It was actually not their decision but their fathers' intention to let them drop out of school. At that moment, the head teacher was frustrated and proposed to maintain the girls' status for a few more weeks in case they changed their mind. She said that it is highly possible that they will not return to school anymore.

Yet family expectations for girls' education also produced motivation among female students. Under the pressure of her family, Ping claimed that

> I am recalcitrant and just don't want to give up. I am capable of studying and raising my performance. I don't want them to neglect my capabilities… They said that I shouldn't go to school. Then I will disobey them. I will go, and I will finish my schooling. I have attended middle school and I can finish it. So I need to try my best…to achieve well and show it to them.

In fact, education becomes a pathway for girls to escape from their destinies in their communities. For example, Yan Wang said, "Dongxiang girls even have stronger motivation than boys. Some girls work so hard in school and strive for a better life in the future. In our belief of Islam, boys and girls are totally different. Boys always come first. So we have to strive…"

**Gender Conflicts in Modern School and Urban Life**

The attitudes of families and communities toward education are not just transmitted through expectations for study and performance, but they also have concerns about the effects of receiving modern knowledge and values in school. Moving to the multiethnic Lanzhou allowed female students more exposure to an urban environment. Its contextual culture and values first

caused some conflicts with traditional expectations of women in Islam. One significant conflict happened in the personalities and virtues of girls between modern city life and Islamic requirements. Islam requires women to show restraint in speaking and behavior. According to Li Dong, "Most elders think girls should be graceful. … Bold, lively, and outrageous girls are usually not liked." Elders' expectations were mostly kept in a more efficient manner in the rural communities. But the media in the city quickly provide conciliating alternatives.

Speaking about the frequent image of female as obstinate and outrageous on TV, Li Dong commented, "This kind of personality might not be accepted by people who have strong [religious] beliefs. These kind of figures appear very frequently in TV. They are even promoted as characteristic of contemporary women…but they conflict with what is taught in the mosque." Being extroverted is further promoted in school education. During class observations, teachers regularly asked students to be more active and bold. Li Dong reflected that, "the school promotes equality between males and females. Girls are the same as boys in social interactions and virtues. But it does not fit well with our [religious] education."

There are strict requirements for female social interactions outside the Muslim community. After moving to Lanzhou, girls were exposed to broader social networks and social lives. With restrictions from their family and community, they often faced challenges and conflicts in their social interactions, especially with males. Friendships with males were not encouraged. As Yan Ma explained, "They don't let us have too much contact with boys…I never give male classmates my home number…If male classmates call, parents interrogate you…because parents think too complicatedly, I have to say this." Yet, social interactions with boys are still common in the school. As students leave school, Ping Ma said, "we only say hi quickly, then that is it. It is not like girls with whom we can chat for a while. This might come

from the family education that I am not suppose to do that [chat freely] with boys outside." When offered a second-hand cellphone for follow-up research use, she declined for the sake of her family control. Cellphone use was frequently prohibited. Ping Ma stated, "when I used my brother's phone at home, my mom starts her talking. As soon as she saw me holding a phone, she turned on."

The participants in this study frequently mentioned prohibitions on going out. For example, Yan Ma said, "We usually are not allowed to go out. Boys are OK. When girls go out, it has to be very short. Nighttime was absolutely not allowed. This is quite unfair for girls. Boys can go outside as they wish. We will get rebuked if we didn't inform parents." In her family, she usually returned home before five o'clock. Yan Ma recalled a time after a parent-teacher conference when she met a few old classmates and hung out with them. They gathered and wandered around the streets. With one male student in the group, she talked to him for a while, then her mother questioned her and ordered her not to go out with boys. Ping Ma's family had even more strict rules about her going out. Because of a previous incident of coming home late, Ping Ma became more cautious of misbehavior. Her interviews were all conducted in school except one time she finished earlier at weekend school. She indicated that she preferred interviews and group discussions in school. Without meeting between the researcher and her parents during the parent-teacher conference, her participation in this research would not have been possible.

## Rural-urban Identity and Conflicts

### Moving to Lanzhou

During the migration from hometowns to Lanzhou, the participants in this study experienced huge rural-urban differences in many aspects of their lives and encountered various

conflicts. Their descriptions of these experiences and conflicts reflected their attitudes toward previous and current communities and feelings of belonging toward them, which conveyed their identities regarding rural and urban status.

**Complex feelings.**

In sharing his first impressions of the city, Li Dong said, "urban life here is better than rural places. For example, there is convenient traffic for people to transport. We only need to walk for one or two hundred meters for shopping, which is much more convenient than taking a bus to a town miles away." Ping Ma was also aware of better education environments and infrastructures. She explained the harsh condition in her hometown, "if we go to school, we need to climb one mountain, which take at least two hours. It gets more difficult in the winter. The roads are very slippery." Because of these bad conditions, her two older sisters did not attend primary school and stayed at home.

After students moved to the city, one direct emotional feeling was strangeness. As Li Dong noted, "The city was so bewitchingly beautiful, yet strangeness came right along." Ming Ma also described his impression of the city as "admiring and strange". The participants shared many descriptions of being unfamiliar with the school and the city in their narrative stories and interviews. Ping Ma decribed about how strange she felt when she transferred to a primary school in Lanzhou:

> My dad walked with me to the campus. I took an exam on the first day…then the second day is formal class. I still went with my dad… With my backpack, I walked in the hallway and the head teacher walked out from the classroom and said I can come in. As I walked in, I knew no one. They stared at me. I was shy;…it is hard to describe, just very strange. I sat in the last row with another student…. Transferring from the village, I was

> very unused to everything. The teaching style was different, the talking with classmates was different, and urban students were also very different. Everywhere was different, and was very strange.

Not just the classroom, the whole urban environment was so strange to these students. They were so curious but also so lost! Yan Ma recalled that, “in the beginning two years, there were high-rise buildings, which made me feel particularly strange…I felt I knew nothing. I dared not go out and just stayed home, except to go out with my family.”

Along with feelings of strangeness, there were also complex feelings of loneliness, sadness, and regret. Ming Ma wrote, “I came to Lanzhou. A little boy was all by himself and he was really lonely. No one to listened to his inner world. In the evening, the little boy would weep in his room. The city at night was so beautiful and brilliant. But it cannot compare with nights in the hometown.” Ping Ma recalled, “I was good enough back in my hometown, and then came over here and didn’t fit, with so many troubles. I felt some regret. Unfamiliar classrooms and faces made me feel a little fear. . . The more I fear, the more I missed laughter, chasing, critics, and reward [from] back home.” Ming Ma further described his sadness and reactions in the beginning days of living in the city.

> Sitting in the new classroom, I was so sad. All the familiar faces disappeared. Everything that I was familiar with changed. I didn’t know anyone. Then I started to reject everything new. I regretted that I did not insist [on not coming]. If I had insisted, I didn’t need to be here. I adapted to new things very slowly, probably a month or so. I started to deal with others slowly. But I regretted [coming to Lanzhou] for about a whole semester.

**Awareness of rural-urban differences and adaption.**

Along with feelings of strangeness, students realized the differences between Lanzhou and their hometowns, as they started their journey of adapting to urban life. Before Ping Ma moved to Lanzhou, she did not have a TV in her family. In her mind, she felt a middle school degree was high education. Her previous goal of going to middle school changed to university after coming to Lanzhou. Beyond differences in study, Li Dong wrote about how Lanzhou differed from his hometown in social life, particularly the lack of friends and community:

> At home, I was an unfettered bird, and never feel lonely and helpless, because I had always been with buddies since young and always felt free. In my hometown, the village people helped and supported each other. But after I first came here, it was like my family was isolated, and I had no familiar folks. No one came to the house to visit. There was only cold and strange faces on the street.

Gradually these students began to adjust to urban life in Lanzhou. Li Dong wrote, "for three years, I have gone from fifth grade to seventh grade. During this period, I was deeply aware of the differences between urban and rural areas, great changes from rural to urban life, and how to become familiar with and adapt to life here as a Muslim." Yan Wang also reflected how she felt when she tried to adapt to city life, and interact with new classmates. "After all, I am from the countryside. Compared with the students here, I have big differences. While I felt inferior and I kept trying… Positive energy eventually won." Li Dong even made a statement about his accumulated philosophy of adaption:

> Everything in my life should do as the Romans behavior here, and started from scratch. My parents told me that I had to deal with new and unfamiliar faces. We must strike a balance with neighborhood and be sure to go just right. Don't be too close, and reveal a

> serious face. We need to show a kind face and language should be decent. Basically you need to show that you are a person with education and virtues!

Participants in this study took various years to adapt to urban life. As they looked back on their journey, many of them also shared joys and pride. For example, Ming Ma stated,

> After living in Lanzhou for three years, I gradually found I am now very familiar with Lanzhou and I gradually liked it. I fully accept the transition period in Lanzhou after three years.

Li Dong declared:

> Three years seems like a dream, and now I have basically adapted to city life. Parents enjoy the convenience of urban transport facilities and purchasing items. I also have adapted to the elementary and secondary schools. And I am getting along with the students. Living in the city, I feel good!

Li Ma noted:

> It was tough in the beginning. But, after two years, I gradually adapted and had more friends; a man not afraid to be alone. The city provided exercise and prepared us for our future roles in society, such as personal communication.

**Reflective responses.**

With more familiarity and adaption to the city, the participants in this study started to rethink their urban life and formed reflective responses. After the honeymoon of living in Lanzhou, they started to consider the negative impact of moving to the city. Li Dong described the smog and pollution that happen in Lanzhou. When he returned to Lanzhou after visiting his hometown, "first it was overcast, like a kind of haze. Later it became direct sandstorms, yellow sand! When I went to school that afternoon, there was a layer of sand on the table." Ming Ma

also commented on the complexity of people and urban life. He noted, “Our imagination is far better than real city life… City life made me very disappointed, because the city is a place of cohabitation, with all kinds of people. Subsequently, a series of social problems made me really scared.” He further criticized the social inequities and discrimination he observed in the city: “The city people look down on rural people. The rich look down on the poor. Those well-fed ones have nothing to do but bully others.” The noisy environment disturbed Li Dong’s sleep in the first year. Beyond the physical noise, he also noticed the ostentatious urban climate and the preoccupation with making a fortune. He noted, “The city seems to be the pursuit of luxury and wealth. A lot of people come to the city. The goal is to make money, big money. So Hui come here to do business. So they changed the city's environment. Their purpose is to do business. ”

Complex and busy city life produced both intense and conflicting reactions among participants. During the group discussion, the participants talked about the intensity of social interaction in the city. Compared to the cold city without *Renqing Wei* (human sentiment), rural life for them was more hospitable, where people greeted each other on the street. Dealing with this intensity often made Ming Ma homesick. He said,

> I remember a few months after I arrived in Lanzhou, because I didn’t like the city's lifestyle and schedule. I started to miss home. At the time I actually thought the advantages of living in the countryside [were better]. Home is a place without those bad guys. You will not be bullied and we all live in harmony.

Living in a busier and more intense environment, students had less control over their religious practices. Ping Ma recommended that his older brother changed a lot after he came to Lanzhou and he often did very few prayers. But his brother also exemplified how people can change after going back to simpler places. When he went to a college in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region,

his classmates placed more emphasis on religious practices. His roommates prayed on time everyday and her brother was affected and followed them. He also kept this habit when he spent vacations at home.

## Complicated and Contextual Rural-urban Identities

### Urban identities.

Realizing rural-urban differences, the participants in this study started to think about their previous and current life, and plans for the future. During the process of adaption, Ming Ma stated his fondness of urban life:

> One day, the little boy felt he had fallen in love with the city, especially the people in the city. They are warm and hospitable. Now the boy could be said to be inseparable from Lanzhou, because there are people here he likes . . . The little boy's fantasy is that one day, he will also be an urban person. I think these aspirations will be achieved.

The participants also complimented public goods in Lanzhou as one way of showing their fondness. Ming Ma complimented that, "Beautiful Yellow River, tasty beef noodles, clean and neat streets, and unique customs are all one of a kind in *Jincheng* [another name of Lanzhou]."

When asked about his choices of going back to his hometown or living in Lanzhou, Lin Ma said he would stay in Lanzhou. In his mind, "Since the home has been strange and I had just got familiar with Lanzhou's environment, I have to go through the same process if I go to another place. I feel a bit better to stay in Lanzhou." His purpose for staying in Lanzhou also was connected to why he came to Lanzhou initially:

> For us villagers, we started from humble places. We have to work hard as we grow up, probably several times harder than urban people. My families in my hometown were peasants. It will not change in our generation and my dad's generation. [Now that we

> came to Lanzhou] the condition slowly evolved and is a little better than before. My grandfather's entire generation was farmers and we were relatively behind in our village… People cannot choose their origin, but can change their own future. People's life is impossible to stop in one place and does not move, as long as they count on themselves and work hard. My idea is to rely on my own ability to make our economy [better], to get rid of current life, and to slowly go up.

Some participants chose living in the city for practical reasons. As they continued living in the city, they had less connection with their home community and culture. One example was Lin Ma explained that,

> As I just came to Lanzhou for half semesters, I started to hesitate on the idea of going back… If I went back now, it will be impossible to catch up study there… Now some of the best students transferred to other schools, and some simply dropped out of school. Home becomes relatively unfamiliar and I do not want to go back.

Even with more reflective responses on the city and practical reasons for staying in Lanzhou, it is too early to claim an established urban identity among these participants, although preferential urban attachments have developed through the few years of living in Lanzhou. Ming Ma stated that,

> Lanzhou, a mysterious place. No one can say they know Lanzhou [enough]. Because you cannot figure it out completely. The little boy came to Lanzhou for years, but even now he still feels unfamiliar with Lanzhou, He hopes the future of this Lanzhou will be better.

**Rural identities.**

When the Muslim students in this study first moved to Lanzhou, the complexity and intensity of the city turned them back to their hometowns and reinforced their rural identities.

After years of studying and living in the city, some participants still found it hard to perceive themselves as urban residents and felt attached to their home identity and culture. When asked about their identification of group membership as rural or urban residents, some participants still declared their identification as rural people. Their rural identity was expressed through the denial of urban status. A common saying was "Here comes Lanzhou people" from relatives and families when participants return to their hometowns for visits. In Li Dong's mind, this name-calling was prompted by either relatives' admiration of urban life or respect toward Lanzhou people. It could also be teasing about the changes that happened and assimilation in Lanzhou. He was not fond of this statement, but it appeared from time to time.

Some participants also started to rethink rural culture and identity and formed a more profound rural identity. Some of them further claimed that they were rural and not urban people. When asked about his position on the spectrum of rural and urban people, Li Dong declared, "I have basically adapted to life here, but that does not mean that I eliminated or ignored the customs of my hometown. My heart still belongs to the hometown." Ping Ma said that the longer she stayed in the city, the fewer differences she found from her hometown. She noted, "When I first came here, I felt rural people were very *tu* [土, soil]. But then I slowly discovered that in fact there is no big difference. It is just clothing and food. The thought might be a little constrained… But as long as they emphasize education in rural areas, everyone is the same." She further pointed out that rural life is relaxing compared to intense city life. She always missed the time she worked in the field and tended sheep with her grandfather in her hometown. Li Dong added, "Rural places only lack of environment compared to the city. The city has [sufficient] environment for living and study. Rural places are not so convenient, but every place has its own characteristics and advantages."

While participants kept their own rural identity, they also acknowledged the advantages of living in the city and considered urban status as instrumental. After living in Lanzhou for three and half years, Li Dong indicated his identity as Lintan (his hometown) people living in Lanzhou. He explained,

> You came to the city, but you belong to Lintan. In my heart, the main reason why I am here is to study. It is possible that I will still go back after I finish my study…because that is still my home…the city for me is a place to study.

But he was also realistic about employment and his future career that there are much more advantages and opportunities in Lanzhou. In his words, "there are not many differences between city and countryside. One exception might be career success… The busier and wealthier places probably are where I should stay… If I go back, I can only be a peasant." He thought that he can work in the city and go back to his hometown during vacations.

Some participants viewed their experience of migration and living in both cities and countryside as precious experiences. Li Dong indicated that he had more experiences than urban people considering his years of living in the countryside. Ming Ma explained that, "Rural children also have their own colorful world… City people don't know rural life, and we have been experiencing life in the villages since we were young. I worked in the field and lived a peasant life in Northern China." For example, Lin Ma reflected further on the advantages of living in rural settings, "We rural children can do some tough work, which urban children never have chance to touch. We also start to take responsibilities much earlier. Children at the age like me have already taken half of family responsibilities." Ping Ma added a female's perspective that, "girls from the countryside always take care of themselves. They are always obedient and dutiful to their family and parents… They understand parents' bitterness and share their responsibilities.

But urban children are never like this… they usually disobey parents.” Some participants also treasured their migration experience. Lin Ma commented that, “What we [rural children] have seen are not what they [urban children] would necessarily see or encounter. What we played were something they probably never heard.” Ping Ma concluded her story with, “I am very proud…what I have been through, what I have experienced, and expressions of what I had are much richer than others.”

## Education and Study Adaption in the City

Education was the main reason why the Muslim students in this study moved to Lanzhou. While living in Lanzhou, their lives centered around studying. They experienced rural-urban differences in schooling and difficulties in adapting to studying in the city. When they first moved to Lanzhou and studied in primary schools, language barriers, achievement gaps, and different learning styles emerged. As they became more familiar with city and school environments, they further experienced pressures of standardized testing. Throughout their study adaption, academic performance and social competence facilitated their engagement and integration into school-based education.

### Language Barriers

The first barrier some participants encountered at entering city schools was language. Hui students speak and write Mandarin as their first language, but Dongxiang have their own spoken language. But participants from both groups found difficulties understanding and participating in Lanzhou schools. In her hometown, Ping Ma’s teacher taught all classes in the Dongxiang language. Li Dong’s teacher instructed in the Dongxiang language, and only spoke Mandarin when referencing content from textbooks. Language barriers were also blended with strangeness in student relationship and teaching content. Li Dong stated that, “Facing a group of strange

classmates and teachers, I could barely understand what the teacher said. It was hard to talk in Mandarin with classmates. In addition, they were different from peers in my hometown." But speaking Mandarin became an important aspect of Li Dong getting recognition and engagement outside of school. He said, "I had to first abandon dialect and speak in Mandarin to get others' recognition. One casual sentence of dialect often caused teasing from classmates, which left us nothing but embarrassment."

In fact, the language differences between Dongxiang and Mandarin did not cause major problems for these students. The major difference was the context of speaking Mandarin in rural and urban places. During a visit to two primary schools in the Dongxiang Autonomous Prefecture, students showed major differences in understanding Mandarin in rural and urban primary schools. In a rural primary school with only three teachers and classes, students could read textbooks in Mandarin but barely understood Mandarin in spoken communication. Students in town primary school understood and communicated well in Mandarin with teachers and visitors. In Lanzhou, the participants made significant progress in speaking in half or one year. Some participants had experience of speaking Mandarin before. For example, Ming Ma said that his uncles and grandmother spoke to him in Mandarin in his hometown. Other participants practiced Mandarin during their study and afterschool life. Yan Wang practiced her Mandarin by watching TV. However, language still remained as one issue of fully adapting to studying in Lanzhou because of accents. Li Dong explained that,

> We still have that kind of Dongxiang tone. Particularly, our reciting of classical poems sounds very odd…for example, if we recited "chun mian bu jue xiao, chuchu wen ti niao" [from chunxiao, a famous classical Chinese poem. It means 'this morn of spring in bed

I'm lying, not to awake till birds are singing.'], other might tease you about what kind of song you are singing?

**Achievement Gaps**

Another difficulty students encountered in study was the achievement gaps from their rural education. Because of huge gaps in educational facilities and conditions between rural and urban places (See Figure 13), salient differences existed in average academic performance between rural and urban students. Hui and Dongxiang migrant students were usually assigned to lower grade in primary schools of Lanzhou. Lin Ma was in sixth grade in hometown and fifth grade in Lanzhou. Yan Ma was transferred from third to first grade. Li Dong transferred from fifth to third grade. Teachers said the main concern was rural students' lagging behind in urban schools. For those who continued in the same grade, they bore the stereotype that migrant students had lower level of achievement than urban students.

Figure 13. A Rural Classroom in Dongxiang Autonomous Prefecture

In some ways, migrant Hui and Dongxiang students lagged behind in subject content knowledge. English learning was frequently mentioned by participants among their study

problems. Ping Ma was not able to read English vocabulary at all when she first started school in Lanzhou. She remembered her hometown English teacher "only taught letters in the beginning and then went quickly to the word. I barely remembered those letters." Ming Ma was even worse. He could not even read 26 English letters in the beginning, not to mention grammar. One reason was the lack of English teachers in rural schools. Lin Ma said that they usually played outside during scheduled English classes. Those who taught in rural areas also had very limited qualification for teaching English. During class observations at rural primary schools in Dongxiang Autonomous Prefecture, a math teacher was teaching English to rural students. In an English class at a town primary school, the teacher taught several English vocabularies incorrectly in one lesson.

Some students, such as Ping Ma, Yan Wang, and Lin Ma, registered for weekend school to improve with their English skills. Those who were not able to afford the expense of tutoring classes remained deficit in English until middle school. English is a required subject of high school and college entrance examinations. Their achievement gaps further became a barrier to advancing their study. Rural-urban achievement gaps also brought pressure for students who moved to Lanzhou. Most of the participants claimed that their performance ranked middle or top back in rural schools. The sudden reversion in performance caused panic and anxiety. Ping Ma indicated that she felt anxious and inferior after seeing the gap between herself and others. Ming Ma explained that, "I was playing around everyday and still performed well, but I do not now." He still remembered that, "I can get 80 or 90 points [of 100] back in my hometown. When I first came, in a test during primary school, I only had 30 points. That was such a shock to me."

**Adaption of Learning and Teaching**

With more study pressure in the city, the participants in this study met problems with their old learning styles. Li Dong's old habit of procrastination and "never wrote my home homework during the weekend" did not work well in the city. The eighth grade head teacher also explained that Hui and Dongxiang students had insufficient learning habits, compared to the urban students. He said that an urban student in Ping Ma's study group always prepared one or two units ahead of the class. In eighth grade, Yan Wang often finished her homework at 1:00 a.m. When asked about her learning pace, she said that she watched TV while doing homework. But the truth is she only did her homework during the commercials and rushed to finish after her parents came home at 10:00 p.m. Ming Ma realized that he had to change his learning style as he continued to study in urban schools, because "When I was learning, for example memorizing English vocabularies, I only memorized them once and never reviewed them. But now I have to review them again and again to [master them]." Ping Ma also recognized the need for self-motivation in study. She suggested that, students "now study and motivate themselves. Our previous teachers had to push us to study." Students also met challenges from their knowledge bank, as they had limited book access and less reading experience in rural schools. When they studied in a group, they started to notice books that other group members had read and facts that they had never heard about. The knowledge gap between group members made it difficult to engage and cooperate.

The participants in this study also found a mismatch in the teaching styles in their urban learning experiences. One significant mismatch was the teaching pace. Students had difficulties following the instructions and interpretations of teachers. Both Lin Ma and Bing Huang acknowledged that their math teacher went too fast in explaining math content. Lin Ma said, "He

only taught on the concepts, which I never heard about…I rarely understood his classes. There were some classes that I could only understood one sentence." Bing Huang further illuminated this dilemma:

> He thought we could figure out these simple calculation by ourselves…He listed the equation and essential steps on the board and said we could finish later by ourselves. He taught us like this, one chapter after another. Then we only knew the generals but not the specifics of working out a math problem.

Ming Ma also complained that the school only allowed them limited time to finish their homework. He usually finished his homework in rural schools but now he had to work late in the night. Some participants also acknowledged the positive side of teaching and learning in urban schools. Ping Wang complimented urban teachers for being more accountable than her previous rural teachers, and for teaching more than factual knowledge but principles of how to be a better person. With better facilities and qualified teachers in the school, the participants are able to get access to more books and broader knowledge.

**Standardized Tests and Tracking Systems**

The participants revealed higher pressure of studying in the urban schools. Preparing for high school entrance examinations, *Xiaoxihu* Middle Schools had four regular grade tests each semester, not including weekly quizzes. Li Dong pointed to a stock of exercise tests for chemistry and said he usually finished work at 11:00 p.m. The school itself intended to create a competitive climate among students. During class meeting each Friday, Mr. Zhang in eighth grade summarized recent studying of students and urged them to work harder. He said, "You have to work hard enough to not regret. Song [ranked 1st on the tests] went to sleep every night at 11:00 p.m. Everyone who went to sleep before 11:00 p.m. should ask yourself if you work hard

enough." The records and rankings on the monthly tests were posted on the back wall of the classroom. The comparison and modeling of top students did not just happen in this class but in the whole school. In the main entrance of the school, photographs of top students were displaced on the wall as role models (See Figure 14). The principal was very pleased with records of high school entrance examination this year and posted students' names with their admitted school around the schools. The propaganda of test preparation and performance seemed to work well for parents, and the numbers of application leaped in the following September.

Figure 14. Board of Study Models and High Test Performance

An intense environment of test preparation and competition placed a lot of pressures on the participants. Ping Ma said there were so many smart students in her class. Her study goal was to become one of the top ten in the grade. She ranked first in her previous class. She was assigned to the top group in the classes and found she could no longer make the top ten. She

ranked 40th on the test but planned to work hard and improve by 10 on each of the following tests. Yan Wang described how she was pressured by intense tests and ranking:

> I had no confidence in myself. Every time I went over there to see the blackboard [in the back], I saw the posting describing those aspects of accomplishments of top students. Their scores were all more than 100 [points in 120] in each subject. I usually could not pass [100] and [I wonder] how can I succeed on the entrance examination.

Their migration experience further exaggerated their study pressure. With family sacrifices and expectations, Yan Wang stated, “My family…expects a lot from me. I really hope I can succeed [on the entrance examination]… They said I have to work hard even with some pressure.” Li Dong also said, “I came here [Lanzhou] for studying. If I can’t succeed, I can’t go back to my hometown… It would be too embarrassing…I have to achieve.”

Participants in this study were particularly dissatisfied with the tracking decisions made the precious year. Yan Wang and Ping Ma studied in the class three in seventh grade. At the end of first year, *Xiaoxihu* Middle School selected the top 40 students from the final exam and formed a top class from eighth grade. With top students learning and competing in one class, the participants in this study felt stronger pressure than in class three. Yan Wang said, “I felt easy and everyone was happy. But now, after reassignment, I no longer feel happy in studying, and fell a lot in my rankings.” Ping Ma added, “It is too competitive. With so many top students in your sight, we have to go to tutoring class to push ourselves… But too much intensity made me feel less motivated to study… I don’t want to study but then I have to…I became quiet and not willing to talk with others.” Ming Ma also reflected on the impact of tracking that his grade motivated him to make progress on each exam. In this new class, he felt more impulsive and emotional rather than intellectual concentration.

## Social Integration to Lanzhou

Social integration was a significant part of Hui and Dongxiang students' lives beyond study. Yet, without enough contextual knowledge and skills, they found it hard to integrate into social life in Lanzhou. While they continued making new friends, they had complex feelings and reactions to contacting and interacting with their home relatives and friends. Though many of students admitted their problems of fitting in, they realized the social capital and cross-cultural competence they had accumulated throughout their experience of integration.

### Integration to the City

When the Hui and Dongxiang students in this study met classmates in and out of class, they found themselves misfits with content and interactional style in Lanzhou, particularly in the beginning months. Moving to the city as a newcomer, Ping Ma felt that "they [classmates] often look at me strangely." For some participants, these new classmates differed from their hometown peers. Lin Ma described how he and his old peers played in the fields and hills during the summer time. "We played outside for the entire day… We went to the field and saw corn or potatoes. We just dug them out and baked them… Hills surrounded our town and we ran with friends in the hills and adventured in the caves." But they had limited knowledge of how to engage with urban peers. Li Dong said, "Classmates here like to talk about trends and popular movies, online games they preferred, and QQ [a Chinese social media software similar to Facebook]. For a *xiangxia bangzi* [乡下棒子, rural pumpkin] like me, those have no difference from *tianshu* [hieroglyphics]." He said he was silent for a whole semester. Ming Ma agreed and acknowledged that his classmates had broader knowledge than him. "They read more books, but I didn't grow [up with a] fondness of books. I haven't read one complete novel so far... But they know more about history and people's livelihood worldwide." During conversations with

students, Ming often felt unfamiliar with media stars. For him, these attempts at conversation just did not work. His urban peers asked "if I knew that female celebrity. I didn't know indeed. Because I didn't talk about this with them, they gradually talked less with me."

Another feeling that happened in social integration was inferiority and low self-esteem. In Ping Ma's words, they "felt so small and that rural children know nothing other than study." She described her feeling of being *tu* (soil), adding that "I grew up in the villages that is backward in fashion and other ways, and I knew nothing about the world outside… Particularly in fashion, I wore very ordinary clothes from my hometown. Their clothing here followed the trends." Another reason these students felt like misfits came from their personality back in their hometown. Ming Ma explained that "minorities basically are more *guai* [乖, obedient]… they [urban peers] are more lively and active." Yan Ma attributed passive participation in school events to the fact that, "we Dongxiang girls weren't that *defang* [大方, liberal and graceful]… As with those dancing moves, we often were not confident in doing them, or not used to. So we Dongxiang girls rarely participated."

As the participants in this study became more familiar with urban environments, they started to develop relationships and make new friends in Lanzhou. Lin Ma joined a basketball team at the school. He usually socialized with team members after school. For example, he went skating with friends from another class during a weekend of family visits. Ping Ma still remembered how she appreciated some of her classmates giving her some milk candies with a smile. Ming Ma made a friend who had good temper and treated him very well. He described his friend as,

> He was big and his family often worried that he would cause trouble outside…People thought he might have a bad temper [considering his size], but he does not…We are from

> different denominations…but we get along with each other very well…Though he doesn't study well, he conducts himself well in school… He never talked behind the teachers' back… he explained no teachers would like to lead students astray and they all think for our best. He always said he understand every teacher. There is no such a perfect teacher.

They also started to understand and deliberate the social relationship in urban context. Yan Wang made most of her current friends in the urban primary schools and felt it was hard to make new friends in middle school. She shared more affection and memories with friends from primary school. As she made new friends in middle school, she felt a sense of shallowness and dishonesty. She further explained that,

> People all changed a lot as they went to the middle school. They didn't treat friends as honest as they were. I met a girl and got along well with her…but then we fought once and she made another friend and then she fought with that new friend…I think she just wasn't pure and honest. It seems like people are misusing affection rather than giving out honestly.

Relatives and families in Lanzhou made the participants' adaption to the city easier. Li Dong stated that, "fortunately, thanks to aunts and my uncle in Lanzhou. This [moving to Lanzhou] did not fully make us isolated." Li Dong met his uncle every four or five days and often socialized with his cousins after school. Lin Ma's mother also had sisters in Lanzhou. In the feast after Ramadan, her aunt came to visit and brought her little cousin. Lin played with the little girl and helped her with her dinner. Yan Wang lived in her uncle old home for five years. When her oldest uncle bought a new house, he invited her mother to Lanzhou. While her dad was starting his business in the first few years, she lived with three of her uncle's children and

her two brothers. Relatives from hometowns also visited sometimes. During one family visit, Ming Ma's uncle brought his son and lived in his home. They came to visit the hospital for his son. Their random visits brought information from the hometown and the warmth of family for him and his family.

**Contact with Home Community and Friends**

Participants in this study still went back to their hometowns with their parents for vacations, holidays, and family affairs. Ying Wang returned hometown once a semester. Lin Ma's parents went back to help with wheat harvest every year. When asked whether they would like to go back to spend the summer, students had different answers. Some participants, such as Yue Wang and Yan Wang, preferred to stay in Lanzhou. The main reason was their changing social network in home communities. Several participants noted that their relatives had moved to the city for work. One student said that he was barely recognized by some elders in the village. Yan Wang reflected that, "You can't even find many people walking on the street. Trying to find someone [friends] to hang out is so hard." Bing Huang bemoaned that, "It was so quiet in the village. We spent days in the house and never went out. Every family now has their own yard…I stayed in my yard and other people did in theirs… Without people to meet, it is so hard to stay even for one day."

Those individuals who did manage to come out and meet might not be able to talk because of strangeness and gaps in values. Yue Wang came to Lanzhou at the age of seven. She remembered very few friends in Dongxiang Autonomous Prefecture. Her relationship with those friends also faded so that they hardly talked any more. Yan Wang described her feeling of strangeness talking with old friends. She said, "It is quite odd. Someone we used to make friends with now said nothing during the visit. I feel the distance is getting too far… When meeting on

the street, we just smile, with no greeting or talking. " Sometimes, their old friends heard about them coming back and went to look for them. These meetings often were not as close as imagined any more. Bing Huang's friend still showed him around the village with enthusiasm. But he did not have the same feeling on his side. Sometimes, lost feelings of closeness came from the rural side. For example, Li Dong explained that,

> We could talk about everything before. But this time I came back, they held something back… As with what happened in their schools and classes, we talked less and less… Probably our learning environments are different now…and we no longer speak the same language.

Yan Wang also noticed the changed status dynamics among old friends. She felt that,

> They looked up to us too much. It was very repressed. They looked up to Lanzhou. I still felt we are equal…and we are the same…but they thought a Lanzhou person was coming. She must be good in studying…but I think they are also better than me in some ways.

In rare cases, students had disdain toward old friends. For example, Bing Huang felt that,

> Sometimes I think their behaviors are being naïve… They were sitting on a board to slide down the hillside, and then I watched them rolling inside the earth. My first feeling was dirty and the soil was not too clean. My second thought was that it was too boring; I did not have any interest [in playing like that]."

The girls who used to have female friends back in their hometowns also had difficulties in meeting them. Most girls of the participants' age in their hometown dropped out of schools, got married, and had babies. Those previous female friends now took on the responsibilities at home as mothers and wives, and rarely went out to socialize. Yan Ma once talked to her friend who said she had gotten married and had babies too early. In her mind, she thought her friend

should study and get married later. But a her friend thought that Yan Ma probably would have no one to marry later in her life. But a few participants did enjoy the relaxing environment back home and comfortable times staying with family. Li Dong enjoyed his conversation with conversing with grandfather and their talks about Islamic histories.

**Cultural Capital and Cross-cultural Competence**

Few Hui and Dongxiang students adapt well to the urban school and social life. Some students' academic achievement served as cultural capital and played a significant role in facilitating their adaptation. Without social capital in the city, few newcomers like Hui and Dongxiang students still successfully involved with schooling with their diligent study and positions as cadres (student leaders) in the school. After Ping Ma transferred to the urban primary school, she worked hard and progressed from being left behind to middle place and eventually to first place on the test. She expressed her happiness as, "I felt so proud. My confidence surged with my emotion and gave me motivation to move on [in the city]." She also received encouragement from her teachers who recognized her potential of going to a top university. She expressed her reaction emotionally:

> When I walk on my way home, the sunsets went through the mottled leaves and dipped in the ground. Sparse shadows revealed some softness, like a kind of maternal glory. And I, with a smile on my mouth, I thought devotedly that I want to strive to be admitted to the ideal university.

Academic achievement also created confidence for them in the local Hui and Dongxiang community. Ying Wang announced proudly that she would become the person with the second highest degree in her whole family. Bing Huang's parents always felt satisfied when their relatives came to visit them and complimented Bing's achievement. Academic achievement of

these students is slowly changing the stigmatization of Dongxiang's and Hui's neglect of education. Many Dongxiang and Hui students fail to finish middle school in the rural communities of Gansu. They were often teased that, "they run out to work right after they know some characters and can find where the restroom is." Ming Ma declared his own motivation to defeat stereotypes that, "urban people always said Dongxiang students from sixth grade can also attend third grade… I didn't transfer; I studied hard to show them that I can do it. There are no big differences [between Dongxiang and urban students]."

Some Hui and Dongxiang students were popular and influential in their classes because of their involvement with school events. Lin Ma was in charge of discipline in the class. He gradually built his authority with his integrity in classroom management. He said, "You did wrong, I put your name on the blacklist. If you continue to kick up a fuss in the class, I will put your name for another week… If you behave better in the following days, I will take it down. That's how it worked." His strictness and integrity won him respect from classmates. He was always recognized as a lead student even though he was not an official head student in the class. Ming Ma and Yue Wang both worked in the Associated Student of *Xiaoxihu* Middle School. They wore red hats and checked the cleanliness of around the campus during the long recess. With "red hats" they were treated as privileged students in the school. As vice-president of the association, Ming Ma learned how to educate others when they made mistakes. He described his skills as,

> In that moment, you had a lot to consider in your mind. You need to think what I should say and what kind of reaction he would have. Further, you need to think from his perspective to make him accept your lesson and also keep his integrity.

Ming Ma hoped his management experience might help him in his future life. Li Dong also learned from his engagement with school events and concluded that, “I have to learn to work on a team, to be gregarious, to be expressive, and to help others. To form such a code of conduct, I need to work step by step and avoid being anxious!”

Participants began to develop their cross-cultural competence when dealing with students from rural and urban places, and from Han and minority groups. Li Dong said that this is exercise for him to adapt to different kinds of people and environments. He explained that, “compared to those who lived in the tall buildings, we had experience of borrowing and renting houses… we knew how to deal with people in bungalows.” Ming Ma also described his change of personality as he became more mature in conducting himself after learning differences between two places (rural and urban) and two kinds of persons. Ping Ma realized the need for courage and boldness in social interactions. She said, “It wasn’t that hard. You just need to be more active… If others ignore you, you just speak to them boldly. Friendship is something you strive for and then receive.” She also described her passion of conquering difficulties in new environments:

> Now I have strong vitality and a restless heart… Youth should be like this. Youth should so frantically pursue a dream, even with confusion or hesitation. That is the pace of my beating heart. If my life went so smoothly and sailed in a straight line, what is the meaning of my presence?

## Ethnic Identity and Conflicts

The ethnic identity of the participants in this study was often intertwined with religious, gender, and rural-urban identities. For example, they reflected on their study adaption in Lanzhou, they discussed their ethnic relationship with Han students. In further discussion, they

talked about how Ramadan and religious practice conflicted with their daily learning schedule. Particularly, female students mentioned gender inequity in their parents' attitudes toward education. They also mentioned their future plans of study, which indicated their rural-urban identities. Many aspects of ethnic identity have been discussed in previous sections of findings. To avoid repetition, this section focuses on ethnic differences and relationships as indicators of the participants' ethnic identity.

**Hui and Dongxiang**

According to the governmental ethnic classification in the 1950s, Hui and Dongxiang are two different groups. Both ethnic groups were recognized in Lanzhou residential districts. Near Ying Wang's home, local committees of residents posted introduction on Hui and Dongxiang on the wall. Hui and Dongxiang were posted in two sections in a poster and introduced specific characteristics of each group (See Figure 15). During the field trip to Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, elders and scholars were able to differentiate Hui and Dongxiang history and contemporary culture. Hui and Dongxiang lived in two different ethnic autonomous regions in Gansu Province. However, they were both categorized as Hui in China before 1949. Significant percentage of Hui and Dongxiang students in Lanzhou had the same family name of "Ma", which indicated their possible remote family relationship back in history. Empirically, they share the same religion, customs, and culture. A salient example of recognition is the marriages between these two groups in local communities.

Figure 15. Community Poster Introducing Hui and Dongxiang

Hui and Dongxiang participants in this study perceived no generic differences between the two groups. All Dongxiang participants considered themselves as Hui when first asked about their ethnicity. As Ping Ma saw it, Dongxiang had their name for the residential location in Gansu, which is the Dongxiang Autonomous Prefecture. She elaborated that, “Probably, we [Dongxiang and Hui] had different denominations. Then we have different practices and recitation in prayer. Other than that, we are the same.” Li Dong and Ming Ma attributed differences between the two groups to individual differences, which could be overlooked. As a Hui, Lin Ma also repeated several times that there are no generic differences between himself and other Dongxiang friends. The only salient difference participants pointed out was the Dongxiang language. Both Hui and Dongxiang individuals recognized their language differences. One participant learned from his mom that Dongxiang were part of the Hui before 1949 and there was no name of Dongxiang as an ethnicity. Another scenario signaled their membership in different ethnic categorization occurred when they declared ethnicity on their residential documents and school records.

## Hui, Dongxiang, and Han

Participants in this study were conscious of their identity as ethnic minorities. They frequently referred themselves as *shaoshu* (少数, minority). This is a shortened term of *shaoshu minzu* (少数民族, ethnic minority) in Mandarin. Regarding the counterpart, they often referred to Han students as *duoshu* (多数, majority). These terminologies were also widely used by teachers and principals in Lanzhou. Yet, the common names for ethnic minority such as Uygur and Tibetan is called *shaoshu minzu* in other areas of China. Another indicator of ethnic identity was their religious names. Most participants have their *jingming* (经名, religious name) along with their formal names. Ming Ma introduced himself in the beginning of a narrative story as "Ma Ming *Anyoubu*" (安有布). In his full name, *anyoubu* is his *jingming*. *Youbu* is also a common *jingming* of Dongxiang in Northwest China. For example, a chain of beef noodle restaurants in Lanzhou was named *Ma Youbu qingzhen* restaurant. Though their *jingming* is only used on certain religious occasions and rarely used in daily life, it still stands out as part of their ethnic and religious identities.

As the participants studied and lived in Lanzhou, they gradually noticed ethnic differences and conflicts in social interactions between *shaoshu* and *duoshu.* Participants reported that they had very few *duoshu* friends in Lanzhou. Lin Ma commented, "we stayed peaceful in relationships with Han but with very few interactions. We still interacted with them, but…we didn't feel so close." Other participants further pointed to the distances and barriers in daily interactions. For example, Ming Ma mentioned that, "Because we have differences in beliefs… Our life habits are different. They don't have restriction on food and clothing, especially for girls." Again, their perception of *shaoshu* often blended with their identity of being rural people and Muslim. While commenting the advantages of *shaoshu*, Lin Ma said, "we

*shaoshu* certainly had better adaption competence in society and stronger living skills... In the rural places, we started to do our own work and work in the field since very young."

Few Muslim students build closer relationship with Han students in their study group. Bing Huang had frequent contact with one of his group members. He also felt comfortable to share some knowledge about Islam with him. Ping Ma said that she understands Han students better as time goes. She gradually realized that Han students "also had some kind of beliefs, and we should be treated equally regarding our different beliefs." In a school with a major of Hui and Dongxiang students, Han students also developed cultural consciousness and some tacit understanding of Islamic culture. During classroom observations, there was no student who brought food prohibited by Islam. Han students also avoided bringing food to the class during Ramadan. When some of them purchased water in grocery stores during P.E. classes, they often drank it before they headed back to the classrooms.

## Summary

Findings that emerged from different sources of data along with the participants' identities and education in Lanzhou and their relationship with home communities and friends were presented in this chapter. As participants moved to Lanzhou, they continually met challenges in their studying and social interactions. Specifically, they met conflicts and reinforced their identities regarding religion, rural-urban differences, gender, and ethnicity. As Muslims, their religious identity had salient influences on many other aspects of their lives and intertwined closely with their gender, rural-urban, and ethnic identities. Female participants were both pressured and motivated by their roles and expectations from Islamic culture. Participants evolved with their urban status and developed complex rural-urban identities through their reflections on rural and urban living and future choices. These Hui and Dongxiang participants

perceived no significant, other than language between them, and gradually integrated with Han students in the city. School education was the main reason why participants moved to Lanzhou. But they also found mismatches and difficulties because of rural-urban achievement gaps, different learning and teaching styles, and lack of cultural sensitivities in schools. Specifically, standardized testing and tracking systems created huge pressures for the participants in this study. They also started to recognize and develop new identities and cross-cultural competences while dealing with these conflicts.

## Chapter V Summary, Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter includes a summary, discussion, and recommendations for future research on the migration experience of rural Muslim students. Using the theoretical lenses of rural-urban migration, identity formation, and multicultural education, how and why students would experience identities and education conflicts, and what are the potential opportunities of social integration in Lanzhou are discussed. Some suggestions are also made for how education can be adapted to the culture of students and facilitate inclusion in and out of schools. The significance of this study, some limitations, and recommendations for future research and practice are discussed as well.

### Summary

The economic boom in China has brought significant changes in the geographical and cultural pattern of China society. It is estimated that 170-180 million rural populations come to the cities to find jobs and live their lives. Hui (10.6 million), as one of the largest ethnic minority group in China, and Dongxiang, with almost 100 percent of them holding the Islam belief, are also migrating from rural to urban areas in Northwest China. After moving to the urban environment, communication with other ethnic groups, predominantly the Han (the majority ethnic group in China), becomes inevitable, even though the Hui and Dongxiang tend to live collectively in cities as they do in the rural areas. Hui and Dongxiang children attended mostly mixed-ethnicity rather than single-ethnicity schools. Contradictions of rural-urban differences, ethnicity and religion sparkle wide attention and discussion. This study explored the culture experiences of rural migrant Muslim students and their cultural identity in a heterogeneous urban middle school environment. It focused on identity and education of these rural migrant Muslim students. Specifically, it shed the light on the intercultural and adaption questions. That is, how

rural migrant Muslim students live within and between two cultures and how well do they deal with their crosscultural situations.

With the conceptual framework of culture-identity link and categorization of cultural identities, this study interpreted the cultural identity of Muslim students through perspectives of self-identification as rural/urban persons, sense of belonging, attitudes towards rural/urban memberships, and cultural involvement. The specific examined issues were urban impressions and responses, study adaption, after school life, social interactions, value change, and roles in relation to how rural ethnic migrant students self-identify when they transmit from rural and a traditional culture to a modern and urban culture, when previous monoethnic environments are replaced by multiethnic environments, and when they live in contexts that are predominantly non-Muslim.

Few studies look deeply at the cultural influence of rural-urban structures, especially on ethnic minority groups. Even though ethnicity and identity issues are of concerned by both China and other countries, relatively little research has been done on the cultural experiences and identity development of rural migrant Muslim students. Without describing their exact experiences, further improvement in their education will be impossible. This study occurred in the multiethnic contexts of Northwest China, Gansu, and Lanzhou, areas strongly affected by the processes of urbanization and rural migration. Within Lanzhou, certain areas, such as *Xiaoxihu*, are heavily populated by rural migrants, especially Hui and Dongxiang. The demographics of *Xiaoxihu* Middle School made it a viable site for this study. A variety of sampling strategies were used in selecting the participants for this study. Starting from a pool of 12 participants, this study eventually selected seven targeted participants. Three participants from grade seven were involved in this study. The other four were from grade eight. Three were male and four were

female. Two participants were Hui and the other five were Dongxiang. Data were compiled from narrative stories, thematic photos, group discussion, semi-structured interviews, and field observations to explore rural migrant Muslim students' identities experience and education in urban areas.

Findings presented participants' identities and education in Lanzhou and their relationship with home communities and friends. As participants moved to Lanzhou, they continually met challenges in their studies and social interactions. The data revealed that Islam and its denominations are deep influences on migrant Hui and Dongxiang students' identification. They penetrated in many aspects of their lives such as clothing, dietary restrictions, and religious practice and literacy. They also cause some conflicts with urban and school culture. In addition, gender produces salient differences in male and female Hui and Dongxiang students. The roles of females in family, marriage and careers resulted in pressures and motivation on their education and adaption to urban life. Meanwhile, migrant Hui and Dongxiang students are strongly attached to their rural identity while adapting to urban culture. They developed complex and reflective response on their urban and previous living. Hui and Dongxiang students also experience heavy pressures from standardized testing and urban schooling.

## Discussion

Conflicts of primordialism and modernity merged as Muslim students in this study presented their religious and rural-urban identities and challenges. The conflicts occurred as they engaged in Islamic practices and participated in school education. Their religious beliefs and cultures were considered as primordial over modern school culture and value. A similar conflict unfolded as these Muslim minority youths from rural backgrounds tried to integrate into the city

and urban culture. The agricultural civilization they grew up in was significantly different from the urban and industrial civilization they are transitioning into.

**Rural vs. Urban**

The experiences of the participants documented that rural and urban communities are different in various aspects. Participants in this study were impressed, yet troubled by the strangeness of buildings, streets, and services as they first moved to and lived in Lanzhou. Reflections on their previous lives and going back to hometowns also reminded them how their rural origins differed from current living spaces. Regarding the specific impressions of the city and schools, participants first reflected on the crowded, busy, and noisy environments of Lanzhou, which is quite similar to Wirth's (1938) description of a relative large and dense environment. Their impressions of rural-urban differences also echoed the reflections of rural students in other major cities with large migrant populations, such as Beijing and Shanghai.

The difficulties the participants in this study experienced are actually a microcosm of the huge gaps between rural and urban societies in China at large. Since China prioritized the development of urban society and the industrial sector, rural societies evolved slowly because of limited resources and weakened culture. Infrastructures were reflected as the most obvious differences when participants first moved to the city. The rural society in China, especially in the Northwest, is still very much an agricultural society. Entire infrastructures have not been developed in rural societies, such as job markets, comprehensive school systems, hospitals, commercial systems, and public amenities. Rural people are still self-sufficient in many aspects of their lives, such as food productions, entertainment, and healthcare.

As expected the participants described differences in environments and facilities. Yet, there seems to be an exaggerated gap between rural and urban schools in Northwest China.

According to the students' descriptions and field observation, their rural communities had worse conditions in schooling and education than those in eastern provinces and cities in China. For example, a primary school with only three classes and teachers was non-existent in Shanghai or Beijing. The high rate of dropping out of school was not that common until high schools. But the city of Lanzhou has a smaller gap in facilities compared with other developed cities. Still the participants met many challenges in adapting to the schools and urban environments.

Beyond these extrinsic impressions, the participants also reflected on rural-urban differences in their learning and social interactions. As they studied at schools in Lanzhou, they were pressured by the competitive study environment. They were encouraged to study hard for a better life and compete with each other. Participants gradually realized the necessity of study plans and self-motivation when their old habits of study failed them on tests. In other words, they started to use better planned approaches to studying and a self-motivated manner. As they developed their new learning styles, they started to cultivate certain features of urban personality, such as competitive attitudes, approval of efficiency, accomplishment, and the accruement of knowledge. These are similar to those described by Wirth (1938) in the 1930s. On the other side of this highly organized study life were competition, intensity, and mobility. They may have achieved well in their previous schools or classes, but entering new schools brought changes to their academic standings. Meanwhile, their study load increased as they continued their schooling and started to prepare for high school entrance examinations. These demands were high pressure. During this process, they also experienced the kind of challenges, instabilities, uncertainties, and insecurities that Simmel (1971) called as intensification of emotional life.

During their social interactions in and out of schools, the participants generally developed more contact with and understanding of urban people, but remained in connected with their

home communities and friends. These relationships were not always substantial or satisfying. To develop these relationships, some participants avoided certain subjects of discussion (such as denominations of Islam) and social activities. Some participants tended to keep a rational and peaceful relationship with urban people, while others relied more heavily on memories of intimacies in their rural hometowns. All these attitudes and actions illustrated differences between rural and urban personalities, as well as different features of human relationship in rural and urban society of China. Specifically, the participants in this study exhibited features of "mechanical solidarity" (Durkheim, 1893/1997) in which different people try to keep peace and orders by behaving alike.

**Religious Culture vs. Secular Culture**

A salient religious identity existed among these Hui and Dongxiang migrant students. They self-identified first as Muslims, expressed a strong sense of belonging toward their Muslim affiliations, and indicated frequent involvement with religious practices and education. They also expressed admiration for other Muslims who had a strong knowledge of Islam. In Wan's and Yang's (2012) conceptualization, religious identity is exemplified through religious behavior, self-categorization, religious affection, religious experience, and religious evaluation. The participants' religious identities were exhibited through the five pillars of Islam, and embodied through several aspects of clothing, dietary restrictions, and religious practice and literacy. These aspects of religious identity affected the participants' studying and living in Lanzhou. For example, some participants showed how Islam affected their study and future career plans.

Significant conflicts were found between the participants' religious identities and secular urban society in which they lived. School education sometimes interfered with their general religious codes (dress and dietary restrictions). Religious beliefs and practices were not always

respected and at times were discriminated against. Further, the deep-seated ideology in school education sometimes was contradictory with their religious beliefs. One source of these conflicts was the fundamental spirit of a modern urban city. As China has become more urbanized, the cities people live in become more unconventional (Fischer, 1975). On the contrary, those who live in rural areas still maintain rather conventional lives. As the migrant youth in this study entered urbanized spaces, they encountered a public atmosphere that required them to act and think alike with a common conscience. According to Apter (1965), modern cultures require people to be more superficial rather than being fundamental and deep. When the multiethnic and multicultural needs of migrants like the Hui and Dongxiang met the needs of urban unification, huge conflicts happened.

These conflicts were exaggerated when Islamic culture met industrialized and urban culture. Hui and Dongxiang Muslims live in concentrated area around mosques and *qingzhen* facilities in the rural communities in Northwest China. As they moved to the city, they formed similar communities in Lanzhou. Hui and Dongxiang migrants, (somewhat like first generation immigrants to many other countries), kept their customs and lived in concentrated residential areas. *Xiaoxihu* area has some similar characteristics to little Italy, little Korea, or Chinatown for first generations immigrants in the United States. They live rather isolated from the dominant society; they also kept their traditional ways of living in rural hometowns and even in Lanzhou. The Hui and Dongxiang communities in this study still kept many traditional customs of clothing, dietary restrictions, and religious practices. They also retained their ideologies of gender differences, secular education, and personal values. In this study, it seems that their extrinsic needs met challenges from dominant Han society, and their intrinsic beliefs were even criticized by local communities in Lanzhou, and for those participants who started to accept modern

education. In other words, there seems to be an issue of incompatibility between Islamic culture and modern secular culture.

The conflicts participants met in this study confirmed Huntington's (1996) statement about clashes of civilization. As the massive rural-urban migration happened, interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims have increased rapidly in the last decades. The civilizations of Islam and modernity had fundamental differences in history, language, culture, tradition, and religion. In some ways, the civilization of Islam inevitably clashed with modern culture and secular education in Lanzhou. However, some Hui participants seemed to start to adapt to modern culture with their preliminary cross-cultural competencies. As Dillon (2003) and Lipman (1997) explained, Hui have over one thousand years of integration into Han society. While keeping features of Islam, other fundamental differences from Hans were dispelled through this long history of interaction. For example, participants in this study were familiar with most Confucius thoughts. For this reason, Hui are sometimes called Han Muslim in China. Gladney (2004) also noted that Hui have more compatibility with modern society. Hui's integration is exempted from the situation of incompatibility of other Muslim groups. Perhaps as Said (2001) claimed, the Islam civilization should not be over-simplified regarding regional differences of Muslims. More than regional differences, various levels of integration into Han society also happened in different denominations among participants. *Laojiao*, *xinjiao*, and *santaijiao* had different requirements and different compatibility with Han and modern cultures.

Conflicts and compatibilities between Islam and modern society do not solely originate from cultural differences. Issues of race, gender, and social class are intertwined with these conflicts. In the case of China, the rural-urban differences are intertwined with conflicts between Islam and modern society. Hui settled in Lanzhou for more than 200 years and formed their own

neighborhoods and communities. As Hui migrant students met challenges in secular public schools of the *Xiaoxihu* area, local Hui students had more access to ethnic schools in Lanzhou. The residential areas of local and migrant Hui are also different in Lanzhou. Further, Hui and Dongxiang participants showed differences in social integration. Dongxiang only started migrating and being more visible in the last decade. Hui had a longer history of migration and historical connections in Lanzhou. With lower socioeconomic status and larger rural-urban differences, they met more challenges in their integration.

The massive internal migration happening in China, especially among Muslim ethnic minorities, made the existing differences between Islam and modern society more visible. Without sudden moving, Hui and Dongxiang Muslims might gradually evolve into and adapt to modern culture. Despite the conflicts and challenges described in this study, there are still opportunities for integration. It is unreasonable and unrealistic for Muslim migrants to take decades or hundreds of years to integrate into modern and urban society. The diasporic public spheres (Appadurai, 1996) provide them with more opportunities for social integration. Participants in this study lived in a diasporic community of Hui and Dongxiang in the *Xiaoxihu* area. Within this area, these migrants kept their own cultural customs and formed identity groups (Gutmann, 2004) that provided collective and positive membership. For example, participants explained that many community affairs were decided in the mosque after praying. The diasporic public spheres might also cross national borders, especially for Muslims. In this study, participants often mentioned the events or affairs in other countries where Muslims reside. With media and Internet, an imagined community of Muslims may be forming. This community may help resolve and dispel conflicts and contradictions in social integrations.

Another possibility is the changing meaning of modernity. An absolute divide of rural vs. urban, and primordial vs. modern does not exist in the current era of information and human migration. Within the era of information, rural communities development in technologies and medias grew rapidly, which transported information of modernity. For example, participants in this study have contact with modern and urban culture through television long before they entered the city. Human migration also bridges the absolute gap between rural and urban places. In this study, some participants had visited the city long before they settled in Lanzhou. They travelled back to their hometowns and cultures frequently. So there is not a definite gap between primordialism and modernity in their minds at all. Instead, the gap is fluid and evolving. This echoes Appadurai's (1996) idea that modernity is irregularly self-conscious and unevenly experienced among different individuals and groups. For example, rural and urban differences vary in different regions of China. In South China, many migrants work in factories and live in factory districts. In Northwest China where there are fewer factories, migrants usually work in or own small restaurants and form business communities. Living in different communities, migrant students experienced different levels of modernity in their daily lives.

**Identity is Multiple, Complex, Fluid, Changing, and Contextual**

The participants in this study were initially assigned the ethnic identity of either Hui or Dongxiang. The principals and teachers perceived their status stereotypically as *shaoshu* (minority) in *Xiaoxihu* Middle School. Yet, the participants assigned themselves multiple identities in the beginning. They also demonstrated multiple aspects of their cultural identities, including religious, gender, rural-urban, and ethnicity. These identities evolved within participants based on different aspects of culture practices. The analysis of students' multiple identities avoided limiting to one dimension. For example, Lin Ma first self-identified as a

Muslim that indicated his religious identity. But he also identified as *laojiao* (a denomination of Islam), as a Hui (ethnicity), and as a Lintan people (hometown). Together these identities helped explain the complexities of studying and living in Lanzhou.

Multiple identities intertwined and intersected in the self-assignments and real lives of the participants. They often referred to their ethnic identity as *shaoshu* while talking about their religious identity, and their differences from and social relationships with the *duoshu* (majority). They also talked about their individual situation and the collective Muslim community. In some rare cases, the participants talked about rural-urban differences as *shaoshu*. This suggested that people may use a common or well-recognized identity to talk about other identities. This is to say, to look closely at a certain identity, people need do careful observations and study of the contexts of identity. In this study, the participants talked about religious identities mostly in interaction with their ethnic identities. They also identified themselves as Muslim when they interacted with non-Muslim groups like the Hans. This is similar to Gladney's (1998) statement that to be Hui is to be Muslim in Northwest China. However, their ethnic identity still existed in interactions with other ethnicities. For example, they were more aware of their ethnic identity as they talked about Uyghur as another Muslim but different ethnic group.

Participants' identities were further complicated as students attached identity in certain categories of identity, such as ethnic identity. An interesting phenomenon of identity is the self-assignment of Hui by many Dongxiang participants. Participants like Ming Ma and Li Dong were publicly assigned as Dongxiang according to the national ethnic classification. They also carried their publicly-assigned identity as Dongxiang in legal documents. When questioned about these differences from the ethnicity of Hui, they identified none other than language. One possible reason is their limited knowledge regarding ethnic differences. Hui and Dongxiang

shared the same religion and many other customs. It is highly possibly that these youths have not yet developed enough understanding to discern subtle differences. For instance, several Dongxiang college students were able to talk specifically about ethnic differences during the field observations.

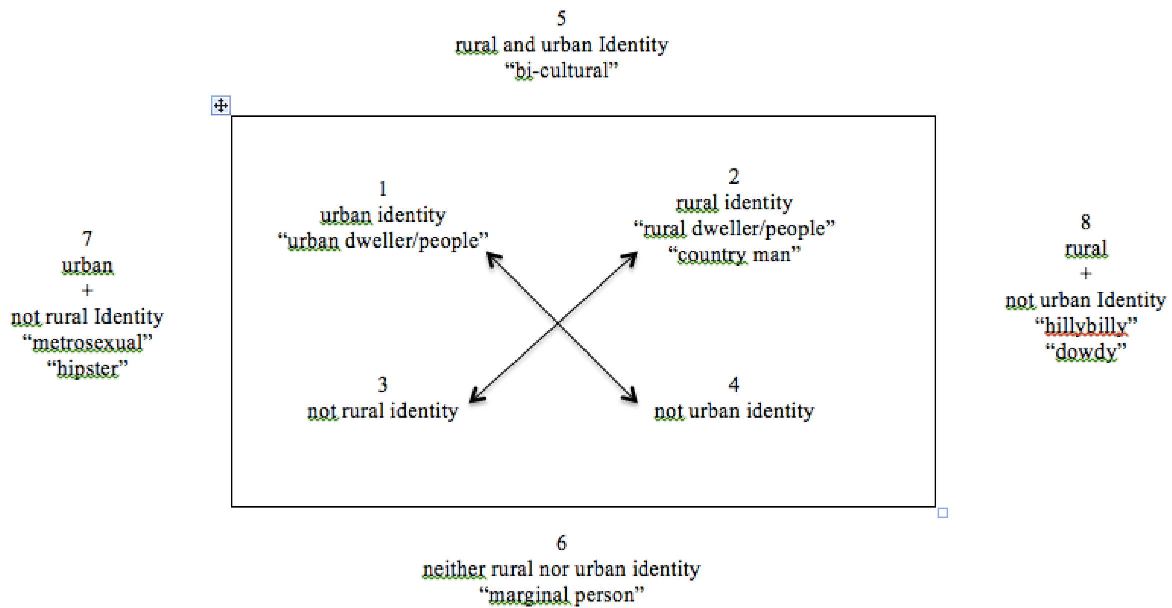
One reason for difference between publicly-assigned and self-assigned identity might be the power dynamics underneath the ethnic differences between these two groups. Hui have lived in their communities for over 200 years and established recognized socioeconomic statuses in Lanzhou. Dongxiang are a less developed ethnic group that inhabit the mountainous Dongxiang Autonomous Prefecture. As they first moved to Lanzhou, there is a stereotype of Dongxiang as workers in construction sites and cheap laborers with limited education. By assigning the ethnic identity of Hui, Dongxiang migrants might intentionally cover themselves with a more recognized ethnic identity with higher socioeconomic status. As Dongxiang adults intentionally blurred the differences between Hui and Dongxiang, the participants in this study inherited the idea of similarity between two ethnic groups without knowing the power dynamics. It is possible that the participants will understand the nuances of ethnic differences and power dynamics as they grow older and have more experience with various ethnic relationships.

On the rural-urban identity axis, participants in this study had various and diverse reactions to places and answers on rural-urban choices. When they first moved to Lanzhou, the city strangeness caused them to prefer rural places and identities. As they became more familiar with the city, they started to develop more fondness for urban places. Some participants started to fully embrace the urban environment and adopt an urban personality. Other participants still maintained their attachments to rural places and identities. As participants developed deeper understandings of rural and urban environments and cultures, those who were fond of urban

culture might miss friends and communities in rural places, and those who had more attachments to rural culture might find living and working in urban places more opportune choices for their education and careers.

Appling Hebert’s (2007) strategy of semiotics to the analysis of the participants’ identity, people may have a clearer understanding of where they are regarding their rural and urban identity (See Figure 16). Using the semiotic technique called square, there existed number 1 and number 2 of rural and urban identities that students held as they grew up in rural and urban environments. Theoretically, people may perceive themselves as the opposite identity as number 3 or 4 as they find incompatibility with number 1 or 2 during the migration. For example, students considered themselves not urban people even as they lived in urban places. Some participants may develop an even stronger rural identity and claim themselves as purely rural, which locate them at number 8 on the semiotic model. Other participants may feel strongest about their urban identity and have no more attachment to rural identity, which locate them at number 7. In other situations, students may own equal feelings toward rural-urban identities (located at number 5) or find little feelings of belonging to neither rural nor urban identities (located at number 6).

Figure 16. Semiotics Analysis of Rural-urban Identities




Semiotic positions describe theoretical assumptions about the status of the participants. However, participants' authentic identity fall in-between these spaces in real life. Since they experienced and cultivated into both cultures, there are very rare cases that they fall in an extreme identity. For example, some participants who had more fondness for urban culture but remained attached to their rural origins are located at places between number 5 and 8. Those who had fondness for and attachment to urban culture were located at places between number 5 and 7. Participants who found difficulties in fitting into both cultures may fall in between number 6 and 7, or number 6 and 8, depending on their attachments leaning toward urban or rural culture.

The participants in this study from different grades shared some variance in exploring and expressing their identities. Those from grade eight were able to talk in greater detail about different aspects of identities. For example, Ming Ma and Li Dong were able to discuss religious conflicts they encountered in and out of school. Ping Ma specifically explained pressures of being a Muslim female. Participants from grade seven also provided examples of identity

conflicts they encountered in learning and social interactions, but they were more responsive than reflective. That is to say, the grade eight participants expressed a more abstract and rational understanding of their identity than those in grade seven. This difference might come from the ages that are connected with developmental psychology as Erikson (1980) suggested. As the participants grow older, they probably will become more mature in their identities. Length of resident in the city probably affected identities as well. Participants in this study varied in their experience of living in Lanzhou. Yan Ma had lived in Lanzhou for approximately seven years; Yue Wang for five years; other participants stayed for three years. Differences of rural-urban and religious identity could be partially explained by the length of urban experience. For example, Yan Ma's dietary restrictions and religious practices were less regimented. Yue Wang described herself as being half urban and half rural. Lin Ma still showed strong attachments toward his rural hometown.

Identity may also shift as contexts change. In this way, cultural identities are contextual to a certain extent. One identity might become more salient than another in certain circumstances. As Banks (2012) suggested, cultural identity might be exhibited in a spiraling fashion. For example, living in a monoethnic community, the participants in this study might not notice their religion and ethnicity as being different from others. Yet, symbols of their religion and ethnicity such as clothing and dietary restrictions were visible in the large Lanzhou. Some participants still considered themselves as members of their rural hometowns. But visiting these communities made them realize their double marginality between rural and urban places, particularly when their relatives identified them as Lanzhou people. Female participant may feel fewer constraints in the school context, but living at home or visiting hometowns imposed different gender role expectations. All of these examples demonstrate how participants in this study experienced

contextualized identities. Although still quite inexperienced at cultural border crossing, they were developing some cross-cultural competences and strategies for conflict resolutions during transitioning.

**Multicultural Education and Standardized Testing**

Participants in this study met difficulties in learning as they moved to the city. It was not merely the strangeness of urban school environments, but the huge rural-urban differences in education that caused them to lag behind in both achievement and competence. Attending school activities and engaging with social interactions tested their competences beyond textbook knowledge as well. Their knowledge and experience from rural education were largely incompatible with urban learning and living. Principals and teachers considered the education Hui and Dongxiang students received in their hometowns inferior and often recommended these migrant students to transfer to lower grade in their schools. This stigmatization of inferiority imposed serious pressures on the students. Moreover, not enough efforts were made to help participants overcome weaknesses in their knowledge and learning styles. Without enough investment in tutoring and help from teachers, many participants were further left behind in their education.

Another set of significant factors on creating identity conflicts for the participants in this study was the lack of cultural awareness, toleration, and recognition by school educators. Many conflicts could have been avoided if teachers and principals were more knowledgeable of Islamic culture. For example, the worship of Confucius and the art festival dancing were contradictory to participants' beliefs and religious requirements. Even though some teachers developed superficial understandings through their years of working with Muslim students, there was still a lack of adequate knowledge about what Islam really means for Hui and Dongxiang students.

*Xiaoxihu* Middle School provided limited recognition of Hui and Dongxiang students in school activities and support for their religious needs. Furthermore, teachers rarely helped students to bridge the gap between two cultures rather than assimilating them into Han culture.

Teachers claimed they were aware of ethnic and religious differences in their teaching but also expressed difficulties in accommodating standardized tests and students' cultural needs at the same time. A common belief in local communities was that to accommodate students' special needs would take time and energy away from teaching test content. However, standardized testing already occupied most time in instruction and preparation. This is often a perceived dilemma of teachers negotiating and engaging with multicultural education along with more conventional teaching priorities. For example, teachers declared a lack of time to conduct family visits to understand students out of school. On the students' side, pressures from standardized testing sometimes caused them to neglect their religious needs and beliefs. A case in point was exam preparation during Ramadan. Standardized testing might create a facade for conflicts in identities as students were occupied in school learning. But the identity conflicts might eventually explode when standardized testing was no longer an issue. A possible time would be during college study when Hui and Dongxiang students had less pressure from exam preparation and more contact with secular urban culture.

## Limitations

One potential limitation of this study was the researcher's positionality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I am a male Chinese, from the Han ethnic group, secular, and non-Muslim. In addition, my graduate studies in the United States were grounded in a western epistemology that added to my outsider status. Even though the Hui and Dongxiang in this study spoke Mandarin as I do, and I have research and personal experiences as a rural migrant, I was still an outsider (Han and

non-Muslim) in terms of religion and ethnicity. My receptivity and involvement in the daily lives of the participants were challenging for this research. In the beginning of the study, teachers and students were curious about why a doctoral student from a U.S. university would be interested on their experiences in Lanzhou. I was very noticeable in the back of the class and in the hallway during the first month of the study. One director in the Department of Discipline at *Xiaoxihu* School specifically questioned my interest in ethnic Muslim students.

Despite these limitations of positionality, my knowledge, experience, and research effort allowed me be somewhat of an inside outsider. I am a Chinese who grew up and finished K-12 and college education in China. I have a better understanding of China compared to foreign researchers. I also developed a deep understanding of the rural-urban migrant experience through my own history of moving to and studying in urban places (in China), and through my previous research on rural migrants. My master thesis was a qualitative study on marginality of rural migrants in 10 cities of China. Talking with local scholars, principals, and teachers helped me adapt and localize my language to accommodate the customs of the participants in the study. During the first and second month, I joined students in the classes everyday and talked to them during recess time. My efforts in building relationships with students worked in the second half of fieldwork. Students were more open to conversation, especially on the topics of beliefs and future plans. Some of them invited me to visit their families and parents. In addition, fieldtrips to their hometowns enriched my understanding of their previous rural life and educational experiences.

Another limitation of this study is the length of data collection. Considering the complexity of participants' identities and school activities, an entire academic year would be a more reasonable length of time for conducting this study. To further explore the evolving

experiences of migrating to and living in the city, their rural-urban adaptions may need to be studied beyond this initial research. With further contact and data collection from targeted participants, this study would generate more comprehensive understanding of rural migrant Muslim students' social integration into the city. Another limitation was related to the depth of each identity. Each participant had his/her own history of growing up and ample experiences of diverse identities. This study focused on only religious, gender, and rural-urban identities. However, more work still needs to be done to explore each of these in further detail.

There is a limitation of the size of the targeted participants as well. This study started with an initial pool of 20 students and eventually narrowed it down to seven participants. Despite the effort to select typical cases, there are still potential errors with only seven participants. That is to say, findings presented in this study may be exceptions to normative experiences. Furthermore, the number of participants is too small to generate absolute conclusions. Another limitation related to the language used in this study. This study was conducted and transcribed in Mandarin. Yet, the findings were presented in English. Some nuances of meanings may have been lost in the translation.

## Significance of this Study

Scholars from sociology and politics have been researching rural migrants in China for more than a decade. Also, education scholars have studied this population from the perspectives of institutional barriers, policies, opportunities, and other external factors. There are also scholars (Gladney, 1998; Lipman, 1993; Dillon, 2009) who have studied the histories and ethnic identities of Hui Muslims. However, a perspective from education is still lacking in this area. Few studies look deeply at the cultural influences of rural-urban structures, especially on ethnic minority groups. Particularly, intersectionality is rarely included in studies to date of ethnic, religious,

rural-urban, and gender identities. With consideration of various important characteristics of Hui and Dongxiang migrant students, this study was able to begin to fill some of these voids.

On a theoretical level, this study combined both western and Chinese theories on migration, assimilation, cultural identity, and multicultural education. It built on previous studies of rural-urban differences among majority groups, marginal experiences influenced by differences, students' education experiences, and literature about Hui culture, school and religious education, and migration. Looking from both inside and outside, it brought a more comprehensive understanding of migrants and Muslims. On internal migration of Muslims in Northwest China, this study should help to generate better understandings of their cultural experiences that can be used to study ethnic group transitions more extensively. Moreover, the cultural experiences in migration happening in Lanzhou-Northwest China could be indirectly shared among other international and domestic migrants.

## Recommendations for Practice and Future Research

Multicultural Education is highly needed in both policy statements and actual classroom practices in addressing the educational needs of diverse ethnic groups in China. Often existing teaching techniques within different social, economic, political and, and cultural contexts contradict ideals and values of justice, equality, and human rights. In implementing multicultural education, policy statements should acknowledge the existing situation of diversity and potential inequalities in educational access, academic achievement, and culture integration. To work toward removing these inequalities, some theories could be adapted from Western contexts and localized in policy statements and classroom practices.

To address diversity in the curriculum, Banks (2004) proposed four different strategies. These are: 1) the contributions approach, the focus of which is discrete cultural elements, such as

ethnic heroes, holidays, and food; 2) the additive approach, on lessons and units containing cultural content, themes, and perspectives that are added to the existing curriculum; 3) the transformation approach in which the structure of curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from a variety of cultural perspectives; and 4) the social action approach, which helps students make decisions on important social issues and take action to help solve them. In the case of China at this point in time, it will not be pragmatic for policy makers and K-12 educators to embrace and conduct multicultural education as a seperate entity from the common curricula. These four approaches will be a feasible model to translate theoretical concepts into practices, and weave multicultural education into the central core of curriculum, instruction, and classroom climate (Gay, 2003).

Another theory that needs to be addressed in policy statements is culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay 2010). A primary goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to create learning environments that help student use cultural wealth, knowledge, and skills from their backgrounds to learn new content and information to enhance their schooling experiences and academic success (Howard, 2012). Gay (2010) described cultural responsive teaching as validating and affirming the strengths of students' diverse heritages; comprehensive by bringing cultural resources to bear in teaching knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes; multidimensional by addressing curriculum and instruction in classroom, teacher–student interactions, classroom climate, and performance assessment; empowering students by giving them opportunities to excel in the classroom and beyond, which will further develop their academic competence, personal confidence, courage, and the will to act; and

transformative by helping students develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become social activists.

Culturally responsive teaching is possible to be used in the classrooms of China. The curricula, instructional approaches, and assessment mechanisms in China are deeply embedded with mainstream ideology, language, norms, and examples. One fundamental premise of cultural responsive teaching is the recognition of the cultures and funds of knowledge that all students bring to the classrooms. In this way, the cultural backgrounds and heritages of all minority groups will be recognized. This offers the possibility to cover knowledge, skills and beliefs of diverse groups, and enrich students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically in ways that are connected to their own ways of knowing.

**Culture Rights for Rural and Ethnic Migrants in Education**

Zhou (1997) pointed out that assimilation is not a general process of incorporation into society, but actually means assimilation into a specific segment. In China, wide variations exist within and across the categories of ethnicity, culture, language, and religion. However, issues of cultural integration are marginally addressed in the process of migration. The failure of inclusion of minority cultures could serve to exacerbate the tensions between structurally or culturally advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Beyond the missionary view of maintaining disadvantaged minority cultures, minority rights have the potential to enhance a common citizenship identity. Without the presence of minority rights, the common citizenship might not even exist (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000, p.37). Sadly, this idea, in many contexts, is perceived as untrue, and minority rights are respected and recognized only for the sake of national security. Refusal to grant recognition and autonomy to such groups may provoke even more resentment and hostility from the members of minorities groups. China still has a long way to go to

recognize minority children's cultural backgrounds and stop undermining the values and cultures of their parents and communities.

**Differentiated and Affirmative Citizenship for Rural Ethnic Students**

In China, a universal but vague definition of citizenship was regulated in the Constitution. This universal meaning of citizenship failed to explain the inequality in citizenship rights happening to citizens within different entitlements. Applying the universal notion of citizenship, groups with power and influence equated their own interests with the public interest. Law and rules are blind to individuals and groups differences. Groups without power often experienced structural exclusion and discrimination, and are in fact treated as second-class citizens (Young, 1989, 2000). To include the minority groups in China, a differentiated citizenship (Banks, 2009; Young, 1989) should be constructed to deal with the heterogeneous context in a diverse and stratified China. Various forms of differences need to be accommodated through special legal or constitutional measures beyond the common rights of citizenship. More importantly, a differentiated citizenship should be constructed as an affirmative action to help rural ethnic students to fill the rural-urban achievement gaps and adapt to city life.

Differentiated citizenship also should be perpetuated throughout the entire educational system, in which group-differentiated rights are incorporated and recognized (Fraser, 2000). In the enactment of differentiated citizenship, Castles and Davidson (2000) introduced the principle of "*ius domicili*"(law of residence), that people may gain entitlement to citizenship through long-term residence in the host countries (cities in the case of China). This new principle is very important to reforming issues of immigrants and migrants long-term substantive residence. Beyond the talk of universal and differentiated divisions, citizenship itself is becoming more fluid. More and more migrant workers and migrant students are mobile and flexible (Ong, 1999)

between rural and urban areas. In this way, they maintain economic, social, political, and cultural relationships across boundaries. Education needs respond to respond to these new ways of conceptualizing citizenship and belonging, and possibly reconstructing the *hukou* systems in China.

**Further Research on Broader and Older Muslim Populations**

This study looked specifically at rural migrant Muslim students from two ethnic groups in Northwest China. Using qualitative methodologies allowed depth in researching a small group of participants. A quantitative approach to the same population will help extend insights into large numbers of Hui and Dongxiang students and their experiences. This qualitative study may serve as part of an exploratory mixed-methods research. A follow-up survey collecting a larger database could provide more evidence on the possible differences in strategies of adapting to the city between Hui, Dongxiang, and Han. Results generated would be helpful to policy makers and educators in addressing the needs of Hui and Dongxiang migrant students in urban schools. Further, students in middle school are still forming their identities and research on older Muslim students such as those in high school and college could extend and enrich the spectrum of experiences of ethnic Muslim migrants.

Another area of potential research is to look at other Muslim groups and denominations in Northwest China. This study found denomination to be a significant maker of Muslims' religious identity. A further look at denominational differences or one specific denomination may provide more details and nuances of how Hui and Dongxiang students in similar and different ways. It could improve understanding about within group differences and avoid essentializing of certain Muslim groups. Hui and Dongxiang may be different from Uyghur, although they are all Muslim groups in Northwest China. The reason is not just that they are

from different denominations, but also that they have different histories of integration into Han society. It will be an interesting study to compare the cultural identification of Hui and Uyghur students, and explore how and why Muslim groups vary in the degrees of compatibility with the Han majority ethnic group.

The conflicts between rural and urban, religious, and secular cultures were deeply impacted by contemporary infrastructures in China. Another possible future research area is to look at the how the various infrastructures of China's society affect rural ethnic migrants in China. Particularly, the *hukou* system should be considered as research as education reforme continues. The *hukou* system was initially established based on the industrialization strategies, incomplete urbanization, and special group interests. It had caused come major problems in citizenship and human rights. The nature and function of the *hukou* system can exploit and discriminate against some groups while privileging others. It has caused huge inequalities in education (especially for migrant children), including access to education, academic achievement, and cultural integration. Still little public awareness and institutional change have occurred to reform this system. More research is needed to examine possibilities of reforming education policies and practices attached to *hukou* system. The results may bring assets and capital to the city, and generate real and complete urbanization in China. For example, one step to initiate this change could be the institutional changes in education to empower rural migrant students with more rights in education. These rights could eventually turn into cultural and social capital for the development of the city.

## Concluding Comments

China is still in the process of urbanization and bridging rural-urban differences. Comparison with countries that have been urbanized might provide macroscopic understanding

of how rural and urban differences evolved in human societies. Towns and villages in other parts of the world have already developed modern urban social systems. Even though rural and urban places in those countries still have differences in scope and development level, those differences are less than the rural-urban gaps in China. In fact, rural society in China is still primordial compared to the city.

Students who grow up in rural and urban environments, and Islamic and secular communities show differences in cultural psychology if the results of this study are indicative of broader trends. This confrontation reflects the perceptions of rural Muslim students about cultural differences. In order to adapt into urban life, rural Muslim students must continually assimilate to urban and secular cultures as they start their odysseys of urbanization. The feelings of surprise, excitement, low self-esteem, loneliness, and rationality are challenging, yet enriching their experiences and to become part of their personalities. Often the urban lifestyles and cultural personalities acquired by rural students do not match their socioeconomic positions. As the Chinese Academy of Social Science (2004) reported, economic resources, institutional resources, and cultural resources are being aggregated to higher social class. Obstacles for social mobility are being strengthened, and individuals from lower socioeconomic status are finding it more and more difficult to gain access to the middle class. Caught between rural and urban, and Islamic and secular cultures, rural Muslim students experience marginality when they do not want to go back to rural life but find no deep grounding in their current urban life.

This project revealed complicated marginal feelings and identities among rural migrant Muslim students. Yet, there is still the possibility for them to develop some agency while transiting between rural and urban, Islamic and secular cultures. During the process of adapting to urban and secular culture, rural Muslim students provide new lens for both rural and urban,

Muslims and secular people to understand each other. Education plays a role in guiding these rural Muslim students when they enter the city and attempt to assimilate into urban life. Culturally responsive curriculum and teaching should be developed to help them adapt to urban life, and explore more critically who they are, where they come from, and where they are going. Influences on their current education and life in urban high schools, and self-identification in cultural transition are important for subsequent education and life options. Therefore, both should be analyzed more thoroughly. Moreover, curriculum for these cultural-boundaries-crossers should facilitate mutual understanding between rural and urban cultures.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Narrative Stories

**“Moving to Lanzhou City” (For 20 Hui students)**

Addressing the topic “Moving to Lanzhou City”, please write your personal story about moving from your hometown to Lanzhou City. If applicable, you can talk about your perceptions of rural-urban differences, extrinsic and intrinsic changes that happened to you, and describe your identity in relation to Hui ethnicity and Muslim. Please keep the story  tono less than 1000 words in Chinese.

**“Being a Rural Migrant Hui Student” (For Selected Four Students )**

Using the topic “Being a Rural Migrant Hui Student”, please write a personal story about your living in Lanzhou city. If applicable, please talk about changes, opportunities and challenges for you in relation to your identity as a rural migrant, Hui student and Muslim. Please keep the story to no less than 1000 words in Chinese.

**Appendix B: Group discussion Protocol**

## Group Discussion Protocol

### Group Discussion 1: Urban impression and response

For the first discussion, I am interested in hearing about your experience when you first migrated to the city. You can also talk about your current feeling and thoughts. Thanks for participating this conversation.

1. When did you move to the city? Why did you/your family move to Lanzhou city?
    1) You whole family come with you or just yourself? Where are you living?
    2) What you family do for living in Lanzhou City?
    3) Can you share some memorable story during the trip you move to Lanzhou and when you just arrived in Lanzhou?
2. Can you describe your first impression on Lanzhou city?
    1) How, if at all, does this city differ from your hometown? Can you describe the differences (building, transportation, weather, food, life services, people you meet and so on)
    2) What is your emotional reaction to these differences? What was your feeling when facing these differences? How do you look at it intellectually?
3. Can you describe your first impression of on ## school?
    1) How does this school differ from the school you attended in your hometown? (facilities, school size, teachers…)
    2) What is your emotional reaction to these differences? What was your feeling when facing these differences? How do you look at it intellectually?

4. How, if at all, your current impression on Lanzhou city and # school is different from your first impression? What's your idea on the differences between first and current impression.

**Group Discussion 2: Learning Differences and Life experiences**

Hello, everyone, this is Tao. We will continue our talk on your experience moving to Lanzhou city. For this discussion, we will talk about your learning and life experience when you first move to the city and your current experience. Thanks for participating this conversation.

1. Study Adaption
   1) What do you think about the differences between studying in your prior rural school versus an urban school now? Can you describe the differences between your old school and new school? (Like learning method, learning content, learning peer)
   2) How, if at all, did you face challenges adapting to your school here? Can you say more about those challenges? (probe: can you provide an example of X challenge?: Difficult to understand, unfamiliar content, previous experience)
   3) Do you feel like you have adapted to the school context now? If so, in what ways?
2. Life Style and Leisure
   1) Can you describe your regular leisure activities after school and during the weekend?
   2) How, if at all, different is your current life from how you were living at your prior school? How, if at all, different is your daily lifestyle and life customs such as eating, wearing and so on?

3) How much money do you spend each month? Can you describe how your spending habits relate to those for your peers? How, if at all, do you think about the differences in spending?

**Group Discussion 3: Social interaction and School Activities**

Hello, everyone, this is Tao. We will continue our talk on your experience moving to Lanzhou city. For this week, we will talk about your experience in social interaction, your relationship with your family and prior friends, and involvement of school activities. Thanks for participating this conversation.

1. Social Interaction and Interpersonal Communication
    1) Interaction with Classmates and Friends

       What types of friends you have more, classmates with urban or rural background? What's content you talk and communicate with each group? Do you feel and find any problem in communication because of your rural background? Why do you talk to one group (urban or rural) more? Can you give me some examples of close friends and what you talk to each other about?
    2) Interaction with Teachers

       What's your situation of interaction and communication with teachers? If you have problems, will you choose to look for teachers' help? Why? Does the situation differ from prior experience in rural school?
    3) Interaction and Communication with People in Prior Environment

       What would you do when going back home? Can you describe the nature of the communication with your family? Do you often chat and communicate with your

family? What's the content? Would you quarrel with your family? What's the content? Do you play with your prior friend? Is there anything different from before?

4) Interaction with people outside of school

   Do you have experience in interacting with people outside of school? Who are they? What do you think of them? What are the differences from your hometown?

2. Activities Attendance and Participation

   What activities do you attend or participate in school? Could you talk some detail and examples? Do you decide by yourself or be organized to attend? What's your role in these activities?

**Group Discussion 4: Values and Identification**

Hello, everyone, this is Tao. We will continue our talk on your experience moving to Lanzhou city. For this week, we will talk about your values change and identity after you moved to Lanzhou City. Thanks for participating this conversation. Everyone in this group discussion will be anonymous or use a nickname, so the information you reveal will not be recognized, please feel free to talk out in the discussion.

1. How would you define your self, a rural resident, urban resident or someone else? Why so? Could you explain more?
2. What do you think about your rural background in school and social life? How do you look at it, an advantage or disadvantage? Could you explain about it?
3. Moving from your hometown to the city, what kind of changes happened in your value, like life value, social value, and future plan?

**Group Discussion 5: Intersectionality of ethnicity and religion**

Hello, everyone, this is Tao. We will continue our talk on your experience moving to Lanzhou city. For this week, we will talk about your personal experience of being Hui people and Muslims in Lanzhou City. You can also talk about your current feeling and thoughts. The content of this conversation will be kept secretly. If necessary, we will change the nickname to protect your privacy. Thanks for participating this conversation.

1. Can you describe the ethnic and religious demographic diversity in your class?
2. How do you continue your previous religious practice regarding ethnicity and Muslims in Lanzhou city and your school, like five times pray a day, going to the Mosques and so on?
3. How, if at all, does your identity as Hui Person and a Muslim shape your learning experiences? Your overall life experiences?

## Appendix C: Photo Project

### Photo Project "Lanzhou city and # School Through My Eyes" (For Selected Ten Students)

Moving from your hometown to Lanzhou City, we can all think of a few things from your daily life with multiple meaning. Think of that special moment and all the memories that go with it. Think about the stories it would tell, if it could, photograph that. The moment might be gone, but you can still make a photo that shares the often-retold story about this item. Your story might include a beloved item like a tool you brought from your hometown, a snapshot where you are living now, a backpack you carry everyday, a mosque your family now usually go, or a moment you play with your friends after schools. No matter the story, it's a part of who you are. For this project, I want to collect photos you take on the scenarios as mentioned.

When you are taking these photos, you might consider use following themes or you can just use your own themes to tell you story moving to Lanzhou City and tell others the city and school through your eyes. You might also consider put one sentence or a word as the tag of this photo

"This is where I live"

"Lanzhou and # School"

"One day in # school: My backpack"

"My life after school"

"My clothes in a week"

"One day in my family "

"With my friends"

"One day as Muslim"

…

**Photo Project "My life as Rural Migrant Hui Student" (For Selected Four Students)**

Moving from Your hometown to urban Lanzhou city, we can all think of a few things from your daily identity with multiple meaning. For this project, you might include special moment and occasions related with your identity. Through these photos, you might want to introduce and describe yourself through these selected moments.

## Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Protocols

### Semi-structured Interview Protocols

### First Round Interview Protocol A: Moving to Lanzhou City

1. **Could you introduce yourself about moving to Lanzhou city,** How long have you been moving to Lanzhou city, and studying in this school?
2. **For your impressions on the city and school** you mention in your story and chartroom, you mentioned that …(synthesize from narrative story and group discussion history), could you talk more about it? Could you give me an example on the first week your came to the city? What did you see, and how do you feel about it? Why so?
3. **For your study experience**, you mentioned in your story that … …(synthesize from narrative story and group discussion history), could you talk more about it? Could you give me an example on certain subject or class? How did you feel about it at that time? How, if all, have your feelings changed over time? Can you describe why you think your feelings have changed?
4. **For your life experience in Lanzhou city**, you mentioned in your story that … …(synthesize from narrative story and group discussion history), could you talk more about it? How often are you dealing with this kind of situation now? Could you give a memorable example, which you always remember?
5. **For your experience of interacting with friends, classmates, teachers and family**, you mentioned in your story that … …(synthesize from narrative story and group discussion history), could you talk more about it? How often are you dealing with this kind of situation? Could you give an example that you still have fresh memory? How do you think that will happen?

6. You mentioned in your story that you have some **changes on your thoughts and values**, could you talk more about it? What makes these changes happen? For example?...

**Second Round Interview Protocol A: Moving to Lanzhou City**

**1.** In our last conversation, you mention about the **change and challenges in your study**, in your opinion, how do you think that will happen? How does your identity as rural migrant shape this ? How does your identity as Hui people shape this? Are there, if at all, any other identity of your help shape this?

2. In our last conversation, you mention about the change and challenges in your **afterschool life and lifestyle**, in your opinion, how do you think that will happen? How does your identity as rural migrant shape this ? How does your identity as Hui people shape this? Are there, if at all, any other identity of your help shape this?

**3.** In our last conversation, you mention on your **social interaction** that …, could you explain more about it? in your opinion, how do you think that will happen? How does your identity as rural migrant shape this ? How does your identity as Hui people shape this? Are there, if at all, any other identity of your help shape this?

**4.** In our last conversation, you mention on your **values and future plan** that …, could you explain more about it? in your opinion, how do you think that will happen? How does your identity as rural migrant shape this ? How does your identity as Hui people shape this? Are there, if at all, any other identity of your help shape this?

**Third Round Interview Protocol A: Moving to Lanzhou City**

1. Through our conversation, we talked about your experience moving to Lanzhou city. How do you self-identify yourself in relation to rural VS urban inhabitants, Hui people and Muslims? Could you explain why you would self-identify as…? Could you give a detailed example that has profound impact on you?
2. How does your self-identification changed through the time? For example, how did you self-identify your self when you first came here? How do you self-identify yourself now? How do you think **the length you stay** here has something to do with your self-identification?
3. How do think your self-identification relates to your gender as male/female? How do you think about **gender difference** in relation to the your and your family expectation? For example, how did you self-identify yourself as a male Hui Muslims when you first came here? How do you self-identify yourself now?

## Appendix E: Observation Guide

### 1. Student Learning in the classroom

**1)** Learning Content: What is the lesson focused on? What are students learning?

**2)** Learning Style: How do students engaged with the material?

**3)** Curriculum use in the classroom: what aspects of the curriculum are evidence in the classroom?

**4)** Classroom interaction: How do teacher and students interact? How do students interact with each other?

**5)** Teacher-student relationship: How can this relationship be characterized—how formal, how warm, how two-way, etc…

**6)** Peer relationship (with rural peers and urban peers): How can the apparent relationship among students be characterized – how formal, how warm,

**7)** Role of rural migrant students in the classrooms: How much are these students recognized, involved, engaged in the classroom work and activities?

### 2. Student Behavior Outside of the classroom

**1)** Leisure after class (Sports,): What do students do outside of the classroom in school? Where and with whom?

**2)** Conversation during the break and recess time: Who talks to whom outside of the classroom? What kinds of things do they talk about?

**3)** Cafeteria Conversation: Who talks to whom? What kinds of things do they talk about?

**4)** School activities Attendance: What other activities do students

**5)** Friends making and Interaction with peers (rural and urban peers): who appears to be friends with whom? How do the friends interact with each other?

3. **Special School Events**

**1)** Organized school events: How are these events organized and what kinds of participation do they encourage or allow?

**2)** Organized class events: How are these events organized and what kinds of participation do they encourage or allow?

4. **Student Behavior Outside of the School**

**1)** Interaction with people outside of school: What do students do outside of the school with other people? Where and with whom?

**2)** Leisure outside of the school: What do students do outside of school for fun or relaxation? Where and with whom?

5. **Basic Information about Students' Family and Community (during family visiting)**

**1)** The location, environment and climate of students' family and house: where do students live? In what kind of surroundings?

**2)** Conversation between students and families: How do students talk with others in their family? What do they talk about?

**3)** Student behavior during the summer break: How do students use the summer break time? Doing what with whom?

# Vita

# Tao Wang

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## EDUCATION

**Ph.D., Multicultural Education, Department of Curriculum & Instruction,**

**University of Washington/Seattle, WA, 2015**

Dissertation: Walking out of the Mountain: Cultural Identification and Education of Rural Muslim Migrant Students in Northwest China
Dissertation Committee:

- Professor Geneva Gay, Multicultural Education, University of Washington (**Advisor and Chair**)
- Professor James A. Banks, Kerry and Linda Endowed Chair in Diversity Studies and Director for Multicultural Education, University of Washington
- Professor Michael Knapp, Educational Leadership and Policies, University of Washington
- Professor Kam Wing Chan, Department of Geography, University of Washington

**MEd, Multicultural Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction (August, 2012)**

University of Washington/Seattle, WA

Advisor: Professor Geneva Gay

Master Final Project: Marginality of Rural Migrant Students in China

**B.A., Education, Southwest University (Prestigious Teachers University), Chongqing, China (June, 2010)**

- Certified to teach English in grade 8-12

## TEACHING INTERESTS

Introduction to multicultural education; Sociocultural foundation of education; Principles of Curriculum; Citizenship education and social studies in China and U.S. Education for multiethnic youth; International perspectives on multicultural teacher education; Immigrant schooling; Urbanization and China society;

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

Multicultural education, equity, and curriculum studies; Global migration, citizenship, and cultural identification (China and U.S.); Muslim migrants and social integration; Formation of cultural identity within the urban context

## RESEARCH EXPRIENCE

**Executive Research Assistant, Center for Multicultural Education, College of Education, UW (Prof. James Banks), Sept. 2012-Jun. 2015**

Assisted in ongoing research project:

- International Conference on Global Migration, Structural Inclusion, and Citizenship Education Across Nations (June, 2014)
- Failed Citizenship for Kurds, Uyghurs and Chechens: Citizenship Education in Turkey, Russia and China (Tentative Topic)

Assisted in Grant Writing: Spencer Foundation ($50,000); The Rockefeller Foundation (Submitted)

Assist in editing for:

- *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspective* (9th ed.) (Banks & Banks, 2015),
- The *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education* (Banks, 2012)
- *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (5th ed.) (Banks, 2014)
- *Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching* (6th ed.) (Banks, 2014)

Organized several academic conferences and book talks:

- Youth Civic Development and Education: A Conference and Book Launch (May, 2014)
- World Book Launches of *the Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education* (Seattle, Nov. 2012; London, Mar. 2013; London, Sept. 2014) and 20th Anniversary of Center for Multicultural Education
- Book Talk of *Identity Safe Classrooms: Places to Belong and Learn* (Steele & Cohn-Vargas, 2014) (May, 2014)

**Research Assistant, Center for Multicultural Education (Prof. James A. Banks), UW, Nov. 2011-Sept. 2012**

Assisted in editing:

- The *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education* (Banks, 2012)
- *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspective* (8th ed.) (Banks & Banks, 2013),

Coordinated Book Talks:

- Book Talk of *Words at work and play: Three decades in families and communities* (Shirley Brice Heath, 2012) (May, 2012)
- Book Talk of *Critical Curriculum Studies: Education, Consciousness, and the Politics of Knowing* (Wayne Au, 2011) (Nov. 2011)

**Research Annotator, Socio-cultural Content in Language (SCIL) Program in the Department of Linguistics, UW, Jun. 2011-Aug. 2011**

- Researched on interpersonal alignment moves and claims of authority

**Research Assistant, College of Education, Southwest University (Prof. Ling Li), Oct. 2008-Jun. 2010**

- Assisted with literature searching and proposal editing, received 5 federal projects funding on teacher education

**Independent Researcher, Marginal Personality of Rural Students, China, Jan. 2011-Jul. 2011**

- Interviewed more than 50 students with rural background in 11 cities

**Independent Researcher, Series of Investigations on Teacher Preparation, Children Remaining in Rural Areas, Middle-aged Adults Who Lost Their Children, Chongqing, China, Jun. 2009-Jul. 2007**

## UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Teaching Assistant, College of Education, University of Washington, Jan. 2012 – Jun.2015**

- Assist with all aspects of the course: syllabus design, lesson design, and grading
- Consult with undergraduate and graduate students about multicultural courses and assignment

**Educating Ethnic Minority Youth: Seminar in Multicultural Education** (**Prof. James A. Banks**), EDC&I 569

- Class of 25 graduate students in Autumn 2014 and Autumn 2012

**Multicultural Education Across Nations** (**Prof. James A. Banks**), EDC&I 505

- Class of 25 undergraduate and graduate students in Winter 2015, Winter 2014, and Winter 2013

**Race, Gender and Knowledge Construction** (**Prof. James A. Banks**), EDC&I 574

- Class of 25 graduate students in Autumn 2013, Winter 2012

**Multi-Ethnic Studies: Methods, Content, and Materials** (**Prof. James A. Banks**), EDC&I 474

- Class of 25 undergraduate and graduate students in Autumn 2012

**L. S. Vygotsky, Funds of Knowledge, and the Cultural Mediation of Thinking** (**Prof. Luis Moll**), EDC&I 505

- Class of 23 undergraduate and graduate students in **Summer 2013**

**Learning in Our Own times (Prof. Shirley Brice Heath),** EDC&I 505

- Class of 23 undergraduate and graduate students in **Summer 2012**

**Guest Speech, Seattle University, Feb. 2014**

- International Perspective on Social Justice Issues in Professional Practice: China (Graduate Level Class at Seattle University)

## K-12 TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Heritage Language Teacher (Chinese), Chong Wa Chinese School (Seattle, Chinatown, WA), Sept. 2011- Jun.2012**

- Taught one class of 11 5-9 years old non-native Chinese speakers from multiethnic background
- Created lesson plans, delivered lessons, and organized learner-centered activities

**Chinese Teacher, Seattle Public Schools Foreign Language Assistance Program Summer Language Camp, Aki Kurose Middle School Academy, Seattle, Jul. 2012**

- Taught one class of 23 7-8 years old non-native Chinese speakers from multiethnic backgrounds
- Performed all aspects of the course: lesson plan design, and lesson delivery
- Attended course training, developmental workshops for teaching Chinese as a second language

**Chinese and English Teacher, Nonglin Primary School, Hongyan Primary School, and Chengjiang Middle school (Chongqing/China), Oct.2006- Jun.2010**

- Taught 30-40 students in different primary schools in rural areas of Southwest China every Friday afternoon
- Supervised student activities

## ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE AND PROGRAM SERVICE

**Student Chair, Academic Programs (Faculty) Committee, College of Education, University of Washington, Sept. 2013- Jun. 2015**

- Assist in review of new course application and course change, design of course systems, new program application and program change
- Assist in reforming graduation policies (Advance to Prospective Candidacy, Research and Inquiry, and General Exam)
- Collect and provide student feedback for faculty decision-making

**Intern Assistant, Confucius Institute of the State of Washington, Seattle, Jun. 2011- Sept. 2011**

- Organized cultural and language actives for potential Chinese Learners

**Staff Assistant, International Department of College of Education, Southwest University, China Jan. 2009- Jul. 2009**

- Coordinated international exchange and cooperation program like Education in China with MSU and UW

## HONORS & AWARDS

**The Dean James I. Doi Fellowship**, University of Washington, April 2015, $2200

- Fund for excellent dissertation

**Doi Dissertation Research Scholarship**, University of Washington, March 2015, $1000

- Fund for dissertation writing

**Research Assistantship**, Center for Multicultural Education, College of Education, UW (Nov. 2011-Present)

**College of Education Scholarship**, University of Washington, March 2014, $4500

**Boeing International Fellowship for International Research**, University of Washington, April 2014, $6391

- Fund for graduate student to conduct an international research

**College of Education Travel Grant**, University of Washington, March 2015, April 2014, and April 2013

**Graduate and Professional Student Senate Travel Grant**, University of Washington, May 2014

**National Scholarship**, Department of Education, China, September 2008, September 2009

- Given to top 1% students each academic year

## PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Wang, T. (2015). Strategies for cultural borders crossers. In G. Gay. Strategies for Multicultural Educators. (Prepared to be published in 2016)

Wang, T., & Longoria, A. (2015). Civic values in curriculum standards of China and the United States: A comparative study on citizenship education within different social systems. (In preparation).

Wang, T. (2015). Marginality of rural students in Chinese urban high school. (In preparation).

Wang, T. (2015). A narrative approach to cultural identification of rural migrant Muslim students in Northwest China. Paper will be presented at the annual conference of the American Education Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Wang, T., & Longoria, A. (2015). Civic values in textbooks of China and the United States: A comparative study on citizenship education within different social systems. Paper session, Paper will be presented at the annual conference of the American Education Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Wang, T. (2014). Cultural differences and classroom management: Teaching Chinese as second language to K-2 Graders. Paper session, Paper presented at the 44th annual meeting of Jean Piaget Society, San Francisco, CA.

Wang, T., & Longoria, A. (2014). Civic values in curriculum standards of China and the United States: A comparative study on citizenship education within different social systems. Paper session, Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Education Research Association, Philadelphia, PA.

Wang, T. (2013). Marginality of rural students in Chinese urban high school. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Education Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

## UNIVERSITY/PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

**Member and Reviewer, American Education Research Association (AERA), 2011-present**

Member of Division G, and SIG-Multicultural/Multiethnic Education: Theory, Research, and Practice

Serve as individual and session proposal reviewer in:

- Social Context of Education/Division G - Section 5: Social Context of Research on Schools and Communities
- Social Context of Education/Division G - 2: Education in Multicultural Contexts Within and Across Subject Areas
- Teaching and Teacher Education/Division K - Section 4: Multicultural, Inclusive, and Social Justice Frameworks for Teaching and Teacher Education in PK-16+ Settings
- SIG-Critical Examination of Race, Ethnicity, Class and Gender in Education
- SIG-Democratic Citizenship in Education

**Member, Jean Piaget Society: Society for the Study of Knowledge and Development**, 2014

**International Students Representative, Associated Students of College of Education, University of Washington, Sept. 2013-Jun. 2014**

- Serve as counselor for policy-making, students development, and events regarding international students

## VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

**UNICEF Delegators in Chongqing**, Department of Health at Beibei, Chongqing, China, Jul. 2009**-** Jun. 2010

- Received funding from UNICEF for Individuals at High Risk of AIDS
- Illuminated knowledge of preventing AIDS to homosexual groups, sex workers, and prisoners

**President, Student Association Special for pre-service teachers, Southwest University, China Jan.2008- Sept. 2009**

- Organized professional development for pre-service teachers such as volunteer teaching and workshops

**Volunteer, Volunteer Group for Middle-aged Adults Who Lost Their Children, Chongqing, China Jul. 2007- Jun. 2010**

- Accompanied lonely middle-aged adults lost their only children under the one child policy