

# ***Unknown in Alien—A Study of the Ethnic-Exclusive Group Socialization among Undergraduate Chinese International Students and the Conflict between Chinese and Canadian Interaction Order behind It***

**Zhaoyu (Steven) Chen**

*The Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE), McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada*  
Chenzy2002@163.com

**Keywords:** Chinese international students, Race, Group socialization, Qualitative community research

**Abstract:** In this paper, I will describe the qualitative community study I have conducted for the SOCI 382 course I have been attending. The first part of the paper will be an introduction to the community and my research objectives. This would be followed by a brief literature overview of previous research related to my research interest. The third part of this paper will discuss the specific methodologies I employed for this qualitative research. Next, I will present the major findings of this study and discuss their implications. I believe that my themes have provided possible explanations of the challenges international students face, as I have attempted to use a systematic view of sociology to interpret this phenomenon rather than from a more practical angle.

## **1. Introduction**

The community I wish to study is first-year Undergraduate Chinese International Students (or UCIS for short) who participate and especially socialize in a Chinese-oriented board game club at the University of British Columbia.

To shed a glimpse of light on the life of this group, I first conducted a preliminary analysis of its demographic before recruitment through the WeChat (a communication software majorly used by Chinese communities) group of this community. This preliminary analysis, focusing on the communication logs of this WeChat group, indicates that the community's central motive for action is to play tabletop games favoured among the Chinese population. The most talked-about form of games is the so-called "Murder Mystery games" (or "Jubensha" in Chinese expression)—a genre of party tabletop games that place a heavy emphasis on role-playing, communication, inferences, and large-group socialization. By allowing its players—mostly youths—to easily "ice-break" and express their identities in various scenarios, "Jubensha" has become a critical part of Gen-Z socialization in China and thus managed to gain trends in this club [1-2]. The second most discussed topics to date are Texas Hold 'em and fried Chicken advertisements. Based on my personal experience and belief, I argued that these conversation topics are very specific to the UCIS

community. It is also interesting to note that the group members expressed a degree of eagerness to meet and play these games face-to-face, which also resonates with the common mentality of Chinese youths following the pandemic. In short, a first look at the community provided me with a general understanding of their socialization-focused motivation, their predominantly casual atmosphere, and potentially their culturally specific nature. A later ethnography of the community then provided me with a more personal understanding of life within this community. The ethnography was conducted on a Friday night during one of the board game club's activity sessions. While the club has more than 500 members in the WeChat group, only about thirty to forty members were present during this session. Aligned with previous suspicions, the members present at the session chose to play tabletop games as their main objective. These games range from the most casual poker to the most hardcore "Murder Mystery games." All of them are more socialization-focused compared to Western tabletop games, which have a stronger focus on strategy and competition. Yet, despite the diverse forms of activities the community holds for its members, all these activities have a limited audience, mostly consisting of young Chinese adults, rather than other cultural or ethnic groups. As a result, the lives in this community are primarily filled with purpose-based social gatherings and activities that can only be appealing to an ethically and culturally homogeneous population.

Based on this presumption, I argued that the members of this community are experiencing ethically exclusive group socialization. I argued that the UCIS, who made up the absolute majority of this community, socialize or "hang out" in their own ethnic groups rather than with domestic students or students from other countries because their activity preference and the factors behind it have limited their capability to reach out to other ethnical and cultural groups and form inter-group bonds with them. This phenomenon interests me because, despite UBC being a space for cultural diversity and inclusivity, the ethnic-exclusive grouping of UCIS presents a picture of ethnic exclusion, contrasting with the university's image of being an inclusive space and the presumed Canadian societal ideal of a diverse nation open to all. As a UCIS myself who has also experienced not being able to "melt" into groups of local students, I wish to study how this phenomenon came to be. This research interest also resonates heavily with the sociological concept of a race and ethnicity-based interaction order. In Rawls & Duck's (2020) report, the concept of interaction code—or "interaction order"—is suggested to be shared rules for coordinating sense-making in the form of unconscious processes. When the interaction orders are incompatible between two groups of people, the automatic sense-making process is hindered, and people begin to question each other's character, competence, and motivation [3]. In their book, Rawls & Duck (2020) pinpointed that the cause of different interaction orders shared by white and black people in the United States results from past colonialism, which some whites seek to maintain. In Canada, however, it could be argued that while similar conflicts caused by different interaction orders persist, the causes and characteristics of these conflicts differ significantly from those in the US. A recent study on the conflict between Indigenous people and Canadian society presents a different perspective, one that reveals the conflict is not only historical but also social in nature [4]. I believe by looking through the sociological theory of the interaction order, I would be able to gain a perspective into the conflict between the Chinese and Canadian interaction orders and explain how it relates to the phenomenon of ethnocentric group socialization.

Thus, this study aims to explore the phenomenon of ethnic-exclusive group socialization by analyzing the experience of a UCIS board game group member through the lens of the racial/ethnic interaction order sociological theory.

## 2. Literature review:

Previous scholars have already studied challenges CIS faced while trying to socialize in, adjust to or socially integrate into North American countries. While many of their studies did not directly examine the particular sociological theory I am interested in, they did provide valuable insights into the lives of this community. Thus, several research papers studying either international students as a whole or CIS specifically have been reviewed to provide a background understanding for this study. In this section, I will discuss each of these sources, their implications for the findings, and what they mean for my research question.

The first article I would like to discuss is George Zhou & Zuochen Zhang's article about studying the challenges international undergraduate students face with socially integrating into the university environment, published in 2014 [5]. The author focuses on understanding the experiences of international students in their first year of study at a Canadian university. The authors studied 77 international students at an Ontario university, with 44% of the sample coming from China. The results of the study provided a systematic perspective of the difficulties international students have to face when adjusting to a new environment, as it has not only listed potential factors that have connections to the socialization challenges of international students but also categorized them into language and cultural factors. The interviews commenced by the study also looked into the specific phenomenon of ethnic-exclusive socialization, where it provides first-hand responses of international students about why they chose to socialize in their own group, mainly because they felt powerless to “melt” into the domestic students and that they felt lonely in their first year of study, which while did not focus on interaction order, could provide me perspectives into the life of my future interviewee and allow me to distinguish which factor is more sociological and which are not. And finally, the article also provides key information on how to select samples for the study on international students and why that is the case, providing me with a scholarly basis on how to select my future interviewee—who, according to the article, has to be a first-year international student because their experience showcases how this community accustomed to the new culture better than the more experienced international students. In short, the article has answered my research question about my community by not only providing perspectives on the potential factors that could apply to my interview participant, but also offering possible interview questions and information to help code their answers. Additionally, it offers a perspective on sample selection.

The second article I would like to discuss is Vander Tavares's 2021 study on the international students' experiences of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) [6]. The study took place in a “research-oriented university” in Southern Ontario, Canada. The author employed a case study approach and conducted seventeen semi-structured interviews, asking participants about their perceptions and lived experiences in Canada as five international students from diverse backgrounds. The results of the study identified four major factors of why international students feel unable to integrate with their new environment—a structural lack of socialization opportunities, the local student's minimized social presence on campus—which makes international students harder to become the routine life of domestic students, a lack of effort by institutions to bring diverse groups together, and a lack of intercultural awareness where such awareness is supported but not actually rewarded. These themes the author uncovered resonate with other studies that have chosen to examine the socialization challenges of international students from a practical perspective. They also provide a valuable example of how to categorize factors and results uncovered in my future study, which asks a question similar to the one in this study. In short, the study has answered my research question about my community by providing more supplementary information on the general socialization challenges international students face and providing themes that could grant me more insight into the potential causes of ethnocentric group socialization.

The third article I would like to discuss is Tang et al.'s study of Chinese international students' perception of their future life in university and beyond [7]. Unlike the other studies I have discussed previously, this study specifically targeted prospective Chinese students as the authors explored three questions to study future adjustments and beliefs of this population: What are the motivations of Chinese international students' choice to study in the US, and what influenced the formation of their motivations? What are Chinese international students' expectations of their life—especially social life—in US universities? How do Chinese international students view their post-graduate plans in the US? To answer these questions, the author studied sixty Chinese students currently attending Chinese colleges with the intention of studying in the US in the future, recruited from a summer institute program located in the Midwestern US. The results of the study tackled the researcher's questions by pointing out three major themes: Academic difficulties in America, Social Networking, and Parental Influences. The results showed that Chinese international students expect to face more challenges in the American academic system, are almost forced to develop relationships with co-nationals, expect forging bonds with Americans to be hard already and have parental influence as a strong influencer of their post-graduation choices. This article provided a perspective for my future research by not only introducing factors and themes that could have specifically caused Chinese students to face challenges in socializing in a Western setting but also providing me with potential opportunities to connect the Chinese population to some results in other articles that are more perennially applied to international students as a whole.

In short, the three articles I reviewed for my study have helped answer my research questions in unique ways and provided me with useful insights that will enhance my future interviews.

### 3. Methodology

For this qualitative study, I decided to use the semi-structured interview method to acquire data for analysis and ethnography to acquire additional data for background understanding.

A semi-structured interview is the main source of analytical data in this study. The interview would last for about 70 minutes, during which I would ask my participants a series of questions, including but not limited to their experiences with someone they met in China or Canada, their life before and after they came to Canada as an international student and their current relationship with others. While this interview focuses on only one participant, it allows me to delve deeper into the individual lives of community members I am interested in.

On the other hand, four ethnography sessions worked as an additional source of background information for this study. These sessions each last about three to four hours and mostly take place in either in-person or virtual community gatherings. During each ethnography session, I would observe the interactions of members in a specific community environment, where social interaction is often present, and even participate in on-going social interactions to gain first-hand experiences of the atmosphere and norms of the community. While only one of the sessions took place within the context of the Chinese Board game club, other sessions provided me with unique insights into how Western/Canadian communities interact, allowing me to compare and contrast the interaction patterns between the two.

The person I chose to interview for my study was given the pseudonym "Eden." Eden is a first-year male UCIS currently studying Engineering at the University of British Columbia. He has been an active participant in the UBC Chinese Board Game club and the games this community held for several months, though I have yet to see him in my previous ethnography session on the club activity day.

I recruited with specific criteria in mind: I wanted to recruit a first-year Chinese international student studying at UBC who studied in a Chinese high school before directly coming to Canada. I

chose Eden for a reason: Compared to students in other year levels, first-year students, especially students who came directly to Canada after finishing their Chinese high school, maintains their Chinese interaction order, for they have been drastically shifted into a new, alien environment where everything is not familiar—consist of new languages, cultures and educational tasks they had never seen before—without enough time to adapt their original interaction order to the new environment. This, as a result, can give me a perspective of how the purest Chinese interaction order interacts with Canadian society and the interaction order behind it and allow me to interpret the historical, societal and cultural differences between the two societies.

I managed to get into contact with Eden through Ian—a student who is also a leading member of the Chinese Boardgame club. I met Ian while I was doing my first ethnography on November 4th. As a first-year psychology student, Ian is surprisingly adept at organizing, leading, and hosting games in a veteran-like fashion. After further conversing with Ian about my study plans and my ideal participant, Ian recommended three candidates. The first candidate is the ideal participant: a first-year UCIS at UBC who is very sociable and even has a girlfriend. The second candidate is a first-year female UCIS who has a unique background, having graduated from an international high school in Beijing while she was in China. The final and third candidate is Eden, the participant I chose for this interview, who is also a member of the board game club.

I chose Eden as my interviewee not only because he participated in the community, but also because of his personal background. Ian told me that Eden graduated from a "typical" Chinese senior high school—and then came to Canada as soon as he graduated. While Eden was not very sociable compared to other potential candidates, he is more unique in his personality, as he has an active hobby that could provide me with more perspectives on how personality influences interactions between ethnic groups. I chose Eden in the end, not only because his background fits my criteria, but also because the first participant, whom I had wished to recruit instead, was unavailable for an interview. Still, being a "clean slate of paper" not much influenced by Canadian society, Eden is a great candidate for interview and observation, for I can observe the chemical reaction between ethical interaction order in a clear fashion and his status as a fresh UCIS could give me unique perspectives into what he feels about the novel experiences of socialization in Canada.

I examined the overlap between my research questions, research concept, and previous studies as I first drafted prompts and questions that I believed would shed insight into my research question. I then refined many of my research questions through workshopping with my professor. For example, one of my research questions is about my participants' experiences with the Chinese Board Game club. The reason I asked this question is that I want to understand the UCIS's idea of community through their own perspectives on Chinese interaction order. By asking my participant why he wanted to join the club, I can in term get a greater perspective into how he sees the social environment in Canada, and in the term, it gives me more insights into the social motivation of our participant and in term allows me to understand the Chinese interaction order's social goal: Does its bearer seek homogeneous community or otherwise? What do its bearers want from a relationship? And by comparing and contrasting with what we know of Canadian interaction order, we will gain even more insights into how the two interaction orders interact and challenge each other in various ways. The question then went through some changes under the suggestion of our professor when I visited her during office hours. During office hours with Professor L, we discussed how to elicit as many responses as possible while trying not to disrupt the flow of the questions. We agreed that by asking this question, the topics of questions could shift more naturally from the general life in Canada to their specific life details. L and I also agreed that asking this question also allows me to draw out more pursuit questions, for I am letting the participant talk here and will be able to ask things that they think are notable, instead of me wildly speculating. Like other questions that have

undergone office hours, what it is asking remains relatively the same, but instead, its location within the interview has changed. Other questions in my interview also follow this similar formula of forming through interest and then refining through office hours.

Ethical considerations have also been a focus of mine, as my interviewee deserves to be treated with consideration. There are several considerations I need to prepare for before the interview, so I can minimize the potential risk he faces. Firstly, as a UCIS who is possibly facing pressures from all aspects of society around him, asking him to recount stressful experiences in socialization could make him feel uncomfortable. This means I would have to respect his authority on whether to answer questions or not while asking questions in these areas. Secondly, he may also be triggered by some of my views, which might differ from his, such as my political views on the current Chinese government. To prevent this, I would attempt to limit my opinion expressions to a minimum during the interview and let him be the main speaker. Thirdly, there is a possibility that he may be identified and have his information exploited during or after the study. To prevent this, I chose not to include any information that could precisely identify him in any interview records, store interview-related information on my password-protected computer and make sure the data would be deleted as soon as the research had ended.

I also made sure that the ethical considerations of the interview mechanics and ethnographic observations were taken care of. For the interview, I have prepared a consent form that is translated into two languages for my participant so they can understand the content without a potential language barrier. Before, during, and after the interview, not only did I acquire signatures from my participants, but I also explained the consent protocols in detail until they understood. For ethnographic sessions, I ensured that all notes remained unseen by others by storing them on a password-protected computer and also did my best to remain neutral during interactions with community members.

A thematic analysis has been conducted to narrow down the results of this study. I first looked through the data I had collected and wrote down codes and important findings, which I would then cross-examine with other codes and findings I had concluded. For example, I first annotated my interview transcript and marked down my interpretations of the data, which I would then compare with my ethnographic note conclusions. Through multiple examinations, I would be able to narrow down a few central themes which would work as the final answers to my research questions. I also made sure my analysis and interpretations were mostly neutral by reminding myself of the ethnographic considerations I have prepared for my study.

#### 4. Discussion

I have identified two major themes through the examination of my data. These themes addressed my research question by providing a possible cause for the conflict between the Chinese and Canadian interaction orders, which could have contributed to the unique phenomenon of ethnic-exclusive group socialization.

Theme 1: Social Cycle of Networks and Opportunities.

One of the possible causes for why UCIS is experiencing challenges in socialization, I argue, is that Chinese society emphasizes opportunities through social connections. Within a Chinese social network, opportunities are made available, such as friendship and even financial support. Sometimes, such opportunities also lead to other social networks, which reinitiate a cycle of "get into a social network—acquire opportunities—get to know more social networks through that community," and thus more social opportunities and connections to social networks are made available to those who adopt the Chinese interaction order. I believe that it is the incompatibility between the Chinese and Canadian interaction orders that was then created, as the Canadian

interaction order does not emphasize this form of socialization and has a different take on why we socialize, which leads to Chinese international students feeling less motivated to interact with domestic students and causes ethnic-exclusive socialization.

My interviewee's experience not only confirms this assumption to some degree but also completes another piece of the puzzle—how opportunities reaped from social nets lead to more social connections.

Firstly, codes concluded by my interviewee indicate that not only are benefits transferred through the social network, but there are also prerequisites to form that network—long enough time spent together or enough shared history, or both. I have uncovered codes and examples during the analytical process of the interview that establish connections between the previous history with others and all forms of benefits reaped from that social connection. One such example is my interviewee's experience of his first arrival in Canada, where a friend from a long time ago sheltered him. This not only helped my interviewee adjust to an unfamiliar environment at a more manageable pace and manage his own illness in a secure setting, but also introduced him to more Chinese social networks in Vancouver. This could indicate that the stronger bonds the interviewee shared all characteristics of having spent a long time together/knowing each other, or having some form of shared history together.

*“When I first came (to Canada), my friend allowed me to stay at his home for a week, and there would be teachers and elders bringing me out of the house to take a stroll downtown.”*—Eden, explaining the history between him and this particular friend.

*“I got COVID the second week I got here, and it was my friend who told me what to do online. I got a self-testing package with their direction and just forced through the sickness.”*—Eden, discussing how his social connections with this friend helped him through a crisis.

*“I knew them since elementary school...we continued to keep in touch, and every year...After I arrived (in Canada), I asked him to help me...I only came here for below two months... I think that forging real bonds requires time.”*—Eden, discussing his previous history and then, in later conversations, arguing that it is the history shared together that creates bonds.

*“I organized many of my classmates to skip class because our junior high is really bad...When we come out and play, we would remember the times we spent skipping class together...we don’t really despise others, even if I got into a better school (and the friends that skipped class with me didn’t), probably because our relationship had already started when we were all young.”*—Eden, once again uses his personal experiences to tell how long time spent together and shared history can create powerful social bonds among Chinese students.

Quotes such as these give us an insight into how UCIS viewed their social connections as something that contains actual benefits. This can also be indicated by the interviewee's view of socialization—that it's a surgical tool to be sharpened to achieve some sort of benefit rather than a natural part of life.

*“I would probably go if I were familiar with the people inviting me (to a party). I will take this as a chance to practice my social skills.”*—Eden, explaining he would attend a social occasion because he sees social skills as a tool that can be practiced to benefit himself.

On the other hand, the “Cycle” aspect of this theme can also be observed among UCIS, as stated by my interviewees. Through his previous social network of a few individuals whom he participated in board games with, my interviewee was able to reach a new social network—the Chinese board game club—and gain more opportunities—such as more board games—that led him to know more people, eventually allowing me to get to him through Ian, the “middle man” in my sampling process.

*“When I first came to UBC...I personally organized some small-scale board game activities and got to know some people who share my passion for board games. Then some of them told me UBC had a board game club, and eventually, they introduced me to that community.”*—Eden, talking

about how his previous social opportunities led him to broader social networks.

I argued that such a system, which exists in the Chinese interaction order and is incompatible with the egalitarian outlook and socialization goals of Canadian society, contributes to the conflict between the Chinese and Canadian interaction orders, thus creating an alternative for the UCIS to ethnic-exclusively exclude their own group. Other minor factors also hinder the interviewee's opportunity to go outside this model, such as language and cultural barriers. During the interview, my interviewee regularly mentioned these barriers and how they make him feel "embarrassed":

*"I realized there are grammatical mistakes in what I just said, and that would make me feel embarrassed."*—Eden talked about how language barriers caused him embarrassment.

*"I cannot understand what the menu says. There are no pictures on the menus, and it's like reading exams because I don't know what they are selling!... I would just ask for a recommendation..."*—Eden talks about how cultural barriers hinder his ability to adjust to local ways of living

Embarrassment is a very special code because it connects theme 1 and theme 2. As something our interviewee is trying their best to avoid, it hinders their ability to socialize with strangers and thus limits their opportunity to go out of the Social Cycle of Networks and Opportunities model.

#### Theme 2: Social Goal: Harmony and Stability.

I believe that one of the possible causes for why many UCIS are experiencing ethnic-exclusive group socialization is that the Chinese interaction order prioritizes creating harmony in interpersonal and intrapersonal circumstances, whereas the Canadian interaction order does not. In the following section, I will provide support for this argument from two perspectives, as I believe they best demonstrate how the concept of harmony is applied in every aspect of UCIS's life.

Interpersonally speaking, I argue that social interactions utilizing the Chinese interaction order assume that all members taking part in the interaction acknowledge a common undertone. This tone can be harmless—like an unspoken rule, and it regulates the behaviour of all members of the community without obvious intervention. However, I argued that breaking that undertone by pulling it out or speaking it upfront is a shameful deed because the image of harmony and stability within the conversation and within the person has been disrupted. As we can see in the open codes concluded from the interview, if one side of the social interaction does not have access to this shared undertone, a feeling of embarrassment could be ignited. To avoid shame, those who do not know the undertone still pretend to go with the flow. This can be primarily shown in my ethnography session with the Chinese board game club. Before social interaction takes place, there is already a hidden set of rules forming between Chinese students. When a new game of "Werewolf kill" starts, all students are assumed to have a mutual understanding of what the game is about, its rules, and the conduct of interaction. No one would break the rule because while breaking the rules is not overtly punished, it does embarrass the rule-breaker as everyone would turn their attention to this person, making them feel pressured. For example, during the session, I participated in one of the games held by the Chinese Board game club and made a mistake because I did not know the underlying tone. While no one overtly blamed me, I was told to watch instead of play. The underlying tone can be enforced through referential language—that members indirectly reference the underlying tone without explicitly discussing it. For example, during my ethnography session, all members of the Chinese board game club discussed the rules of a specific game and assumed that all others had a clear understanding of what they were talking about.

On the other hand, without that underlying tone, UCIS feels uncomfortable. According to my interviewee, during the Jumpstart—a collection of UBC-held activities for new students—he was asked by organizers to go take selfies with random strangers wearing blue T-shirts. Despite all the strangers he met agreeing to help him, Eden felt uncomfortable participating in this activity, as he claimed:

*“Like you gotta pull over a random stranger on the street and ask them for a photo! I cannot understand this, it’s so bizarre...I came up to strangers and did activities with them without any previous context... literally embarrassing.”*—Eden, talking about how he felt interacting with strangers without knowing them.

Later, my interviewee gave a more detailed reason why he dislikes interaction without an established context or understanding: the feeling of not knowing how to react properly to a situation really makes him feel nervous. In this example, Eden argued that because he does not know what the right thing to do when going to a party is, he would rather choose not to go so he can avoid mistakes and, potentially, feelings of shame and embarrassment.

*“Because I do not know how to express myself in a party situation—I do not know what the normal thing to do is and what’s not... in that environment, I don’t know what to say to basically everybody.”*—Eden’s reason to avoid interaction without a pre-established context.

This works the same for the open codes uncovered about the menu—when the interviewee had no prior knowledge of the items and had no access to the shared undertone, he felt alienated.

In short, the underlying tone—or pre-established context—in an interpersonal context is crucial for setting up the image of harmony in Chinese interaction order, for without such a basis, interactions would be full of uncertainty, which could be what UCIS is trying to avoid in an alien environment. A previous study has concluded that acceptance of socially approved rules of behaviour based on ordered hierarchy creates a basis for the requirement for harmony, which could grant us a better perspective into the importance of this “conversation prerequisite” [8].

Intrapersonally speaking, I argue that those who utilize Chinese interaction order also seek harmony and stability within themselves through emotional stability. The key here is avoiding cognitive dissonance—that by not going against one’s code of interaction order—which will cause embarrassment and which the Chinese want to avoid—one can feel confident about their decision and their social standing as their decisions and patterns of behaviours are on the same page as the rest of the community—in other words, keeping their personal image intact and unified, which would, in turn, influence their sense of stability and harmony.

Firstly, confidence and self-esteem have been emphasized in my interview with Eden, giving us an indication of the importance of UCIS’s internal well-being. During a conversation, when Eden talked about his language abilities, he complimented himself despite talking about a negative trait:

*“I don’t particularly feel ashamed (for not speaking English well) because I always comfort myself with something like ‘I can speak some English while they cannot speak Chinese, not even a bit.’”*—Eden talks about his strategies to maintain inner confidence.

Later, the focus on avoiding cognitive dissonance through maintaining one’s self and society’s perception of oneself on the same page was emphasized in my interviewees’ responses. According to Eden, when he felt distraught, he would not tell anyone else about it, not only because he didn’t want them to feel worried but also because he did not want them to know his “negative side.” This, in turn, could indicate that he was trying to avoid the internal conflict caused by the different “iterations” of himself and instead wants to recognize himself in the same image as how others see him:

*“I don’t want them to worry about my well-being in a distant place...I just don’t want others to know my negative side...I don’t like how I look when I am showing those negative emotions.”*—Eden addresses why he does not want to seek help from others if he feels distraught.

I argue that to avoid cognitive dissonance is to keep one’s unified image. Based on our previous explorations, we could also argue that a supplement motive for avoiding cognitive dissonance is to avoid shame. The culture of avoiding embarrassment and cognitive dissonance is very prevalent in China and other Asian countries like Japan. Many aspects of Chinese society, either its previous literature works or its current ruler, try to promote an image of stabilized society—a form of a

unified image which could have influenced the behaviour of its citizens.

In short, I argued that the desire to avoid shame and maintain one's unified image contributes to the conflict between the Chinese and Canadian interaction order. As the focus on social interactions is drastically different, the incompatibilities led to a more conservative attitude within the UCIS population.

## 5. Conclusion

In this study, I have concluded three major themes that could have possibly contributed to the understanding of the phenomenon of ethnic-exclusive group socialization and the conflict between Chinese and Canadian interaction order behind it. I argued that it's because of the existence of the Social Cycle of Networks and Opportunities, the social goal of Harmony and Stability and the Social Structure of Stability and Set Paths that the unique aim and focus of the UCIS in socialization do not align with those of the Canadians, making them less likely to go out of this system and socialize in different settings. The literature I have selected for this article also resonates with my themes. Many practical findings presented in the literature can be explained through one of the multiple themes I have concluded. For example, the academic focus of the UCIS can be explained by the social structure of education, and the difficulties international students face while trying to "melt" into the life of domestic students can be explained by the social cycle or the social goal of harmony. I believe that my themes have provided possible explanations of the challenges international students face, as I have attempted to use a systematic view of sociology to interpret this phenomenon rather than from a more practical angle. If given opportunities to conduct future studies, I would love to interview members of the Canadian community so I can compare and contrast differences between patterns uncovered in two interaction orders.

## References

- [1] Yi, W. (2022). *A Research on the Spreading Characteristics of "Murder Mystery Games" and the Path Construction of Ideological and Political Education*. *Journal of Dali University*, 7(9). <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.2096-2266.09.010>
- [2] Mao, J. (2021, July 14th). Chinese gen Z's new obsession: Murder mystery games. *Vogue Business*. Retrieved October 23rd, 2022, from <https://www.voguebusiness.com/consumers/chinese-gen-zs-new-obsession-murder-mystery-games>
- [3] Rawls, A. & Duck, W. (2020). *Tacit Racism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226703725>
- [4] Perzyna, M., & Bauder, H. (2022). Threats from within and threats from without: Wet'suwet'en protesters, irregular asylum seekers and on-going settler colonialism in Canada. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473x.2022.2030083>
- [5] Zhou, G., & Zhang, Z. (2014). A study of the first year international students at a Canadian University: Challenges and experiences with social integration. *Comparative and International Education*, 43(2). <https://doi.org/10.5206/cie-eci.v43i2.9253>
- [6] Tavares, V. (2021). Feeling excluded: International Students Experience Equity, diversity and inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.2008536>
- [7] Tang, X., Collier, D. A., & Witt, A. (2018). Qualitative study on Chinese students' perception of US university life. *Journal of International Students*, 8(1), 151–178.
- [8] Lau, W. K., Nguyen, L. D., Pham, L. N., & Cernas-Ortiz, D. A. (2021). The mediating role of harmony in effective leadership in China: from a Confucianism perspective. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 1–24.