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Career Outcomes of International Master's Recipients from Chinese Institutions: A Study of Students From Three ASEAN States

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Career Outcomes of International Master's Recipients from Chinese Institutions: A Study of Students From Three ASEAN States

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Abstract

As the third largest destination country for international postsecondary students, China has received nearly 500,000 international students, and more than 20% of them are from ASEAN member states (Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, 2019). Compared to students from Western society, most ASEAN students are from developing countries and may have stronger needs to generate career benefits via studying abroad. ASEAN students in China and their career outcomes, however, have been always overlooked in existing research.

In this qualitative study, I applied Human Capital Theory (HCT) and Neo Racism Theory (NRT) to investigate the career outcomes of graduated ASEAN students who obtain a master's degree of Chinese Language from mainland China. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interview with 16 participants who were born in Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand, investigating their perceptions on the benefits and costs of studying in China, factors impacting their career outcomes, and suggestions on Chinese government and universities. I also explored how participants' experience and perceptions vary across sending countries.

Participants recognized that studying in China can improve their employability by enhancing their technical skills, language skills, and soft skills. Establishing professional networks, holding a master's degree granted by Chinese universities, and learning from the workplace culture in China can also contribute to their professional development in both China and their home countries.

Based on participants' perceptions, the influential factors for career outcomes can be categorized into international/national, social/institutional, and personal/family factors. China-ASEAN economic cooperation has created opportunities from these participants who have

studied in China and know China well. China's unclear policies on international students, however, have confused participants and caused barriers when they seek jobs in China. At the social level, some participants have experienced discrimination against non-White races, which discouraged them from remaining, but most participants were impressed by China's development and wanted to work in China. Participants improved their employability via courses offered in their programs, and those who graduated from high reputation universities or universities that have cooperation with ASEAN states tended to obtain better career opportunities. Most Chinese universities, however, adopt a segregation policy, dividing Chinese and international students into different classes and dorms. Participants, therefore, lack opportunities to interact with local students and build local network. Moreover, many advisors in China were limited by their knowledge on ASEAN states and cannot offer necessary help on participants' career development. At the personal and family level, personal experience is vital in jo-seeking, and family responsibility and parents' expectations have pulled many participants back to their sending countries. Most participants had no suggestions for Chinese government and institutions, although some expected more fair scholarship policies and more clear immigration regulations.

The results partly echo HRT and NRT but challenged some arguments as well. This research remains scholars to be more cautious when applying West-originated theories in Asia, and factors like politics, culture, and economic development in the studied areas should be considered. This study also generated a model to show how influential factors interact with each other and impact participants' career outcomes.

Keywords: Internationalization of higher education; China; ASEAN; International student career outcomes; Human Capital Theory; Neo-Racism Theory.

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Background

Regionalization of higher education is defined as the "process of building closer collaboration and alignment among higher education actors and systems within a defined area or framework called a region" (Knight, 2012, p.19). It is a form of the internationalization of higher education and has been one of the most important trends affecting Asian countries in the past decades. Like other Asian countries, China has been internationalizing its higher education via several strategies, such as sending students and scholars to other countries, cooperating with elite universities to build branch campuses or programs in China, improving the rankings of Chinese universities, establishing Confucius Institutes overseas, and attracting international students (Neubauer & Zhang, 2015).

Student mobility is one essential area of regionalization of higher education, and China has launched several initiatives to attract international students. By 2018, China became the third largest destination of studying overseas and attracted 10% of the world's international students (Ministry of Education, 2019). In the past decade, both the number and percentage of degree-program students increased sharply. Because the requirements for degree students are higher than that for non-degree students, and degree students typically stay longer in China, they are supposed to have better quality and achievements. The increase of degree students, therefore, indicates an improved quality and developed structure of foreign students (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Students from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) have comprised a great portion of international students in China, and China has

cooperated closely with ASEAN countries via ASEAN–China Free Trade Area, ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and South Korea) and many other networks. The intra-regional trade, the influence of Chinese culture within southeast Asia, and the Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia all contribute to the tight relationship between China and ASEAN countries (Wang, 2005; Welch, 2012a). Although no empirical data show how many ASEAN students enrolled in Chinese Language program, it is reasonable to presume that Chinese Language is a popular major for them, because it is the most enrolled major of international students in China.

However, as the number of international students in China rises continuously, people wonder if China can offer high-quality education. To examine the quality of China's education, one way is to study students' labor market outcomes, because many students study abroad with the hope to improve employability (Moskal, 2017). Compared with students from developed areas, students from developing countries, most ASEAN member states for example, generally have stronger needs to transfer their studying experience to employability, mainly because students from less developed areas face greater economic pressures (Wen & Hu, 2019). Moreover, governments in many states hope to train a qualified workforce to promote national and regional development, so students' career outcomes are relevant to the success of national strategies.

Studies have showed international mobility has positive effects on students' job-major match (Jiang, 2016), productivity (Pinto, 2020), and intercultural awareness (Pylväs & Nokelainen, 2020; Roy et al., 2019), and might improve their chances to work in international companies and to get promoted (Kehm, 2005; Mol et al., 2020), and Teichler (2012) suggested that these benefits are higher if the students move from less to more economically or educationally developed countries. Some scholars, however, have concluded that international

students might face longer education-to-work transitions upon graduation, lower salary, and more challenges when seeking jobs in their destination countries, compared to domestic students (Van Mol et al., 2020). Studies have also suggested that international students' career outcomes could be influenced by factors like acculturation to the host society, social network, visa policies, family issues, and support offered by institutions and professors (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Schnepf & d'Hombres, 2018).

Despite the existing research, many scholars have claimed that international students' career outcomes are not fully investigated (Coates, 2016; King et al., 2010; Roy et al., 2019; Van Mol et al., 2020). Current studies, moreover, mainly focus on the western countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the EU (Di Cintio & Grassi, 2017; Schnepf & d'Hombres, 2018; Stronkhorst, 2005;), while China, as an emerging destination, and students from ASEAN countries have been highly neglected (Lu & Tian, 2018). Several reasons may lead to this disparity. First, most scholars studied English speaking countries because of the dominating status of English in academic publication (Rostan, 2011). Second, international education is now highly marketized in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, so institutions and governments are eager to prove the value of education to attract international students. While in China, political and cultural orientations of international education are prior to economic considerations (Lu & Wu, 2020), so few studies examined the employment of international students. Finally, in 1999, 29 European countries launched the Bologna Process. It is a regional education framework that connects European institutions, programs, faculty, and students together, and its main purpose is to improve the education competitiveness and economic development of Europe by focusing on the mobility and quality of education. Given that the Bologna Process emphasizes students' learning outcomes and professional development,

many studies on European students emerged in the past decades (Nelson & Sandberg, 2017; Schnepf & d'Hombres, 2018; Zeng et al., 2013).

Due to China's huge population, its labor market has not been as internationalized as most western countries, so international students' career prospects in China might be different from that in other areas. And because the quality and reputation of China's higher education are comparatively lower than that of the developed countries (Altbach, 2009), whether and how studying in China contributes to ASEAN students' career success if they return to their home countries remains a question. Furthermore, at current stage, most Chinese institutions highlight the faculty and students' academic success like publication and citation only, while international students' career outcome has not been included in the evaluation criteria that used in assessing Chinese universities (Lu & Wu, 2020). One example is that, by 2016, only one university offered specific career counseling service to students from other countries (He, 2016). Studying international students' career outcomes, therefore, has both theoretical and practical significance.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

In this study, I applied Human Capital Theory (HCT) and Neo Racism Theory (NRT) to investigate the career outcomes of graduated students from three ASEAN states (Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar) who obtain a master's degree of Chinese Language from China, including students staying in China, returning to their home countries, and moving to other areas. Because HCT argues that education is an investment and can improve students' productivity and career prospects, this study aims to examine graduates' perceptions of the career-related benefits and costs of completing a master's degree of Chinese Language in China. Because NRT suggests that international students face barriers when seeking jobs in the host country, due to their foreigner identity and different cultural background, this research also analyzed how participants

perceive the national, social, institutional, and family factors facilitating or hindering their career outcomes after graduation. Finally, this study wants to know, in ASEAN students' perspectives, how can Chinese governments and institutions improve the value of China's higher education in job market.

The research questions guiding this study include:

1. How do students from three ASEAN member states perceive the career-related benefits and costs of obtaining a master's degree of Chinese Language from Chinese universities?

2. How do participants perceive that their international, national, institutional, social, family, and personal identities influence their career outcomes after graduating from China?

3. According to Thai, Malaysian, and Myanma students, what efforts can Chinese institutions and government take to improve the career outcomes of ASEAN students graduated from China?

4. How do participants' experiences and perceptions vary by sending countries?

Importance of the Study

As stated above, there has been little research on the link between international mobility and students' employment (King et al., 2010), and the existing studies focus on international students attending American, European, and Australian institutions. Therefore, one contribution of this research is to investigate the employability and career outcomes of ASEAN students graduated from China. The result of this study presents the uniqueness of international higher education in China and ASEAN students, therefore paving theoretical bases for future studies.

The practical importance of this study can be analyzed from personal, institutional, and national layers. From the perspectives of international students, enhancing employability is one of the most common motivations to study abroad. Several studies have investigated international student mobility by applying push-pull framework, suggesting that the lack of career opportunity in the home states is one influential factor pushing students to leave their homelands, while career prospects impact students' choices of host states (Gbollie & Gong, 2020; Lu & Tian, 2018; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Brooks et al. (2012) and King and Raghuram (2013) highlighted the importance of employability to international students, suggesting that governments and institutions should notice the great career needs of international students, because they are not only learners, but also have potential to become foreign workers and migrants. Moreover, compared to international students from developed countries, students from developing countries (including most ASEAN member states) have stronger motivations to pursue career success and hope their international mobility to yield higher labor market returns (Van Mol et al., 2020; Varghese, 2008). By studying ASEAN students graduated from master programs offered in China, this study can examine the value and cost of studying in China, as well as ASEAN students' career experience, then offer suggestions to help future students to make rational decisions of studying abroad and seeking jobs.

For postsecondary institutions in China, this study may offer necessary knowledge for the development of career services for international students. Career services, like career counseling and professional development workshops, can help college students set career goals, obtain job information, and facilitate education-work transitions. In China, the importance of career services has not been fully recognized. For example, Li (2009) reported that career counseling services in most Chinese universities are rarely offered to all students and not individualized to

address students' personal needs. Yang (2016), based on a case in one top university in Beijing, argued that the quality of career services is limited because of the outdated data and information, faculty's knowledge on career services, and lack of practical training. Sun and Yuen (2012) therefore called for more research and practices to improve the quality and access of college career services in China. Furthermore, seldom do institutions offer career services and classes to international students (He, 2016), partially due to the lack of understanding of international students' career needs and experience. This research, by interviewing ASEAN students in depth, describes the challenges they meet when seeking jobs, thus offering suggestions to institution leaders and faculty.

Moreover, as challengers of the current international higher education system, Chinese institutions need to demonstrate their quality to global stakeholders (Yonezawa et al., 2014). By investigating international students' career development, this study shows if and how China's education is value adding. Based on the results, institutions can develop their career-relevant activities and policies, thus improving their quality, reputation, and international recruitment.

Research on international students' employment also contribute to the economic development in both China and ASEAN member states. As the development of knowledge economy, many states have used higher education as the primary tool to train domestic workforce and to recruit global students to enlarge their talent pool (Jarvis, 2011; King et al, 2010). By studying the factors impacting international graduates' retention in China, this research offers implications to Chinese policymakers and boost the promotion of relevant policies or practices. For ASEAN states, how to avoid brain drain has been a critical issue in the process of regionalization of higher education (Zeng et al., 2013). This study helps governments

to identity the influential factors attracting and discouraging graduates to return to the home countries, thus further improving the states' human capital policies.

Theoretical Framework

To study ASEAN students' career outcomes and influential factors, this research employs HCT and NRT as theoretical lenses. HCT treats education as investment and argues that "an educated population is a productive population" (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008, p. 479). By investing in education, students improve their productivities and career-related skills, therefore enhancing their career outcomes such as competitiveness in job markets, earnings, and chances to be promoted (Becker, 1993; Gillies, 2017; Zhuravlev et al., 2018).

One premise of HCT is that, by being educated, students obtain the knowledge and skills needed to promote their productivity, so they are more welcomed in employers' eyes and can have better opportunities. However, scholars, based on the experience of American students, have questioned the quality and academic standards of international education, arguing that study abroad is less likely to promote academic and career success, but offers only superficial learning outcomes (McKeown, 2009; Schmidt & Pardo, 2017). Thus, whether international students have better human capital than domestic students remain debatable. And because China is still at the periphery or semi-periphery of international higher education, it is undetermined whether international students graduating from Chinese universities perform better than those who studied in Europe and North America (Altbach, 2009; Mulvey, 2020).

Another flaw of HCT is that its arguments rely on the assumption that the labor market is free and meritocratic, so international graduates are supposed to have equal career opportunities as domestic students if they receive same education. Many studies, however, have criticized HCT for its unrealistic assumptions and argued that, compared to domestic students,

international students face more barriers when seeking jobs in the host countries (Lee, 2016; Leung & Yuen, 2012; Reynolds & Constantine, 2017).

NRT, as a critic of HCT, presumes that culture and nationality, rather than race, are the causes of discriminations and difficulties when foreign workforce looking for jobs (Balibar, 2007; Barker, 1981; Hervik, 2004). According to NRT, although international students may receive the same education as domestic students, their professional outcomes upon graduation appears to be less fruitful, or they must overcome more barriers to achieve similar career results as domestic students (Jiang, 2016). These barriers might result from strict immigration regulations, lack of language proficiency and local networks, and employers' discrimination, but the root is their foreign identities.

Moreover, NRT suggests that the discrimination toward international students may vary by their home countries (Balibar, 2007; Jiang, 2016; Hervik, 2004). On one hand, students from states of similar cultures may speak similar languages and acculturate to the host society easier, thereby having better employability than those from greatly distinguished cultures. ASEAN students, therefore, are supposed to have better career opportunities in China than students from non-Asian countries, because ASEAN member states have closer cultural relations with China. On the other hand, however, scholars found that in China, students from less developed states or non-Anglo-Saxon societies may be more likely to be discriminated against, due to their socioeconomic positions and the dominating status of Anglo-Saxon culture (Yang et al., 2019). How foreigner identity affects ASEAN students' career outcomes in China, therefore, remains controversial and needs further research.

Definitions

Based on prior studies and the theoretical framework I will use, namely HCT and NRT, I define career outcomes as graduates' employability, major-job match, salaries, and career opportunities (including promotion opportunities and chances to work internationally). I will examine how studying in China impact these career outcomes, both positively and negatively.

In this study, ASEAN refers to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, whose member states include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Although my study focuses on students from Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar, my literature review will cover research on all the ten countries. ASEAN students who obtain a master's degree from Chinese universities in this study are restricted to those who are ASEAN member states citizens and graduated from fulltime master's programs offered by universities in mainland China, excluding institutions located in Hongkong, Macau, and Taiwan.

A master's degree of Chinese Language (*zhongguo yuyan wenxue*) may include master's recipients who graduated from programs of Chinese Linguistic, Chinese Literature, Teaching Chinese as a Second Language, Creative Writing, et al. I study the graduates of Chinese Language not only because it is the most popular field of study for international students in China, but also because, compared to STEM graduate, Chinese Language and other non-STEM graduates face greater competitions when seeking employment opportunities. Moreover, studies in the United States have shown that the U.S. immigrant policies prefer STEM graduates (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2019; Mandalapu & Gong, 2019), but if this equality happens in China and how it affects non-STEM graduates' career outcomes are unexamined.

Summary

Despite the rapidly increasing number of international students in China, more relevant studies are needed to investigate the development and outcomes of China's international higher education initiatives. Because ASEAN member states are main origins of international students in China and improving career outcomes is one rationale of studying abroad, this research aims to explore ASEAN graduates' perceptions of their career outcomes. Because Chinese Language is the most popular field of study, my target group is the ASEAN graduates of Chinese Language master's programs. By applying HCT and NRT, I examined how they understand the career-related benefits, costs, and barriers of graduating from Chinese universities.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this section, I will review prior studies on international students in China, students from ASEAN member states, international students' career outcomes, and factors impacting international students' career outcomes. Although my study focuses on ASEAN students from three countries, this section covers students from all ASEAN states to offer a comprehensive review.

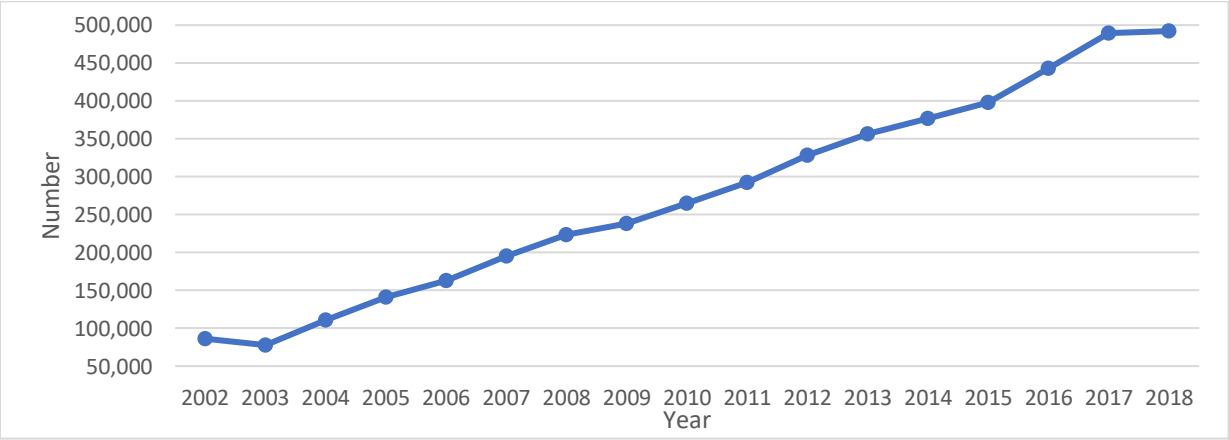
Research on International Students in China

The Data and Trends of International Students in China

The number of international students studying in China has been increasing rapidly and constantly since 2003. For example, in 2018, 492,185 international postsecondary students studied in China, representing a dramatic increasing of 120% as compared to international students (223,499) in 2008 (Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, 2019). China, by 2018, has become the third largest destination of international students, following the United States and the United Kingdom.

Figure 1.

Number of International Students in China



Note. Data collected from Jiàoyù bù guójì hézuò yú jiāoliú sī (n.d.).

International students in China came from 196 countries, and the top five origin states were South Korea (50,600), Thailand (28,608), Pakistan (28,023), India (23,198), and the United States (20,996). Students from Asian states accounted for more than half (59.95%) of the total shares, followed by students from Africa (16.57%), Europe (14.96%), America (7.26%), and Oceania (1.27%) (Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, 2019). Moreover, there were 99,317 (20.18%) students from ASEAN member states in 2018, representing the attractiveness of China's education in this area (Wen, 2012).

The number of international degree students (258,122) passed that of non-degree students (234,063) for the first time in 2018 and accounted for 52.44% of all international students in China. Among all the degree students, 62.3% (160,783) were undergraduate students, 23.0% (59,444) were master's degree students, and 9.9% (25,618) were doctoral degree students (Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, 2019). Han (2017) has argued that the remarkable increase of degree students and graduate students is the result of China's efforts to improve its education competitiveness, and the changes indicate a sustainable development of China's international education.

In 2018, 185,476 international students of all degree levels enrolled in Chinese Language, making it the most popular field of study, followed by Engineering (73,533), Western Medical (55,225), Management (46,724), and other fields. At the master's level, 24.0% of all master's students (14,285) enrolled in Engineering, while 3,529 enrolled in Chinese Language, accounting for 5.9% (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The mentioned data and trends show that Asian states have been the most important home countries of international students in China, and students from ASEAN member states represented nearly 20%. Moreover, the number and portion of graduate students are both increasing, and Chinese Language is one of the most studied majors. The ASEAN recipients of master's degree of Chinese Language from Chinese institutions, therefore, is an important group to study Chinese international higher education. In the next section, I will review the characteristics of students from ASEAN member states and prior studies on them.

Students from ASEAN Member States Studying in China

ASEAN and China-ASEAN Relations in Higher Education

Motivated by a fear of communism in Asia, the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand signed the ASEAN Declaration in 1967, which marked the founding of ASEAN, a regional intergovernmental organization (ASEAN, n.d.). Currently, ASEAN comprises ten countries in Southeast Asia and mainly focuses on promoting regional economic growth and peace; facilitating regional collaboration in the economic, social, cultural, scientific; and administrative fields, and assisting other member states in the educational, professional, technical, and administrative spheres (ASEAN, n.d.).

After the regional currency crisis of 1997-1998, and the tsunami in 2004, China devoted plentiful resources to help ASEAN member states to recover (Sheng, 2003; Hirono, 2010; Laksmana, 2011). All these efforts promoted China's relations with ASEAN and helped ASEAN states to recognize the importance of China's booming economy. In January 2010, the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (a regional economic network aiming to promote regional mobility and goods, services, and people) came into effect (Knight, 2012; Welch, 2011, 2012a).

Now higher education cooperation is a formal component of China-ASEAN cooperation and supported by several intergovernmental agreements. The principal areas supported by China-ASEAN cooperation include student mobility, institutional partnership, and language training (Wen, 2016), and one significant outcome of this cooperation is the growing population of students from ASEAN member states studying in China. From 2013 to 2018, the number of ASEAN students in China has grown consistently from 68,418 to 99,317, representing an increase of 45.7%.Thailand, Indonesia, and Laos are among the top 10 home countries of international students in China, while the number of students from Malaysia and Myanmar increased sharply in the past years. Table 1. Presents the number of ASEAN student in China from 2013 to 2018.

Table 1

Number of ASEAN students in China.

States	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Brunei	-	87	62	70	121	112
Cambodia	1,390	1,446	1,829	2,250	3,016	4,047
Indonesia	13,492	13,689	12,694	14,714	14,573	15,050
Laos	3,999	5,040	6,918	9,907	14,222	14,645
Malaysia	6,126	6,645	6,650	6,880	7,948	9,479
Myanmar	2,299	2,317	4,733	5,662	6,233	8,573
Philippines	2,917	2,929	3,343	3,061	4,442	2,786
Singapore	5,290	5,031	4,865	4,983	5,259	4,718
Thailand	20,106	21,296	19,976	23,044	27,884	28,608
Vietnam	12,799	10,658	10,031	10,639	11,311	11,299
Total	68,418	69,138	71,101	81,210	95,009	99,317
Percentage	19.19%	18.34%	17.88%	18.34%	19.42%	20.18%

Note. Data collected from Jiàoyù bù guójì hézuò yú jiāoliú sī (n.d.).

Factors Facilitating China-ASEAN Education Cooperation

Knight (2012) has suggested that the general rationales for the regionalization of higher education include promoting regional harmony and mutual understanding by forming regional identity and trust, enhancing economic competitiveness by developing regional knowledge capacity and human resources, and fostering collaboration to address regional and global issues. Compared to developed western countries, most Asian countries are disadvantaged economically; they therefore have pursued a catch-up strategy to develop their industrial and economy (Ziguras, 2016). Because training skilled workforces and developing knowledge needed for industrial development and innovation are at the core of the catch-up strategy, China and ASEAN member states are encouraging higher education collaboration and regional mobility of students and faculty (Neubauer & Zhang, 2015; Ziguras, 2016).

Besides the shared economic goals, other factors like similar culture, long history of intraregional trade, and Chinese diaspora facilitate China-ASEAN education cooperation as well. Although the ideologies and mainstream religions in ASEAN member states are diverse, all the countries have been influenced by Confucianism to various extents. The similar cultural bias resulted in some common features of education in China and ASEAN member states, including a strong national education system (Kim, 2009; Marginson, 2011), massive public investment in flagship research universities (Hazelkorn, 2011; Lo, 2014), and traditions of valuing both education and teacher (Welch, 2016). The common characteristics further facilitate education cooperation and encourage ASEAN students to choose China as their destination of study.

The trade between China and southeast Asia can be traced to the Han dynasty (202 BC-220 AD), then it extended during the Tang (618-906) ,Song (960–1279), and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties (Tai & Soong, 2014), when Confucianism became the dominant or influential culture

in states like Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Wang, 2015; Welch, 2016). These commercial activities not only promoted the communication of goods and ideas, but also brought Chinese diaspora in southeast Asian countries and formed a fundamental pillar for China's relations with these areas. Liu (2012), for example, examined Chinese immigrants in Singapore, finding that these immigrants have formed stable social networks and played a central role in cooperation between China and Singapore. Studies conducted in other ASEAN member states also support Liu's argument (Brahma, 2018; Koning & Verver, 2013; Suryadinata, 2012; Tan, 2013).

Besides the mentioned common goals and backgrounds, China's initiatives to introduce China's higher education to other states offers opportunities for ASEAN to collaborate with China. China's international education started in the 1950s but did not develop significantly until 2001, when China entered the World Trade Organization (WTO) and opened its higher education markets to more areas (Jiang & Ma, 2011; Wen, 2012). In 2013, China initiated the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to promote regional economy, education, and other important areas. By now, all ten ASEAN member states have signed BRI agreements with China. China encourages international students to study BRI-related majors such as Chinese Language, Management, and Engineering, in order to promote multicultural understanding and to train qualified talents for the further development of regional cooperation (Jiang & Shi, 2019; Peters, 2020). By offering scholarships and improving students' career prospects, BRI and relevant policies have advocated the international attractiveness of China's education (Gong et al., 2020; Li, 2018; Ong, 2016).

Issues in China-ASEAN Education Cooperation

Despite the mentioned achievement, however, scholars have indicated several issues in China-ASEAN cooperation in higher education, focusing mainly on the cooperation framework, academic culture, and quality assurance. Knight (2012) proposed that the regional cooperation in

higher education could be achieved through three interrelated approaches: functional, organizational, and political approaches, and China-ASEAN cooperation relies mainly on political approaches, via intergovernmental platforms. As a result of the absence of functional and organizational collaboration, credit transfer system and quality assurance organization between China and ASEAN are not completely established.

Wen (2016) noticed that the cooperation and student exchange between China and ASEAN are "sporadic, non-planned, and less regulated" (p.180). As Wen mentioned, by 2014, China-ASEAN operated 36 joint higher education programs, among which 25 were with Singapore, 10 with Malaysia, and 1 with Thailand, suggesting the discrepancies of China-ASEAN cooperation. Unbalanced regional development within China might also impact the quality of cooperation. Because most ASEAN member states are to the southeast of China, students from these countries tend to study in neighboring Chinese provinces, where economy and education are underdeveloped (Wen, 2012; Yang, 2012; Yuan, 2013). Whether ASEAN students obtain high-quality education and have desired learning outcomes, therefore, remains a problem.

Scholars also studied whether the academic cultures in Chinese and ASEAN institutions impact the quality of international higher education. Although China has included promoting university autonomy and granting more flexibility to faculty in its long-term development plan, political considerations still trump academic freedom, shadowing the general academic performance of most institutions (Li et al., 2018; Lo & Pan, 2020). The lack of academic freedom also deterred many states from building stable education partnerships with China (Altbach, 2019). Additionally, corruption, academic fraud, and reliance on personal relationship (*guanxi*) are widespread in China and ASEAN member states, challenging their sustainable

collaboration and students' learning outcomes (Jarvis & Mok, 2019; Rosser, 2019; Welch, 2012b; Zhou, 2017).

All mentioned concerns emphasize the importance of quality assurance of China-ASEAN education partnership. Knight (2012), however, found that quality assurance frameworks are underdeveloped between China and ASEAN, leaving the quality of education unregulated or self-regulated by institutions. One explanation of the absence of regional quality assurance suggested that, because of the unbalanced development of education and the multilayered nature of quality assurance, it is a hard job to coordinate diverse quality assurance systems in each state into one framework (Yavaprabhas, 2014). Another possible reason is that most Asian states find quality assurance a useful tool to increase their control over higher education, so they are unwilling to transfer the authority of quality assurance to intergovernmental or private agencies (Hawkins, 2016). As a result, regional quality assurance in Asia is less developed compared to Europe and North America. Although some ASEAN member states and China have been included in the quality assurance framework launched by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), no China-ASEAN quality assurance system has been formed.

In summary, although China and ASEAN try to enhance higher education quality and promote student mobility within the region (Yang, 2012), various factors are affecting the achievement of these goals. Examining the quality of education, therefore, becomes an essential topic for the sustainable development of China-ASEAN collaboration. Among all the criteria of evaluating higher education quality, one critical but unexamined area is students' postgraduate outcomes, which will be discussed in the following section.

Research on International Students' Career Outcomes

As cited, improving career outcomes is one major motivation for students who choose to study abroad. In this section, I will review how studying abroad impacts international students' career outcomes, including employability, salary, education-work transition, and other aspects. Because studies in China are rare, I will firstly focus on the global context, then discuss studies on international students in China, and finally examine problems in existing literature.

Employability

Crossman and Clarke (2010) defined employability generally as "having the skills and abilities to find employment, remain in employment or obtain new employment as, and when, required" (p. 602). Like the development of knowledge economy, graduates' employability has been recognized as a central purpose of education (Kostelijk & Regouin, 2016; Small et al., 2018). Nilsson and Ripmeester (2016), for example, found employability the most important element affecting international students' learning satisfaction.

Employability can be impacted by complicated factors, including education (Suleman, 2018), gender (Rocha, 2012; Vuorinen-Lampila, 2016), age (Froehlich et al, 2015; Van der Horst et al., 2017), work experience (Allen & Van der Velden, 2011), and career management resource (Monteiro et al., 2020; Rocha, 2012). The relationship between international mobility and employability has been an increasingly important topic, and scholars have argued that studying abroad can enhance students' employability by improving technical and soft skills (Jones, 2016). Students moving from less developed countries to countries with superior education systems can obtain more resources and opportunities to develop technical skills (Mol et al., 2020), and compared to studying international content or language domestically, studying abroad offers students better opportunities to develop soft skills (Huang, 2013).

Technical Skills. Technical skills, also called subject-specific skills, mainly include skills relevant to specific positions, and by studying in states that have advanced education, international students can access to updated knowledge, experienced faculty, and high-quality curriculum, thereby improving technical skills (Cisneros-Donahue et al., 2012). For example, Pylväs and Nokelainen (2020) surveyed faculty and students at a Finnish university, suggesting that most participants developed their engineering-related skills and knowledge from international programs. Pinto (2020), based on data in Spain, has suggested that studying abroad has positive impacts on the development of professional skills. And research by Collins et al. (2016) on Asian students who graduated from degree programs in foreign countries, most participants agreed that the overseas credentials and practical skills brought them more career opportunities.

However, some other scholars doubted to what extent international program can enhance students' professional skills. Kostelijk & Regouin (2016), for example, divided 2878 students at a Dutch institution into the test group (students who had studied abroad for one semester) and the control group (students who had not studied abroad), finding that the impact of short-term overseas education on the development of professional knowledge is limited. McKeown (2009) and Schmidt & Pardo (2017) argued that the academic standards on study abroad may not be as rigorous as they are at the home institutions, so international students may obtain only limited development on their professional skills and knowledge. Moreover, Schmidt & Pardo (2017) wonder if the knowledge students learned from other countries meet the demands in their home countries. If a mismatch exists, international graduates may have to make more efforts to transfer their knowledge to employability.

Soft Skills. Despite the discussion on technical skills, scholars of different fields of studies have reached a common sense that studying abroad can contribute to students' soft skills or "transferable skills" (Jones, 2013), such as language proficiency, intercultural communication and understanding, and the ability to work with people from different backgrounds (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Jones, 2016; Pinto, 2020; Roy et al., 2019). Due to the rapid development of globalization, the current labor market has been much more international and diverse than ever before, so employers are seeking graduates with the capability to work in culturally diverse contexts (Jones, 2013; Salisbury et al., 2013).

Foreign language proficiency is one essential factor of soft skills, and studies have found studying in foreign language societies, either short-term or long-term, can improve students' linguistic skills (Kostelijk & Regouin, 2016; Roy et al., 2019). Hernández (2010) compared American students who attended an overseas program in Spain with those who attended a similar program at the home institution, finding that the former group had better oral language skills. Evidence from Italy (Schnepf & d'Hombres, 2018), the United Kingdom (Huang, 2013), and a broad European context (Nilsson, 2016) also support that studying abroad can improve language skills, which is highly valued by employers. In addition to the ability to speak foreign languages, Cubillos and Ilvento (2012) suggested that studying abroad can improve participants' confidence to use a second language. As their language capacity and confidence improve, students can obtain better cross-cultural communication skills as a result of studying in other countries, thereby becoming more willing to engage in multicultural communication (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Gullekson et al., 2011).

Improved cultural awareness, which refers to the "cognition and understanding of differences between cultures" (Roy et al., 2019, p. 1632), is another benefit that students can

obtain from studying overseas. Quantitative studies have used pre- and post-tests to determine how international mobility influences students' cultural awareness (e.g., Kuehn et al., 2011), and qualitative results also argued that students perceive cultural awareness as one of the most significant outcomes of mobility (Cleak et al., 2016; Gullekson et al., 2011). Scholars also suggested that enhanced cultural awareness can further improve students' cultural intelligence, which means students having better capacity to interact with others from various cultural backgrounds (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015; Michailova, S., & Ott, 2018; Varela & Gatlin-Watts, 2014). Both cultural awareness and cultural intelligence are closely related to employees' performance and career adaptability in a globalized working environment; employees with overseas education experience, therefore, are increasingly valued by employers, especially the owners of international companies (Le et al., 2018; Presbitero & Quita, 2017).

Besides the mentioned benefits, studies also found other cultural outcomes related to international mobility, such as openness to cultural diversity (Leutwyler & Meierhans, 2016), increased social justice concern (Tarrant et al., 2015; Le et al., 2013), and higher levels of global awareness (Shiveley & Misco, 2015). Although no studies have investigated the relationships between these cultural outcomes and career success or employability, it is reasonable to suppose these soft skills have positive impacts on employees' ability to work in a globalized era.

As a summary, studying in other countries can improve students' employability by enhancing their technical skills and soft skills. The development of technical skills can help students solve practical issues and perform well when completing jobs, but this benefit depends highly on the quality of overseas education and cannot be taken as a promised advantage of international students. The development of soft skills, however, is a more widespread benefit

people can obtain from international experience, and these skills are increasingly important with the development of globalization.

Salary and Wages

Graduate' earnings are important predictors of economic return of education. Studies have shown that although mobile students may have higher salary than non-mobile students in their home countries, international graduates' earnings are generally lower than those of domestic competitors if they choose to work in the host countries (e.g., Jiang, 2016).

Krazt and Netz (2016) compared German students who attended an international program with those who did not, finding that students with international experience have steeper wage growth after graduation and the medium of their wages are also higher. Favero and Fucci (2017), based on longitudinal data in Italy, also suggested that mobile students' wages are about 7%-9% higher than those of non-mobile students. Di Cintio & Grassi (2017) and Pinto (2020) analyzed international students' wages, finding that after controlling other factors, studying abroad is associated with higher salary, which is the result of education investment. From employers' perspective, Brandenburg et al. (2016) argued that international experience is valued by employers, so they are willing to pay higher salaries. The positive correlation between international experience and salary have been supported by many other studies conducted in the United States and Europe (for example Jacob et al., 2018;Rodriguez, 2013).

Jiang (2016), however, applying NRT, indicated that international students in the United States face similar earning disadvantages as racial minorities. With other characteristics controlled, Jiang found among people with master's degrees, international students face a 6% loss compared to those who are from the United States. Frenette et al., (2019) compared the mean earnings of Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and international graduates, finding

that international graduates' earnings have been the lowest. Moreover, Thamrin et al. (2019) found in Austria, 42.7% of the interviewed international graduates perceived that their wages are unfair.

The salary gap can be explained by international students' foreign status: because foreign workers need to persuade employers to sponsor their work visa application, they may need to compromise and accept a lower salary (Jiang, 2016; Sperry, 2017). In addition, Bradtsberg & Regan (2000), Chiswick & Miller (2007), and Miradan & Zhu (2012) have argued that employers' discrimination, students' language capacity, and devalued education in students' home countries may also cause international students' lower salary.

Prior studies have shown that international graduates' salary is a controversial topic and highly dependent on where the graduates work. If they have studied in the host countries with high-quality education and returned to their home countries, their overseas experience may increase their chance to find higher-paid jobs, because they have better education compared to domestic students in the home countries. However, international graduates have to compete with domestic students in the host societies if they chose to seek jobs in the destination countries. As NRT argues, international status, discrimination toward foreigners, and employers' other concerns may force international graduates to accept a relatively lower salary.

Education-Work Transition

Education-work transition or school-work transition has been defined by Schoon & Bynner (2019) as "the phase between completion of full-time education or training, the entry into paid employment, and establishing oneself in a labo[u]r market career" (p. 155). Effective transitions can lead to shorter times of unemployment and better salary, while unsuccessful transitions may force jobseekers to accept undesirable jobs. Education-work transition has been a

universal concern for students, and both domestic and international students feel lost or need more help when in finding jobs (Pollock, 2014). International students, however, meet specific difficulties in transition, and their education-work transition is rarely studied (Jiang, 2016).

Although Petzold (2017a) argued international students generally need a shorter time to get a response from employers, most other studies have different conclusion. Studies have shown that when transiting to the local labor market, international graduates face more barriers than domestic students due to their lack of local networks and unfamiliarity with local job-seeking procedures (Moskal, 2017). Blackmore et al. (2014) found that in Australia, international graduates were poorly prepared for the transition and had unrealistic expectations of graduate employment, which may increase the barriers in their job-seeking processes. Morris-Lange and Brands (2015) conducted comparative studies in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, finding that although international graduates typically have strong motivation to stay in the host countries after graduation, most of them failed to find satisfactory employment and had to leave. Morris-Lange and Brands also listed seven barriers impacting international students' transition, such as lack of local experience and insufficient language skills. Given these barriers, international students may take longer time to find jobs (Waibel et al., 2017). The barriers will be discussed in detailed in the next section.

Scholars have also focused on other aspects of international students' education-work transition. Rodrigues (2013), for example, found that in Poland, France, Czech and Belgium, students with international experience need a longer period to find their first jobs. Additionally, the longer students stay abroad, the more time they need to find their first jobs. Data in Rodrigues' study suggested that the longer transition period is caused by international students'

higher possibility to continue education. Mol et al. (2020) found that graduates who studied in countries that rank higher in education have slightly longer transition periods than their peers.

As Schnepf and d'Hombres (2018) argued, salary and education-work transition are the two areas that international mobility contributes little. It is common sense that international students need longer education-work transition in both the home and host countries. However, NRT and HCT offer different explanations for this phenomenon. NRT attributes the lengthier transition to the disadvantages brought by the foreign status, but this reason failed to explain why they still face a longer transition in their home countries. Scholars who applied HCT, however, argued that international students who graduated from stronger education systems typically have better human capital, they therefore tend to have higher career expectations and may become more selective when seeking jobs, so they are willing to wait extra time for a suitable job that matches their experience and knowledge (Mol et al., 2020; Waibel et al, 2017).

Other Outcomes

Scholars have found other career outcomes in addition to employability, salary, and education-work transition. Parey and Waldinger (2011) and Petzold (2017b), using the data of German graduates, concluded that international mobility has significant positive correlation with graduates' probability to work in countries other than Germany. Oosterbeek and Webbink (2011) in the Netherlands found similar results and argued that the graduates choose to work or live overseas after graduation because they perceive better career opportunities there. Kratz and Netz (2018) found that regardless the study level (Bachelor or Master), students who have studied abroad have better chances of being employed by international companies.

Increased entrepreneurial intentions, which refers to the willingness to create a new business (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993), is another career outcome related to international students

reported by studies, besides international orientation. Roach et al. (2019) studied over 5,600 foreign and native STEM PhD students in the United States and found international students have more characteristics related to higher entrepreneurial intentions, including risk tolerance, interest in work activities, and autonomy. Foreign PhDs are also more likely to express their interests in creating their own business. One explanation is that students from less developed countries tend to have stronger entrepreneurial intentions than students from the United States and developed European countries (Nabi et al., 2011).

Graduates' major-job match has been measured by "how college graduates' primary job is related to their fields of study" (Jiang, 2016). Bender and Heywood (2011) suggested that lower major-job match can indicate the waste of public investment in education. Bender and Heywood (2011) found in Australia that international graduates have difficulty finding jobs that match their majors well, probably due to discrimination in the labor market. Frank (2009) and Arbeit and Warren (2013) also suggested that international students in the United States are considered as outsiders, therefore tend to have lower major-job match than domestic jobseekers. Jiang (2016), however, found that all other variables being equal, international master's recipients in the United States are twice as likely to find jobs that match their fields of study as compared to domestic students. Jiang suggested that, as required by immigrant policies, international graduates must find jobs closely relevant to their majors in order to apply for a working visa. But Jiang also pointed that international recipients have the training and skills needed by their employers, which may facilitate them finding jobs related to their majors.

Career Outcomes of ASEAN Students in China

Despite the existing literature, little empirical research examined the international students born in ASEAN member states. Even in China, most scholars focus on international

students from western countries or Japan and Korea. Studies on China-ASEAN higher education cooperation highly emphasize intragovernmental or interinstitutional policies (Jiang & Shi, 2019; Welch, 2012; Zeng et al., 2013) and students' motivations (Wen & Hu, 2019), leaving graduates' career outcomes not fully investigated.

Li and Sun (2015) argued that compared to non-degree students, international students who pursue degree education in China typically have better language proficiency and deeper understanding of Chinese society, and therefore should have more opportunities to work in China. Xu (2016) found that Vietnamese students with international education experience are highly welcomed when they return to Vietnam, mainly because of their advanced knowledge, international working styles, and enhanced problem-solving skills. Most other discussions on the career outcomes of ASEAN students in China, however, either lack theoretical framework or have no empirical data, therefore contributing little to understanding the current context. One possible cause of this issue is that most of the studies are conducted by scholars in the southwestern Chinese provinces, where the academic quality is relatively weaker than northern and eastern areas of China.

Summary

International students can obtain many career-related benefits from studying abroad, but what is unknown is if international students are more selective, which means they already have better social, human, or economic capital before studying abroad, compared to students who have no chance or resources to study overseas (Netz & Grüttner, 2020; Roy et al., 2019; Waibel et al., 2018). Moreover, international students also face barriers when looking for jobs, especially in foreign countries. By applying HCT and NRT, therefore, my dissertation can investigate both the positive and negative impacts on career outcomes.

Research on Factors Influencing International Graduates' Career Outcomes

Studies have shown that international graduates' career outcomes are complicated and impacted by multiple factors (Roys et al., 2019; Vaicekauskas et al., 2013). As Gajderowicz et al. (2012) indicated, "mobility per se cannot be treated as a positive predictor of employability" (p. 60), which is correlated with other characteristics. In this section, I will review the studies on national/social, institutional, and family factors impacting international graduates' career outcomes. In each section, I will first analyze the research in developed western countries, then discuss the Chinese context. It should be noticed that all the factors are intertwined and sometimes overlap, so I will also mention the relationships among various factors.

National and Social Factors

Based on NRT, the influential factors at the national level mainly include regulation on immigrants and other national policies, social attitudes toward foreigners, and graduates' acculturation. They are the macro influencing factors and may impact many aspects of international graduates' career outcomes.

Policies. One premise of NRT is that when seeking jobs overseas, international graduates face barriers caused by immigrant policies in the host countries. Bound et al. (2021) have found that in the United States, international graduates are asked to seek jobs that are relevant to their fields of study if they want to apply Optional Practical Training (OPT) and working visas. International students in American institutions are also required to be enrolled as fulltime students and face many restrictions to find parttime jobs or internships. These limitations are reducing students' opportunities to gain work experience before graduation, thereby decreasing their employability. Additionally, the fee, time, and paperwork involved in working visa application discourage employers to hire international graduates (McFadden & Seedorff, 2017).

But the OPT policy has also positive impacts on specific groups. For example, students from Canada, Mexico, Chile, Singapore, and Australia are exempted from the job-major-match limitation, so they are supposed to have better career opportunities than peers from other areas. Moreover, graduates of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors have a longer OPT period (up to 24-month extension) after graduation (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2019). The extension not only attracts many international students to choose STEM majors, but also increase STEM students' time to find jobs or get training, as well as their probability of working in the United States and transferring to permanent residents (Demirci, 2019).

The United Kingdom has also adopted policies to regulate international students' job-seeking. Moskal (2017) interviewed 52 international students from China, Indonesia, and Thailand, finding that students' decisions to return to home countries or stay in the United Kingdom were strongly related to career prospects and migration policies, and most participants thought the visa rules were strict, so they had insufficient time to look for jobs after graduation. Lomer (2018), based on a review of relevant policies, argued that on one hand, the United Kingdom has been trying to attract international students to support its education market; while on the other hand, the UK government hopes to reduce the overall migration and limit the number of foreign workers. As a result, the political context around international graduate policies has been uncertain and has forced many graduates to leave when their student visas expired. As Madge et al. (2015) criticized, migration authorities in the United Kingdom have been paradoxical and problematized international students' experience.

Like the United States, China requires international graduates to take positions relevant to their majors to apply for working visas. But the policies relevant to international graduates and workers in China are recently developed and less mature compared to those in the United States

and the United Kingdom According to the *Regulations on the Management of Employment of Foreigners in China* revised in 2017 (National Immigration Administration, 2021), international students are not allowed to receive any kind of payment when studying in China. And if international students want to take on-campus parttime jobs or internships, they must obtain permission from the host institution and report to local immigrant offices. However, China has not published clear and practical guidance on international students' internship or parttime jobs, so neither students nor institutions understand the relevant policies well (Liu et al. 2015; He, 2016). Moreover, compared to western countries, the punishment on foreign students who work without permission is relatively lighter (Zhang, 2013). As consequences, many universities do not know how to regulate international students' job-seeking, and many students either lack working experience upon graduation or work illegally while studying in China. He (2016) indicated that many aspects of employment, including insurance, tax, and the duration and types of work, are needed to improve. He therefore suggested that China should notice the importance and necessity of working experience for international students and learn from developed countries, upgrading its policies on employment of foreign students and graduates.

One possible explanation of the undeveloped policies on international graduates in China is that currently, China's main strategy of global talent competition is attracting high-achieving, experienced foreign professors and retaining Chinese students studying in other developed countries (Harvey, 2014; Wang, 2012). For example, China launched the Thousand Talents Program to recruit high-level global experts (Sun et al., 2017). In this context, foreign students in China are not a major target group of China's talent plan.

Despite the unmatured migrant polices, China's international plans, like Belt Road Initiative (BRI), have offered career opportunities to international students. Because BRI

emphasizes the basic construction in developing countries and the regional trade, studies have shown that foreign students who graduated from relevant programs in Chinese universities (e.g., engineering and Chinese language) will have improved career prospects (Liu & Zhang, 2020; Musyimi et al., 2018; Peng, & Hu, 2020), because they have the technical skills, language proficiency, and familiarity of China and their own countries, which are all highly needed by BRI.

Attitudes toward International Graduates. When seeking jobs in a foreign society, international graduates are impacted by the social climate in the host countries and employers' attitudes. Shelton & Yao (2019) suggested the nationalism during Trump's presidency affected international students' career outcomes and called institutions to offer more assistance to international students. Similarly, Ritter et al. (2021) and Zeleza (2017) argued that, in addition to the unwelcoming immigrant policies, the xenophobic fervor in society caused more barriers to foreign graduates seeking jobs. McFadden & Seedorf (2017) noticed that the central argument behind the xenophobic fervor is that "international students are taking jobs away from American workers" (p.45). Pitre (2017), based on Hope Theory, argued that due to the perceived barriers in the job-seeking process, international students may tend to have less work expectations and negative career outcomes.

Besides the general social attitudes, employers' attitudes can also have both positive and negative impacts on international graduates' career outcomes. As mentioned in the last section, employers now realize the value of intercultural experience and capacity in an international environment, so foreign-born graduates may have more opportunities in the host society, because of their multiple culture and language background (Brandenburg et al., 2016; Knight & Yorke, 2004; Standley, 2015). Gajderowicz et al. (2012) applied the Signaling Theory and suggested

that, in many employers' minds, international experience is a signal of being adaptive and motivated and having more skills. Employers, therefore, typically use international education as criterion to screen candidates.

Scholars, however, have also identified some barriers caused by employers. Moskal (2017), for instance, found in the United Kingdom that the lack of employers' trust has been a significant barrier for international graduates. Moskal suggested that distrust is caused by graduates' language proficiency and status as temporary residents, because employers are concerned about whether the graduates can communicate effectively and work steadily. Berquist et al. (2019) and Tran & Soejatminah (2016) also argued the visa issue in Australia has been a main factor hindering employers' recruitment of international graduates. One employer that Berquist et al. interviewed described hiring international visa holders as "buying the burden" (p.21) because of the complexities and unclarity related to their visa conditions. Berquist et al. further indicated that the two-year post-study work visa is too short to establish employers' trust in international graduates. It is clear that employers' unwillingness to hire international graduates is closely related to immigration policies.

In China, the unclear immigration policies have also caused employers to be reluctant to hire international graduates (He, 2016), and international graduates in China also face specific barriers. Li and Zhang (2020) found that although employers of cross-border E-commerce in China want to hire international graduates to develop their overseas business, non-Chinese employees are hard to take the core positions because of employers' concern of trade secret leaking. After graduation, many foreign students in China entered branch companies of cross-national enterprises. Because they are directly hired from China, however, they are treated as Chinese employees, rather than foreign workers, which means they generally have marginal

positions, lower payment, and less promotion opportunities (Lee & Ma, 2013). Additionally, Wen (2012) suggested that, unlike European countries, China and other Asian countries lack a regional identity recognition, so graduates born in other Asian countries are still regarded as foreigners. In this case, the experience of international graduates in branch companies is a paradox, because the general society takes them as foreigners while the employers treat them as local workforces, and this unfair treatment has pushed international graduates to seek jobs in their home countries. Moreover, some scholars have noticed the emerging nationalism in China (Callahan, 2003; Guo et al., 2007; Qian et al., 2017), but how this social climate impacts ASEAN students and workers in China has not been studied.

Regardless of these barriers, compared to other industrials, Chinese employers of language education school, bars, and fitness clubs are keener to hire foreign graduates, especially white people, to give costumers an international and fancy impression (Zheng, 2020). But this favorite can be explained by an irrational preference of White races (Pfafman et al., 2015), so whether graduates from ASEAN member states have the similar opportunity is doubtful.

Most of the mentioned barriers can be explained by NRT , but Pham and Saito (2019) also suggested that Vietnamese returnees from Australia face social discrimination too. The hostile social attitudes towards west-education returnees can be traced from a nationalism burgeoning in Asian states, who worry about the threats posed by western cultures on their own traditions. International graduates with overseas ideas, therefore, may be treated as traitors and face career barriers in their home countries.

Acculturation. Acculturation is defined as the "dual process of cultural and psychological changes that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2005, p. 698). Friz et al. (2008) have suggested that

acculturation stress, the stress of adapting a new cultural environment, is an essential barrier that international students face in the United States, and students from different areas have various patterns of acculturation issues. Research suggested that acculturation difficulties are caused by language and cultural differences, social isolation, homesickness, discrimination, and other factors, and impact international students' mental and physical health (Austell, 2013; Du & Wei, 2015; Duru & Poyrazli, 2011; Pitre, 2017; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Yu et al., 2019).

Acculturation issues also impact international graduates' career outcomes. Nadermann and Eissenstat (2018) studied Korean students in the United States, finding that lack of network in the local society is both the result and cause of acculturation problems. Their results revealed that international students who are less acculturated tend to report that career networking is more challenging, while better acculturation is associated with a higher level of comfort and engagement with professional networking. Because career network is the main source where international students get job-related information, lack of network may limit students' job options and reduce their employment opportunities in the host society (Cheung & Xu, 2015; Liu, 2013; Roh, 2015). For instance, Nyland et al. (2009) found in Australia that the relative insufficiency of language and cultural skills pushes international graduates to a narrow range of jobs, forcing them to accept low payment.

Unfamiliarity with the local language and culture also affects graduates' professional development. Arthur and Flynn (2011), Marginson et al. (2010), Moskal (2017), and many other scholars have argued that language and cultural barriers not only impede international graduates' communication with employers and colleagues, but also impact others' expectations and trust of international graduates. Research also found that the different workplace norms and cultures between graduates' home and host countries can be the barriers when they seek jobs and work.

McFadden and Seedorff (2017), for example, suggested that because many international graduates are not familiar with the job norms in the United States, which are often unspoken, they feel confused and anxious when searching and applying for jobs. Moreover, Spencer-Rogers (2000) found that international graduates in the United States may refuse to use career networking to seek jobs, because they mistake it for nepotism. This unfamiliarity with local culture, in turn lowers employers' willingness to hire international graduates.

In addition to the acculturation barriers in the host countries, acculturation issues in international graduates' home societies also draw researchers' attention. After studying and living in a different culture, returned students may need to re-adapt to their home societies, and this process is called reverse culture shock (Gaw, 1995). In the study conducted by Pham and Saito (2019), Vietnamese students graduated from Australia felt confused and disappointed due to the hierarchical working norm in Vietnam, and they lost the enthusiasm to share and apply what they have learned overseas after failures in adapting to the local career environment. But Pham and Saito did not mention if the participants want to return to Australia or keep staying in Vietnam. Le and LaCost (2017) studied Vietnamese who have studied in the United States, finding the returnees' personalities and beliefs have changed a lot, resulting in disparity and conflicts with local professional networks. Furthermore, Alkubaidi & Alzhrani (2020) studied Saudi doctoral students returned from western countries, finding some of them face frustration because of the bureaucratic procedures in the home society and the gap between the career cultures in Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Compared to their peers studying in western countries, ASEAN students in China may face fewer cultural differences, because China and ASEAN member states share many similar features in society and traditional culture (Chan, 2016). For example, they are all influenced by

Confucian philosophy to different extents, which emphasizes values like family obligation, group thinking, and humility (Allen , 2017; Marginson, 2011; Sim & Chow, 2019; Welch, 2016). But Wen and Hu (2019) suggested that, to many international students, China' contemporary culture is vague and ambiguous, which may hinder students' understanding and acculturation to Chinese society.

Most Chinese institutions adopted separating policies on foreign students, which means they arrange foreign students to live and study with other international students, instead of domestic Chinese students (Wong & Wu, 2011). Although the separation of international students does not exist exclusively in China (Fincher & Shaw, 2011; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006), it has been an essential issue of China's internationalization of higher education. Due to the separation, international students in China do not have many opportunities to interact with Chinese peers, and the major way to learn Chinese language and culture is via taking language classes. Engaging with Chinese society and building local career networks, therefore, become more difficult (Gu & Chen, 2013; Li, 2015). Furthermore, the Chinese language requirement for international students in China is relatively low, compared to that in English-speaking countries (Li, 2015; Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2016), so international students may lack the language proficiency needed to interact with local people, which further impedes their acculturation.

In summary, national and social factors impacting international students' career outcomes are the macro factors rooted in policies, social climates, cultural differences, and students' interaction with the society. Factors of different categories are intertwined and inseparable. For example, employers' attitudes toward international jobseekers are influenced by visa policies and jobseekers' adaptation to the host culture. Macro factors also intermingle with meso and micro factors, which will be discussed in the coming sections.

Institutional Factors

Institutional factors are the issues that are closely relevant to postsecondary institutions, including education quality and career services. Although institutional factors mainly appear prior to graduation, they have long-term impacts on international graduates' career outcomes.

Education Quality. One fundamental premise of HCT is that the better education individuals possess, the better productivity and career outcomes they obtain (Gillies, 2017). Education quality, therefore, is a crucial factor impacting graduates' career outcomes. Although some studies have argued that the overemphasis of employability undermines traditionally defined academic quality, like students' critical thinking and humanity (for example, Teichler, 2011), more scholars and policymakers have noticed the importance of graduates' employability (Sin & Neave, 2016; Tomlinson, 2012).

Research based on Push-Pull Theory has shown that academic quality and reputation are the main considerations when international students choose the destination countries and institutions (Barnett et al., 2016; Huisman et al., 2021; James-MacEachern & Yun, 2017), but whether international education means high-quality education remains questionable (Schmidt & Pardo, 2017). Because of the different academic standards and teaching methods, Vande Berg (2007) suggested that the education that American students received outside the United States was not as high-quality as they expected. And because most stakeholders focus mainly on the cognitive consequences of study abroad, academic rigorousness of international students has been ignored by faculty and institutions (Twombly, 2012). Moreover, the slow development of international quality assurance systems also challenges the general quality of international education (Deardorff & van Gaalen, 2012).

Research on China's international education has suggested a more practical curriculum to improve international students' career prospects. Peng and Hu (2020) for instance, proposed a "profession, culture, and environment" model (p. 77) to explain international students' career development. They advised Chinese institutions to (a) strengthen foreign students' professional knowledge by offering practical content and internship training; (b) offer career education to help students set career plans and goals; and (c) offer classes to support international students to understand China's career culture, policies, and current development. Song (2018), based on a survey of Thai students in China, recommended that effective career education should help students evaluate themselves rationally, identify their jobs of interest, and set practical professional goals. Liu et al. (2015) and Lu and Wu (2020) also indicated the lack of career education in China's higher education, and recommended curriculum about professional norms and job-seeking skills.

Career Services. Career services in higher education includes several activities like career counseling, CV workshops, career-related lectures, professional networking, and connected community (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Fakunle, 2019). Existing studies focus mainly on career counseling offered by host institutions.

As discussed, international students face policy, social, and acculturation issues when seeking jobs in the host society, so they tend to have greater needs for career counseling, compared to domestic students (McFadden & Seedorff, 2017; Shen & Herr, 2004). Research conducted in various countries has shown that effective career counseling can help international students prepare materials like CV or cover letters, address acculturative stress, connect with professional resources and information, get familiar with local career norms, and improve confidence in job-seeking (Crockett & Hays, 2011; Loo et al., 2017; Nadermann & Eissenstat,

2018; Nunes & Arthur, 2013; Poyrazli, 2015). As Guichard (2003) suggested, one primary goal of career counseling is to reduce social inequalities, and it enables international students to transition from college to labor market and increases their chances to remain in the host countries (Luo, 2013).

Even though career counseling is important, it could be more effective and accessible to international students. Many studies have suggested that international students are less willing to use career counseling. For example, Li & Lee (2018) surveyed 3,300 international students in the United States, finding that only about 40% participants used career services at least once a semester. Crockett and Hays' (2011) findings also revealed that international students are typically hesitant to seek professional counseling services, though more than 75% of them indicated a need for career counseling. Arthur et al. (2018) and Shen and Herr (2014) both indicated one essential reason for the underuse of career counseling is that international students were typically not familiar with career services provided on campuses. Li & Lee (2018) also found that instead of seeking help from career services offered on campus, international students tend to reach to their academic departments for career-related suggestions and assistance.

In addition to students' willingness, language and cultural diversity is another barrier to career counseling (Linkes et al., 2018). Because many career counseling centers lack foreign language support, international students in the United States often feel discouraged from using career counseling due to their difficulties in communicating in local languages (Crockett & Hays, 2011). Yi et al. (2003) and Yoo & Skovholt (2001) suggested that students from collectivist cultures are more likely to receive support from family and friends, rather than outside resources like career counseling services. Moreover, career counseling faces intercultural challenges because the counsellors may not understand the clients' particular cultural values and fail to offer

specific help (McFadden & Seedorff, 2017; Olivas & Li, 2006). Ahmed et al. (2017) and Tidwell & Hanassab (2007) therefore suggested that counselors be familiar with international students' unique barriers, update knowledge and information, and notice the difference among students from various areas.

Most of the studies on career counseling are developed in the United States, while career guidance and counseling in China is less developed and studied (Hao et al., 2015). Studies found that effective career service is implemented in only few colleges, and there is a lack of practical strategies and empirical data (Fang & Tan, 2010; Sun & Yuen, 2012). One problem in career counseling in China is that many institutions solely copy the practice and theories from western countries and fail to incorporate them in China's context (Sun & Yuen, 2012). Moreover, the lack of qualified counselors poses another barrier of career counseling in China. For instance, Jin and Fan (2002) found that in Beijing, the ratio of career counselors/teachers to college students was lower than 1:1000, and only 12.9% counselors had background in career guidance. Luo (2020) also indicated that most counselors were familiar with psychology but short of career-related knowledge and experience. Additionally, Luo found most counselors were part-time employees and could not concentrate on career services.

Limited by the general context of career counseling in Chinese colleges, relevant services for international students are further undeveloped. He's (2016) study revealed that because international students' employment rate is not included in accountability standards and most foreign students return to their home countries after graduation, Chinese colleges rarely offer career services to them. Liu & Wang (2020) found that international student career service in China is far from mature and there was a lack of policies and professional staff. Song (2018)

further criticized Chinese colleges for the ignorance of international students' needs of career counseling and poor quality of career services.

To sum up, institutions in China and other countries all need to enhance the quality of international student education and develop practical curriculum to improve foreign students' employability and understanding of local culture. In addition, career counseling aimed at international students cannot meet students' expectation. In China, career education and counseling for international students are underdeveloped both theoretically and practically, so how this context impacts ASEAN students' career outcomes was explored in this research.

Family Factors

Besides HCT and NRT , scholars also applied the Push-Pull model to analyze international students' career outcomes and mobility after graduation (Gesing & Glass, 2019; Huang, 2013; Lin & Kingminghae, 2017; Wu & Wilkes, 2017), and family issues are important factors impacting students' career intentions and outcomes. Although the Push-Pull model is not included in this research, reviewing family factors can help understanding international students' career outcomes comprehensively. Moreover, family background may impact international graduates' human capital and career-related resources.

Familial and Romantic Ties. Familial ties play an important role in international students' career outcomes, especially for those who come from collective cultures, who tend to return to these home countries and stay close with family. Mahadevan (2010) found that cultural backgrounds affected Chinese, Korean, and Indian students' career beliefs, and they are more likely to consider family responsibilities when making career decisions. In Moskal's (2017) comparative research, all Chinese students were relatively young and had stronger familial ties in China. All the Chinese students returned to China after graduating from the United Kingdom,

and some participants admitted that their parents in China was a factor pulling them back. Moskal's findings are also supported by Huang (2013).

On the contrary, graduates are more likely to stay and find jobs in the host societies if they have strong familial or romantic ties there. Lin & Kingminghae (2017), for example, found that Thai graduates whose partner was Chinese were more willing to find jobs and stay in China. And Bordoloi (2015) also noticed the importance of graduates' local ties and argued that, to attract and retain international graduates in the United States, immigrant policies must be revised to protect the rights of partners of international students, who are not permitted to work if they come to the United States with their spouses.

Family Background. Family economic status impacts graduates' resources and intentions to seek jobs after graduation. In Lin (2017)'s research, among the studied Thai students graduated from China, those who were from families owning business were found more willing to work in China, and Lin attributed this result to the families' strategy to explore business opportunities in China. Studies in Canada also found that some Chinese students from rich families looked for jobs in Canada, in order to obtain permanent residence and help their parents to migrant (Geddie, 2013).

Parental education is closely related to family economic status and serves as another indicator of family background. Erola et al. (2016) have revealed that parental education has strong impact on future child professional development. Hirudayaraj (2011) and Tomlinson (2017) also found parental education can increase students' soft skills as well as cultural, human, and social capitals, therefore improving their career returns.

Several studies also found that college students from better-educated or higher-earning families tend to have better career returns, mainly because they have more human, social, and economic capital, such as better professional network and more resources devoted in job-seeking (Borgen, 2015; Di Cintio & Grassi, 2017; Rivera, 2015). Some studies, however, have argued that students from higher-income families have less pressure to work right after college graduation, so they are more likely to pursue graduate education than peers from low-income families (Hill et al., 2003; Watts et al., 2015). Although some of the studies did not examine international students specifically, it can be supposed that family background impacts international graduates career intentions and results.

In brief, family influence is crucial for international graduates' career intentions, because familial bonds can impact graduates' career choices and family background can affect their human, social, and economic capitals when seeking jobs. Although little research investigated how family factors impact ASEAN students' professional development, given the collective traditions in most ASEAN states, it is reasonable to presume that family is a key consideration when ASEAN students make career decisions.

Summary

Although many scholars have indicated that the link between international mobility and students' employment has been little researched (King et al., 2010; Moskal, 2017; Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016), this literature review has reached fruitful findings. The review has revealed that studying abroad has positive impacts on graduates' career outcomes in many aspects, including professional skills and soft skills. International mobility also correlates with salaries, opportunities to get promoted or work internationally, and education-work match to various extents.

But studying abroad cannot promise great career returns. In both the host and home countries, international graduates' career outcomes are impacted by multi-level factors, and those factors are interconnected. At the macro level, national polices form the legal framework for international graduates, the colleges they enrolled in, and the employers who hire them. Restrictive or ambiguous regulations may cause barriers for graduates' job-seeking and discourage institutions and employers to help international jobseekers. National policies also reflect and represent social climate, which impacts graduates' career experience and how employers treat them. Hostile climate in the host countries may force international graduates return to their home societies, where the reverse cultural shock in home countries may also cause poor career outcomes and low satisfaction.

At the institutional level, the quality and content of education decides if students can improve their productivity as HCT assumes. Moreover, the quality of career counseling and other services impacts how graduates address the career-relevant barriers and achieve career success. And at the micro level, family influence should not be ignored since it can impact students' career intentions and resources. As Popadiuk & Arthur (2014) indicated, international students' career decision making is a group effort, so conversations with career counsellors, faculty, friends, and family are all critical to students' career outcomes.

Despite these productive findings, some problems in prior studies also appeared. First, there is a Western bias in earlier studies, as Arthur and Popadiuk (2010), Leung and Yuen (2012), and Reynolds and Constantine (2007) have criticized, which means most of the studies are conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and developed European countries, while international students from and studying in less developed areas like China and ASEAN member states are always ignored. One possible reason is that, given the development

of Neoliberalism and the marketization of higher education in the developed countries, institutions and government in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia are more willing to study, prove, and improve the learning outcomes and quality of their education; therefore, relevant studies bloomed as a result.

Another explanation is that regionalization of higher education has been accelerated in Europe since the launch of Bologna Process, which emphasizes regional mobility and employability as its two main goals (Gajderowicz et al., 2012). Therefore, many studies are relevant to European countries. Due to the similar reason, many scholars focus on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member students.

The third explanation is that China and other developing countries have been located in the peripheral position of in the international system of higher education due to their late development of modern higher education (Altbach, 2009). And because of the dominating power of English as an academic lingua franca (Rostan, 2011), non-English speaking countries tend to be ignored by mainstream scholars.

Moreover, the conclusion made in western countries may not be generalized to other areas, because of the various education quality, academic traditions, economic situation, relevant policies, and other factors in different countries. For example, China's international education does not adopt Neoliberalism, which emphasizes free market and competition (Bamberger et al., 2019), but combines international education with national strategies and regional cooperation. How this philosophical difference between China and the United States causes different results on international students' career outcomes, therefore, needs further study. Given the scarcity and importance of non-western studies, both Huang (2013) and Roys et al. (2019) called for more research outside Europe and America.

Finally, most studies on international graduates' career outcomes are quantitative and large-scale (Jones, 2016), so graduates' own perceptions of the impacts of studying overseas on career outcomes and individual experience are rarely investigated. Via qualitative interviews, I can study not only the perceived relationship between international mobility and career outcomes, but also how, in the participants' minds, the impacts on career outcomes happen and interact, thus contributing to the development of relevant theories.

Given the theoretical gaps, my dissertation focuses on the internationalization of higher education in China and international graduates born in ASEAN member states, studying graduates' own perceptions of career outcomes. The result of this study presents the uniqueness features in China and ASEAN states, therefore paving theoretical bases for future studies.

Theoretical Framework

Given the complexity and multitude of internationalization of higher education, scholars have advocated using multiple theoretical frameworks to understand the factors involved in internationalization (Ellingboe, 1998; de Wit, 2002; Wong & Wu, 2011). Research also has cautioned that no single theoretical framework can explain international graduates' career outcomes perfectly (Jiang, 2016; Phythiam, et al., 2011). In this dissertation, I applied both the Human Capital Theory (HTC) and the Neo Racism Theory (NRT) to analyze international graduates' career outcomes. By combining two theoretical frameworks, I investigated both the positive and negative impacts from multiple dimensions.

Human Capital Theory

Premises. Scholars have defined human capital differently but most of the definitions agreed that human capital mainly refers to people's knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and abilities (Becker, 2002; Crook et al., 2011; Ployhart et al., 2014; Youndt & Snell, 2004). Lynch

(1991) suggested three ways human capital is developed: formal schooling (including K-12 and postsecondary education), on-the-job training (training offered by employers), and off-the-job training (training offered by for-profit institutions). Although all the three approaches involve costs like tuition fees, foregone incomes during schooling, and reduced salaries during training, Schultz (1961) and Becker (2002) argued that the expenditure on human capital is investment, rather than consumption, because the development of human capital has economic returns at both personal and national levels (Bae & Patterson, 2014).

At the personal level, the main returns include increased productivity, higher earnings, and better career prospects (Bloch & Smith, 1977; Fleischhauer, 2007). As general skills (skills useful with both the current and potential employers) and specific skills (skills useful with the current employers only) develop, employees participating in education and training perform better in the labor market, therefore obtaining higher salaries and more career opportunities (Fleischhauer, 2007). At the national level, when governments' expenditure on education increases, the productivity, creativity, and GDP are boosted as a result. For instance, Giménez et al. (2015) found in OECD countries that human capital is an important predictor of GDP, and Mellander and Florida (2021) and Pelinescu (2015) suggested that a mature education and training system is essential to national economic growth. In order to maximize personal and national returns on educational investment, scholars call for more emphasis on the quality of academic programs and teachers (Gillies, 2015).

As the internationalization of higher education developed, scholars applied HCT to understand international student success and mobility. Gerhards and Hans (2013) proposed "transnational human capital" to refer to the "knowledge and personal skills that enable a person to operate in different fields beyond the individual nation-state" (p. 99). Skills like foreign

language proficiency and intercultural competence are components of transnational human capital and are related to workers' performance and economic gains in a globalized context closely. Gerhards and Hans suggested that studying abroad is an effective way to develop transnational human capital, and parental education and other family issues also impact the obtaining of transnational human capital.

Scholars also applied HCT to examine international student mobility. Rosenzweig (2006, 2008) proposed two models to explain the relations between human capital and studying abroad. In the first model, which is called school-constrain model, students migrate to developed countries to acquire better human capital, because of the lack of high-quality educational resources in their home countries. In this case, students who have studied abroad tend to return to home countries to reap the benefits of higher human capital. The second one is called the migration model, which argues that students with high human capital face low returns in education in their home countries and, therefore enter other countries with student visas and stay abroad after graduation in search of higher benefits. In both models, the returns of human capital (e.g., wages, career opportunities) in sending and receiving countries impact student flows substantially.

Critiques. One common criticism of HCT is that it ignores the heterogeneity among jobseekers or workers. For instance, Britton et al. (2016) studied UK graduates and found that, after controlling for education-related factors like institution characteristics and fields of study, graduates' family background and gender effected their incomes. As a result, students from wealthier families have more cultural, social, and economic capital and greater possible career alternatives. Scholars made similar conclusion in other countries (Guvenen et al., 2014; Marginson, 2019), challenging the central role of education in the development of human capital,

career prospects, and economic development. Additionally, Spence (1973, as cited in Tan, 2014) proposed Signal Theory and argued that higher education level does not guarantee higher productivity, but just indicates employees' specific characteristics like time management skills, propensity to be intelligent, and ability to follow instructions. These characteristics are attractive signals for employers when they select candidates, so jobseekers with better education backgrounds may have better career opportunities, although education may not increase their productivity and knowledge (Blaug, 1976; Tan, 2014).

Another weakness of HCT is it simplifies the education-work transition to a linear process, ignoring the complicated factors involved in the transition (Marginson, 2019). Melguizo and Wolniak (2012), for example, found that many specific-trained graduates entered positions that did not fit their fields of training but chose the positions that pay the most. Moreover, employees' wages are also impacted by employers' acknowledgment of their education experience and general ability, so productivity is not the single decisive factor (Mincer, 1974). Studies also suggested that factors like personal ties and extra-curricular activities as students also impact employees' choices (e.g., Rivera, 2015; Tholen et al., 2013).

Critiques also concern international students. As Jiang (2018) concluded, the basic premise of HCT is that the labor market is free and meritocratic and "individuals become more productive by investing in education and training, which in turn improves career outcomes" (p. 930). But Leung and Yuen (2012) have criticized this assumption as unrealistic and ethno-centric, because it excludes the special barriers faced by international students when they seek jobs in the host societies. For instance, based on HCT, countries of origin do not play an influential role in graduates' career outcomes, so there should be no significant career outcome difference between domestic and international graduates of similar programs, and between

international graduates from different areas. Jiang (2016) in the United States, however, found salary, job satisfaction, and major-job match variations not only between American and international master's recipients, but also between Chinese and Indian recipients.

Moreover, as mentioned in the prior sections, students seeking jobs overseas have to address issues like visa obtainment and processing, working permissions, and discrimination (Arthur & Nunes, 2014; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014; Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). The applicability of HCT to analyze the career outcomes of international students, therefore, remains a debatable issue.

Summary. HCT emphasizes the economic role of education and training at both the personal and national levels. As Tan (2014) argued, according to HCT, education is considered the center and source of economic development. According to HCT, studying abroad is an education investment and international graduates improve productivity, salary, and career prospects via moving from homelands to the countries that have better education systems and resources. In this case, the quality of Chinese institutions, programs, and teachers impacts international graduates' human capital significantly. Besides formal education, internship and work experience also increase graduates' human capital, so whether ASEAN graduates in China have access to internship or part-time jobs before graduation impacts their productivity and career prospects. After graduation, the economic return gap between host and home countries impacts graduates' decisions to stay overseas or to return to home countries, so the development of China and ASEAN member states may influence graduates' mobility.

However, HCT may overrate the importance of education and ignore the impacts of nationality and other factors, thereby failing to explain international students' career outcomes fully. The correlation between education and employability, as well as the process of education-

work transition remain debatable. Given the deficiency, I introduced NRT as the second framework.

Neo Racism Theory

Premises. Traditional Racism Theory focuses on the discrimination caused by race or color of skin, while NRT examines how factors like nationality, cultural background, and language differences, instead of race, trigger discrimination (Balibar, 2007; Lee, 2020; Lee & Rice, 2007). Neo Racism can be observed in the process of internationalization of higher education. For instance, international students in the United States are reported to face unobjective academic evaluation, loss of employment or an inability to get jobs, stereotypes of their cultures and home countries, more sexual harassment, and negative effects caused by their foreign accents (Jiang, 2016; Lee, 2007; Yao, 2018). One recent example that Lee (2020) indicated is that, following the China-U.S. political tension and the outbreak of COVID-19, Chinese students in the United States have been demonized and criminalized, and Wang (2020) observed a surge of attacks against Chinese in the United States in 2020.

Beyond social climate, Neo Racism is also found at the political dimension. Trump's ban on students from Muslim countries is another case (Collingwood et al., 2018), because of its roots in the xenophobia and stereotyping of people from the Mid-East. Another example of discriminatory policy regarding international students in the United States is the restricted work policy, which limits the time, type, and payment of their jobs before and after graduation (Coleman, 2014; Lan, 2013).

One characteristic of Neo Racism is the heterogeneity and hierarchy of cultural preference. International students from non-white countries (Asian, African, Latin American countries) face greater barriers in U.S. postsecondary institutions than those from European

countries and Canada (Lee, 2007; Glass et al., 2014). A similar result is also found in South Korea and South Africa (Lee, 2017; Lee et al., 2017), therefore the level of similarity between the host and home cultures is not the reason for the hierarchy. Scholars have attributed the differences to White supremacy and the uneven postcolonial international system (Lee et al., 2017; Stein & de Andreotti, 2016; Suspitsyna & Shalka, 2019), arguing that, because of the dominating status of the United States and EU countries, students from those areas have more privileges when studying abroad.

Implications on Career Outcomes. Neo Racism has significant negative impacts on international students' career outcomes. Firstly, the social discrimination toward foreign graduates may cause low confidence and discourages them from applying for competitive positions and accepting 3D jobs- the dangerous, dirty, and dull jobs (Favell, 2008; Wilken & Dahlberg, 2017). Secondly, international graduates may find it difficult to acculturate to the host societies and build local networks, mainly due to the xenophobia and their lack of familiarity with the host culture. One consequence is that they have to rely on their international peers to offer career information, which could be partial or incorrect (Lee, 2007).

Finally, due to the limiting policies, foreign students either are not allowed to work legally before graduation or have only limited internship or work opportunities (Bound et al., 2021; McFadden & Seedorff, 2017; Moskal, 2017). Lan (2013) found that international graduates in the United State with permanent resident status have better career outcomes than holders of working visas.

To address the aforementioned barriers, scholars have suggested institutions and faculty offer more career assistance for international students (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014; Yao, 2018). However, many international students consider themselves temporary visitors and do not

recognize their rights. They consequently tend to keep silent when facing discrimination, attempt to solve problems by themselves, or seek help from other international students. Colleges and faculty, therefore, can be unaware of international graduates' specific needs (Lee, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007).

NRT in the Chinese Context. As a relatively new theory, NTC has been applied mainly to study issues in developed western countries. Although research conducted in Korea and South Africa (Lee, 2017; Lee et al., 2017) provided some insights about non-western countries, China, as the receiving country of international students, is absent in current Neo Racism studies. Furthermore, the impact of Neo Racism on ASEAN students also needs more investigation.

As NRT suggested, there is a hierarchy of cultures and nations, and non-white students like ASEAN students are subject to more discrimination in the host countries. Although China did not colonize any ASEAN states throughout history, it had strong regional, cultural, and political influence until the 19th century and now is influencing ASEAN countries with its economic power (Ba, 2014; Shambaugh, 2018; Wade & Chin, 2018). The uneven relationship between China and ASEAN, therefore, could be a source of Neo Racism toward ASEAN students in China. However, the historical connection and similar race and culture between China and ASEAN states may reduce the resulting discrimination.

China, as mentioned in earlier sections, does not have mature polices on international graduates' employment, but it has national initiatives like BRI that need high-skilled international employers. How these policies facilitate or limit ASEAN graduates' career prospects remains another question to be explored.

NRT and Language. NRT argues that language difference is one trigger of discrimination (Lee, 2020; Lee & Rice, 2007), and scholars have studied how language barriers affects international students' sense of belonging to American campus (e.g., Lynch, 2021; Yao, 2018). Students who have lower Chinese language proficiency or who are perceived to have lower proficiency, therefore, may have different experience and may encouter more barriers when studying or looking for jobs in China, based on prejudice related to language ability and perceptions of language ability.

Because all the participants of this study have graduated from Chinese language programs, they are supposed to have better language competence and be more sensitive about language differences than international students majoring in other fields. Additionally, many ASEAN students were born in heritage Chinese families and speak Chinese since their childhood, so their Chinese competence should reach or nearly reach a native level. According to NRT, participants with better Chinese language proficiency are supposed to have better career opportunity in China. The typical jobs of graduates of Chinese language programs, such as language teacher and translator, however, tend to have high requirement for candidates' language competence, so whether participants' Chinese are capable enough and if they have specific understanding of the role of language capacity remain to be explored.

Summary. NRT argues that nationality, language, and cultural difference are the main reasons for discrimination, and hostile social climate and policies may impact international graduates' professional opportunities and experience negatively. Because China and ASEAN member states are ignored by existing studies, one key question of this dissertation is to investigate how NRT explains ASEAN graduates' career outcomes.

Although HCT and NCT focus on different aspects, studies combined them to investigate international graduates' career outcomes comprehensively (Jiang, 2016, 2018; Schmidt & Pardo, 2016). Schmidt & Pardo (2016), for instance, argued that, although studying abroad may allow students to acquire better human capital, the negative effects have balanced those benefits and costs. As a result, the students who had studied abroad have no earning advantage compared to those who have not. Instead of focusing only on the results, this qualitative study aims to explore how international graduates understand the positive and negative factors impacting their career outcomes and how HCT and NRT explain this process.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Given the importance of international graduates' career outcomes and the lack of research focusing on China's international higher education and students from ASEAN member states, I am compelled to investigate how ASEAN students understand the impacts of obtaining a master's degree from Chinese colleges on their career outcomes. In this section, I will describe the methodology and research procedures I used.

Research Questions

To meet my research purpose, this study addressed the following questions:

1. How do students from three ASEAN member states perceive the career-related benefits and costs of obtaining a master's degree of Chinese Language from Chinese universities?

2. How do participants perceive that their international, national, institutional, social, family, and personal identities influence their career outcomes after graduating from China?

3. According to Thai, Malaysian, and Myanma students, what efforts can Chinese institutions and government take to improve the career outcomes of ASEAN students graduated from China?

4. How do participants' experiences and perceptions vary by sending countries?

The first question mainly focuses on the participants' perceptions of the benefits (e.g., better productivity, more career opportunities, higher salary) and costs (e.g., tuition fees, time, opportunity cost) of studying in China. Most of these benefits and costs are argued by HCT and prior scholars have studied similar question in western countries. Whether western experience fits Chinese context, however, needs further investigation. The second question partly echoes to

NRT's assumption that international graduates face several barriers when seeking jobs and working in the destination country, but it also examines the factors impacting graduates' career outcomes positively. The third question is constructive because it explores how Chinese institutions and government can improve their education, services, and policies to improve international graduates' career outcomes. The last question aims to find and explain the national difference of participants' experience.

Research Design

This section will discuss the social constructivism paradigm, qualitative research method, and the narrative approach that guide my research procedures. I chose a qualitative and narrative approach because I want to explore graduates' own perceptions and reflection on the impacts of studying in China.

Social Constructivism

The basic philosophical framework of my research is social constructivism, which argues that reality is constructed in individuals' mind via the meaning making and subjective interpretation of past experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to constructivist argument, "everything we know has been determined by the intersection of politics, values, ideologies, religious beliefs, language, and so on" (Given, 2008, p.118). People's views on reality are varied and multiple due to their different experience and sensemaking, so researchers' task is to rely on participants' perceptions and to interpret the meanings participants have about the world (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Because people's understanding of the world is typically forged via discussion and interaction with others, qualitative study is a practical research approach that fits constructivism.

Qualitative Research

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research begins with assumptions and uses interpretive or theoretical frameworks to address "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 44). One of the strengths of qualitative approach is its capacity to reveal participants' experience in depth and present the studied phenomena in expansive detail and in first-hand data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Qualitative research, therefore, is effective when the studied issue is complex and needs detailed understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Because career outcome is a complicated topic and job-seeking is influenced by multiple factors, qualitative inquiry offers me the tool to dig into details and to explore how participants understand their career outcomes and influential factors.

Creswell and Poth (2018) have suggested several characteristics of qualitative research and some of them are crucial to this study. The first one is natural setting, which allows researchers to collect data via talking directly with participants and obtaining their reflections, rather than conducting studies in labs or via questionnaires. The second one is participants' multiple perspectives and meanings. Because career outcomes involve influential factors of different layers (e.g., national, social, institutional, and personal) and dimensions (e.g., economic, political, and cultural), multiple perspectives help me to understand this topic comprehensively. The third characteristic, context-dependent, is especially important, because ASEAN students in China is rare studied and their experiences are typically ignored. Studying international graduates' career outcomes in Chinese context is one of the contributions of this study, and qualitative research allows me to investigate how graduates' experiences and perceptions in China differ from those in western countries. The last one is emergent design, which means the research plan and process may change as the researcher collecting and

analyzing data. This characteristic enables qualitative studies to be flexible and practical to address complex situation.

Narrative Approach

Narrative, as defined by Connelly and Clandinin (2006), "is the phenomenon studied in inquiry" (p. 477), and narrative inquiry, as "the study of experience as story", is "first and foremost a way of thinking about experience" (p. 477). Therefore, "to use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomenon under study" (p. 477). Narrative inquiry is an important research methodology in education and has been used to study the lived experience of teachers and students (Kim, 2016). It has been also applied to study students' career development and outcomes (e.g., Abkhezr, 2018; Chinyamurindi, 2012; Stockfelt, 2018).

One basic feature of narrative inquiry is it collects stories from individuals, and the research question that best fits narrative inquiry is one in which researchers aim to explore the life of individual (Creswell and Poth, 2018). But according to Clandinin (2013), the focus of narrative inquiry is "not only valorizing individuals' experience but is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals experiences were, and are, constituted shaped, expressed and enacted" (p. 18). In this study, I adopted narrative inquiry to explore how participants understand the career benefits and costs of studying in China and the multiple factors impacting their career outcomes. From the experiences of participants, I can investigate how national, social, institutional, and family factors impact their career outcomes in China and in their home countries.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested three dimensions of narrative inquiry, namely interaction, continuity, and place, and all these dimensions make narrative inquiry a good fit of

my research on ASEAN graduates' career outcomes. The interaction dimension emphasizes the process and effects of personal and social interactions, which are critical to career outcomes. Job-seeking and working are highly socialized: graduates have to acquire job information via professional network or public platforms, interview and negotiate with employers, and cooperate with colleagues. By studying participants' narratives on their career experience, I can examine how interaction happened and what factors impacted the process. The continuity dimension refers to the past, present, and future themes in narratives. Narrative methodology enables me to obtain participants' experience from making the decision to study in China to graduating and seeking jobs in China, as well as their future plans, so I can investigate participants' life stories over the course of time, rather than focusing only on their current jobs. In other words, with narrative inquiry, I study the dynamic process of participants' career development, rather than the accomplished results of their job-seeking. The last dimension focuses on the specific context of experience and narrative. This feature enables me to focus on how China's education and policy impact ASEAN graduates' professional development and how China-ASEAN cooperation creates opportunities for ASEAN students, which are both investigated incompletely.

Additionally, narrative inquiry is useful in studying minority or underrepresented groups, and scholars have adopted it to investigate the stories of racial, sexual, and gender minorities (e.g., Butler et al., 2020; Orom et al., 2013; Patel et al., 2017; Stockfelt, 2018). The advantage of narrative inquiry is that it digs rich details from individual experiences and studies how they are understanded by participants themselves. Narrative inquiry, therefore, can explore the specific difficulties minority groups face and echoes to the basic argument of NRT.

Besides collecting narratives, narrative researchers also need to re-story participants' experience, which means reorganizing participants' stories into general type of framework

(Creswell and Poth, 2018). For instance, researchers should locate the contexts of participants' stories, conclude the common themes from different narratives, organize events chronologically, and discuss the meaning of the stories. By re-storying collected narratives, I can conclude participants' job-seeking experience and explore how they perceive the roles that Chinese education and other factors played in this process.

To summarize, social constructivism, qualitative approach, and narrative inquiry offer me the instrument to explore how people understand and construct the complex reality. By collecting and analyzing stories from different participants, I can find common experiences of ASEAN graduates then draw conclusions on studying in China and seeking jobs after graduation. In the following sections, I will introduce my sampling, data collection, treatment, and analysis procedures.

Positionality Statement

To review my own experience and perceptions that I bring to my study is critical to limit research bias (Creswell and Poth, 2018). My experience as an international graduate student in the United States motives me to study international students' career outcomes. I came to the United States in 2016 and enrolled in the Asian Studies master's program at Seton Hall University, and I started to teach Chinese language at Seton Hall University, Kean University, and Asbury Park High School since 2017 to 2019. I felt the American immigrant policies both facilitated and limited my career development, because although the Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) enabled me working here before and after graduation, I have to transfer to the H-1B visa to work in the United States longer, and the application of H-1B can be tedious and full of uncertainty. I, therefore, became curious of how immigrant policies affect international students' career outcomes.

My dissertation focuses on ASEAN students graduated from China because of my prior studies on China's internationalization strategies and my future career plans. I have read a lot about internationalization of higher education, especially that in Asia and mainland China's contexts, finding that China is transferring from a sending country to a receiving destination of international students and is increasingly attractive to students from other Asian countries. I, however, also found that policies and regulations on international students in China are far from being developed, compared to those in the United States. Given this problem, I decide to return to China and improve international students' study experience and career returns.

I chose students from ASEAN member states because they are a large but ignored population in China. Based on my own observation and anecdotes, White people from North America and Europe are welcomed in China and always labeled with tags like "rich", "handsome/pretty", or "talented", and ordinary Chinese people have similar positive stereotypes for Japanese and Korean students. Students from Mideast and Southeast Asia, however, are always labeled with negative keywords. My friends who came from southeastern Asia had also complained the difficulties they met when looking for jobs in China. I, therefore, want to focus on this particular group and see how I can help them in the future.

I am a native speaker of Chinese (Mandarin) and have lived in the United States, so I can speak both Chinese and English proficiently. My language proficiency also impacts my research design, because by offering more language options to participants, I can reach graduates who do not speak English well and enlarge my participant pool. Additionally, participants who speak Chinese better than English can feel more comfortable to share their stories and build strong relationship with me.

Population and Sampling

Population Studied

The sample population of this research is graduated students from Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar who obtain a master's degree of Chinese Language from mainland China after 2010, including students staying in China, returning to their home countries, and moving to other areas. According to China's Ministry of Education (2019), 11,128 students from ASEAN member states enrolled in master's programs in 2018, accounting for 18.7% of all international master students. Although the number of ASEAN students enrolled in master's programs of Chinese language is unavailable, it is reasonable to believe the population to be significant, given the popularity of Chinese language major. In 2010, China and ASEAN signed China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA), which facilitated the service, education, and people exchanges between them. ASEAN students graduated after 2010, therefore, are supposed to have more career opportunities and are included in this research.

Limited by my resources and time, I recruited participants from Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar only. Thailand had 28,608 students in China in 2018, making it the second largest sending country, while the number of students from Malaysia and Myanmar increased fastest in the since 2015, and they contributed 35.56% of all ASEAN students in China in 2018 (Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, 2019). These countries also have similar economic or religious background as all other ASEAN member states except Singapore, so they can partly represent the trend of ASEAN member states. Studying only three countries can make my study more focused and help me distinguish national and individual differences.

Participant Selection

Given the definition of studied population, participants in this research should:

(1) have citizenship of Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand;

(2) have graduated from any full-time master's program of Chinese language in mainland China and hold a master's degree of Chinese Language (graduates enrolled in Hongkong, Macau, Taiwan, and distant programs in other countries are excluded);

(3) have job seeking or working experience or are pursuing a PhD in either China, their home country, or in other locations.

Based on my own observation, several gradated students met barriers when seeking jobs after completing a master's degree, so they tried to improve employability by pursuing a PhD degree. I, therefore, do not exclude those who are PhD students currently or who have obtained a PhD degree.

Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling is an essential feature of qualitative research (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Flick, 2014). I used snowball sampling to recruit eligible participants in this research. Snowball sampling is also known as chain sampling, which uses a small pool of initial participants to nominate others who meet the criteria for a study to be sampled (Given, 2008). It is useful when no lists available to identify participants who meet the eligible criteria. Because ASEAN students are enrolled in different institutions, snowball sampling allows me to take use of their network and communicate with eligible graduates.

Snowball sampling, however, poses the risk of recruiting participants who have similar experiences or viewpoints, which may cause bias. Potential participants who are not linked with the initial participants may also be ignored (Given, 2008). To address these issues, I will recruit

multiple initial informants who have diverse background (e.g., gender, nationality, location), so I can increase the likelihood of reaching different segments of the total population.

The sample size of my research was ultimately determined by the quality of collected data. I planned to recruit about 15-20 participants and the saturation point of sampling was reached when I recruited 16 and no new or surprising results found from narratives. I have conducted pilot interviews with one Thai student and one Malaysian student graduated from Minzu University of China, and one Vietnamese student from Peking University, who had been my classmates or colleagues, and they were also my initial sample members, via whom I can access to more ASEAN students. I chose people I know as initial sample members, rather than recruiting from social media, because in this way I can build trusts with participants easier and dig more information. Table. 2 shows the information of my 16 participants.

Table 2.

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Nationality	Gender	Chinese Heritage	Current Job and Location	Major
Cindy	Myanmar	F	Y	Private school teacher, Myanmar	International Chinese Education
Melissa		F	Y	University faculty, Mainland China`	International Chinese Education
Pink		F	Y	Private school teacher, Myanmar	International Chinese Education
Sharon		F	N	International company Translator, Myanmar	Chinese Language
Alice		F	Y	Private school teacher, Myanmar	International Chinese Education
Zin		M	N	International company trainer, Myanmar	International Chinese Education

Pseudonym	Nationality	Gender	Chinese Heritage	Current Job and Location	Major
Peggy	Malaysia	F	Y	University faculty, Malaysia	International Chinese Education
Miss E		F	Y	Private school teacher, Malaysia	Chinese Language
Annie		F	N	University faculty, Malaysia	International Chinese Education
Crisa		F	Y	University faculty, Malaysia	International Chinese Education
Andrew		M	Y	University faculty, Malaysia	Chinese Language
May	Thailand	F	Y	Private school teacher, Hongkong	Linguistics
Dora		F	N	International company translator, Thailand	Chinese Language
Jason		M	Y	International company coordinator, Thailand	International Chinese Education
Pan		M	N	International company translator, Japan	International Chinese Education
Lily		F	N	Self-employed teacher, Thailand	Chinese Language

Note. Participants with a Chinese heritage may have grown up in a bilingual environment and have higher Chinese language proficiency and more knowledge on Chinese culture, which may bring them benefits when studying and working in China, based on NRT.

Data Collection

I used one-on-one, in-depth, and semi-structured interviews to collect narrative stories. The interview in qualitative studies "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world" (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 3). This feature fits my research purposes and questions well and the semi-structured nature of interview research ensures the flexibility of my study, allowing me to adjust my questions as the interview progresses.

Unstructured or semi-structured interviews are typical data colleting methods employed in narrative studies, because via interviewing, participants and interviewers can cooperate to dig and make sense of participants' narrative. To collect high-quality narrative, I followed the principles of interviewing suggested by Hollway & Jefferson (2012), namely asking open-ended question, avoiding "why" questions, and following up using participants' ordering and phrasing.

I have developed an interview protocol that include 12 open-ended main questions and several follow-up questions and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2011), based on my research questions and the assumptions of HCT and NRT. The protocol has been reviewed by two experts in qualitative research to ensure the quality and length of interview. I have also sent my protocol and informed consent (in both English and Chinese) to Seton Hall University's Institutional Research Board (IRB) to ensure protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects of research. I contacted the initial participants and conducted interviews virtually via Microsoft Teams after my research was approved by IRB in June 2021.

At the beginning of each interview, I secured signed consent form from participant, decide participant' pseudonym and the language(s) to be used (Chinese, English, or both), then read an introduction to explain the research purpose, my interests, participant's rights, and the need to audio record the interview. I then ask some general questions on participants' background, rationales and experience of studying in China, and how studying in China has improved their productivity and employability. My next questions were arranged by themes, exploring participants' perceptions of the benefits of studying in China, the opportunity costs of studying in China, and the factors impacting their career outcomes. I also asked follow-up questions and probes to ask for clarification, elaboration, or more details. The order of these questions is not fixed and I adjusted their sequence, deleted, and added new questions based on

participants' answers and reactions. At the end of interviews, I asked participants to talk about their future plans and offer suggestions for Chinese institutions and government to improve ASEAN students' career outcomes. After these questions, a concluding question was posed and participants had the chance to share anything relevant to their career outcomes. The whole process was audio-taped and I also wrote down notes as interviews progress.

Data Treatment and Analysis

I transcribed each audio-recording into text right after the interview completed. All recordings and transcripts were kept in a secured flash drive then locked in a cabinet in my home, and no one but me can access to these original data. I polished the transcripts from errors in transcription then send them to the interviewees for member checking, ensuring they are comfortable with the content to be analyzed and shared. Member check is an essential strategy of my research, not only because it ensures reliability and participants' rights, but also because it is required by constructionism, which argues that interview data should be co-constructed by interviewers and interviewees (Roulston, 2010).

To translate interviews into English or not is an issue I must address, because some interviews may be conducted in Chinese. As Flick (2014) suggested, translation may impact the overall presentation of findings, mainly due to the nuance between languages and the risk of losing accuracy in the process of translation. For the accuracy of analysis, I decide to read, code, and re-story each interview in its original language(s) but translate the codes and categories into English for the convenience of representing.

Common elements of narrative analysis suggested by Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) include collecting narratives of personal experiences, finding narrative elements, and retelling the stories, rewriting stories into a chronological sequence, and incorporating the settings of the

participants' experiences. And Yussen and Ozcan (1997) have argued that narrative analysis should focus on the characters, setting, problem, actions, and resolution in the stories. I will follow the steps suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018) to analyze my data.

The first step is managing and organizing the data. In this stage, I created individual folder for each participant, and each folder was named after the participant' pseudonym and include his/her audio-recording and transcription.

The second stage is reading and memoing emergent ideas. To get familiar with the data I am going to analyze, I listened to each audiotape repeatedly right after each interview completed and read the transcripts thoroughly. As I listen to and read the raw data, I wrote memos and recorded all relevant ideas, such as emergent thoughts on the procedures of interviewing, themes I found in narratives, and questions that need further clarification. The memos helped me to decide the codes I am going to use in the next stage.

The third stage is describing and classifying codes. I developed my codebook that includes the categories, definitions, examples, and notes of each code. The coding approaches I used include *Attribute Coding*, which helped me to organize participants' basic information and features, *In Vivo Coding*, which keeps the origin words the interviewees used, *Structural Coding*, which "applies a content-based phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview" and is suitable for interview data, and *Evaluation Coding*, which investigates participants' judgments about the factors impacting their career outcomes. By applying multiple coding methods, I analyzed my data comprehensively and deeply (Saldaña, 2016).

Once I completed my initial coding, I started my second-round coding, where I "develop[ed] a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 234) from my prior coding results. Basically, I coded and reorganized my codes, classifying them into categories like "technical skills", "soft skills", and "national factors". I also found the causality or other connections between themes (e.g., weak intergovernmental correlation causes policy restrictions on ASEAN students' job-seeking in China, which further results in limited time to look for jobs and employers' low trust).

I also identified themes specific to each participant and then look for themes across narratives, then examined whether the themes are specific for China and ASEAN students and how HCT and NRT can explain participants' experiences and thoughts. I, therefore, went back to my literature review and relate my research with prior studies.

I analyzed the transcripts several times and each time I focused on only one research question. I used both inductive and deductive methods to analyze my data. Applying deductive method means my analysis was based on the arguments of HCT and NRT, and I looked for specific themes that have been identified as important to my research questions within the research literature. Applying inductive method, however, means I kept an open mind to my data to find particular issues and factors that are related to their career outcomes but not mentioned by prior scholars.

My first-round analysis focused on Question One "How do students from ASEAN member states perceive the career-related benefits and costs of obtaining a master's degree of Chinese Language from Chinese universities?". As HCT argues, high-quality education improves students' employability, so my deductive coding intended to look for narratives that support or challenge this argument. As a result, I generated several codes: knowledge of Chinese

language, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of education technology, cross-cultural communication awareness, cross-cultural communication skills, knowledge of Chinese culture and society, and Chinese language proficiency. I further concluded these codes into three themes: technical skills, soft skills, and language skills.

From participants' narratives, I also generated inductive codes, including relationships with advisors and class/schoolmates, relationships built via internship and extracurricular activities, and relationship out of campus. These codes were then concluded as the theme "professional network", which is important for participants' career development but absent in HCT and NRT. Another two inductive themes were found: a master's degree in China and workplace culture in China. For the career-related costs of studying in China, my analysis was purely inductive and I found the disconnection with the sending country and the lack of motivation to prepare for working as the main costs.

My second-round coding focused on Question Two "How do participants perceive that their international, national, institutional, social, family, and personal identities influence their career outcomes after graduating from China?". NRT argues that nationality, language, and cultural difference are the triggers of discrimination and the barriers of career development, so I looked deductively for experience and narratives that are related to this argument, finding the immigrant policies in China are strict and ASEAN students are located at a lower rank compared to white people in China, both impeding their career outcomes. I also found that also many heritage Chinese participants grew up in a bilingual family and speak Chinese and know Chinese cultures well, they still encounter discrimination, which challenges the argument of NRT.

All other codes related to influential factors are totally inductive. Based on participants' narratives, I found China-ASEAN economic cooperation and education recognition as the

international factors. Politics in ASEAN member states, including political turmoil and policies encouraging students to return, and scholarship policies in China were found as the national factor. These themes, along with the immigrant policies in China, were recognized as the macro or international/national factors. Via inductive coding, I also found other codes: institutional reputation, inter-institutional cooperation, institutional curriculum, segregation policy of living and taking classes, advisor, career services (concluded as the theme "Institutional Factors"); social development and living costs (theme "Social Factors"); working experience, willingness to stay with family, romantic relationships, family responsibility, and parents' support (theme "Personal and Family Factors"). These inductive codes and themes proved the uniqueness of ASEAN students in China and offered new insights for future studies.

My following analytical processes were purely inductive. Question Three asked participants for suggestions on government and institutions in China, and participants mentioned how changes on scholarship policies and immigrant policies may improve their experience in China and career outcomes. Question Four aimed to find national differences across the three target countries, and results showed that cultural, political, and education differences in these countries may cause different experiences and perceptions, including different career opportunities and choices.

The final step is representing and visualizing my data. In this stage I re-storied participants' narratives, merging their stories into a bigger narrative that can represent their common experiences, perceptions, and suggestions. I also presented a conceptual model of the factors impacting ASEAN graduates' career outcomes in China based on my findings and explanations and suggest how Chinese institutions and government can maximize the benefits of studying in China and improve international students' learning outcomes. Finally, I developed

suggestions for future qualitative and quantitative scholars to advance knowledge in international higher education.

Conclusion

In this section, I discussed why I choose narrative inquiry as research approach and how I recruited participants, collect, and analyze data. My personal experience and enthusiasm motivate me to study ASEAN graduates' life stories, and narrative method enables me to dig in-depth details of graduates' career outcomes and re-story their experience into the theoretical frameworks I am going to use. To protect participants' privacy and rights, I followed strict procedures in the processes of collecting, restoring, and analyzing data, and to ensure the accuracy of analysis, I kept all data in their original languages and only translate the coding results into English.

Chapter Four: Findings

In this chapter, I will present my findings based on the themes I identified through my analysis process. Following the research questions, I will first present the benefits and costs related to career development, then list the international, national, social, institutional, family, and personal factors impacting participants' career outcomes and how these factors work. Finally, I will present the suggestions that participants thought can improve their career outcomes. Findings related to Research Question Four, the variations between nations, will be also discussed throughout the chapter when they are relevant.

Question One: Students' Perceptions of Degree Costs and Benefits

I recognized several career-relevant benefits that ASEAN students obtained via perusing a master's degree of Chinese language in China. The benefits include employability (technical skills, soft skills, and language skills), professional network, a master's degree in China, and the workplace culture they experienced in China. Studying in China, however, also resulted in a lack of familiarity with the job markets in participants' home countries, and the lack of motivation to look for jobs may also impede participants' career development.

Employability

When asked how studying in China impacts their career development, most participants agreed that they became easier to be employed and perform better, which suggested an enhanced employability.

Technical skills. Defined as the skills relevant to job accomplishment, technical skill is one of the most common themes found among participants of different professions. For participants working as K-12 and college teachers, technical skills refer to the abilities needed

for curriculum design, teaching, and classroom management. All ten participants majoring in international Chinese education agreed that both their knowledge about Chinese and teaching Chinese language improved significantly via attending the master's programs. Cindy, for example, indicated how professional courses offered in her program help her in teaching Chinese:

> Although I am [of] Chinese heritage and I speak Chinese at home, my knowledge about Chinese was fragmented, so I was not capable to teach Chinese until I learned it systematically at National University (pseudonym). I knew how to pronounce Chinese words naturally but only after taking professional courses did I know how my lips, tongue, and mouth work in that process. I need this kind of knowledge to teach my students who are not native speakers (of Chinese).

Cindy also compared Chinese programs offered in Myanmar and China, saying that the former focuses mainly on Chinese characteristics while the latter provides comprehensive courses to train professional Chinese teachers. She had known this difference before she made her decision and, in order to be a qualified Chinese teacher, chose to attend National University rather than staying in Myanmar.

Crisa echoed to Cindy's statements by indicating that she did not know how to explain Chinese grammar until taking specific courses at North University (pseudonym), although she is a native Chinese speaker. She also said that attending Chinese language programs offered her a chance to understand Chinese language from "the perspective of a teacher, not a native speaker," which helps her a lot when she teaches non-native speakers.

Education technology is another benefit that most participants, especially those who came from Myanmar, obtained from China. As Alice said, even in Mandalay, the second largest city in Myanmar, teaching with PowerPoint is not popular and most teachers can barely use computers, so they had to attend computer classes to learn basic skills before moving to China. Pink shared her thoughts on technology:

"In Myanmar we are basically applying traditional teaching methods still. Like, we are still using blackboard, not PowerPoint, not even electronic facilities…I did not start using computers until I came to National University, where I learned how to design and deliver my courses with PowerPoint…Technology is unprecedentedly important now since everything is taught online and you cannot complete your teaching without slides. The slides also make your content more interesting and attractive."

Pedagogy refers to the methods and practice of teaching, which is another benefit mentioned by nearly all participants. Theoretically, many participants had the chance to study advanced pedagogical theories in China. Lily, for instance, appreciated the courses in National University for teaching her the Middlebury Method, a popular language teaching pedagogy introduced and developed by Middlebury College, Vermont. Cindy also said that she learned about the basic procedures of teaching from her master's program, and she was following the "reviewing the last class, introducing new class, explaining and practicing, reviewing new class, and assigning homework" process still. The pedagogy can be generalized to teach other languages. For instance, although teaching Burmese (the official language of Myanmar) in China, Melissa applied the procedures and methods of teaching Chinese language as well.

Universities in China also facilitated participants' teaching via practicing with technology support. Miss E said that she had taken several courses where she could practice her

methodology and get feedback from faculty. She also mentioned the multimedia classrooms in Normal University (pseudonym), which can record her teaching activities so that she can re-watch her teaching repeatedly and learn from it: “I had never met such an advanced equipment in Malaysia, and it’s really useful because you can find your problems (from watching the video records) and your supervisor can guide you in a more efficient way.”

Participants also mentioned more knowledge and skills that they learned in their graduate programs helped them completing their jobs. Both Cindy and Miss E, for instance, agreed that theories and methods about educational measurement and evaluation helped them a lot when they lead language programs. Miss E said: “That course (Educational Evaluation) was very helpful because it told us how to develop exams…it gave me clear concepts on how to design questions and evaluate students’ outcomes.” Peggy, currently working as a college professor, said that she had improved her literature searching and analysis skills via completing theses in China.

Soft skills. Soft skills are the abilities that improve people’s general performance of accomplishing various kinds of jobs and typically include leadership, communication, and cross-cultural communication.

All participants, regardless various job positions, mentioned cross-cultural communication awareness and skill as the most significant soft skills obtained from their experience in China. Alice, a language teacher, explained how she applied cross-cultural communication skill in her daily work:

“Years ago, the students in Chinese schools (in Myanmar) were mainly [of] Chinese heritage, but as the China-Myanmar cooperation developed, Myanmar people have realized the

importance of Chinese language, so an increasing number of native Myanmar kids enrolled in Chinese schools. Now in my school, Chinese heritage students and native Myanmar students are 50:50, and with students of different cultural backgrounds in the same classrooms, cultural conflicts are inevitable. When talking with different students, I will first pay attention to their cultures then decide my communication strategies; by doing so we can communicate effectively and avoid many conflicts."

As a translator in Thailand, Dora had to work between Chinese and Thai companies to promote international business collaboration. Dora, from her experience in China, noticed that Chinese people are not willing to reject, decline, or cancel business cooperation face-to-face, but tend to do so by calling or emailing, in order to save the face of each other. She also said, "I know what Chinese people like and do not like, so I can give suggestions for my boss." Additionally, she can adopt strategies to soften the tones of both sides to mollify conflicts when they have contradicted opinions in negotiations. These cross-cultural skills made her distinguished among colleagues and brought her better opportunities.

Zin is in a Chinese-funded company in Myanmar, working between Chinese employers and Myanmar salesmen, as well as training the latter. He realized the differences between Chinese and Myanma cultures and how the differences affect cooperation. For instance, Zin said that Myanmar workers, influenced by Buddhism, tend to work slowly and always complete tasks later than the decided deadlines, while Chinese employers generally set tight schedules to maximize workers' productivity. Zin, therefore, had to explain the different logic to both sides to promote harmony inside the company.

Besides realizing cultural differences between China and ASEAN member states, Andrew also understood China's political ideology better after spending 5 years in China.

Andrew had heard a lot of negative comments about China and the Communist Party of China, like “no Facebook” and “no criticism of national leaders.” After comparing his experiences in China and Malaysia, however, he agreed that China’s political system is “stable” and “effective,” and “shows the possibility of another form of politics other than the democracy in Malaysia and some other Western countries.” This shift of mind has encouraged him to conduct research on modern China and Chinese cultures, as well as to introduce a new China to his students. Being familiar with modern China also enabled Andrew to understand his Chinese colleagues better and have “more common themes to discuss” with them. Because they can discuss entertainment, celebrities, and social news together, Andrew can build friendships with Chinese colleagues easily. Melissa, who works in China, indicated the importance of knowing China’s current political climates and the rationales behind policies, saying that “you have more advantages when negotiating with your bosses or colleagues if you are familiar with the policies relevant to education and immigrants.”

Language skills. Language skills is a fundamental part of employability in this study, given the multi-language nature of participants’ studying and work experiences. For both heritage and non-heritage Chinese participants, pursuing a master’s degree in China improved their Chinese proficiency greatly, mainly bringing them more standardized and professional Chinese.

Pan is a non-heritage Chinese speaker and did not study Chinese until entering college. When evaluating the benefits of studying in China, Pan kept emphasizing the importance of his improved Chinese, saying “many factories in Japan are doing international business with China so my language skills helped me a lot when I looked for jobs. And I know if I did not study in China, my Chinese would not be good enough.”

Sharon and Dora both listed Chinese proficiency as a "priceless" outcome of studying in China, which enabled them to apply for highly demanding positions. Dora's Chinese level had to reach HSK-5 (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi, "Chinese Level Test"), which is the second highest level, to meet the requirements of her current position, so she appreciated North University for improving her Chinese.

Compared to the non-heritage participants, heritage Chinese participants typically grew up in a bilingual family and have been speaking Chinese since childhood. Fluently as they speak, they tend to have strong accents and limited vocabulary, which may restrict them from taking highly demanding jobs (teaching Chinese for example) or working in China. Studying in China, therefore, offers them a chance to practice Chinese in an immersion environment, and courses on the master's level enable their vocabulary by adding professional words and academic expressions in the fields of Chinese language, cultures, and education.

Lily, as an example, said: "my pronunciation (of Chinese) reached the peak when I was in China…and I became confident to express my ideas and talk with friends in Chinese." Pink realized the gap in Chinese proficiency between her and her classmates who are native speakers, therefore decided to improve Chinese proficiency and "get rid of [her] accents." Jason had the similar thoughts to Pink and he learned a Beijing accent intentionally. "I think my Beijing accent impressed the HRs (when I was taking an interview) because they were very interested [in] my experience of learning Chinese…and finally I got the job," said Jason.

The improvement of Chinese speaking is only one benefit. Nearly all participants said they were struggling to follow courses delivered in Chinese, mainly because they did not understand many professional words, but after one or two semesters, most of them got more familiar with those technical terms and jargons. Zin said that he only studied basic and daily

Chinese back in Myanmar, and only in China did he "encounter professional and academic vocabulary." Sharon indicated that her biggest problem, in addition to her Malaysian accent, was that her vocabulary was "Malaysialized" and "sound[ed] more like Taiwanese than standard Chinese," so she made extra efforts to standardize her vocabulary to meet her supervisor's expectations, although she can communicate with Chinese people fluently.

Zin, Peggy, Jason, Cindy, Alice, and May all mentioned that their Chinese writing, especially academic writing skills, improved significantly when completing theses. Peggy said: "my supervisor had strict requirements for me so I had to use complex or advanced grammar structures to make my sentences more native and concise." Jason also applied his writing skills when in interviews: "I was asked to translate several paragraphs from Thai to Chinese, and thanks to my experience of writing [my] thesis, I can ensure I used correct word order and appropriate moods."

To sum up, pursuing a master's degree in China enhanced participants' employability by training them in technical skills, promoting soft skills like cross-cultural awareness and communication skills, and improving language proficiency comprehensively. Participants, with enhanced employability, are more likely to perform impressive interviews and to be productive in workplaces, making them better candidates than their compatriots who did not study overseas. However, the development of employability is limited by the lack of work experience, which will be discussed in the following sections. To improve employability, especially language and cross-cultural communication skills, was an important rationale that motivated many participants to study in China, although there were also other unexpected benefits, which are discussed in the following section.

Professional Network

Professional network in this study refers to the interpersonal relationship or network that impact participants' job-seeking and working. All participants admitted the importance of professional network in China and their home countries, and all but Zin and Dora got their current or previous jobs through their professional network. Most participants built new networks during their time in China, which is the focus of this part, although some of them (Cindy for example) relied on the network they had before going to China.

Relationships with advisors and class/schoolmates are primary networks that participants can build in universities. Peggy, for example, looked for job opportunities in her last semester in China, and she was told by a senior classmate that a college in Malaysia was hiring part-time Chinese lecturers. She therefore knew the chance and finally got her current position.

Internship and extracurricular activities are also opportunities to build networks. Crisa, in her fourth semester, was assigned back to Malaysia to take an internship at Malay University (pseudonym), where she impressed the college chair and her supervisors. She said: "I did a good job there, as an adjunct lecturer, so when the COVID broke out and Malay University lacked language teachers from China (due to China's travel bans), the chairwoman asked if I could fill the position. I was in Malaysia and looking for jobs, so I was employed as an adjunct faculty first, but now I am a full-time lecturer."

Jason interned in the embassy of Thailand in Beijing in his last semester which gave him an opportunity to get to know officials of China-Thailand trades. When Jason's current company tried to recruit new employees in 2019 to develop its business in China, an official whom he knows well recommended him to the employers and wrote him a letter of recommendation.

Relationships beyond campus or worksites also contribute to professional networking. For instance, May's girlfriend worked in a private international school, so because of her recommendation, May was able to take interviews and enter that school. International students from the same country typically have group chats on Wechat, Line, Facebook, and other social media platforms, in which they can discuss news in their homelands and share career information. Social media, therefore, has become important in finding jobs and establishing career networks. Melissa, as an example, received a job vacancy poster of Southern University (pseudonym) from a Wechat group of Myanma students in China, so she applied and got her current job.

Besides providing recruitment and interview opportunities, professional networks also impact participants' career development after they are hired. For participants who are working in universities, publication, especially international publication (co-working with scholars from other countries or publishing on international journals) is critical to their promotion and incomes, so scholars having international networks tend to have more advantages than peers who do not. Annie shared how studying in China impacted her publication: "the formats of publication in China and Malaysia are different, so I always need my Chinese friends or former classmates checking my format and language, if I want to publish in Chinese…I have some friends working in Chinese universities and they also need international cooperation, so we can work together (to publish)."

Peggy agreed that studying in China enlarged her professional network and said: "my supervisor and Chinese classmates often share conference information or paper callings in China…I don't feel I left China, I can still listen to and work with Chinese scholars."

A Master's Degree in China

Most participants agreed that China's higher education, compared to that in most ASEAN member states, is of better quality. A master's degree granted by Chinese universities, therefore, can bring receivers higher career outcomes in both China and ASEAN member states, than people who have no master's degree or receive a master's degree from institutions in ASEAN countries.

For participants applying for university positions, a master's degree is the basic requirement, while education in China is highly valued by ASEAN institutions. The university that Peggy works for is one of the top five institutions in Malaysia, so it has higher recruitment standards than most other Malaysian universities. As Peggy said: "a primary entry requirement of (the university) is a master's degree granted from foreign countries, or you must graduate from Malaysia University, the best in our country…I hold a bachelor's degree in [a European country] and a master's degree in China, so I think I had advantages on my CV. I am welcomed (by the employers)." Melissa echoed what Peggy said, saying that a master's degree in China also brought her advantages when she looked for jobs in Myanmar colleges.

Participants who applied for K-12 jobs also indicated the importance of a master's degree in China. From the narratives of different participants I found that, compared to Malaysia, postgraduate education is less common in Myanmar and Thailand, and students who studied overseas are less willing to return. Master's degree holders who graduated overseas, therefore, are more valuable in Myanmar and Thai job markets. According to Cindy, Pink, and Alice, they are, or were the only teacher holding a Chinese master's degree in their schools, so they tend to take on more responsibilities, hold higher positions, and earn better salaries. Pink, for example, said: "the school that I work for has courses from elementary level to high school level, and the

higher level you teach, the more salary you are paid. Because I am one of the first group of teachers graduating from China, I was assigned to teach high school students so I have the highest salary in our school." Pink also agreed that she is more capable to teach advanced courses than most of her colleagues, who are only high school graduates or bachelor's degree holders.

Participants working outside schools and universities also agreed about the value of a Chinese degree. Zin said that because of his experience in China, when he went back to Myanmar, he was confident in proposing a high salary when arguing with HR representatives, who accepted his proposal immediately.

The value of holding a master's degree, however, is being challenged in various ways. First, all participants indicated that it only impacts their initial salary, while the further promotion of salaries and positions are decided by participants' performance or if they have a PhD degree, and "have nothing to do with your previous education" (Peggy). Additionally, as internationalization of higher education develops in southeastern Asia, master's degrees obtained overseas are becoming more common and less valued than before. Crisa shared her anxiety, saying: "nearly all newly recruited young faculty have overseas experience and most of them graduated from China, so I feel great competition." Annie also indicated that among the six faculty in her office, five have Chinese master's degrees. Pink evaluated the competition she faced in Myanmar, saying that a Chinese master's degree is good enough in less developed areas but cannot ensure satisfying jobs in big cities like Mandalay. In this case, graduates of top universities and people studying in areas of better education (Beijing and Shanghai for instances) tend to keep their advantages, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Workplace Culture

Nearly all participants who interned or worked in China noticed how Chinese workplace culture differed from that in southeastern Asia. Andrew, for example, was impressed by the "996 (working from 9am to 9pm, six days per week) spirit" and considered it as a culture that Malaysia lacked. Andrew took "996" as a "necessary system" that developing countries needed to "narrow the economic gaps" between them and developed countries, although workers are required to work longer and harder than people in developed countries and this might bring some other problems. Dora also agreed that young Chinese people tend to be more "diligent" than European and Japanese workers, so China is developing faster than them.

Although workplace culture in China is overwhelming and tiring, participants who experienced it can "take higher pressures when back to their homelands" (Dora). Zin also said that his internship in China helped him to be familiar with Chinese people's working habits so now he can collaborate with Chinese colleagues well. For participants who wanted to challenge and improve themselves (Melissa, for example), working in China is an opportunity to live a fast-paced life, which is hard to experience in their homeland, and they like the fast pace in China.

Costs

Only a few participants indicated how studying in China had negative impacts on their career outcomes, and they all admitted that the impacts are negligible, compared to the mentioned benefits. Melissa said that Myanmar has changed greatly in the past years, both politically and economically, so when she looked for jobs in Myanmar, she found herself knowing little about the job market, and so finding jobs in her homeland became difficult. "I did not know if there are any companies (that fit my field of study) that I can work for," said

Melissa. Because she studied biology as an undergraduate student and taught Chinese language only after going to China, Melissa had no professional network of language education in Myanmar. She, therefore, "did not know much job information about teaching Chinese in Myanmar," and had less opportunities compared to people who had strong connection in Myanmar.

All participants but May received generous scholarships from the government of China or their institutions, which covered nearly all their tuition fees and living costs in China. As a result, Zin, Lily, and Sharon mentioned that they felt no pressures in China so did not prepare for job-seeking until graduation. Zin, therefore, said that he could have started looking for jobs earlier so he may find better jobs. No participants, however, regret enrolling in their programs since the benefits extended far beyond the costs.

Summary

The most direct benefit of studying in China that all participants mentioned was the improvement of employability, including technical skills needed in workplace, soft skills desired to accomplish general tasks, and Chinese language proficiency required in an international context. Additionally, experience in China brought participants professional networks, which is crucial in all the ASEAN countries, especially in the initial stage of career development. Holding a master's degree granted in China also increased their chances of being noticed or hired by employers. Because postgraduate education is less developed in Thailand and Myanmar, participants from these countries tended to have more advantages than Malaysian participants, who faced stronger competition and more degree inflation. Some participants also admired the diligent workplace culture in China, saying it is helpful for developing countries. Spending two to three years in China, however, may reduce students' connections with their home country,

making them less familiar with the job market there, and therefore cause problems like reverse cultural shock when they returned. The abundant scholarship and relaxing life in China, besides, had caused some participants to feel no pressures and to start job-seeking upon graduation only.

Question Two: Participants' Perceptions of Influential Factors

By applying both deductive and inductive coding, I found and then categorized the factors that impacted participants' career outcomes into international/national, social/institutional, and personal/family factors. In this part, I will describe each factor and how participants perceived that they improved or impeded their professional outcomes.

International and National Factors

International Cooperation. Cooperation between China and ASEAN member states has a long history and has been burgeoning since the signing of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) in 2010. The growing international trade needs people who are able to work between China and ASEAN, such as people speaking both Chinese and southeastern Asian languages, as well as ASEAN citizens who are familiar with Chinese cultures and markets.

Five participants (Zin, Sharon, Dora, Jason, and Pan) are working in international enterprises that involve trading between China and ASEAN states, and they all agreed that the stable and prosperous China-ASEAN trade created their career opportunities and is impacting their daily work. Jason, for instance, works in an international Thai enterprise that has more than 100,000 employees in China, and his main responsibilities include communicating between the headquarters in Thailand and branch companies in China, as well as promoting the business in China. Jason organized trade fairs and took business trips between Thailand and China often

before the pandemic, and the frequent activities improved his employability and experience in a short time, which made him eligible to be promoted to higher positions.

Sharon, Dora, and Pan are translators in international companies, and China-ASEAN trade not only offered them positions but also impacted their salaries. All their incomes are composed of a base salary and additional compensation, while the latter is mainly decided by achievement and workload. Participants, therefore, all appreciated the flourishing China-ASEAN cooperation for improving their incomes. As Sharon said: "(before the pandemic), I had new business negotiations to attend every week, so my income is higher than most of my peers who are taking other jobs."

International cooperation also encourages more students to study Chinese language, which demands more language teachers in ASEAN member states. As Cindy said: "(the number of) my students kept increasing in the past four years, and my salary gets higher as I teach more students". Peggy also mentioned the booming development of her college, where the enrollment in Chinese courses tripled in the past three semesters. Due to COVID-19, China published its travel ban and the transportation between China and ASEAN member states has been interrupted, so local teachers have been unprecedently needed in Malaysia, which created career opportunities for Crisa. Participants, therefore, have been benefited from the burgeoned China-ASEAN cooperation, which requires ASEAN workers and teachers who know China and Chinese language well.

International Recognition. Although China has built a close economic relationship with ASEAN, a mutual recognized education system between China and ASEAN is still absent, so master's degrees obtained in China may not be recognized by institutions or companies in some

ASEAN states. Pink, for example, when applying jobs in a Myanmar school, made great efforts to prove the validity of her diploma, including but not limited in offering enrollment certification, transcripts, and the email addresses of her supervisor and the dean of her department, and to persuade the employers that the program she attended is of high quality. Crisa also mentioned that Malaysian universities mainly accept job candidates who hold degrees from Hong Kong, so she was "less hopeful (to get the job)" when she applied for a faculty position with her degrees obtained in mainland China and Taiwan. Participants who graduated from well-known universities, however, faced fewer barriers when arguing with employees because of the well-known reputation of the institutions, which will be discussed later. Positive examples were found in Thailand, who had built a mutual recognized system with China, so Lily, Jason, and Dora had their certificates translated and recognized soon after graduation, shortening their job-seeking processes.

Immigrant Policy. Immigrant policy in China, in many participants' eyes, was "strict" (May) and "confusing" (Jason), discouraging them from staying in China. May's working visa application was declined and was told that she was incapable to teach Chinese language in China, although she had studied Chinese linguistics and teaching Chinese as a second language for more than six years. May, therefore, said:

> I think China just does not want to us to work in China…I have been speaking Chinese since I was born and studied Chinese for years. I am definitely good enough to teach." May further expressed her understanding of China's policy: "we must prove that we have unique skills to take the job. If you are a foreigner and your job needs your language capacity, your visa application will be easier to be approved.

Jason also agreed that China's immigrant policy limited his job-seeking, because no official agent or organization introduced or explained the policy to him and his peers. Given the absence of helpful guidance, he did not know how and when he could apply for jobs in China and for what types of jobs he could apply. Some participants, however, have indicated that the embassies of their countries have held orientations to introduce policies and laws in China, but no participants thought they understood immigration policy well, and no university introduced relevant policies.

In addition to the ambiguousness of immigrant policy in China, participants also mentioned that the regulations for international students were flexible or sometimes absent. For instance, many participants were told that they were not allowed to take any full- or part-time jobs before graduation, but neither their institutions nor governments inspected if they were working. The absence of inspection and punishment undermined the authority of China's regulation on international students, and some participants work off campus without authorization. Crisa believed that the loose regulation caused inequality, because heritage Chinese students and most Asian students tend to be "well-behaved" and follow the laws, while students from America or Europe were bolder to work off campus illegally, so they earned more and acquired more work experience.

Politics in Homeland. Politics in participants' own country impacted their willingness to return to their homeland as well as the stability of their jobs. Most participants said that their motherland had no policy to encourage students studying overseas to return, or they did not know if such policies exist. Crisa, for instance, said: "the government (of Malaysia) does not care if we come back or not". Given the lack of encouraging policies, many participants did not want to return to their homeland after graduation.

Political turmoil also discouraged participants from working in their homeland, which is significant in Myanmar. Cindy, as an example, said that she did not know how long the chaos in Myanmar would last and she was planning to pursue PhD study or to work in China when the interview was conducted, because she "[does] not feel safe at home" and wants a peaceful environment.

Scholarship Policy. All participants but May received different scholarships granted by the government of China, and Confucius Institute Scholarship (CIS), one of the most popular scholarships, requires receivers to teach Chinese language back in their homeland after graduation. CIS aims to train professional local Chinese teachers in countries outside of China, so applications must be from non-Chinese residents who study teaching Chinese as a second language and promise to teach Chinese in their homeland for at least two years right after graduation. Pink, Alice, and Cindy, therefore, all had to seek jobs in their homeland to meet the scholarship requirement, and they are still working at the schools they found right after graduation, although the two-year requirement has been met. This requirement, according to Cindy and Pink, pushed them to find jobs or collect relevant information as soon as possible, therefore facilitated their knowledge on job market and promoted career outcomes.

As the only participant who had no scholarship, May felt "abandoned" when she needed assistance on campus. May said: "all resources were devoted to students receiving scholarships, for example, faculty shared job information with them but nobody asked me if I need any information". Without any scholarship, May also had to work outside campus to cover the costs of studying and living, although she knew she was not allowed to do so. Due to the pressures of living, May accumulated much work experience in China and got access to an international education company before graduation, where she was working when participating in this study.

To sum up, influential factors in China, like visa policy and scholarship policy, affected participants' willingness and opportunity to study and remain in China after graduation, while politics in their homeland encouraged or discouraged them to work in their own countries. Although China-ASEAN cooperation created career opportunities for most participants, the lack of a mutual education recognition system had required Malaysian and Myanmar participants to make more efforts to prove the validity of their certificates granted in China.

Institutional Factors

Institutional factors refer to the influences happening on campus. These factors mainly impact the type and quality of education and service that students received, as well as the professional network that students can access before graduation.

Institutional Reputation. As mentioned above, degree inflation is happening in Asian states, especially in big cities, as the number of receivers of overseas master's degrees increases. Holding a master's degree, in this case, is not good enough to guarantee desirable career outcomes, and students who have graduated from high-reputation institutions tend to be more welcomed in job market.

Crisa mentioned that, when applying faculty positions in Malaysia, candidates will have more opportunities if their alma mater is well-known or at least heard of by HR. Zin's response also echoed this point, since the company he worked for only accepts applicants graduating from highly ranked universities. Jason as well mentioned that graduating from one of the best universities is an important highlight in his CV and was helpful when negotiating salaries with his boss.

Graduating from top universities also helped participants to work in China. Jason, an alumnus of one of the best Chinese universities, said: "to apply working visas in China successfully, you have better to have rich work experience or to be recognized as 'elite'…because I graduated from [North University], my working visa application was smooth, because they thought I am talent." Although this visa application requirement may help top university graduates to work in China, neither Jason nor other participants realized their advantages until they looked for jobs in China.

Inter-institutional Cooperation. Many participants, especially Malaysian participants, mentioned that cooperation between Chinese and ASEAN institutions can bring graduates more career opportunities. Peggy, for example, knew that Language University (pseudonym) cooperated with several Confucius Institutes in Malaysia, so many Malaysian students who attended Language University were hired by Confucius Institutes as soon as they graduated. National University, the institution that Peggy attended, however, had no cooperation in Malaysia, so she had to find jobs by herself. Peggy therefore said: "I could have more opportunities if I had attended [Language University], because many positions (in Malaysia) are only open to students graduated from [Language University]." Thanks to institutional cooperation, said Peggy, some graduates can find internships easily in their last year of studying, and they have higher odds than others of being employed temporarily after the internship. Beside Malaysia, Melissa also agreed that some Myanmar institutions tended to employ students who graduated from specific Chinese universities due to inter-university contracts. No Thai participants, however, mentioned similar cooperation.

Cooperation between universities and companies also facilitate graduates' career outcomes. Zin, for example, said that some Myanmar companies built long-term cooperation

with Chinese universities, sharing recruitment information with students and offering interview opportunities to students recommended by those universities. Graduates of those universities, therefore, know available positions earlier than others and have more opportunity to be employed.

Institutional Curriculum. Curriculum delivered in universities impacts the education content and quality directly, and also influence graduates' employability. All participants, as mentioned earlier, agreed that the courses offered in their programs were helpful in improving technical skills, language proficiency, and cross-cultural communication skills. Courses about professional development, however, were absent. For example, no participants were taught how to set career goals, how to ensure their own rights when finding jobs, and how to develop career plans. As Zin and May hoped, more courses on career development can make their programs even more practical and helpful.

Another weakness that six participants mentioned was the absence of elective courses. As Sharon said: "we were not allowed to select courses. Every course was decided". May echoed Sharon, saying:

> I had wanted to take more courses on Chinese history and cultures, but I could not register for them since they were not on my course list. I did not even have time to attend those classes because the schedule was in conflict with the courses that I had to take.

Although most participants were satisfied with their curriculum design, the absence of selective system may impede the training of cross-disciplinary labor forces and further hinder participants' long-term development.

Chinese is the most commonly used instruction language in universities in mainland China, and it impacted participants' language proficiency and career outcomes. On one hand, all participants agreed that taking classes in China is the most efficient way to promote their language skills, and via learning professional knowledge in Chinese, they can expand their vocabulary and improve the accuracy of their language. On the other hand, however, participants had no chance to learn and practice English or other languages in class, which limited their capacity to take more international jobs. Sharon, Dora, and Pan, therefore, all wished that they had taken more courses delivered in English, which is one of their working languages.

Segregation Policy. Because Chinese universities typically adopt a segregation policy, dividing Chinese and international students into different classes and dorms in most cases, international students have few opportunities to make Chinese friends on campus. Nearly all participants mentioned that they wanted to communicate more with Chinese peers, which could have improved their language skills and cross-cultural awareness. Miss E said: "I think I could have improved my Chinese if I could have taken classes with Chinese students together…having Chinese classmates would also be interesting since we can exchange our cultures and ideas." Peggy also agreed with Sharon, saying: "taking classes with native Chinese speakers can definitely practice our speaking and listening skills, and if we can have class, especially sports classes, (with Chinese students) together, I can make more friends and know Chinese people better". Dora also said that she would be more motivated to learn and use Chinese if she had more mixed classes (classes having both Chinese and international students).

Some participants, although they desired to take classes with Chinese people, understood the rationale of the segregation policy. Firstly, taking classes with Chinese classmates is challenging for most international students, even heritage Chinese students. Andrew, for

instance, reflected on his experience of having classes with Chinese people: “I had some mixed classes in the first semester and I was frustrated. I could not understand my teachers and classmates and…oh my… my pronunciation was too terrible. I did not dare to speak.” Alice also mentioned the difficulties she met in mixed classes: “my basic Chinese is fine, but because I did not know much professional words of linguistics or pedagogy, I could not keep up with the pace (of teaching).” Sharon echoed what Alice said, saying if there are many Chinese students in mixed classes, teachers will speak very fast and sometimes ignore international students.

Crisa shared her understanding of why some Chinese faculty do not want international students in their courses:

> there was a class in which all students could enroll, but the teacher did not like us, because some international students had challenged his/her argument fiercely in class, making him/her embarrassed…I also know that some teachers do not want to lower their speed (of instruction) for international students.

Additionally, Peggy said, because most people tended to stay with students from their own countries, for the convenience of communication, in mixed classes, “Chinese people will occupy the front seats, while international students will sit in the back of the classroom naturally, so we would not have much communication in classes. We are still two distinct groups (of students).”

Besides taking classes separately, another outcome of segregation policy is that international students live in hotel-like dormitories with only one or two roommates, while Chinese students have to share dorms with more people (ranging from three nine). Living in

different buildings reduced the communication between Chinese and international students, and impeded international students' acculturation of Chinese society.

Given the desire to live, talk, and make friends with Chinese peers, most participants said that they did not like the segregation policy. Lily mentioned that living with local people can both develop international students' language proficiency and help them know Chinese cultures better. Melissa said: "although I spent two years in China, I never visited real Chinese families. So I did not have a chance to know Chinese culture from ordinary people's life." Zin also regretted having no chance to learn how Chinese students' real life is.

Cindy criticized this policy from the perspective of equality, saying: "I absolutely want to live with Chinese people. I do not understand why we, international students, can enjoy such fancy dorms but Chinese students cannot. I hope we are treated equally."

Some participants, however, liked the segregation policy for it improved their quality of living. May, who had to rent an apartment off campus because she was self-funded, mentioned that finding places to live was terrifying and expensive in Beijing, especially for new arriving international students. "The whole process was annoying and I could only live with other seven people to make the fee affordable. I wish I could live on campus," said May.

Crisa admitted that there are many differences between China and Malaysia. Universities in northern China, for example, typically do not have individual bathrooms in Chinese students' dorms. Crisa, therefore said: "for me it would be hard to accept to use public bathrooms, so I think it good to keep the (segregation) policy." Pink also agreed this segregation policy, saying: "I like living with my friends I knew in my homeland because our habits and cultures are similar and we can communicate smoothly."

Jason, however, said that it is the cultural conflict that improves cross-cultural awareness. He said:

> I like conflicts between different cultures. How can we know and communicate with other cultures if there is no conflict or difference? So I really want to live and have classes with Chinese people…it is the best way to know Chinese people and Chinese society.

Segregation policy influenced participants' career outcomes in several ways. First, it reduced students' opportunity to practice Chinese in a real-life context, thus impacted their language proficiency, which is required if they want to work and live in China. Second, this policy separated international students from Chinese peers and society, limiting international students' acculturation in China and therefore impeding their willingness and capacity to seek jobs in China. Finally, participants' cross-cultural communication skill, a critical part of employability, was also limited by segregation with local Chinese people. The importance of social interaction and acculturation will be further discussed in the section about social factors.

Advisor. Although separated into different classes and dorms, international and Chinese students can share the same advisors, who mainly take responsibilities for students' academic affairs like course selection and thesis writing. Most participants mentioned that their advisors impacted their career outcomes, such as professional network, suggestions on professional development, and career expectations.

Participants talked about how their advisors helped them build or expand professional network. Cindy said: "I started my network in China from making friends with the Chinese classmates who were supervised by my advisor…we attended extracurricular activities together. We also discussed how Myanmar people learn Chinese and other professional knowledge."

Peggy also mentioned that her advisor asked her to attend an international competition for foreign-born Chinese teachers, where she met peers from different countries and built an international network. When working in Malaysia, Annie's advisor introduced her several professors who can be helpful:

> I benefited from my advisor's professional network…[my advisor] has some schoolmates, colleagues and former students in Malaysia so whenever I need assistance in work, like finding journal reviewers or evaluating job candidates, I can ask her if she knows someone who may help.

Advisors can also offer suggestions on students' career development, and given the absence of formal career consulting on campus, which will be mentioned in the next part, many students can only ask their advisors for career suggestions. Both Crisa and Pink, for example, said that they would ask their supervisors if they met any difficulties in work. When Melissa got the first contract in her life, she asked her advisor to check it to see if it was a good deal. Cindy, who had to choose between working in Myanmar and applying to PhD programs upon graduation, also asked her advisor for information.

The availability and effectiveness of advisors' professional network and suggestions, however, are determined by advisors' personal experience and interests. Advisors, therefore, can barely help ASEAN students effectively if they have no professional connections in ASEAN member states. Jason said: "my advisor tried to help me searching for jobs, but because he knew nothing about Thailand, he did not share any useful information." Sharon also mentioned because her advisor never visited Myanmar, they did not help her when she needed suggestions to apply for jobs in her homeland.

Advisors also influenced participants' career expectations and soft skills via daily interactions. Peggy appreciated her advisor, saying: "I did not determine to be a teacher until I spent two years with Dr. T (pseudonym)…I would not work in colleges without her…she has high expectation [of] me and showed me how to be a good teacher." Peggy also mentioned that her advisor, a specialist on Chinese and southeastern Asian cultures, paid much attention to cross-cultural communication, therefore improved her cross-cultural awareness and communication skills greatly. Alice as well agreed that her patient and sympathetic advisor influenced her to be both a good teacher and a kind person. Additionally, Sharon, Miss E, and Annie all used "mother-like" to describe their advisors, who not only taught them practical knowledge but also helped them kindly to engage in Chinese society and adapt to life in China.

Career Service. Career service is barely offered in Chinese universities to either Chinese or international students. Alice and Cindy mentioned that because they were granted CIS and must work in their homelands, their universities, in the last semester, asked if they had found jobs successfully or need any help. But Alice and Cindy did not know what help can be offered by their universities, since they had found jobs successfully by that time. Crisa mentioned that North University had teachers who are in charge of sharing career information. Besides these three participants, however, all others said that they received and knew no career service on campus.

Jason even asked: "Are universities supposed to offer career service?" After I introduced how career service in American universities operates, Jason was surprised, saying: "Seeking jobs should be students' own tasks. I do not think we should rely on universities…we have already received rich scholarships and it will be unfair (to other students) if we ask for more service." Peggy agreed with Jason's argument and said: "Universities do not have to help students to seek

jobs necessarily because I rely on myself….if you do not look for jobs actively, it is your fault if you remain unemployed."

To sum up, institutional factors typically have direct impacts on students' experiences and career outcomes. Great institutional reputation cannot only bring participants career opportunities, but also increase their chances to apply China's working visa successfully. Cooperation between Chinese and Malaysian and Myanmar institutions also facilitated participants' job-seeking, while China-Thailand institutional cooperation is to be established. Factors on campus also affected participants' career development: curriculum design decided what they can learn in China; segregation policy separated international and Chinese students into different groups, impacting the quality of education that international students received and their cross-cultural interaction; a capable advisor can ensure the quality of education, acculturate international students to Chinese society, and improve their career outcomes, but there are also advisors who can barely help international students; finally, due to the lack of career service on campus, some participants received no information or assistance when preparing for job-seeking.

Social Factors

Social Development. Many participants mentioned that the convenience of living in China is an important factor encouraging them to work in China. Jason, for example, indicated why he wanted to stay in China after graduation: "I think China develops very well and fast. Everything can be found in China…(China is) very modern, very advanced…but in Thailand, all good things are concentrated in Bangkok, so other cities are less developed. (If I returned) I could not enjoy such a convenient life unless living in Bangkok." Sharon also said that she felt safe when walking outdoors in China at night, since all business close late, while in Myanmar, people seldom play outside after 8 pm for safety reasons. Miss E and Andrew compared life in

China and Malaysia, saying that they missed the immediate food delivery in China, as well as the developed public transportation, including bus and subway. Cindy, Zin, and Alice expressed how advanced Chinese society encourages them to stay.

A more developed society, however, typically means higher living cost, which discouraged some participants from living in China. Peggy, for example, said that the high cost of renting or buying house is the "biggest difficulty" of living in China, and only high salary can cover the cost. May also said she had worked in Beijing but the salary was too low to afford her basic expenses, so she eventually left Beijing after graduation and moved to Hong Kong.

Discrimination. Although most participants did not feel that they had been discriminated against China due to their gender, race, or nationality, some shared how the preference for White people impacted their career development. May and her girlfriend had applied for the same position of teaching English in China together, and while she could only get 800 RMB per month, her girlfriend, a White woman, was paid more than 3000 RMB monthly. May attributed this difference to race and nationality, saying: "[The company] assumed that Malaysian people speak poor English, and because [my girlfriend] has a White face, which looks 'elegant' in students' and parents' eyes, she was paid much more than I…[my girlfriend] had only a bachelor's degree". This discrimination, according to May, was a factor pushing her to Hong Kong, where "multiple cultures and races are more respected". Lily experienced a similar problem when she had an interview with a Chinese company. Lily said:

> I think I performed well [during the interview], but the interviewers did not like me since the beginning…I think she did not like to hire a candidate who has an Asian face, because the company wanted to be international or, let's say, Westernized.

This discrimination discouraged Lily and some other participants from working in China.

Peggy also found the preference for white people after comparing her and her classmates' career outcomes:

> I know a girl in Shanghai who has only a bachelor's degree, and her Chinese is not as good as mine…I do not think she is high-quality person. But she found a good job in China after graduation, just because she looks beautiful and has 'foreign face'. You know in Shanghai, looking like an American or European is very attractive and can bring you awesome jobs, especially in English education companies.

She also mentioned a Chinese heritage friend born in Canada had only lower salary compared to other foreign-born colleagues, because he has a Chinese face.

Crisa, as another example, mentioned how Confucius Institute discriminated against her on the basis of her nationality:

> When I tried to apply faculty position in Confucius Institute, I was told that I can only apply the positions in Malaysia. I can only return to my home country…But I wanted to work in different countries to experience different world, so I finally gave up (working for Confucius Institute).

Crisa also echoed to what May and Peggy experienced, saying: "Chinese people are willing to talk with white people, and because I look like Chinese, I have to be active when I want to communicate with ordinary Chinese people I meet on the street."

As a summary, the convenient life in China, especially in big cities like Beijing, had a pull effect and encouraged some participants to remain in China. The high living cost and preference toward white people, however, forced some participants to return to their sending countries or other areas.

Personal and Family Factors

Work experience. Although most participants agreed that many factors can help them get interview or career opportunities, they also mentioned that personal work experience impacted their career outcomes significantly. Dora, for example, said: "To find jobs successfully in Thailand, your capability (of working) is the most important thing, then your work experience, and your network." Miss E also agreed that work experience is prior to a master's degree in employers' minds.

Lily compared herself and her friends, saying: "Some of my friends do not have a master's degree, but they earn much more than I do, mainly because they have more work experience….they started working as early as the senior year, so there is a five-year gap between our work experiences." This argument was echoed by Zin, who also noticed that he has been much less experienced than his peers and therefore gave up pursuing a PhD degree.

Jason, from the perspective of working in China, shared the importance of work experience. "To apply working visas in China successfully, you have better to have rich work experience," said Jason, who also thought he had only limited promotion opportunities in China given his lack of experience. Annie and Pan agreed with Jason, indicating that their salaries and promotion are mainly decided by work experience.

Family. Family-related factors impacted participants' career outcomes in many ways. First, to stay close with family was a main concern pushing participants back to their homeland. Dora said: "Staying with family is one reason (I returned to Thailand), because it will be difficult to visit my parents if I stay in China. Now I can meet them on weekends, although living in different cities." Lily mentioned family as well: "My grandparents are getting old, as well as my parents, so I do not want to leave them in Thailand and work or study in China by myself." Sharon and Cindy also decided to return to their own countries to stay with their parents.

Romantic relationships also impacted career choices. Pan, as an example, chose to travel to Japan, rather than returning to Thailand or staying in China, because his Japanese girlfriend wanted to work in her home country: "I hesitated for a long time before making the decision (to move to Japan), because I knew nothing about Japan and I did not speak any Japanese. But I finally made my decision. I want to live with her." May, as another example, had worked in Hong Kong for a long time but determined to travel to the UK, where her girlfriend was transferred. As Jason indicated: "I felt alone when I saw my colleagues having a happy time with families after work…they have partners and kids, but I am far away from my girlfriend and parents. That's one reason I wanted to return."

Additionally, participants also considered family responsibility when choosing jobs, so they tried to balance their own interests with their abilities to work near family and support family. Lily mentioned that she had considered working in universities, but finally chose to be a self-employed teacher in order to earn more. Lily said: "I wanted to earn more because the salary of the faculty position can only cover my own life, not my family's. I have to earn more to support my parents and my younger siblings." Miss E also said that she gave up her former job because it was too time-consuming and she barely had time to help her parents with family

affairs like cooking and house-cleaning. Annie, additionally, thought that females are supposed to take more family responsibilities in Malaysian culture, so she may alter her career path according to her husband's thoughts if she gets married.

Melissa, however, did not think that she can only fulfill her family responsibility by staying close with her parents. She said: "The best way to help my parents is living a good life. If I have a good job and I can live my own life, they will be happy for me…my parents' business got disrupted due to the coup that happened in Myanmar, so I am the only income in my family. If I can keep my job and salary stable, it will be helpful for my whole family."

Finally, parents' support is critical to participants' career choices, because many participants mentioned that their parents' thoughts were important when choosing jobs. Pink said: "My mom is a teacher so she wants me take the same job. I may not be a teacher without her influence. Now she likes my job and I know she is supporting me, so I think I will keep teaching in the future." Zin and Cindy also mentioned that they felt "confident and comfortable" to continue their job because their parents approved their choices or felt happy or proud of their current jobs.

Alice, as a counter example, did not receive much support from her parents and therefore was struggling between different futures:

> I like China so I want to live there, and I want to apply to a PhD program in China. But my mom thinks it will take a long time, maybe four to six years. She asked me: 'Are you not going to get married? Are you not going to work, to make money?' So, I do not know if I still have a chance to go to China.

Her parents did not like her current job as well, for they hoped Alice could do business and earn more, rather than working in school and taking fixed salary. Alice, therefore, felt "confused and struggled" about her career path.

Parents' roles in career development vary across different countries and cultures. Peggy talked about how she perceives parents' role in her job-seeking:

> Relying on parents is shameful in [Malaysian] cultures…it means you are incapable or have low competence if your parents help you to find jobs. So normally our parents do not engage in our job-seeking, and because I have two younger brothers, I seldom have pressures from my parents. They do not care about my job; it is my own business.

May's and Andrew's parents neither engaged in their job-searching nor offered any suggestion for their career development, which echoed Peggy's argument on Malaysian culture. Myanmar and Thai participants, however, typically mentioned how their parents supported or at least care about their job-seeking processes, as mentioned above.

Although personal and family factors are more individual than other factors, I still concluded common themes from participants' narratives. Personal work experience affected both job-seeking and visa applying processes, and parents' thoughts had strong influences on participants' career choices, although parents' roles vary by culture. Given the traditional thoughts in Southeastern Asia, family members and responsibilities are considered important issues when many participants make career decisions.

Summary

In this section, I presented the common influential factors mentioned by participants. National and international factors can impact participants' career opportunities and motivation to remain in China after graduation, and difficulties of having Chinese certificates recognized in the sending countries. Institutional factors are closer to participants' development of employability than other factors, since curriculum design, advisor, and segregation policy impacted education quality directly. Reputation, inter-institutional cooperation, and career services, however, influenced career chances and other aspects of career development as well. Personal, parental, and family issues impacted career choices and results, due to the family-centered culture in many Asian countries.

Difference between countries should be noticed as well. Although China signed economic agreements with the whole ASEAN, educational cooperation still exists between China and some individual ASEAN states only. As a result, certificates or diplomas were recognized easily in Thailand, while participants returning to Malaysia and Myanmar faced some difficulties in proving their experience and quality of education in China. Politics in each country also impacted participants differently: Malaysia has no policies encouraging overseas students to return, while the political turmoil in Myanmar reduced participants' willingness to work there. Thai participants refused to talk about their government and policies, partially due to the censorship in Thailand, which prohibited criticism of the royal family and government. Cultural traditions caused most Malaysian parents to avoid engaging in children's job-seeking processes, which is rare according to Thai and Myanmar participants.

Question Three: Participants' Suggestions

Some participants mentioned how they think Chinese government and institutions can change their services and policies to improve students' career outcomes, although most participants were satisfied with what they had experienced in China. May thought that the scholarship policy at North University is unfair, since it is neither merely merit-based nor need-based, but "nation-based," which means each country has a specific share of scholarships, so students from large sending countries, such as Thailand and Malaysia, face fierce competition, while applicants from the countries that send only few students to China can almost certainly have scholarships. As a result, May failed to receive a scholarship and had to cover all costs by herself. However, she met a student from Afghanistan who can barely speak Chinese and did not study seriously but received a generous scholarship, only because he was the only student who came from that country. Although a scholarship is not relevant to career outcomes directedly, it impacted international life pressures, which may affect students' motivation to take part-time jobs while studying in China. Scholarship policy also reflects China's attitudes toward international students, whose willingness to remain in China or return to their homeland might be altered accordingly.

What impressed the author during the interviews was, when asked "What changes on policies do you think that Chinese government/institutions can adopt to improve your career outcomes", many participants did not know how to answer since they knew nothing about current policies. This fact supported the argument that the government and institutions in China should devote more effort to familiarizing international students with relevant policies.

Both Peggy and Pan wished that their institutions could introduce the immigration policies in China once they were enrolled, so they can prepare to apply for a working visa as

early as possible. Zin and Miss E agreed with this suggestion, saying that they wanted to know more about the policies regarding international students and work in China.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the main findings of the interviews, showing how participants understand the career-related benefits and costs of studying in China, the factors impacting their career outcomes, and the changes on policies that should be made to improve their career outcomes. The results revealed that studying in China can bring career benefits to participants mainly by improving their employability (including technical skills, soft skills, and language proficiency), building professional network via interaction with faculty, classmates, and other professionals, and granting master's degrees.

Given these benefits, career outcomes are complicated and impacted by numerous factors, so attending a master's program in China solely cannot guarantee successful career development. This study shows that at the macro level, the policies in China and ASEAN member states, as well as China-ASEAN cooperation, can impact participants' career outcomes. At the meso level, institutional education, policies, and career services decide what participants can obtain from universities, while the difference between Chinese and ASEAN societies, as well as the discrimination in China, have impacts on participants' willingness to work in China or their homeland. At the micro level, personal work experience and employability are critical for participants' promotion and salary, and influence from partners and parents may also alter their career choices and paths.

Participants expected more fair scholarship policies based on needs or merits, rather than assigned according to applicants' nationality. They also hoped that the government or their institutions could introduce them the immigrant policies in China more clearly so they can decide if they want to stay in China after graduation and set career plans sooner. Most participants had no suggestions for China and the institutions they attended.

My last research question focuses how participants' experiences and perceptions vary by sending countries, and the results can be located throughout this chapter. Basically, participants from different countries also perceived influential factors variously. For instance, political turmoil in Myanmar has encouraged Myanma participants to seek jobs in China, and the traditional culture in Malaysia has forced participants to rely on themselves, rather parents, for employment.

In the next chapter, I will first analyze how different factors work together to impact participants' career outcomes, the connect my findings with theoretical frameworks.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In Chapter Four, I presented participants' perceptions on studying in China and their career outcomes. In this chapter, I will first summary my findings to respond each research question, then connect my findings to theories and show how my research contributes to theories and practice.

Research Question One: Students' Perceptions of Degree Costs and Benefits.

Most participants agreed that studying in China improved their employability, including technical skills, soft skills, and Chinese language proficiency required in an international context. Studying in China also brought them a master's degree and professional network, which are crucial for job-seeking. Studying in China, however, may disconnect participants with their sending countries and therefore cause reverse cultural shock or make them less familiar with the job market there.

Research Question Two: Participants' Perceptions of Influential Factors.

National and international factors like immigrant policy and China-ASEAN cooperation can impact participants' career opportunities and motivation to remain in China after graduation. Institutional factors like curriculum design and advisor may impact the quality of education, while segregation policy may influence participants' acculturation and local network. Institutional reputation, inter-institutional cooperation, and career services influenced career chances as well. Personal, parental, and family issues also impacted career choices, motivations, and results.

Research Question Three: Participants' Suggestions.

Although most participants enjoyed their time in China and agreed that they are benefited from this experience, some participants mentioned that they expected a fairer scholarship policy

and clearer immigration regulation, so they can have less pressures and set career goals as early as possible.

Research Question Four: Different career experience and perceptions caused by national or cultural difference.

The political turmoil in Myanmar has caused participants wishing to return to China to work, and the Malaysian culture has excluded parents from their kids' job-seeking process, so the Malaysian participants have to rely on themselves, schoolmates, or advisors.

Findings and Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory

The findings I presented in Chapter Four partly echo Human Capital Theory and Neo Racism Theory, showing how they explain ASEAN graduates' career outcomes. As HCT argued, pursuing high-quality education can improve students' employability and bring them career benefits (Fleischhauer, 2007). This argument is supported by my research, since all participants mentioned that studying in China equipped them with up-to-date and professional knowledge on Chinese language or education and enhanced their capacities to apply that knowledge.

China holds more highly ranked institutions than ASEAN countries and therefore is considered to have better higher education (Khosrowjerdi & Kashani, 2013). In my research, I found that participants perceived that they have better career outcomes in their home countries than their peers who did not have overseas experience, and those benefits include but are not limited to higher initial salaries, better chances to be employed, and higher productivity. For ASEAN participants, graduating from elite Chinese universities also brought them higher odds to apply working visa in China successfully. As degree inflation happens in Asia, however, the

value of a master's degree granted in China is decreasing in both China and ASEAN countries (Kariya, 2011; Mok & Jiang, 2018).

Besides those advantages, participants in this study also mentioned some cross-cultural benefits, which echo the concept of "transnational human capital" introduced by Gerhards and Hans (2013). In this study, all participants' jobs are international to some extent, either teaching Chinese language and cultures at schools or colleges, or trading between China and their own countries. Studying in China has helped them understand Chinese people's thoughts and behavior, so they performed well in bridging between two different cultures. Overseas studying experience also enhanced participants' language ability and tolerance of cultural differences, therefore improving their performance in international workplaces.

This study also adds new research areas to HCT, since previous studies mainly focused on how knowledge or educational credentials such as certificates improved students' employability, while this study emphasizes the importance of advisors. From many participants' narratives, I found that advisor was one of the most influential factors impacting their study experiences and career development. The vital role of advisors in Chinese universities probably has two roots. The first one is traditional Chinese culture, which promotes K-12 schools or universities as a big family, where all students are siblings while advisors are parents (Li & Du, 2013; Lo et al., 2017). Advisors in China, therefore, are supposed to cultivate students' academic achievements, mental and physical health, daily life, and career development. Chinese culture also considers foreigners as guests (Zhang, 2015), who should be treated warmly, so Chinese advisors generally help international students enthusiastically and offer whatever assistance they can. Many participants in this study also stated how their parent-like advisors helped them warmly and some participants even used "mom" to describe their advisors.

The second fact is the lack of career service in Chinese universities. Partly limited by the resources that universities can allocate, most institutions make efforts to improve students' academic success but ignore their professional outcomes, so career counselling is less developed in China than in the United States or the UK (Bao, 2014; Fan, 2012). This absence of formal career service requires advisors to take on more responsibilities for students' career development, including sharing job information, introducing professional networking, familiarizing students with working cultures in China, and setting career goals, as shown in Chapter Four. As a result, students' career preparation and outcomes are highly dependent on their advisors, so if an advisor knows little about the career opportunities in students' sending countries or the requirements on foreigners who want to apply working visas in China, he or she can rarely help international students.

The difference between advisors' roles in Chinese and American universities partly reflects their various rationales of higher education. As education becomes more commercialized in the United States, many stakeholders are offering education as a good, treating students as customers, and highlighting the economic costs and values of education (Kelchen, 2018), creating opportunities for HCT, which argues that "higher education is preparation for work" (Marginson, 2017, p. 287). Because HCT views human beings as "a machine for the production of an income" (Tan, 2014, p.433), it may overlook students' development in other aspects like overall performance. Additionally, HCT views students as rational individuals whose aim is to "obtain maximum outputs for minimum costs" (Tan, 2014, p.436), so each person is responsible for their own investment and gain.

These arguments based on HCT, however, are challenged in China due to at least two facts. First, higher education in China has been much less commercialized than that in Western

countries (Khan & Karim, 2014) and education has been recognized as not only an investment for employment, but for fostering one's humanity and overall development (Bai, 2010), so many institutions and students have not recognized developing career outcomes as the primary goal of education. Moreover, the collective culture in China encourages a paternalistic relationship between advisors and students, so advisors are involved in many aspects of students' life, and career development may not rank at the top. Advisors in China, therefore, may want to help students in their career development but lack necessary training and may be limited by their time and energy. As shown in this study, most participants perceived that their advisors helped them like parents but did not improve their career outcomes greatly.

Influenced by the traditional culture that highlights the importance of personal relationships, both China and ASEAN member states emphasize professional network (known as "*guan xi*" in Chinese, literally meaning relationship or connections) in working places (Chua & Wellman, 2015; Gold, 2002; Huang, 2018). Most participants found their first jobs with help from family, classmates, or advisors, who either introduced them to career opportunities or helped them to skip to the final round of interviews. One benefits of studying in China, therefore, was that participants developed professional network with Chinese people or organizations, who may help them in different ways. Given the importance of traditional professional network (*guan xi)*, its importance has been reduced by job-seeking apps like LinkedIn, which helped some participants find their jobs.

The findings also argue that students need much more than the knowledge taught in classes, because work experience and professional network are also vital in seeking jobs. One limitation that some participants mentioned was that pursuing a master's degree means devoting more years to studying before starting career, compared to people who do not attend graduate

schools or colleges. Those participants hence had less work experience than their peers and may have lower productivity or salaries at the beginning of their careers. This argument has been supported by Tran's (2017) research on the return on investment in a master's degree.

Improving graduate students' work experience effectively before graduation, therefore, should have positive impacts on their career development. China, however, forbids international students from taking full-time jobs, but does not have practical laws regulating foreign students' internship, on-campus work, and part-time jobs, so most participants in this study had no chance to work in China legally before graduation. The absence of regulation also confused universities, who do not know how to help international students find internships or part-time jobs (He, 2016; Liu et al. 2015). As a result, bold students (like May in this study) tend to work outside campus without legal protection, while law-abiding students typically have no work experience until graduation (Zhang, 2013).

Neo Racism Theory

The essential argument of NRT is that the differences of nationality, language, and culture, rather than race, are the triggers of discrimination (Balibar, 2007; Lee, 2020; Lee & Rice, 2007). For example, policies on foreign students and applicants' foreign accents may inhibit international students' job-seeking. Because many participants are heritage Chinese and have been speaking Chinese as the first or second language since childhood, their experience can test if and how nationality caused different treatment.

As mentioned, China does not have clear regulation on international students' internship and part-time work (Haugen, 2019), which limited the participants' chances to work before graduation. Moreover, China is not an immigrant country traditionally, so it holds a small immigrant population and strict immigration policy. According to the participants, international

students who want to work or live in China after graduation, therefore, have to make extra efforts to overcome different barriers, such as proving they are elites or specialists, or their positions cannot be taken by other people. Another example is that the Confucius Institute Scholarship (CIS), one scholarship that is popular among foreign students majoring Chinese Language or Teaching Chinese as a Second Language, requires recipients to return to their own countries and teach Chinese language there. Furthermore, strict immigration policy discourages Chinese employers to hire foreign workers, worsening the situation that international students face. In this study, Pink, Alice, and Cindy all returned to Myanmar for internships, as required by CIS, and finally found jobs there. Jason and Andrew both had wished to work in China after graduation, but the strict immigration policies have forced them to leave. Participants' experience echoes to NRT, since it was their foreigner identity, rather than race, that caused discrimination and extra barriers when they sought jobs in China.

Although NRT focused on the negative outcomes brought by discrimination, being treated differently, in this study, brought participants benefits as well. Many scholars argued that China has been employing internationalization of higher education to develop international relationships. For instance, one goal of enrolling foreign students is to educate foreigners who know and love China (Ng, 2012; Metzgar, 2016; Yang, 2012). Governments and institutions in China, therefore, are generous in offering international students scholarships, luxurious dorms, and many other resources. As a result, most participants enjoyed their study experience and wanted to remain in China.

Given the goal of enrolling international students: to serve foreign affairs, China hopes international students return to their sending countries, spreading Chinese language and culture, improving China's overseas image, and promoting public diplomacy. This expectation can partly

explain why it is hard for foreign students to remain in China after graduation, and it echoes one premise of NRT: difference in nationality is a trigger of discrimination (Lee, 2020).

Race-based discrimination is contradictory to NRT's basic argument but can be found in China and has impacted participants' job-seeking. China, partly colonized by Western countries since 1840-1949, exhibits preference toward White people (Saito, 1996), who have more career opportunities in China than the participants from ASEAN member states. This argument is verified by May and Lily, who thought they performed well during interviews but perceived that the employers preferred White applicants. This White privilege has been found in East Asia widely (Lan, 2011; Li & Liu, 2021; Moosavi, 2022) and shows a hierarchy of cultures argued by NRT (Ba, 2014; Shambaugh, 2018; Wade & Chin, 2018). In this case, non-White international students tend to face more barriers in China than White students, and it is primarily the social climate, rather than the government policy, that causes these barriers.

This inconformity between NRT and reality in China may be attributed to the different contexts. NRT was developed by European scholars and applied generally in America, and both Europe and the United States received a large number of immigrants in the 20th century, so they are experienced in dealing with people of different races. China, however, is not a typical immigrant country and people there are basically Asian race, so White and Black people are still rare. The uncommonness may heighten people's attention or interests on these races. Moreover, since most European and American countries are developed, White people have become a symbol of wealth, health, and internationality in China (Moosavi, 2022), so the employers of English schools, bars, and gyms have been willing to hire White people.

Push-Pull Theory

Push-Pull Theory examines the factors influencing international immigrants' motivations to move between the host and the sending countries (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), separating factors into pulling factors that attract students to move to the host countries and pushing factors that force students to leave their home countries. Gesing and Glass (2019) studied students' mobility intentions post-graduation and posited the role of reverse push-pull factors, meaning the factors encouraging students to remain students in the host countries and the factors discouraging students from returning to their home countries. Push-Pull Theory and Reverse Push-Pull Theory are helpful in explaining some of the findings, although they are not involved in my framework.

According to participants like Cindy and Zin, one important factor attracting participants to remain in China was China's comparatively developed society, where public transportation and other parts of social life are convenient, salaries are typically higher than in the sending countries, and politics are stable. Moreover, heritage Chinese participants tend to have closer emotional connections and more common cultural background with native Chinese people, and their language skills facilitate their living in China. Those similarities in culture and language also encourage participants to stay in China.

For most participants, however, factors discouraging them from working in China were more powerful. Besides the mentioned immigration policies, more developed society usually means higher living costs, such as house price, which are unaffordable for most young employees. Asian cultures, which encourage staying close with families, also pushed some participants, especially female participants who are supposed to take more family responsibilities than men, to return and work in where their parents live (Rungreangkulkij et al, 2019). In this study, staying close with family members was an important issue pulling participants like Dora

and Sharon to return to their hometown. Their parents expected them to work in their hometown and they wanted to stay close with their family. Many participants, therefore, chose to return to their homeland as a result of both inner and outer motivations.

Economic and academic connections between China and ASEAN countries have been improving in the past decade, so the number of positions where knowledge about China are required (language teachers, translators, and coordinators between China and ASEAN states) is growing in ASEAN member states, which attracts participants to return. International corporations play an active role in China-ASEAN business, and four participants worked as translators or coordinators to facilitate communication between Chinese and local staff. Cooperation between Chinese and ASEAN universities bloomed as the regionalization of higher education in Asia advanced, so scholars who are experts in China or Chinese language are now popular in countries like Malaysia. Moreover, as ordinary people in ASEAN member states realized the importance of China, students increasingly tend to study Chinese as a second language, creating openings for participants interested in teaching Chinese language in their home countries. These social needs are essential factors motivating participants to return.

Helpful as it is, Push-Pull Theory is too broad and can nearly cover every aspect of immigrants. To focus my study on education and race, I did not include it in my initial framework.

To summarize, HCT, NRT, and Push-Pull Theory can all explain parts of my findings, and this study also supplies an Asian viewpoint for these theories. To apply these West-originated theories in China, I suggest scholars consider the following factors:

1.Politics in China. China has adopted a localized socialism since the late 1970s, shaping an ideology that includes socialism, market-based economy, and traditional Chinese philosophy (Brown, 2017; Madsen, 2014; Su, 2011). The uniqueness in politics has influenced China's economy, diplomacy, and education, and has challenged many theories originating in western countries.

2.Chinese Culture. China has a long history and many cultures that began thousands of years ago are still influencing modern China. The collective nature distinguishes Chinese culture from the cultures in the United States and many other European countries (for example, the importance of professional network in this study). As internationalization develops, however, China is experiencing a conflict and fusion between Chinese and western cultures, so many cultures can be found in modern China but none of them can completely explain what is happening in China today.

3.Economic Development. Despite China's fast-growing economy, it is still a developing country and its resources are limited (Zhang, 2014). In this case, the relocation of resources is limited by China's economy, which can partly explain why most institutions in China do not have formal career services.

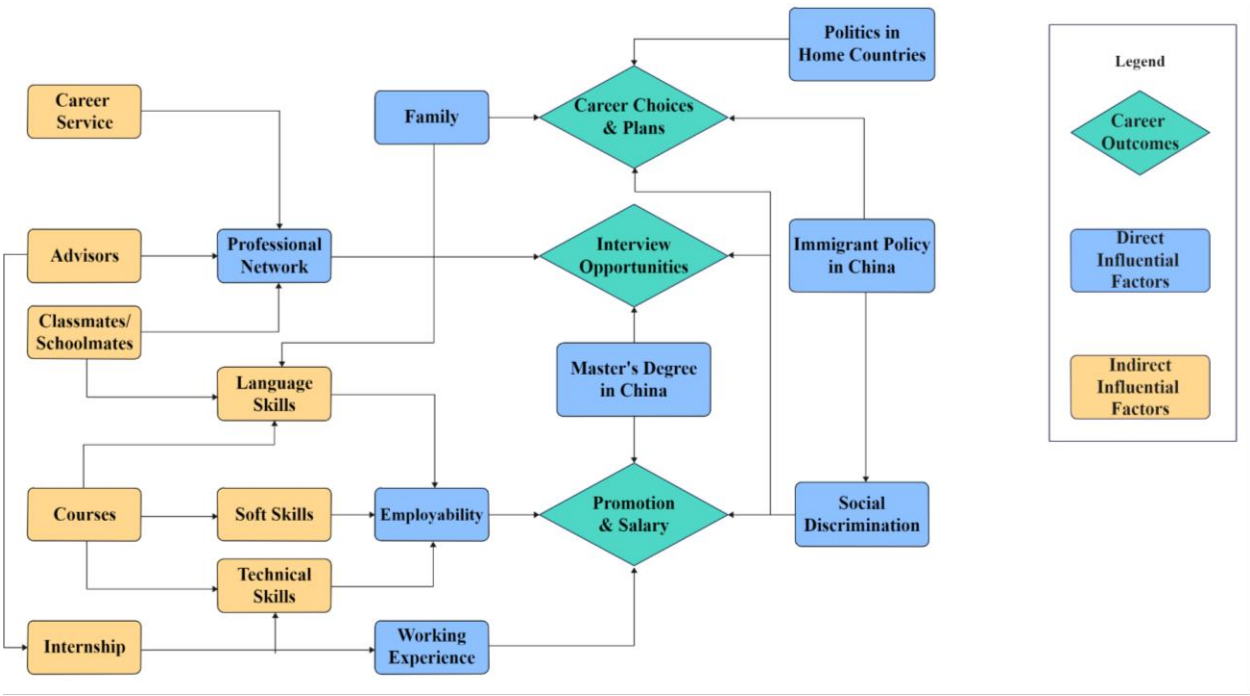
Just like China, Many Asian countries have their own problems and solutions. To hold an Asian viewpoint, therefore, politics in each country, Asian cultures, social development, and the aftermath of colonization must be considered. A comprehensive model aiming to investigate factors impacting ASEAN students' career outcomes, therefore, is presented in the following section.

A Model of Impacting Factors

International students' career outcomes are complex and impacted by numerous factors on different levels. The following model includes most of the factors that appeared in this study and shows how factors impact each other.

Figure 2.

Model of Factors Impacting Career Outcomes



In this model, international students' career outcomes, as found in the data, are divided into "career choices and plans," "interview opportunities," and "promotion and salary", and located in diamonds. Influential factors are divided into direct factors and indirect factors, and the former refers to the factors that impact career outcomes directly while the latter means the factors impacting career outcomes by changing other factors. For example, advisors, as a typical indirect factor, impact students' interview opportunities by enlarging their professional network.

All influential factors are placed in squares and listed according to their levels: institutional factors are listed in the left side of the model, social and national factors are in the right, while personal and family factors are in the middle.

As shown in this model, one factor can impact multiple factors or career outcomes (such as social discrimination, which influences all three career outcomes), and can be impacted by multiple factors at three same time (employability, for instance, is impacted by language skills, soft skills, and technical skills). The left part of the model basically echoes HCT's arguments, showing how education shapes ASEAN students' career outcomes. As an example, schoolmates and classmates can become participants' professional network and introduce them to internship opportunities, and interacting with schoolmates/classmates, especially Chinese people, can improve ASEAN students' language skills and therefore improve their employability. The right part of the model reflects NRT's basic arguments and indicates the roles of social discrimination and immigration policies in ASEAN graduates' job-seeking. Factors not mentioned in these two theories, like family and politics in the sending countries, are also presented. To ensure the succinctness of the model, however, some factors are not mentioned, such as segregation and scholarship policies in China.

This model is valuable in listing important issues in ASEAN students' career development and how they interact with each other. Its innovations include: (1) it separates education into several parts and analyze how each of them effects; (2) it highlights the uniqueness of Asia, by including the politics in China and ASEAN member states, as well as emphasizing the role of family. Comprehensive as it is, this model is not a one-size-fits-all pattern to examine international students' professional development, but it includes most issues that should be noticed when analyzing China-ASEAN higher education cooperation and ASEAN

students' career outcomes. Uniqueness in each ASEAN member state should be further examined in more detail to generate nation-based models. More implications and limitations will be discussed in the next section.

Implications

This study has implications for China's government, institutions, and ASEAN students who are studying or planning to study in China. The primary mission of internationalization of higher education in China, as mentioned above, is not commercial interests but diplomatic need. This function helps China prevents some problems from appearing with the marketization of international education in the United States and the United Kingdom, but also brings new challenges. Because the government scholarship has to cover all sending countries, people from countries that contribute few students are easy to be granted financial aids, despite of their needs or merits; on the contrary, applicants from major sending countries face fierce competition. Ensuring equality in scholarships would improve the quality and reputation of China's international education. Moreover, China should develop practical and clear regulations on international students' internship, part-time working, and job-seeking, like setting the salary that international students can be paid and publishing the laws that companies should obey to hire international students.

My data also revealed that China-ASEAN cooperation has facilitated ASEAN students' career outcomes by creating job opportunities. This experience can be transplanted to the cooperation between China and other areas: developing economic connections to promote goods and people circulation, attracting foreign students to study in China, and encouraging international students to work between China and their sending countries. This process is vital to

connect education, economic growth, and international relations, and it can shift brain drain to brain circulation, avoiding the loss of talent in developing countries.

Due to the lack of knowledge on current regulations, many institutions do not know how or do not dare to offer professional guidance to international students. For universities, therefore, being familiar and helping international students understanding current policies on non-residential students should the first steps to improve their services. Setting formal offices dealing with international students' career issues is another helpful method. Now, the career services and information that international students receive are mostly offered by their advisors rather than any institutional organization, so the availability and quality vary from case to case. I therefore recommend formal career service offices on campus, and all staff should be trained professionally to help both native and international students. Within the current immigration policy in China, international students are supposed to return to and work in their sending countries, so universities should bridge between students and their homelands. Possible measures include sharing job information and professional network, teaching resume writing and other job-seeking skills, and offering practice opportunities.

In this study, participants' experiences have been greatly impacted by the segregation policy, which separated them from native students. Studies have also proved that interacting with local people can help international students improve language capacity, build local networks, and acculturate to the host country (Floyd, 2015; Glass, 2014). Universities, therefore, should review their regulations on international students, mixing international and local students to encourage communication and improve international students' career outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

This study includes only participants from Thailand, Myanmar, and Malaysia so the results cannot be generalized to all ASEAN countries, especially when Singapore, which holds better higher education and economy than all other ASEAN member states, is discussed. This study only interviewed people who graduated from institutions located in Beijing, but a large number of ASEAN students are studying in Southwestern China, and their experience can be significantly different, given the economic and education gaps between areas of China.

For researchers interested in this topic, therefore, narrower but deeper qualitative investigations are needed. For example, scholars can interview graduates who graduated in different years but came from one specific ASEAN country to see how the relationship between China and their homeland changed over time and the impacts on their career outcomes. Researchers could also study how people of different races and cultures evaluate the influential factors impacting their career outcomes and see how government and universities can offer more specific career services to them. Studies based on Push-Pull and Reversed Push-Pull Theories can also reveal ASEAN students' career choices more comprehensively by covering all influential factors. Quantitative studies that include more participants are encouraged as well, since they can product statistical analysis of the correlation between different influential factors. Scholars can also compare how nationality, the quality and location of the university that they enrolled, age, gender and other factors influence participants' professional development.

In this chapter, I first connected my findings with prior studies, showing how my research contribute to the development of relevant theories. I then presented a model to visualize my results and show how influential factors and career outcomes interact with each other. Finally, I concluded the limitations, then offered suggestions for practice and future research. To

summarize, my research supports HCT in showing that pursuing a master's degree in China, as perceived by the participants, improves ASEAN participants' career outcomes by enhancing their employability, language capacity, and cross-cultural communication skills. My study also contributes to HCT by highlighting the importance of professional network in China. To examine NRT, my research discussed how nationality brought participants extra barriers when seeking jobs in China and how their Asian race caused difficulties when competing with white people in China. Internationalization of higher education in China and ASEAN member states, given their cultures and economic development, is different from that in the United States and the United Kingdom, so I listed several factors that should be noticed when applying HCT, NRT, and other theories in Asian contexts. As a suggestion, scholars should conduct more studies to reveal the problems in Asia and find solutions to promote students' career outcomes and the process of internationalization of higher education.

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Appendix A - IRB Approval Form

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
1 8 5 6

June 25, 2021

Ms. Yanhao Wang
Seton Hall University

Re: 2021-214

Dear Ms. Wang,

The Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled, "*Career outcomes of International Master's recipients from Chinese Institutions: From ASEAN Students' Perspectives*" as resubmitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study's approval as exempt. If your study has a consent form or letter of solicitation, they are included in this mailing for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Sincerely,

Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OTR
Associate Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Phyllis Hansell, EdD, RN, DNAP, FAAN
Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

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