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**Sojourners and Social Exchange:
Family and Friends' Interpersonal Ties across China-New
Zealand Borders**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy in Tourism Management
at
The University of Waikato
by
XI WANG



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Abstract

Sojourners are peripatetic, making multiple, open-ended circular trips to other countries for a range of purposes. Nonetheless, sojourners retain interpersonal ties with their families and friends who remain in the homeland, and may return ‘home’ in times of need. The pace and direction of continual international travel appears linked to the family life cycle, yet the mutual interdependencies of interpersonal ties are not well understood.

A review of the literature suggests that this study is one of the first to explore the roles that family ties and friendships play in shaping the lives of sojourners and their ‘stay-behinds’ within the context of Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel. A key overarching question emerges to guide the research: What is the interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners abroad and their family and friends in China? Social exchange is the key scholarly perspective used to examine the nature and meanings of transnational relationships.

The researcher’s positionality as a transnational sojourner locates him centrally within the researcher-participant continuum, so he was able to create empathy and inter-subjectivities which uncover social dynamics and cultural nuances. A hermeneutic methodology extends researcher’s positionality into the research design, enabling mutual reflection and synthesis of respective views regarding living transnational lives.

Respective spheres of transnational family and friend interactions are captured in two samples: 44 sojourners (prolonged stay, freedom of movement permits) who had lived in New Zealand for more than three years, and 36 family members and friends resident in China. Paired roles in transnational interactions and nations of residence were obtained, although the initial intention had been to create family tie- and friendship-matched samples in both countries, but proved impossible to achieve. Consistent with Chinese cultural norms of respect and privacy, most participants refused to provide their paired counterparts’ contact

details. Also, it would have been too costly in terms of field work time to track paired widely-dispersed participants. Although this is a study limitation, the knowledge that paired family members or friends were not in the same study encouraged open and free disclosure.

The study used both video-recorded focus groups and audio-recorded in-depth interviews, conducted in the same timeframe to capitalise on the complementarities of each method, enlarge the depth and scope of study, and facilitate participation. Constant comparative thematic analysis was used to identify the themes, assisted by NVivo, a data management software package that helps researchers analyse emerging themes.

The findings contribute to new knowledge. Chinese sojourners abroad and families and friends in China tend to preserve the over-stretched ties that are crucial to their wellbeing. Family ties and friendships played common, but also very different roles in shaping their lives, evidenced by the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges.

This study also contributes to theory development, by indicating that social exchange theory is insufficient to explain all the dynamics behind transnational social interactions, in particular, VFR visiting and hosting. This study identified a range of emerging concepts that also influence the social interactions/exchanges between the two sides, and contribute previously unidentified dimensions that nuance social exchange theory for this context. For example, over time, a widening gap in the cultural backgrounds between the sojourners and those who remain in China develops, demonstrated by articulated conflicts and silences in their interactions, especially during actual travel periods. These potentially threaten the wellbeing of all parties. Also, the family life cycle plays a continual role in shaping family members' needs and felt obligations, giving rise to the fluid and continual transnational support exchanges.

Further, this study has implications for practice in an era, when COVID becomes the 'new normal'. From a micro-level, the findings may help populations of Chinese sojourners

abroad and their families and friends in China understand how their respective roles and the dynamics behind the social exchanges shape the wellbeing of all participants and transnational ties. From a meso-level, this study may help the Chinese and New Zealand tourism and hospitality industries identify VFR travel motivators, understand travel patterns, support the international traveling populations, and recognise the opportunity for developing domestic travel in a post-COVID, pandemic-aware world. From a macro-level, this study provides implications for future Chinese migration/sojourning patterns, identifies key issues Chinese families face, contributes to immigration policy making in host countries, and offers advice on looking after Chinese migrant families who cannot receive sufficient support from their homeland. Finally, the research limitations are discussed and some suggestions for future research were given.

Acknowledgements

Completing this programme means a lot to me. It is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. For the past five years I have lived within a circle of reading, learning, writing, and re-writing. I had never imagined how difficult it would be. As a Chinese sojourner, I experienced a lot in this journey, which gave me the opportunity to become a researcher, a husband, and a father.

First and foremost, I thank my parents for their great sacrifice for me. As their only child, I rarely came back to China during the past five years. They suffered severe illness but deliberately concealed all unpleasant things from me, because they didn't want to worry me. They always want me to focus on my study and my newly built family in New Zealand. As a researcher, I have strong empathy with some Chinese sojourners I interviewed. We have a strong sense of guilt for prolonged absence from our parents, a debt that we can never repay in this life.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 My Position in This Study

云横秦岭家何在？雪拥蓝关马不前。

Being surrounded by clouds and snowy mountains makes me wonder “Where is my home?” Even my horse is scared of the heavy snow ahead and refuses to move one more step.

This short verse is by Han Yu (韩愈), a Chinese poet from the Tang dynasty (唐). The poet was on his way to a distant place, far away from home. I could not find an official translation, so translated it in a way that best reflects my feelings and memories. As a Chinese transnational sojourner, I have a strong empathy with the poet. Sometimes, I dream about my aging parents, my old friends, and the place I grew up. When I wake up beside my wife and young daughter, I cannot help but ask myself: “Where is my home?”

My personal sojourning experience prompted my interest in this field of research. I was born and grew up in China. I am an only child. After acquiring my bachelor’s degree in tourism management, I persuaded my parents to support me to pursue a master’s degree in the UK. I wanted an opportunity to experience a very different world and to enhance my employability. After completing my journey in Europe, I returned to my homeland and joined an American multinational company.

Yet after one year working for ‘the richest person in the world’, I felt exhausted and disoriented and realised that I not only wanted to change my career path, but also needed another way of life. I do not want to work merely for money. Instead, I want to enjoy my life and live with a purpose, to make a real contribution to the world. I thus thought that pursuing a higher research degree while continuing my journey of transnational sojourning may be a better fit for the next stage of my life.

Chapter One: Introduction

I chose New Zealand as my new destination because it would offer me a very different lifestyle from my previous experiences. I applied to the PhD programme at The University of Waikato. While writing the research proposal, I decided I wanted to study something that I have experienced personally, something that I am a part of, something close to my heart, that is, living a transnational life.

What I did not realise was that beginning this exciting journey would not only provide me with the opportunity to ‘start all over again’, but also bring many challenges, losses, and perhaps, a sense of regret, because of the emotional costs involved. During the five-year PhD journey, I developed friendships with many other Chinese sojourners, including a few participants in my study. Also, I interviewed many stay-behind family members and friends during a two-month return visit to China. The adjective of stay-behind describes the people whose family members and/or friends migrated to other countries (Adugna, 2018; Baldassar, 2007a). Learning about their different life experiences and reflecting on my own journey, I gradually realised that sojourners are not the only ones who pay the costs of living transnational lives; our families do too.

As I continued to live a transnational life, I became increasingly interested in the challenges and tensions that sojourners abroad and stay-behind family members might face, the sacrifices they might make, the possible ways they may support each other across national boundaries, and the implications for their wellbeing and transnational interpersonal ties. This growing interest became the driving force behind my doctoral study. Indeed, it is my personal journey of transnational sojourning and the questions that emerged along the way that encouraged me to study the diverse life experiences of Chinese transnational sojourners abroad, and their family members and old friends in China. I wanted to learn about the multiple realities in their minds and their lives, to share their happiness and frustrations in the past, and plans for the future.

Chapter One: Introduction

In this study, I want to give a stronger voice to this international mobile population and their stay-behind family members and friends whose life experiences have been previously ignored. Particularly, I wanted to enhance my understanding of the roles of our transnational family ties and friendships in shaping our lives, focusing on the social exchange that the ties enable, the factors shaping the exchange, and the implications for our wellbeing and ties. It seemed to me that such ties both underpin our continuous cross-border social exchanges, and frequently present challenges and tensions.

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel represents an important means by which sojourners and stay-behinds can enjoy a short reunion and exchange essential support. Exploring their understandings of VFR hosting and visiting encourages participants to further elaborate on their diverse perceptions of the nature and meanings of their geographically stretched ties, in particular, the roles of the ties in shaping their lives. I thus adopted social exchange theory and VFR travel as my lenses, which led me to the nexus of migration and tourism studies. I hope this research not only provides a clearer view of living transnational lives, but also offers future researchers a path to a new and fruitful field of research.

Given my personal experience of transnational sojourning, I have purposefully written this thesis using both first-person and third-person voices to indicate my connectedness to the ideas being discussed and insert myself wholeheartedly into the research (Botterill, 2012). (1) I use first-person voice, when I talk about me, my experience, and my responses to others' ideas (e.g., introduction, my comments on the literature, my methodology, and conclusion). (2) Where I discuss others' ideas (e.g., literature, research context, findings, and some parts of the discussion and conclusion), I use third-person voice. (3) Just as I started this introduction with my experience, I finished the conclusion with my responses to the outcomes of the research, also using first-person voice. Of note, the first-person voice of 'we' refers to transnational sojourners, including myself. This approach has been adopted in tourism peer-

reviewed papers (Lynch, 2021; Ryan & Gu, 2010). The benefit is that my position is made clear to the readers as I move between the close and far-away encounters with the different topics, freely shafting my position between a Chinese sojourner and a researcher.

Having explained my position in this study, in the next two sections I briefly introduce the phenomenon of transnational sojourning, and explain the rationale behind the exploration of this field of research, through presenting the major challenges and tensions that sojourners and their stay-behinds face, especially in an era of COVID-19, so that an important question is answered, ‘Why this is a fruitful field of research that potentially contributes to the real world?’

1.2 Transnational Sojourning

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, global migration had become unprecedentedly intense and complex because of ongoing changes in immigration policies worldwide (macro-level), fast-growing international trade (meso-level), and transnational families’ changing needs throughout their family life cycle (micro-level) (Cave & Koloto, 2015). According to the United Nations (2020b), the number of international migrants had rapidly grown over the past two decades, although in early 2020 the coronavirus disease disrupted this trend. Even so, over 280 million people (nearly four percent of world population) were living abroad in mid-2020 (United Nations, 2020a).

Also, prior to COVID-19, this was an era of transnational sojourning. Many mobile international migrants tended to have patterns of multiple and circular trips from their home countries, departing for open-ended stays abroad. These trips were not ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ migrations (Wiesböck et al., 2016; Zufferey et al., 2021), nor ‘tourism-like’ trips away, but were repeated over several years. Before the epidemic changed the context, sojourners had a desire to return home or move on to other global destinations, actively changing their

migration strategies based on their family members' changing needs (McCann et al., 2010; Wall & Bolzman, 2013; Waters, 2011). I am one of them, a transnational sojourner.

Chinese people have a long history of international migration (Li & McKercher, 2016), which can be traced back to the first century B.C. when religious and political exile communities migrated to Japan (Lai, 2004). The implementation of the 'Open-door Policy' in 1979 initiated China's most significant economic reform, and gradually opened the borders of the once-closed post-socialist society. Since then, policy changes and wealth accumulation have started to free Chinese people's geographical movement, allowing us to freely emigrate to global destinations for a better life, resulting in the acceleration of Chinese international emigration (Biao, 2003; Li & Chan, 2018; Skeldon, 1996). At the different stages of my study in Beijing, I was jealous of the classmates who went abroad for education. Prior to COVID-19, China had become a major migrant-sending country (Guo et al., 2018).

Stimulated by the expansionist policies of the Xi Jinping era, people of Chinese descent were relocating with great frequency and intensity to global destinations (United Nations, 2020b).

In Chinese tradition, 'Sojourning' is considered a time-honoured necessity and an important survival strategy (Ip & Liu, 2008). We sometimes move to a distant place and stay there temporarily for various reasons, such as education and career development. Given our long-standing tradition of sojourning, we are flexible in this rapidly changing world, and highly resilient in difficult circumstances (Ip, 2011). Before the epidemic, Chinese transnational sojourners' migration trajectories were multiple and circular in nature. We tended to seek to be 'citizens of the world', rather than permanently staying in one host country (Benton & Gomez, 2014). We actively changed our migration strategies to meet our family members' changing needs throughout the family life cycle (Guo, 2016; Ho, 2014; Liu & Wu, 2017). For example, Tu (2016) indicated that unmarried Chinese migrants in the UK are inclined to return to China, because of their felt obligations to stay-behind parents, while

their married cohorts tend to settle abroad for their children's wellbeing. Transnational sojourners often have more than one homes and simultaneously 'live between homes', as they maintain close ties with their stay-behinds, continually exchange support, and participate in VFR visiting and hosting.

1.2.1 Living Between Homes

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional boundary between 'home and away' had been increasingly blurred (Choi & Fu, 2018), because transnational sojourners no longer attempt to fully integrate into host societies, or completely abandon the baggage of former lives (Kelly & Lusi, 2006). New means of communication and reduced costs of transportation allow us to simultaneously live in both our countries of residence and origin, creating borderless social worlds (Bell, 2016; Bilgili, 2014; Davidson & Kuah-Pearce, 2008). Along our sojourning trajectories, we intentionally preserve our ties with our stay-behind families (Appadurai, 1996; Bryceson, 2019) and friends (Herz, 2015; Lobburi, 2012; Robertson, 2018), which act as a conceptual bridge that enables continuous exchanges of support across national boundaries (Boccagni, 2015; De Silva, 2018; Kornienko et al., 2018).

Just like other international mobile populations, Chinese sojourners tend to live 'between homes' (Chan, 2003; Ip, 2011; Liu, 2013), by intentionally maintaining social connections with our stay-behind family members and friends (Chao & Ma, 2017; Ip, 2006b). In particular, Chinese stay-behind parents and migrant children actively pursue a sense of 'familyhood', by making great efforts to maintain emotional closeness (Ip et al., 2007; Liu et al., 2018), or "long-distance intimacy" (Tu, 2016, p. 12), which underpins the continuous exchange of essential support between the two sides (Guo et al., 2018; Li & Chong, 2012; Wang, 2016). When I discussed the idea of 'living between homes' with my Chinese friends in New Zealand, we realised that we have been continually living in China after emigration.

Chapter One: Introduction

We read Chinese news, watch Chinese TV shows, eat Chinese food, and contact our stay-behind families and friends on a daily basis. We just physically reside in New Zealand.

Before the pandemic, international VFR travel contributes to the emerging phenomenon of living between homes. As Janta et al. (2015) indicated, after World War II, VFR travel has become a driving force behind the growth of the global tourism industry. Although new means of communication have created imagined forms of co-presence, VFR travel is still deemed an essential means by which sojourners and stay-behinds can better preserve their over-stretched ties and exchange various forms of support (Griffin, 2015; Janta et al., 2015; King & Lulle, 2015). Baldassar and Bryceson are the researchers who inspired me to use the adjective of over-stretched to describe the geographically stretched ties between migrants abroad and their family members and friends in countries of origin (Baldassar, 2007a; Baldassar et al., 2014; Bryceson, 2019). For instance, for some Chinese stay-behind parents, visiting their migrant children was a means by which they can provide childcare assistance (Da, 2003; Y. Q. Zhou, 2012), while enjoying a short family reunion that greatly improves their emotional wellbeing (Shin & Sok, 2012; Ye & Chen, 2014; Zurlo et al., 2014).

However, VFR tourism is still an understudied field of research (Backer, 2019). Although it has received some scholarly attention in recent decades (Seaton, 2017), most studies have focussed on its economic contribution. Only a few studies have explored its social aspects (Yousuf & Backer, 2015), such as the effects of VFR travel on wellbeing (Backer & King, 2017), and the roles of interpersonal ties in shaping VFR travel (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Griffin, 2014; Janta et al., 2015). This suggests a research opportunity that builds on and contributes to current research.

1.2.2 New Zealand: A Home of Transnational Sojourners

New Zealand, or Aotearoa in Māori, is a hub of transnational sojourning. Chinese were first brought to New Zealand as goldminers in 1866, but they were not encouraged to remain, and their stay-behind family members were not permitted to join them (Ip & Liu, 2008). The 1987 Immigration Act opened New Zealand to a wide range of immigrants (Trlin, 1992), and led to the arrival of new Chinese migrants (Feng et al., 2011; Ip, 2011). The 2018 census shows that Chinese have become the third largest ethnicity in New Zealand (close to five percent of the total population) and there are nearly 133,000 Chinese residents in the country who were born in China (Statistics New Zealand, 2020).

New Zealand is an ideal social setting in which to study Chinese transnational sojourning. It has a social structure formed under a treaty between Maori and the British Crown. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, New Zealand has controlled migration and welcomes international migrants who meet clearly stated and openly administered immigration criteria (Ip, 2011), a home to more than 200 ethnic groups and 160 different languages (Chan, 2017). Chinese VFR visitors represented a valuable market for New Zealand's tourism industry, growing to over 40,000 annual visits that contributed approximately 200 million NZD to the country's economy every year (Statistics New Zealand, 2019), since Chinese sojourners identified New Zealand as a preferred destination.

1.2.3 Impacts of Coronavirus

I started this PhD journey on 1st August 2016 and collected the life experiences of Chinese sojourners in New Zealand and stay-behind families and friends in China in 2017. At the beginning of 2020, the outbreak of coronavirus disease quickly changed the research context, although the data still provides a valuable view of living transnational lives before

the pandemic, which is important for understanding the impacts of COVID-19 on the lives of Chinese transnational sojourners and their stay-behinds.

International migration. The coronavirus disease has fundamentally changed international migration patterns worldwide (Boucher et al., 2021), and leads to a decline of international migration stock for the first time in the past seven decades (Ratha, 2021).

From a macro-level, to reduce the magnitude and mobilities of the virus and its variants (e.g., Delta), many countries have unprecedentedly changed travel/immigration policies, such as the staccato, unpredictable, and uneven patterns of opening/closing of borders (Farzanegan et al., 2021; Ramji-Nogales & Goldner Lang, 2020), imposed/lifted travel bans to non-citizens (Adekunle et al., 2020; Triandafyllidou, 2020), mandatory symptom screening and quarantine (Papademetriou & Hooper, 2020; Zhu et al., 2021), the changes in visa rules and delays in visa processing (Boucher et al., 2021), and domestic mobility restrictions (e.g., self-isolation and lockdowns) (Niewiadomski, 2020; Seyfi et al., 2020), which collectively caused the fast decline in global human mobility (Gössling et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2020; Martin & Bergmann, 2021).

New Zealand has been doing relatively well in fighting the virus, because of the geographical isolation and highest level of restrictions (McDougall, 2021). However, this has significantly constrained the exchange of support between Chinese sojourners and stay-behinds, especially from the sojourners' retired stay-behind parents who traditionally visit to help with childcare. The sudden closure of New Zealand-China border eliminated this option, forcing some migrant families to reluctantly send their new-borns to daycare. I have strong empathy with those families who had to change their plans for raising their children after the COVID-19 outbreak, as my first child was born just a few days before New Zealand's first national lockdown. This reflects that Chinese VFR tourism is not only important for New Zealand's economy, but also greatly impacts Chinese transnational families' wellbeing.

Some researchers claimed that the policies may have long-term consequences (O'Brien & Eger, 2020). For instance, developed countries increasingly prefer high-skilled and high-salary migrants (Boucher et al., 2021). Since the COVID-19 outbreak, New Zealand has closed down routes for unskilled and temporary migration, and largely increased the requirements and processing time for 'skilled migrant' applications. As Adey et al. (2021) indicated, the world may have entered 'a new era of heavily controlled movement'.

From a meso-level, countries shut down their economies, which leads to reduced demand for labour (Martin & Bergmann, 2021), forcing migrant workers to return home (Lee et al., 2021), so that the flow of international remittances to low-income families have been disrupted (Ratha, 2021; Withers et al., 2021). From a micro-level, the pandemic and some policies may lead to increased prejudice/xenophobia against Asian migrants (Bianco et al., 2021). Since the pandemic, I noticed that some people, especially politicians, deliberately called coronavirus 'China Virus', which is inaccurate and xenophobic (The Washington Post, 2020, May 20).

Travel and tourism. Some researchers claimed that the ease of travel in the previous era of globalisation facilitated the spread of the epidemic (Farzanegan et al., 2021; Niewiadomski, 2020), which in turn seriously disrupted global economy, especially international and domestic travel and tourism (Adey et al., 2021; Gössling et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021; Neuburger & Egger, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021), reflecting a temporary de-globalisation.

However, some researchers claimed that we may never return to the 'normality' that we experienced before COVID-19, because the pandemic has brought enduring changes to the nature and dynamics of human mobility worldwide (e.g., migration, travel, and tourism) (Cresswell, 2021; Miao et al., 2021; Rose-Redwood et al., 2020). Instead, the world has been

experiencing a substantial transformation, and we may face a ‘new normality’ in general, and tourism in specific (Lew et al., 2020).

Travellers’ behaviours have significantly changed, because of the external (e.g., travel restrictions) and internal (e.g., perceived health risk and travel anxiety) impacts of the pandemic (Bratić et al., 2021; Chua et al., 2021; Neuburger & Egger, 2021). For example, the epidemic evoked an unprecedented level of travel fear among Chinese tourists, who have become more cautious about travel (Wen et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2021), and tend to avoid participating in international travel (Liu et al., 2021). Also, the economic impacts reduced individuals’ capabilities in participating in international travel (i.e., impoverishment), contributing to increased involuntary immobility (Martin & Bergmann, 2021).

In addition, some researchers argued that a trend of localisation is likely to emerge in tourism sector worldwide. For instance, some researchers claimed that China has almost ‘overcome’ COVID-19, and identified a clear trend of localised travel (Miao et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Such a trend is also expected to emerge in other countries that have experienced the transformation of tourism, such as Canada (Lapointe, 2020), Serbia (Bratić et al., 2021), Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Neuburger & Egger, 2021). In mid 2020, Tourism New Zealand launched a campaign, ‘Do Something New, New Zealand’, to encourage domestic tourism (Tourism New Zealand, 2020). Meanwhile, the avoidance of international travel is likely to remain worldwide (Martin & Bergmann, 2021). The next section introduces the rationale for studying this field of research.

1.3 Rationale

The rationale for conducting my study lies in the challenges and tensions transnational sojourners and their stay-behinds face. In a family sphere of living transnational lives, prolonged separation between far-away family members not only potentially weakens

over-stretched family ties (Baldassar et al., 2016; Janta et al., 2015), but also frequently constrains family-based support exchange (Graham & Jordan, 2011; Simich et al., 2010). Baldassar and Larsen influenced me in adopting the adjective of far-away to describe a situation where migrants abroad and families and friends in countries of origin become experientially distant from each other (Baldassar, 2008; Larsen, 2008; Larsen et al., 2007). As an equivalent of ‘geographically dispersed/scattered’, it equally talks about migrants abroad and stay-behinds (families and friends) from each other’s point of view. This thereby threatens the wellbeing of the sojourners (Baldassar, 2008; Chen, 2004; Collins, 2010) and their stay-behind families (Boccagni, 2015; Janta et al., 2015; Vullnetari & King, 2008).

In Chinese transnational families, prolonged separation threatens over-stretched family ties (Waters, 2011), and puts severe stress on family wellbeing. Chinese sojourners face challenges to their wellbeing. They may not be able to acquire enough support from their homeland (Ho, 2014; Ip, 2006b; Wang & Collins, 2015), and the long absence from their stay-behind parents frequently causes a strong sense of guilt (Tu, 2016). As an only-child Chinese sojourner, this has always been a part of my sojourning experience.

Compared to migrant children, Chinese stay-behind parents may face more serious challenges (Gustafson & Huang, 2014; Liu et al., 2018). They frequently experience a lack of emotional support, which raises concerns over parent-child ties (Liu et al., 2017), and leads to reduced emotional wellbeing (Guo et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2019). Also, prolonged separation creates an almost insurmountable barrier to the practice of the Chinese tradition of filial piety (Liu et al., 2018), resulting in an intricate renegotiation of the traditional meanings and practice of filial piety (LaFave, 2017; Tu, 2016).

This is especially the case in Chinese transnational one-child families. Since 1979, the one-child policy had strictly limited most Chinese families to only one child (Gui & Koropecj-Cox, 2016; Wu & Li, 2012; Zhang, 2017). Although the policy changed in 2016,

the Chinese government failed to respond to some unexpected consequences (Settles et al., 2013). In particular, the policy led to the ‘empty-nest’ phenomenon, which has become a serious social issue (Feng et al., 2014; Guo et al., 2009; Liang & Wu, 2014), threatening the practice of traditional family-based eldercare (Gustafson & Huang, 2014; LaFave, 2017; Wang et al., 2016).

This long-standing policy has led to a large number of Chinese transnational one-child families (Liang & Wu, 2014; Ye & Chen, 2014), including my family, and the tension between the needs of stay-behind parents and their only-child’s overseas settlement has been increasingly accentuated (Tu, 2016). Only-child Chinese sojourners often do not have adequate time and energy to support their parents, because they are now living far away from them and face many challenges abroad (Tu, 2016; Zhan, 2013), not to mention the impacts of COVID-19 on international travel. This greatly shapes the wellbeing of the ‘empty-nesters’ (Liu et al., 2013), and has been a dilemma for me. If we return to China, we may lose an ideal environment to raise our child. If we stay abroad, we will lose something else.

In the friend sphere of living transnational lives, some challenges and tensions also emerge. It is difficult for sojourners and stay-behind friends to maintain their over-extended ties (Bell, 2016; Heikkinen & Lumme-Sandt, 2013), because prolonged separation inevitably reduces social interactions (Lobburi, 2012), and causes a widening cultural gap (Brettell, 2016; Robertson, 2018). This frequently leads to reduced interests in common, increased misunderstandings, and emerging conflicts in social interactions (Bell, 2016), potentially causing a sense of otherness (Westcott, 2012).

The dissolution of the ties threatens sojourners’ wellbeing. Living in host societies can be stressful (Green, 2011; Hung & Fung, 2015), and can contribute to a feeling of social exclusion (Colombo et al., 2009). The loss of old friendships not only represents an emotional cost (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Westcott, 2012), but also constrains sojourners

from receiving adequate support from their homelands (Lobburi, 2012), resulting in a feeling of ‘Double Exclusion’ (Bell, 2016; Korhonen & Siitonen, 2018). Prior studies of the friendships between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends are largely insufficient, suggesting a research opportunity.

Consequently, given the abovementioned challenges and tensions, I argue that the emerging phenomenon of living transnational lives is a fruitful field of research. Exploring this area not only bridges a current research gap (Graham & Jordan, 2011; Jerves et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Waters, 2011), but also potentially contributes to practice by addressing issues that shape the lives of sojourners and their stay-behinds, especially in a world in which COVID-19 may never be eliminated. This answers the question, ‘What made me want to study this field of research?’ and leads to the current study’s research purpose and objectives.

1.4 Research Purpose and Objectives

This study explores the roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members and friends. As I read prior tourism and migration studies, it became clear that social exchange theory and VFR travel would provide useful lenses. The purpose of this research is:

To investigate the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges that shape the lives of transnational sojourners and their stay-behinds.

I reviewed the literature (see Chapter Two) regarding the portrayal of the family and friend social spheres of living transnational lives, identifying two predominant sets of dynamic: (1) an interplay between transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and visiting relatives (VR) travel, and (2) an interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and visiting friends (VF) travel. Both reflect the roles of the over-stretched ties in shaping the lives of

transnational sojourners and their stay-behinds, which lead to the first and second overarching research questions that structure this study.

RQ1: What is the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and visiting relatives travel in the lives of Chinese transnational families?

RQ2: What is the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and visiting friends travel in the lives of Chinese transnational sojourners?

Therefore, this study's major objective is to address the purpose and answer these two research questions (see Chapter Five and Six). The investigation of interplay focuses on the nature and meanings of the social exchanges between the sojourner and stay-behind sides, the factors shaping the exchanges, and implications for their wellbeing and over-stretched ties. My study is underpinned by social exchange theory, forming a view of the way the dynamics reflect the theory and the way the theory conceptualises the dynamics.

In addition, by comparing and contrasting the commonalities and differences in the nature, meanings, and dynamics of the social exchanges enabled by transnational family ties and friendships, this study uncovers common threads across the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives. Such a synthesis (see Chapter Seven) produces a view of living transnational lives, addressing the third overarching research question.

RQ3: What are the nature and meanings of social exchanges behind the interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel?

A research chronology is shown below (Table 1-1). Of note, social exchange theory plays an important role in framing the transnational phenomenon being explored, while the interpretive approach of habitus helps me interrogate more dynamics behind the emerging conflicts, tension, and difficulty in communication between sojourners and their stay-behinds.

Table 1-1 Research chronology

Proposition: “That transnational sojourners’ connections with their homelands play an important role in shaping their transnational lives”	Research phases	Research questions	Theoretical lens	Studies	
	Family	What is the interplay of transnational family ties, wellbeing, and visiting relatives travel in the lives of Chinese transnational families?	Social exchange theory Habitus	Transnational family ties	(1) Chinese sojourners in NZ (2017) (2) Chinese stay-behind families in Beijing (2017)
				Family wellbeing	
				Visiting relatives travel	
	Friend	What is the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and visiting friends travel in the lives of Chinese transnational sojourners?	Social exchange theory Habitus	Transnational friendships	(1) Chinese sojourners in NZ (2017) (2) Chinese stay-behind friends in Beijing (2017)
				Wellbeing	
				Visiting friends travel	
	Synthesis: What are the nature and meanings of social exchanges behind the interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel?				

1.4.1 Potential Contributions

This research explores the roles of the transnational family ties and friendships in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds, before COVID-19 changed the context. By integrating the fields of VFR tourism and migration, the study responds to recent calls for research regarding the social aspects of VFR travel (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Yousuf & Backer, 2015; Yousuf & Backer, 2017). Also, I seek to identify the challenges that Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds may face, and uncover the dynamics behind the continuous renegotiation of the meanings of transnational family ties and friendships. Further, this study explores the role of the family life cycle in shaping transnational social exchanges, bridging another research gap identified in the literature (Lamas-Abraira, 2021; Man & Chou, 2020).

Moreover, this study will contribute directly to practice by helping Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds to better understand each other's needs and the respective roles in their transnational social interactions. Also, in a post-COVID-19 era, my study will contribute to immigration policy making, by helping New Zealand to understand the needs of Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members (especially the empty-nesters), and better evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 on their lives, such as the reality that both sides are unable to visit each other and exchange essential support as easily as before (It is currently impossible for stay-behinds to visit the sojourners, given the current border control policy). Further, the research will identify implications for tourism planning, helping New Zealand to identify key VFR travel motivators and better support both the visitors and the hosts, after the re-opening of the New Zealand-China border.

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Each chapter plays a different role in telling the story of the sequential stages in the knowledge creation process (see Figure 1-1).

Collectively, the chapters reflect the ever-evolving nature of my understanding of living transnational lives. This introductory chapter positions me in this study, and offers the rationale for my interest in, reasons for, and approach to the research.

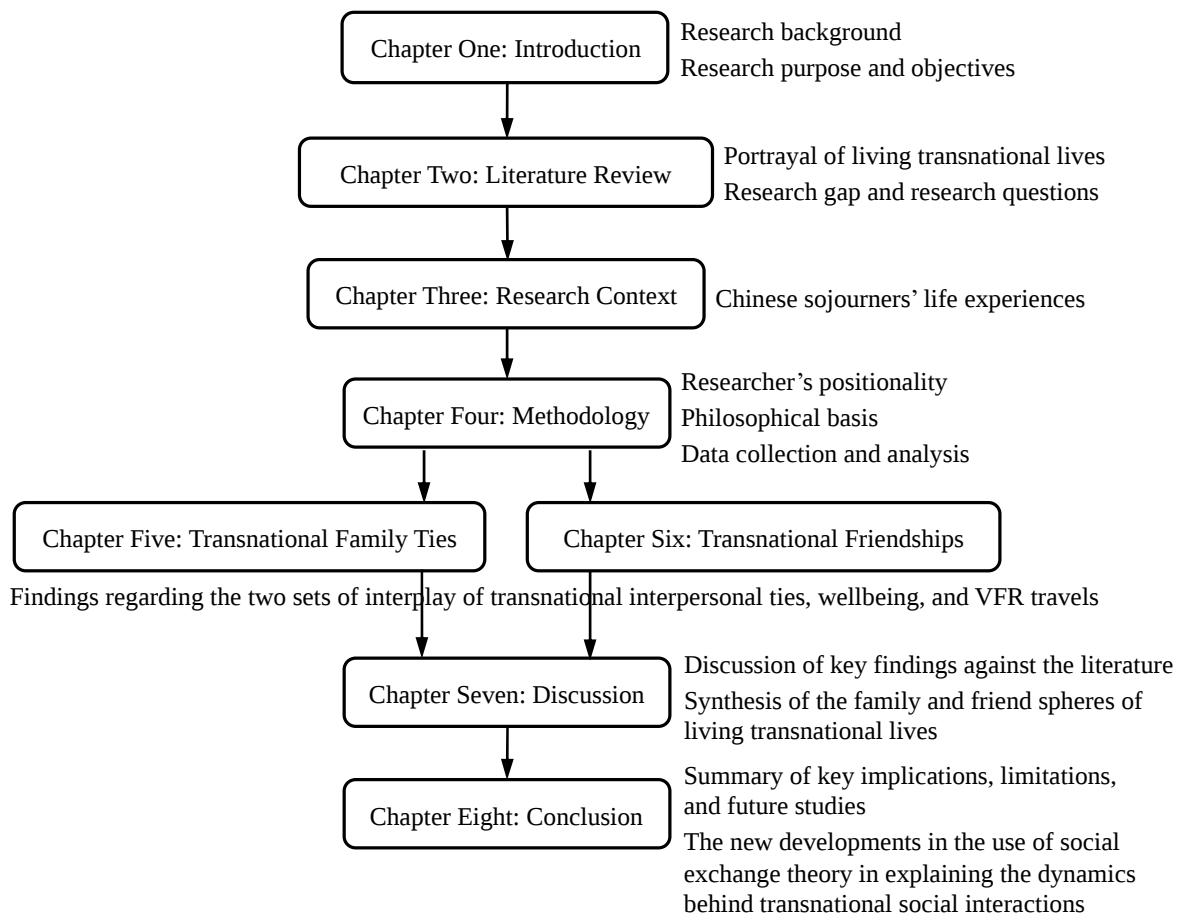


Figure 1-1 The structure of the thesis

Chapter Two, the Literature Review Chapter, discusses (1) the overarching ideas that provide contextual knowledge and foundation for exploring the phenomenon of transnational sojourning, (2) the interrelated constructs about the portrayal of the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives from a wide range of socio-cultural contexts, and (3) social exchange theory, including its origin, development, and role in explaining transnational

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dynamics. The chapter ends with integrating the two sets (family and friend) of interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel, and creating a conceptual diagram that reflects how the dynamics and the theory interrelate. The research gaps are identified, and the research questions developed.

Chapter Three, the Research Context Chapter, elaborates on initial descriptions given in the introduction of the life experiences of Chinese transnational sojourners and their stay-behinds. I discuss the challenges they face, their cross-border exchanges of financial, emotional, and instrumental support, and the roles of VR travel and the family life cycle in shaping their lives.

Chapter Four, the Methodology Chapter introduces the roles of my worldview and positionality in shaping this study's research questions, philosophical basis, and methodological grounds, which collectively guide the research process. I explain the methodological foundation, the rationale behind the choices and process of the data collection methods (focus group and in-depth interviews), and how the qualitative data were transcribed, translated, and analysed.

Chapter Five presents the findings in relation to RQ1 which concerns the role of transnational family ties in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members. As a result, a new conceptual diagram is offered, which reflects the ever-evolving nature of my understanding of the family sphere of living transnational lives and demonstrates the way the social dynamics reflect social exchange theory and how the theory may account for these dynamics.

Chapter Six presents the findings in relation to RQ2 which concerns the role of transnational friendships in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and their old friends in China. Also, this chapter uncovers the nature and meanings of their transnational friendships. A new conceptual diagram is offered that reflects the progress in my understanding of the

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friend sphere of living transnational lives and demonstrates the dialogue between the social dynamics and social exchange theory.

Chapter Seven, the Discussion Chapter, uses a social exchange lens to evaluate and critique the key findings from Chapter Five and Six, regarding the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges, against those found in the literature. Also, this chapter compares and contrasts the diverse roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping Chinese sojourners' lives, through discussing the commonalities and differences in the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges that are respectively enabled by the family ties and friendships. In so doing, this chapter addresses RQ3 which concerns the nature and meanings of social exchanges behind the interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel.

Chapter Eight, the Conclusion Chapter, presents a simple, clear, and powerful synthesis of this study that aims to address the 'so what does it mean' question. I summarise my study's implications for the literature, theory, and practice. Of note, I clearly demonstrate the process by which the new knowledge acquired from data analysis and interpretation reframes and extends the initial dialogue between the dynamics and the theory, by presenting and explaining the new developments with regard to the use of social exchange theory in explaining the dynamics behind transnational social interactions in the fields of VFR tourism and migration. Then, I indicate the major limitations and identify possible directions for future studies. I finish this thesis with my positionality, by explaining what I have learnt about myself as a Chinese sojourner with stay-behind family and friends, and what new positionality I will take into the future, after completing this PhD journey.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the concept of living a transnational life, which is very limited, especially in the context of VFR travel. The first section reviews the seminal studies regarding three overarching ideas: (1) transnationalism, (2) the sojourner, and (3) VFR tourism to lay the foundation for exploring transnational sojourning. Next, the literature on the constructs regarding the portrayal of family (second section) and friend (third section) spheres of living transnational lives is reviewed. In the third section, social exchange theory is introduced as an underpinning theory to analyse the social dynamics of transnational interactions. The conclusion section pulls together dynamics identified from the family and friend literature, synthesizing the two spheres of sojourners' lives. A conceptual diagram/model is produced, which identifies potential contributions to theory and leads to the identification of the research opportunities and research questions.

2.1 Transnationalism, Sojourners, and VFR tourism

This section reviews the seminal studies regarding three overarching ideas: transnationalism, sojourners, and VFR tourism, which form the foundation of transnational sojourning.

2.1.1 Transnationalism

In an era of high levels of cross-border movement of information, resources and people, some people live highly mobile transnational lives, albeit, interrupted by CODID-19. “Distances have never meant so little and so much, with the world getting smaller and larger at the very same time” (Larsen, 2013, p .125). We can easily communicate with families and friends living worlds away, while the development of transportation allows us to travel much

further and more often than was previously possible. This has been clearly evidenced by the rapid spread of COVID-19 around the world. The social networks of migrants are increasingly complex and stretched, allowing them to live multi-sited social lives (Bilgili, 2014), simultaneously maintaining social engagements in (Bell, 2016; Ip, 2011), and emotional attachments to (Stedman, 2006), multiple societies.

The concept of transnationalism is variously expressed in different cultures and historical periods (Palgrave, 2009) and constantly reinterpreted through globalisation (Cave & Koloto, 2015). Depending on the context, transnationalism can refer to large companies whose economic power spreads over multiple countries (Martinelli, 1982), free cross-border movements of people and ideas (Appadurai, 1990), various capital (Schiller et al., 1992), and migrants who live their lives across national borders (Palgrave, 2009). Basch, Schiller, and Szanton Blanc's (1994) anthropological study about the transnational lives of migrants in the US, defines transnationalism as: "The process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (p.8). However, Basch et al.'s (1994) definition focuses on a dichotomy of origin and settlement and fails to recognise interactions between compatriots who reside in different host countries and the dynamic nature of the social relations. More importantly, transnational relations contain social, cultural, economic, and political interactions (Snel et al., 2006) at macro, meso, and micro levels (Cave & Koloto, 2015). For example: at a micro level, some migrants build and maintain multiple interconnections with more than one country, preserving long-distance family ties and friendships, celebrating both Christmas and Chinese New Year, sending or receiving remittances, and sometimes expressing their unique insights about political issues affecting their countries of residence, origin, and beyond. Individuals represent the basic unit of transnational study, developing dynamic social networks across

two or more societies from which various grass-roots transnational activities emerge (Portes et al., 1999).

At a micro level, transnationalism appears to be an ongoing process, through which those migrants intentionally build, maintain, and sometimes abandon multiple interconnections across national boundaries as they move forward, while constantly negotiating their sense of home. For instance, a migrant may consider New Zealand as origin, Canada as ‘host-one’, the UK as ‘host-two’, and then return to New Zealand after several years of sojourning, continuously negotiating a feeling of ‘at home’ as s/he keeps moving forward (Green et al., 2008); as long as such changing transnational involvement is beneficial to individual and/or family wellbeing (Vaquera & Aranda, 2011).

Yet migrants’ identity and sense of home may become uncoupled. On the one hand, identity represents a person’s sense of self, reflecting certain knowledge, values, and ways of life (Jameson, 2007) with which s/he has been inculcated from birth onward, that cannot be easily abandoned as s/he moves to new host countries (Verma, 2018). On the other hand, the concept of home is associated with a sense of belongingness and emotional attachment, which may undergo continuous change following her/his onward migration. Therefore, given continuity of identity, some migrants simultaneously live in both their countries of residence and origin, preserving interpersonal ties with their stay-behind families and friends, from which various transnational interactions are practiced and support exchanged. The adjective of stay-behind describes the people whose family members and/or friends migrated to other countries (Adugna, 2018; Baldassar, 2007a; Fan & Parreñas, 2018). The next two sections discuss transnational family ties and friendships.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1.1.1 Transnational Family

It is claimed that “The twenty-first century transnational family coherence is a virtually inevitable outcome of people’s global mobility” (Bryceson, 2019, p. 3044). Yet literature suggests that the notion has a much longer history. Occurrences of transnational families scattered across national borders pre-dates the 19th century in Western Europe (Palgrave, 2009), together with the emergence of the concept of ‘nation’ as an entity with distinctive characters (Moya, 2011), requiring the families to be flexible.

The emergence of transnational families appears to be closely associated with the flexible nature of families. Migration does not always relate to permanent resettlement of the whole family. Rather, it often involves ‘stretched’ family ties, that is, the ties between migrants abroad and their family members in countries of origin (Baldassar, 2007a; Baldassar et al., 2014; Bryceson, 2019). Family members are separated by national borders, yet find ways to preserve a sense of familyhood, family cohesion, family obligation, and the desire to pursue collective wellbeing (Baldassar et al., 2016; Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002). Indeed, a study of family relationships between Italian migrants in Australia and their ageing parents in Italy from an ethnographic perspective, indicated that family ties are not necessarily determined by living arrangements and national borders, but are preserved across distance (Baldassar, 2007a) in “a highly flexible social formation” (Kobayashi & Preston, 2007, p. 152). This flexibility in families is central to transnational migration.

Given the global migration trend in recent decades, research attention to transnational migration rapidly increased, covering a broad range of topics, such as ethnic group immigration, settlement, and business patterns (Min, 2013); correlation between migration and migrants’ happiness (Gardner, 2015); the role of labour brokerage in organizing and facilitating migration (Kaur, 2012); and methodological issues in exploring migrants’ integration into their host societies, that is, the advantages of certain research methods

(Bolzman et al., 2017). However, prior studies on transnational families are still relatively few. Two examples include an analysis of how migration shapes stay-behinds' wellbeing (Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010) and transnational parenting strategies and the implications for family wellbeing (Berckmoes & Mazzucato, 2018). Only a handful of studies have explored Chinese transnational families' lives, although Chinese transnationalism has attracted some scholarly attention since Chinese migrants have been negotiating their 'Chinese-ness' and 'American-ness' long before transnationalism became a widely studied field (Chen, 2006).

Rather than examining families' transnational lives, recent studies in Chinese transnationalism have primarily taken an economic perspective. This includes the flow of financial capital from Chinese Americans to China and the underlying dynamics (Chen, 2006), Chinese Americans actively participating in international trade business, facilitated by their bi-cultural competence (Light, 2007), and the role of Chinese migrants overseas in China's recent economic growth (Hing, 2010). From a political perspective, Chinese transnationalism studies found that the PRC government in Beijing considers overseas Chinese as social, economic, and political capital (Leo, 2018), and the PRC's official media plays an important role in shaping Chinese migrants' transnational identities (Ip & Yin, 2015).

2.1.1.2 Transnational Friendship

The maintenance of transnational friendships across national borders has attracted considerable attention in migration studies (Bell, 2016; Green, 2011; Herz, 2015; Lobburi, 2012; Robertson, 2018; Ryan, 2011; Tsujimoto, 2014). Emigration has been said to rupture old friendships, as online communication cannot replace co-presence in the homeland (Herz, 2015). For instance, friendships between migrants in Australia and their stay-behind friends

suffered where they could not regularly see each other, which raised emotional costs, since “face-to-face contact is key to maintaining a friendship” (Westcott, 2012, p. 88). Also, maintaining contact with stay-behind friends is time-consuming and can be a burden for both sides, as in an example of Polish migrants in Belfast and their stay-behind friends (Bell, 2016).

Further, the widening gap in the cultural backgrounds between migrants abroad and their stay-behind friends worsens their weakening friendships. Student migrants in Melbourne find themselves feeling excluded and considered as outsiders in their countries of origin, as cultural values are no longer shared (Robertson, 2018). Likewise, Polish migrants in Belfast find that their worldview undergoes change that creates misunderstandings in their interactions with stay-behind friends. Some migrants find that they are not able to fit into either of the social contexts, neither host nor home cultures (Bell, 2016). These ideas mirror the friend literature, indicating that weakening transnational friendships are not necessarily caused by geographical distance alone (Brettell, 2016); widening cultural gaps lead to fewer topics in common, widening emotional distance (Westcott, 2012), emerging frustration (Robertson, 2018), and conflicts (Bell, 2016), and cause a sense of otherness between far-away friends. The term of far-away describes a situation where migrants abroad and families and friends in countries of origin become experientially distant from each other (Baldassar, 2008; Larsen, 2008; Larsen et al., 2007). As an equivalent of ‘geographically dispersed/scattered’, it equally talks about migrants abroad and stay-behinds (families and friends) from each other’s point of view.

Moreover, for some migrants, the establishment of local friendships with compatriots in their countries of residence is a motive for them to intentionally weaken their ties with stay-behind friends (Larsen, 2013). Those newly established friendships can be strengthened quickly as migrants tend to build new social networks in host societies, which provide them

with various forms of support, although such relationships can be easily weakened after their onward migration (Larsen, 2013). For Brazilian migrants in Japan who are of Japanese descent, companionship with local compatriots in Japan is particularly enjoyable, because such friendships provide a sense of social inclusion and represent a source of comfort and security (Green, 2011). Likewise, Westcott (2012) explored the ways migrants in Australia manage their emotions toward their stay-behind friends, indicating that some migrants consider the new friendships they built in Australia as a compensation for their loss of old friendships, reducing a sense of loss and contributing to a stronger feeling of successful migration. As a result, some migrants intentionally limit contact with their stay-behind friends, or do not make contact at all (Bell, 2016).

However, some studies argued that migrants' newly established local friendships cannot completely replace prior home country friendships. Despite the difficulties, migrants tend to intentionally maintain the friendships with their stay-behind friends. In this way, they can provide each other with various forms of support, in order to survive post-migration. For instance, German migrants in the UK tend to maintain close ties with their friends in Germany to receive various intangible support, while the nature and quality of the support is affected by the strength of the ties and frequency of contact (Herz, 2015).

Likewise, Lobburi (2012) indicated that Asian student migrants find it easy to continue their transnational friendships by exchanging emotional support with their stay-behind friends in times of need, regardless of their decreasing day-to-day communication. Of note, compared to the migrants who intend to make a long-term home overseas, those student migrants have a stronger desire to return and do so frequently, so are inclined to maintain their old social networks. Thus, Lobburi's finding does not apply to the migrants who intend to stay in host countries for an extended period, sometimes more than 20 years, purchasing

houses, raising families, and developing new social networks, before they decide to move to another destination or return to their countries of origin at a certain life stage.

Nevertheless, transnational friendships have special value for migrants who constantly negotiate a sense of belongingness throughout their migration trajectories. For example, although Brazilian migrants enjoy their compatriots' co-presence in Japan, they actually consider the people at home a better source of close friends, calling them "kind, generous, full of human warmth" (Green, 2011, p. 377), and most importantly, culturally closer to themselves. Green's finding reflects the importance of cultural closeness in evaluating friendships and that transnational friendships form one mechanism which sojourners use to negotiate a sense of belongingness across national borders. This is seen with student migrants in Australia (Robertson, 2018) and Polish migrant workers in Belfast (Bell, 2016).

In addition, transnational friendships help far-away friends to migrate more easily by providing them with essential resources which ease a transition, acting as "a vehicle of mobility" (Tsujimoto, 2014, p. 333). For instance, Polish migrants already settled in the UK tend to help their friends in Poland to migrate by providing them with instrumental support in the form of information and accommodation (Ryan, 2011). Likewise, for Pilipino migrants in South Korea, transnational friendships with compatriot equivalents living in Canada can be leveraged to provide them with necessary resources, such as essential economic capital and information, before achieving onward movement to Canada (Tsujimoto, 2014). Given the aforementioned dynamics, a definition for the notion of transnational friendship might be:

Transnational friendship represents voluntarily maintained, non-family social ties that people intentionally build, maintain and/or abandon outside their country of residence, according to their changing needs and cultural backgrounds.

This definition is developed based on an enhanced understanding achieved from the review of friend literature. The next section discusses the nature and characteristics of the sojourner, and compares this population with several other types of migrants.

2.1.2 The Sojourner

In an era of globalisation, international migrants are no longer expected to fully integrate into their host countries, nor is departing from these countries considered unsuccessful settlement (Beal & Sos, 1999; Collins, 2021; Tan & Hugo, 2017). Instead, a change in migration strategy is based on family members' changing needs. Such a phenomenon creates borderless social worlds (Appadurai, 1996), transnational identities (Nurse, 2012), and multiple feelings of 'at home'. As a type of migrant, sojourners are key players in this emerging phenomenon, before the pandemic interrupted global mobility.

The term sojourner, however, has not been widely used in migration studies, although some studies clearly explore transnational sojourning lives. Instead, a more inclusive term, 'migrant', is more commonly adopted, potentially confusing sojourner with other types of migrants (Douglas et al., 2019). Ironically, the meaning of migrant has also been rarely explained in migration studies, resulting in the lack of international consensus on this heterogeneous group. An exception is Douglas et al. (2019) who describe a migrant as a person who moves within or across national boundaries, regardless of the direction, for survival or the enhancement of quality of life.

Sojourners are migrants, but not all migrants are sojourners. Siu (1952) first stated that a sojourner is a migrant who lives in a host country for a considerable number of years without being assimilated by it. This broad definition has been commonly used by researchers. Jandt (2001) provided a narrower definition, describing a sojourner as a person who moves to a country with a specific purpose, such as work and education, and stays there

for a limited length of time, from six months to five years. However, Jandt's (2001) definition does not capture the key characteristics of this increasingly mobile population. This section compares the characteristics of transnational sojourner with several other types of international migrant. That way, the characteristics of sojourner are discussed in relation to the literature, contributing to the development of a more comprehensive definition.

First, sojourners differ from transmigrants since sojourners live in host societies and maintain various interconnections across national borders, while transmigrants frequently shuttle between at least two destinations to remain "active participants in all of them" (Light, 2007, p. 89). Second, sojourners may differ from diaspora in that they retain the desire and capability to return home or move to another destination in times of need, while diaspora tend to have limited mobility and less desire of participating in onward migration (Pasura, 2010).

Third, sojourners are different from asylum seekers, who often move to host countries because of persecution or serious harm at home (Randeria & Karagiannis, 2020) and await a decision on the application for refugee status (Douglas et al., 2019). Asylum seekers are those fleeing civil wars in Libya, Iraq, or more recently, Ukraine (The UN Refugee Agency, 2022, May 18), and are frequently considered 'undesirable' by the host societies, creating a so-called 'migration crisis'. In contrast, sojourners are active seekers of a better life, and bring various forms of capital to their host societies, so that they are often considered more 'desirable'.

Fourth, sojourners share some characteristics with nomads, who are considered a metaphor for mobility and fluidity worldwide (Richards, 2015). Global nomads have strong mobility, undertaking cross-border travel and often stay in one place for more than three years, reflecting global nomadic behaviour (Kannisto & Kannisto, 2012). Yet, nomads are fundamentally different from sojourners. Nomads are 'negative diaspora', who reject their original homelands (D'Andrea, 2007). Sojourners, on the contrary, are migrants, who move

globally actively, continuously seeking a place that better meets their family members' needs, while maintaining close ties with more than one society, especially their homelands (Jandt, 2001; Siu, 1952).

Sojourners, therefore, are internationally mobile people who have a behavioural pattern of multiple and circular trips starting from a home country, departing for stays with open-ended lengths of time. These trips are not 'once-in-a-lifetime' migrations (Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011; Zufferey et al., 2021), nor 'tourism-like' trips away, but are repeated over several years and challenge the traditional understanding of migration (Dustmann, 2003). That is to say, sojourners always have the desire to return home or move to other destinations in times of need, based on their family members' needs at different life stages of family life cycles that include children's needs for better education and elders' need for instrumental support. The role of the family life cycle in shaping transnational sojourning is discussed later in this chapter.

Of note, sojourners may stay in a host country for a certain length of time that is much longer than Jandt (2001) suggested. For instance, a sojourner may migrate to and stay in a host country for 15 years to boost family income, before deciding to return to her/his country of origin to take care of her/his elderly parents. Sojourners' mobility, however, may be constrained by some external factors, such as the transferability of economic capital and immigration policies in destination countries. During their sojourn, they may visit their home countries regularly or occasionally, although their mobility is disrupted by the unpredicted border control and the fear of COVID-19 in a post-pandemic era (Bratić et al., 2021; Chua et al., 2021; Neuburger & Egger, 2021). Additionally, their changing migration strategies align with international VFR travel patterns. The next section introduces another overarching idea, VFR tourism, including its definition, seminal thinkers, and some research topics they raised.

2.1.3 Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Tourism

The definition of VFR travel has evolved over the past 30 years as researchers' understanding about the phenomenon has deepened. Initially, the notion of VFR was narrowly defined based on visitors' major purpose for their trips (Yuan et al., 1995), or choice of accommodation (Kotler et al., 2006), to stay with family or friends. However, such narrow definitions do not properly reflect the real size and implications of this growing trend, the economic contribution to destinations, or the dynamics behind the travel. Backer suggests more broadly that "VFR travel is a form of travel involving a visit whereby either (or both) the purpose of the trip or the type of accommodation involves visiting friends and/or relatives" (Backer, 2007, p. 369). Although Backer's definition has been widely adopted in VFR studies, at the time, it did not explicate the dynamics behind this form of tourism.

Griffin's (2013b) later definition emphasizes host-guest relationships, describing VFR tourism as "all tourism experiences that involve a prior personal relationship between a visitor and resident no matter the stated trip purpose, accommodation used, or activities engaged in" (p. 235). This definition recognises the important role of prior relationships in VFR travel, but still does not acknowledge the key dynamics behind the travel, that is, the host-guest interactions.

VFR travel is "a form of mobility (i.e., the movement of humans) influenced by a host that involves a prior personal relationship and a face-to-face interaction between host and visitor within the destination" (Munoz et al., 2017, p. 482). Compared to those suggested by Backer and Griffin, this later definition better captures the dual dynamics of VFR tourism, 'pre-existing relationships' and 'host-guest interactions', which are consistent with the paired research context. Therefore, this definition is adopted for this study.

VFR tourism has received increasing attention since Jackson (1990) first indicated that VFR travellers' contributions to destinations had been largely underestimated. In recent

decades, the sector has been proven to be a substantial economic force in tourism in terms of size of market and expenditure, so has attracted growing scholarly attention (Griffin, 2013a; Seaton, 2017).

In the past 20 years, several influential thinkers have emerged. Backer for instance argues that VFR is a largely under-researched field, given its various contributions to destinations (Backer, 2007; Backer, 2012). Her work has encompassed a wide range of research interests, such as the role of VFR hosts in attracting visits (Backer, 2007), the effects of family life cycle on VFR visitors' willingness to travel (Backer & Lynch, 2017), the differences between the travellers visiting friends and the travellers visiting relatives (Backer et al., 2017), and VFR's role in tourism destinations' crisis recovery (Backer & Ritchie, 2017). Backer also conducted the first large-scale study that examined the demographic profile of VFR travellers in Australia (Backer & King, 2017), and innovatively examined the correlation between VFR and wellbeing, indicating that VFR travel has both positive and negative impacts on the wellbeing of both visitors and hosts (Backer, 2019).

Another leading researcher, Tom Griffin, conducted the first content analysis of journal articles on VFR tourism that covered 21 years (1990 to 2010) of development in the field (Griffin, 2013a). This work identified a significant shift in VFR topics over time, indicating that early articles from the 1990's primarily investigated VFR tourism's economic contribution, while the more recent works tended to explore its social aspects. Although Griffin (2013a) did not mention the societal contexts in which the shift may situate, he indicated that social meanings set VFR apart from other forms of travel; in particular, personal relationships play an important role in shaping VFR motives, behaviours, and, as a result, wellbeing. Griffin also affirmed VFR's undervalued nature as a sustainable form of tourism because it combines considerable economic contributions with minimal negative impacts on the host community (Griffin, 2013b). Regarding VFR hosts' intra-regional travel

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experiences, Griffin (2017) argues that hosts often have a sense of obligation toward their visitors during hosting, which motivates them to act like tourists ‘in their own backyard’ by taking visitors to notable attractions.

Yousuf and Backer (2015) extended Griffin’s content analysis of journal articles to encompass journal articles, conference papers, theses, and book chapters (ranging from 1990 to 2015). Nonetheless, they agreed with Griffin’s (2013a) argument that although the social aspects of VFR had attracted increasing scholarly attention, VFR tourism remains an under-researched field, in which a very small group of authors have produced most of the publications. An important contribution Yousuf and Backer (2017) made to the literature is an exploration of hosts’ perceived differences between hosting friends and hosting relatives. In this context, the key finding was that hosts tend to consider hosting relatives more important than hosting friends and are inclined to host them differently. Hosts perceive the former as a means to fulfil their family obligations and strengthen family ties, while the latter is voluntary in nature.

VFR travel is one of the driving forces of modern tourism (Janta et al., 2015). After World War II, the number of cross-border VFR travel rapidly increased because of the ongoing changes in migration policy worldwide (Hay, 2008), the development in transnational migration patterns (King & Dwyer, 2015), and evolving communication and transportation technologies (De Coulon & Wolff, 2005), which provide globally dispersed family members and friends more opportunities to preserve their ties and visit each other once in a while.

Moreover, VFR tourism has many benefits. For example, it contributes to a wide range of local businesses since VFR travellers tend to visit more areas beyond the core tourist zone (Caffyn, 2012). Also, as researchers gradually noticed, VFR travel benefits both visitors and hosts. It not only creates shared memories between far-away relatives and friends (Janta

et al., 2015), but also greatly facilitates the exchange of emotional (Urry, 2003) and instrumental support (Baldassar, 2008) between them. This has proven to be the case in Chinese transnational families (Zhou, 2013). Other benefits of participating in VFR travel include leisure benefits (Shani & Uriely, 2012), strengthening hosts' feeling of home in their countries of residence (Griffin, 2015; Shani & Uriely, 2012), and preserving hosts' cultural identity (Cave & Koloto, 2015), among others. In the light of this picture, one might ask, how does the notion of 'family' affect transitional sojourners' lives?

2.2 Family

Family studies in the sociological literature link transnational family life experiences to the constructs of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, visiting relatives travel, and family life cycle. This section reviews the literature that collectively illustrate the dynamics behind survival and prosperity of transnational families.

Characteristics of Family. Generally, a family consists of a relationally-close group of people who initiate and maintain ties through their ongoing interactions, either voluntarily or involuntarily. It is the oldest type of social group, which enacts social relationships, evokes mixed emotions, such as love, concern, sexual feelings, excitement, anxiety, frustration, fear, and so on (McKie & Callan, 2012), and shapes our social memories and personal identities (Zimmerman, 2013).

Each family has its unique characteristics, such as shared cultural backgrounds and rules of interaction, collectively followed by its members (Wilson, 1985). Also, the meanings of family are contingent on wider socio-cultural contexts (Antonucci et al., 2012) and historical periods, reflecting diverse notions of resource exchange, sexual relationships, and care arrangement among family members (McKie & Callan, 2012). People with different socio-cultural backgrounds tend to understand family in different ways, which compete with

one another, sometimes causing controversy (Turner & West, 2014). For instance, in Chinese tradition, adult children should fulfil filial piety by providing their elderly parents with all essential support. In contrast, in some Western cultures, governments are primarily responsible for elderly parents, rather than adult children. Focusing on African American families, Stewart (2007) found that the people with higher socio-economic status tend to make a sharp distinction between immediate and extended family members, while those with lower socio-economic status do not make the distinction. Therefore, the contingent nature and meanings of family make it difficult to create a single definition for a ‘typical’ family.

Family relationships are fundamentally different from other kinds of social relations because they have a moral character which implies an inescapable obligation to support each other in times of need (Finch, 1989), as well as high expectations for mutual affection (Turner & West, 2014). This statement has been echoed in prior studies, which indicate that family obligation derives from a strong sense of altruism between family members who have an impulse to help each other without evaluating others’ capacity to reciprocate the favours, or any other instrumental considerations (Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006; Finch, 1989; Weston et al., 2012), such as future remittance or childcare assistance.

In particular, family relationships differ from friendships in terms of the nature of obligation (Finch, 1989). Although there is also a sense of obligation in friendships, such obligation is often voluntary, less formal, and easily dissolved (Janta et al., 2015). It is fundamentally different from the concept of obligation in family relationships and thus should be considered separately. Bryceson concluded: “The family is the ultimate unit of sharing and caring, directed at ensuring material survival, welfare and development, with intergenerational transfers of goods, services and finances flowing between family members” (Bryceson, 2019, p. 3045).

Of note, the notion of family is different from household. In a study that explores the effects of government policy on family wellbeing, Zimmerman defined family as “two or more people who share the same goals and values, are committed to one another over the long term, and usually live in the same household” (Zimmerman, 2013, p. 10). Tammelin claimed that family is broader than household, defining household as family members living in the same home and sharing household work (Tammelin, 2018). Zimmerman and Tammelin’s understandings of family and household blur the boundary between the two distinct concepts, which are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature. On the one hand, a household is formed by a person or group of people who live together in a certain dwelling and may not perceive themselves as a family (McKie & Callan, 2012). On the other hand, in this era of transnationalism, a family is not necessarily included in a household (Wall & Bolzman, 2013), as its members may live in different cities, countries, or continents, creating households in those locations and pursuing individual or family goals.

Forms of Family. Also, understandings of the ways in which family members are connected by discoverable ancestry or other forms of ‘relatedness’ are continuously evolving (Holtzman, 2008; Zimmerman, 2013). From a Western perspective, family members should be related biologically or through marriage (Finch, 1989, p. 218). A ‘typical’ nuclear family consists of “two married parents and their biological children” (Holtzman, 2008, p. 167) where each of the parents has her/his separate family of origin, which includes the individual’s parents and siblings, as opposed to single parent or extended intergenerational families.

One view suggests that only the ‘typical’ families are successful, while all the other forms were deemed to be “disadvantageous” (Antonucci et al., 2012, p. 52), because new forms of family are considered fragile and less supportive, compared to the traditional forms (Martin et al., 2010). For instance, in South Africa, children from single-parent families are

believed to face emotional and financial challenges (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). Similarly, children from single-parent families in Israel were reported to have less social support and higher rates of psychological distress (Shechner et al., 2013). Some conservative Western communities fear that the rise of new forms of family may lead to the onset of moral decline (Gill, 1997). In addition, some indicated that involvement in the ‘disadvantageous’ forms of family may raise undesired attention from others, such as disdain and pity (Holtzman, 2008).

However, those traditional views of family are narrow, since the composition of a successful family is no longer limited to biological and legal ties, but includes other ‘non-traditional’ forms, which can be built based on shared experiences and emotional attachments (Holtzman, 2008). These families have their advantages and can also lead to happy and fulfilled lives (Antonucci et al., 2012), although legal frameworks often favour biological ties (Modell, 2002). For instance, children from same-sex coupled families in the UK are more likely to view their adoptive parents as supportive, suggesting higher emotional wellbeing (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004).

Families have many forms, such as adoptive parent and adopted children families (Bedford & Blieszner, 1997), blended or stepparent and stepchildren families, cohabiting heterosexual/homosexual couple families (Zimmerman, 2013), and polyamorous relationships (Zharkevich, 2019). Even pets could be considered family members (Trost, 1990). It is noteworthy that close friends may also be perceived and named as family members, although such a role is shifting in nature. This is especially the case for those migrants who consider friends very important in their lives abroad since they frequently take up the role of stay-behind family members and provide them with essential support in times of need (Zontini, 2006). This view has important implications to this study, which explores the roles of far-away family members and friends in shaping sojourners’ lives.

Further, the fluidity of family relationships contributes to increasingly diversified family forms (Weston et al., 2012). Family membership boundaries are constantly fluctuating as a result of partnership formation and separation, as well as family members' births, adoptions, and deaths (Bryceson, 2019; Holtzman, 2008). In Western societies, the rising rates of divorce and remarriage lead to the increasing number of stepfamilies (Mikucki-Enyart & Heisdorf, 2019). Therefore, the evolution of societies and emergence of new family structures continuously challenge traditional understandings of family (Tammelin, 2018), so that the definition of family has been constantly evolving and broadening. It is thus difficult to develop a simple unchanging definition for family (Turner & West, 2014). The next section reviews literature on transnational family ties.

2.2.1 Transnational Family Ties

In his book 'Family', Wilson suggested that the significance and functions of family ties in modern societies are two fundamentally important aspects in family studies (Wilson, 1985). In a transnational context, the maintenance of family ties is central to the survival of families. Transnational family ties have traditionally been understood as produced by the active transnational movements of migrants (Appadurai, 1996). However, a variety of agents may create such ties. For example, Zimbabwean female refugees who have experienced forced migration by fleeing their country of origin as a result of severe human rights violations, still seek emotional closeness with those who remain behind, and feel obligated to provide them with financial support (Smit & Rugunanan, 2015). Also, transnational family ties may be created by the birth of young children overseas, as seen in the increase in transnational grand-parenthood between second-generation Vietnamese children in the Czech Republic and their grandparents in Vietnam (Souralová, 2019).

Transnational sojourners and their stay-behind family members tend to preserve their geographically stretched ties, no matter how those ties were produced. In particular, the parents who remain behind often seek to preserve emotional closeness with their migrant children, which is central to their emotional wellbeing (Baldassar, 2008), resulting in the increasing number of visiting relatives who travel from home to host countries. Likewise, transnational sojourners tend to periodically travel back and forth between their host and home countries to preserve emotional closeness with stay-behind family members (Chamberlain & Leydesdorff, 2004; Liu, 2011; Wang, 2016), although they face financial sacrifices in doing so (Waters, 2010). The effort of maintaining such ties is compatible with the sojourner's integration in their countries of residence (Ip, 2011).

Rapid development and increased availability of communication technology, and the reduced costs of transportation since the latter part of the 20th century, especially for air travel, enables transnational families to keep in touch with, and visit each other more easily (Buffel, 2017; McCarthy & Edwards, 2011). Thus, the sense of physical separation can be eliminated to some extent (Perterra, 2006) and affective connections better maintained (Palgrave, 2009), resulting in closer geographically stretched family ties (Griffin, 2014). Cross-border remittance is another factor that maintains transnational family ties (Kastner, 2010). Some Nepalese wives stated that continuously receiving remittances is the only reason they can accept that their husbands live abroad for a prolonged period (Zharkevich, 2019).

However, maintenance of transnational family ties faces significant challenges, because telephone calls or webcam images are helpful but sometimes insufficient (Baldassar et al., 2014). Preserving such ties requires important physical elements, such as face-to-face interaction during co-presence (Janta et al., 2015). Sojourners must invest considerable time and energy to maintain the ties which frequently creates tension and frustration, especially when homemaking in a new environment already requires considerable energy (Svašek,

2008; Wang, 2016). For instance, some Italian migrants in the UK complain about transnational relationships that are not reciprocal and require considerable effort to preserve (Zontini, 2006).

Also, sometimes, sojourners' desire to maintain close ties with their homelands can be inhibited by increasing integration/assimilation (de Haas & Fokkema, 2011), or political traumatising events experienced before emigration. For instance, some Vietnamese migrants in Australia who experienced brutality in Vietnam intentionally cut off all ties with their homeland (Baldassar et al., 2017).

Therefore, a current research challenge is to understand how transnational family ties are maintained and embedded meanings renegotiated (Wall & Bolzman, 2013). Also, prior studies rarely address the implications of VR travel and family life cycle for geographically stretched family ties, transnational interactions, and family wellbeing. Further, the studies on transnational family ties mainly focus on parent-children relationships, largely ignoring other family ties, such as those between siblings and cousins.

Finally, the functioning of family ties is closely associated with wellbeing. We are all members of a family group (Wilson, 1985), which differs from other social groups we may belong to (Finch, 1989; Turner & West, 2014) and plays an important role in shaping our lives (Frankel, 1976). Our families are at the core of our social networks and often considered fundamentally important to our wellbeing (Antonucci et al., 2007; Weston et al., 2012), because they are the institutions of "unconditional love and constant support" (Turner & West, 2014, p. 7), and origin of altruism (Finch, 1989). On the one hand, family can be a source of support, providing us with enjoyable and fulfilled lives (Baldassar et al., 2014). On the other hand, as seen in the UK-Italy transnational families, family can be a source of conflict and unhappiness (Zontini, 2006), especially when it becomes destabilized (McKie &

Callan, 2012). This dialectic nature of family is clearly reflected in the host-guest interactions during VR travel, which is further explored in this chapter.

2.2.1.1 Transnational Exchange of Support

Transnational family is “an evolving institutional form of human interdependence, which serve material and emotional needs” (Bryceson, 2019, p. 3043). A variety of cross-border support exchanges can be identified in transnational families, although they face the constraints of geographical dispersal (Baldassar et al., 2014; Zontini, 2006). For example, Ecuadorian sojourners residing in Italy continuously exchange both emotional and instrumental support with their stay-behind family members (Boccagni, 2015).

The core of support exchange is family obligation (Baldassar, 2007a), which derives from family altruism between close family members. In parent-children ties, altruism is closely related to filial piety, a value which emphasizes the importance of migrant children’s respect for and devotion to their parents (Cheng & Chan, 2006a; Yue & Ng, 1999), so plays an important role in transnational parent-child interactions (Baldassar, 2007b). For instance, Italian migrants in Australia believe that they are obligated to put time and energy into providing their stay-behind parents with emotional support (Baldassar, 2007b).

However, sojourners’ stay-behind parents are not only receivers of support from overseas but maybe a source of support to their migrant children. For example, some parents visit their migrant children quite frequently and make substantial contributions to the sojourners’ wellbeing, providing them with various forms of support (Horn, 2017), including childcare assistance and help with household chores. Such ‘reverse support’ completes a circle of support exchange between sojourners abroad and their stay-behind families, which not only improves family wellbeing, but also strengthens geographically stretched family ties (Baldassar et al., 2007).

2.2.1.2 Financial Support

Remittances represent an important form of care circulation in transnational families, sometimes even more important in demonstrating love than the regular communication between loved ones (Janta et al., 2015), although Western cultures may deny the association between love and money (Baldassar et al., 2014). The remittance made between sojourners abroad and their stay-behind family members has attracted increasing scholarly attention (Boccagni, 2015; Guo et al., 2018). For sojourners, sending remittances back home has historically accompanied free emigration (Singh et al., 2012). Such a selfless practice derives from a sense of obligation (Åkesson, 2011) and altruism (Sana & Massey, 2005), contributing to an increased household income and improved quality of life for families that remain (Graham & Jordan, 2011). Remittances include monetary support for family budgets, emergencies, repayment of family debt (Singh et al., 2012, p. 476), health (Horn, 2017; Liu et al., 2018), education (Goldring, 2004), and to enable other material changes to economic wellbeing (Martone et al., 2011). Sojourners consider sending money back home a means to elicit gratitude (Carling, 2014), improve their social status (Stodolska & Santos, 2006), and preserve family ties (Martone et al., 2011).

However, the provision of financial support is bidirectional, yet the direction is often determined by the financial status of the respective sides. Reverse remittances are very common in transnational families (Janta et al., 2015) and may be sent to sojourners (Boccagni, 2015; Singh et al., 2012) if they are experiencing difficult economic circumstances (Mohapatra & Ratha, 2011) or studying overseas (Singh & Cabraal, 2013). Indeed, stay-behind parents quite often help their migrant children to buy houses overseas (Janta et al., 2015). As an example, some stay-behind Chinese parents have considerable wealth, enabling them to support their children to study abroad. In this case, it is more likely

that the parents would send reverse remittances to their migrant children, rather than the other way around (Liu et al., 2018), especially in a one-child Chinese family where the child is the sole beneficiary of family assets (Tu, 2016).

The cross-border exchanges of financial support often persist throughout family life cycles but tend to change as transnational families move to another stage of the family life cycle. In this way, geographically dispersed family members are provided with substitutes for affection, which are mediated by family members' changing needs and considerably improve their objective wellbeing (Cohen, 2011).

Yet financial support alone may not adequately maintain the wellbeing of far-away family members. Exploring the effects of adult children's emigration on the wellbeing of their stay-behind parents in India, Miltiades (2002) suggests that the contribution of financial remittances to the parents' wellbeing is quite limited, because financial support alone may not be sufficient for those stay-behinds to overcome emotional issues. Thus, emotional support is essential.

2.2.1.3 Emotional Support

For geographically dispersed family members, exchanging emotional support across distance not only helps them to overcome mental issues which often emerge as a result of their prolonged separation, such as loneliness and depression (Salazar, 2002), but also preserves their family ties (Baldassar, 2007b; Kornienko et al., 2018; Sun, 2012). Although the provision of emotional support is often bidirectional in transnational families, the effects of emotional support on stay-behind parents' wellbeing have attracted particular attention from sociologists (Guo et al., 2018; Sun, 2012; Tu, 2016; Zurlo et al., 2014). De Silva (2018) explored the eldercare between Sri Lankan skilled migrants in Australia and their stay-behind

parents, indicating that affluent parents tend to consider emotional support to be the primary support from their migrant children.

To date, studies have rarely discussed sojourners' needs for emotional support, especially if they suffer hardships overseas. For sojourners abroad, their stay-behind family members are the most important source of emotional support (Bryceson, 2019), although some find the communications with stay-behind parents are "boring and trivial" (Tu, 2016, p. 12).

Also, the exchanges of emotional support between geographically dispersed family members have been facilitated by the emerging communication technologies (Bryceson, 2019; McKie & Callan, 2012), such as Facebook, WeChat, Skype, and Zoom, which make frequent contact more feasible and affordable (Liu et al., 2018). Those communication technologies thus shape the process of transnational migration (Jerves et al., 2018), through successfully creating virtual co-presence (Baldassar, 2008) and long-distance intimacy (Tu, 2016). Further, exchanging instrumental support is also essential to maintaining transnational families' wellbeing.

2.2.1.4 Instrumental Support

As stay-behind parents age, they can face health problems and thus increasingly need instrumental support, whether in the state, private, or family settings, as Díaz Gorfinkiel and Escrivá (2012) noted in their study about the care arrangements for older people in Peruvian transnational families. However, the instrumental support available in transnational families can be influenced by a wide range of factors, such as family life cycle, socio-cultural contexts/norms, development of technologies (Baldassar, 2007a) and the availability of economic resources for transportation (De Silva, 2018).

Also, in some societies, stay-behind elderly people do not have sufficient support from the state and yet cannot afford private care, so that they must rely heavily upon their migrant family members for instrumental support. In the case of stay-behind elderly parents in rural Albania, support from the collapsed state welfare system is non-existent, while support from neighbours is also very limited, so that instrumental support from their migrant children has become increasingly important (Vullnetari & King, 2008). Similarly, in the family-oriented society of Poland, elderly adults find that state support is ‘negligible’, so that they have to seek instrumental support from their families, however, such support is increasingly absent as a result of the large-scale emigration flow (Conkova & King, 2019).

Moreover, the provision of instrumental support in transnational families is also bidirectional, delivered within a wide range of close kin in care configurations (Wall & Bolzman, 2013, p. 76). Sojourners as much as their stay-behind parents are periodically in need of instrumental support. For sojourners, such need is mainly related to childcare duties that can be provided by their parents during VR travel who, if in good health, play the role of care providers (Komter & Knijn, 2006). Therefore, during such visits, sojourners can spend more time and energy on income-generating activities by shifting childcare works to parents (De Silva, 2018), which in turn financially benefits their families as a whole. Finally, for transnational families, the fundamental motive of participating in the various support exchanges is to improve family wellbeing, which is discussed below.

2.2.2 Transnational Family Wellbeing

The concept of family wellbeing has attracted worldwide attention from sociologists (La Placa et al., 2013; Lindberg et al., 2018; Noor et al., 2014; Tammelin, 2018), but is often not clearly defined (Tammelin, 2018), despite being at the core of support exchanges within transnational families (Horn, 2017; Xu et al., 2019). Noor et al. (2014) tried to develop a set

of indicators to accurately measure the state of family wellbeing in Malaysia, claiming that defining family wellbeing is not an easy task, because the concept has a “broad, complex, and multi-dimensional” (p. 281) nature.

Also, prior studies merely perceive wellbeing as a desirable human state, which fails to capture its multifaceted nature or the dynamics behind its improvement, maintenance, and reduction (Forgeard et al., 2011; Pollard & Lee, 2003; Tammelin, 2018). La Placa et al. (2013) suggested that wellbeing studies should not focus on a single aspect, since individual wellbeing is multi-dimensional, including a variety of subjective life experiences, and an individual’s objective circumstances.

The notion of wellbeing can be understood from subjective and objective perspectives (Allardt, 2003; Rettig & Bubolz, 1983; Uysal et al., 2016). Subjective wellbeing represents the way people perceive the different parts of their lives, constituting their life satisfaction, while objective wellbeing refers to the external conditions that are related to each of those parts, such as income and housing. However, subjective and objective wellbeing may not be closely aligned with each other in reality, as people’s life satisfaction can decline while their living conditions substantially improve (Andrews & Withey, 1976).

Wellbeing is multifaceted and dynamic, thus stable wellbeing implies that “individuals have the psychological, social, and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social, and physical challenge”, achieving “the balance point” (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230) between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges s/he faces. Indeed, individual wellbeing is “a central goal of all societies” (Andrews & Withey, 1976, p. 23), so that people can confidently face all challenges. Dodge’s ‘balance point’ perspective provides a lens with which to view the way that geographically dispersed family members try to help each other, as an ongoing process of counterbalance, through exchanging various forms of support in their transnational interactions.

Of note, individual wellbeing and family wellbeing are different but closely related. Family wellbeing is achieved if most individual family members report high-level wellbeing (Tammelin, 2018). Indeed, family wellbeing is an outcome of individual wellbeing for Finnish families with children (Lindberg et al., 2018), and can only be improved in transnational contexts if the design of migration strategies takes into account the needs of all family members who span borders, such as the families living across the Hong Kong-Mainland China border (Leung & Lee, 2005). Therefore, preserving family wellbeing requires all family members to achieve the ‘balance point’ between the available resources and daily challenges. The resources include but are not limited to access to financial resources, health care, and a safe environment (La Placa et al., 2013; Rettig & Bubolz, 1983). The challenges transnational families may face are discussed below.

Challenges. For transnational families, emigration leads to prolonged separation which has intricate effects on family wellbeing (Jackson et al., 2007; Mahler, 2001; Simich et al., 2010). For instance, the emotional wellbeing of Asian children who remain behind faces challenges as a result of prolonged separation from their parents who emigrated to work abroad (Graham & Jordan, 2011). Yet, only a few researchers have paid attention to these effects (Waters, 2011).

Compared to sojourners, stay-behind parents’ wellbeing is more likely to be negatively affected by prolonged separation (Baldassar, 2007b, 2008; Boccagni, 2015; Vullnetari & King, 2008). An ageing population is a common issue in many societies (Wang et al., 2012). For example, elderly people from the Netherlands have noticeably higher life satisfaction when they live close to their adult children (Meijering & Lager, 2014), a dependence which is “a reversal of the logic of family altruism” (Finch, 1989, p. 223). Therefore, if adult children emigrate then parents’ lives are fundamentally shaped (King et

al., 2014), in affective (Boccagni, 2013), relational (Marchetti-Mercer, 2012), and material perspectives (Janta et al., 2015).

From an emotional perspective, Baldassar (2008) explored the maintenance of family ties between Italian sojourners in Australia and their stay-behind elderly parents, indicating that the stay-behind parents' emotional wellbeing largely depends on emotional closeness with their migrant children. Also, many elderly parents cannot use newly emerged communication technologies, which severely constrains them from maintaining geographically stretched family ties and extends the sense of loss, resulting in loneliness, regret, abandonment, and depression (Baldassar, 2007b; Salazar, 2002).

From a material perspective, the instrumental support that adult children can provide to their elderly parents declines with distance (Janta et al., 2015), especially in transnational families, where the provision of instrumental support is frequently destabilized as a result of prolonged separation (Boccagni, 2015, p. 252). For instance, in rural Albania, most elderly parents were badly in need of instrumental support, while facing a severe care drain (i.e., lack of essential support), as a result of their children's outmigration (Vullnetari & King, 2008). In addition, state-level migration control can substantially limit transnational sojourners' ability to provide instrumental support to their stay-behind parents (Leung & Lee, 2005).

Moreover, both sojourners abroad and their stay-behind parents tend to deliberately conceal the difficulties they experience in their daily lives, such as physical and emotional illness, to protect their far-away family members from becoming anxious (Baldassar, 2008). This practice further constrains cross-border exchange of support and increases their emotional distance (Baldassar, 2007a).

Of note, although migration researchers consider stay-behind elderly parents' wellbeing a critically understudied field and call for further studies (Jerves et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017), the wellbeing of stay-behind elderly parents' migrant children has

also not been well studied. Therefore, given the aforementioned challenges, far-away family members tend to participate in transnational VR travel, so that they can better exchange various means of support with each other during the short but precious co-presence, resulting in improved wellbeing and strengthened ties.

2.2.3 Visiting Relatives (VR) Travel

In the VR travel from home to host countries that this research explores, stay-behind family members are the visitors, while sojourners abroad play the role of hosts. The abovementioned family literature suggests that VR travel correlates with family obligation, emotional closeness, and exchanges of support, so it is closely associated with family ties and wellbeing. This section further elaborates on the role of VR travel in shaping transnational families' lives.

The Role of Family Ties in Shaping VR Travel. Visiting relatives travel is shaped by geographically stretched family ties (Griffin, 2014), echoing the argument: “The analysis of obligations, social networks at-a-distance, and social capital should be central to 21st century tourism analysis” (Larsen et al., 2007, p. 259). However, little scholarly attention has been paid to the social aspects of VFR travel (Yousuf & Backer, 2015), specifically the role of social relations and obligation (Janta et al., 2015). Indeed, prior studies failed to uncover the unique effects of interpersonal relationships on VFR tourism (Griffin, 2014).

First and foremost, the maintenance of family ties is an important motive for stay-behinds to visit their migrant family members. Although some researchers argued that people frequently participate in VR travel for pleasure rather than family reunion (Backer & King, 2017; Hu & Morrison, 2002), most researchers confirmed the importance of family ties in facilitating cross-border VR travel (Janta et al., 2015; Kobayashi & Preston, 2007; Larsen, 2008), in particular, the feeling of longing for far-away family members (Baldassar, 2008).

For example, visiting migrant children is the main push factor for elderly Spanish senior travellers to travel abroad (Alén et al., 2017).

Similarly, the stretched family ties also encourage sojourners abroad to host their stay-behind family members (Janta et al., 2015), in order to fulfil family obligations and strengthen family ties (Yousuf & Backer, 2017). Therefore, migrant hosts are important drivers of local tourism, continuously attracting VFR visitors from overseas (Yousuf & Backer, 2017) and act as “an informal yet powerful advertising force” (Young et al., 2007, p. 513). Indeed, in developing nations where out-migration is an economic imperative, such as in the small islands of the Pacific, up to 50 percent of tourism figures are visits made by relatives abroad (Cave & Hall, 2015).

Of note, geographically stretched family ties constitute an important source of support during VR visits (Backer, 2019). Migrant hosts are considered a reliable source of tourism information, largely shaping their visitors’ travel behaviours, such as choice of activities, length of stay, and expenditure (Cave, 2016; McLeod & Busser, 2014; Meis et al., 1995; Yousuf & Backer, 2015; Yousuf & Backer, 2017). For instance, resident hosts in Las Vegas often act as tour guides, providing their visiting family members with useful suggestions regarding the area’s tourism activities and potential risks (Young et al., 2007).

In addition, migrant hosts also tend to actively provide their visiting family members with instrumental and financial support, out of a sense of obligation (Larsen et al., 2007). Hosting can involve a variety of responsibilities, such as entertaining, feeding (Griffin, 2014), providing transport and accommodation (Schänzel et al., 2014), accompanying visitors to visit local attractions (Backer, 2019), and so on. A recent study in New Zealand indicated that female VFR hosts provide the majority of care to visiting relatives as well as paying for their costs (Locke et al., 2017). Polynesian migrant hosts in Auckland, New Zealand, describe the end of hosting family member visits from the Pacific Islands as “a relief from the social

obligation of being responsible for the wellbeing of the guests” (Schänzel et al., 2014, p. 146). However, the role of family ties and visitors’ role and responsibilities in host-guest interactions during VR travel are still largely understudied (Griffin, 2014; Yousuf & Backer, 2017), especially from a non-Western perspective (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017).

The Effects of Visiting Relatives Travel on Family Wellbeing. Transnational families are resourceful and resilient, and tend to make great efforts to take care of their own members across national borders (Leung & Lee, 2005). Co-presence is an important condition for care to be directly and effectively exchanged (Baldassar, 2007a). VR travel is therefore a prevalent means to provide far-away family members with various forms of support (Baldassar, 2008; Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; De Silva, 2018), in order to improve family wellbeing. However, the effects of VFR travel on the wellbeing of sojourners abroad and those who remain behind need further study (Backer, 2019; Backer & King, 2017; Shani & Uriely, 2012).

First, VR travel enables exchange of instrumental support across distance. Very few studies have examined the benefits of parental instrumental support during visits to their migrant children abroad (De Silva, 2018). Receipt of instrumental support, primarily childcare assistance, is an important motive for young migrants to invite their stay-behind parents. For example, Filipino young migrants in New Zealand face many challenges at the beginning of migration, such as lack of English language skill and perceived discrimination. They highly value childcare assistance from their visiting parents, which allows them to spend more time and energy on their careers (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017). Benefits then occur for migrants’ assimilation, professional integration, and prosperity in host countries, because of the visits. Such instrumental support can lead to reciprocal action, as the migrant families tend to financially support their stay-behind family members in the Philippines, out

of a sense of obligation, as a result of their increased household income (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017).

Second, VR travel facilitates exchanges of emotional support between far-away family members (King & Lulle, 2015). Although some studies argued that continuous emotional support provision may not require co-presence (Kornienko et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; McKie & Callan, 2012; Sun, 2012; Tu, 2016), nevertheless, face-to-face interaction enables sojourners and their stay-behind family members to “experience each other fully, with all five senses” (Baldassar, 2008, p. 252), confirming their significant others’ health and wellbeing.

Third, for migrant hosts and visitors, participating in VR travel can bring leisure and pleasure benefits, providing them with “increased happiness” (Backer, 2019, p. 166), beyond exchanging support or fulfilling obligations (Backer & King, 2017; Hu & Morrison, 2002; Janta et al., 2015). This is especially the case for migrant hosts who sometimes participate in a wide range of tourism activities and act like tourists in their own backyards (Backer, 2019; Young et al., 2007), becoming more familiar with and attached to the local environment (Shani & Uriely, 2012). Also, hosting is an opportunity for migrant hosts’ young children to strengthen emotional closeness with their extended families and learn the cultures, traditions, and languages of their parents’ countries of origin (Schänzel et al., 2014).

However, both visiting and hosting can be tedious, tiring, and expensive (Janta et al., 2015), with potential damage to the wellbeing of both sides and “have a significant impact on quality of life” (Backer, 2019, p. 162). Migrant hosts are particularly vulnerable (Shani & Uriely, 2012). They may experience loss of privacy, increased daily chores, difficulty catering for visitors with different dietary requirements, unstable sleeping arrangements, extra expenditures on hospitality, and mental stress, such as the feeling of being exploited by their guests (Backer, 2019; Janta et al., 2015; Shani & Uriely, 2012). In a study that examines

the experiences of Polynesian migrant hosts in New Zealand, Schänzel et al. (2014) found that they are often expected to share everything with their visiting relatives. Although unconditional hospitality is the core of Polynesian tradition, this can become a heavy burden or an undesired obligation that causes loss of privacy and financial vulnerability.

In addition, not all interpersonal interactions during VR visits are pleasurable (Backer, 2019; De Silva, 2018). Conflicts may emerge between far-away family members, if living arrangements produce unpleasant interactions (Chen & Short, 2008). For instance, in Chinese families, conflicts can emerge between co-residing adult children and elderly parents, due to differences in lifestyle, daily routine, and especially the style of childrearing (Xiao, 2016). Likewise, adult children in the United States have experienced negative feelings when their efforts to care for dependent parents are unreciprocated, considering such social exchanges as “unfair” This sometimes results in physical and psychological abuse of elderly parents (Suitor & Pillemer, 1988, p. 1038).

Visiting relatives’ unrealistic expectations of their hosts can distort the meanings of welcome and hospitality (Janta et al., 2015), so that feelings of disappointment and disillusionment may emerge in the minds of both sides, raising conflicts and worsening family ties, if these are tenuous (Baldassar, 2008). Visitors and hosts therefore should maintain a ‘comfortable distance’ from each other, avoid exploiting their ties, and respect the spirit of reciprocity, so that “each person’s balance sheet (is) ... kept even” (Finch, 1989, p. 240). These arguments are fairly consistent with the discussion about the gaps between expectations and actual experiences regarding visiting and hosting far-away friends, which can be seen in the friend section below. Having discussed the role of VR travel in shaping family wellbeing, the next section further elaborates on the effects of VR travel on geographically stretched family ties.

The Effects of Visiting Relatives Travel on Family Ties. VR travel shapes transnational family ties. First, strengthening the geographically stretched ties is “at the core of VFR mobility” (Janta et al., 2015, p. 588). Prior to COVID-19, this was a globalised world, where there were a number of geographically dispersed families (Janta et al., 2015). VR travel is thus a means by which migrant hosts and their stay-behind family members can reunite and strengthen their ties (Backer & Lynch, 2017; Baldassar, 2008; Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Griffin, 2014; Komter & Knijn, 2006), overcoming time and mobility issues (Schänzel et al., 2014).

Although the rapid development of communication technologies has shortened their emotional distance to some extent (Larsen, 2008), periodic face-to-face interactions still constitute the most important channel to create more fond memories (Janta et al., 2015), exchange essential support in times of need (Urry, 2003), fulfil family obligations, and as a result, strengthen family ties (Griffin, 2015; Havitz, 2007; Larsen et al., 2007).

However, some tourism researchers argue that VR travel can also weaken family ties, especially when conflicts emerge in interactions between migrant hosts and their visitors (Baldassar, 2008; Janta et al., 2015). For instance, in a study about the transnational interactions between Chinese sojourners in the UK and their elderly Chinese parents, Tu (2016) found that different levels of tension can emerge when the migrant hosts live with their visiting parents, who visit to take care of the young children in the migrant families. Having discussed the constructs of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel, the next section introduces an important influencing factor in the social interactions/exchange between the far-away family members.

2.2.4 Family Life Cycle

This section discusses the role of family life cycle in shaping transnational families' lives, mainly from two aspects, migration strategy and VR travel. Family life cycle is a theoretical lens through which researchers can better understand the patterns of transnational migration (Baldassar, 2007a; Tu, 2016; Waters, 2011) and interrogate the dynamics behind the changing interactions between sojourners abroad and their stay-behind family members (Baldassar et al., 2014; Bryceson, 2019), including VR visiting and hosting behaviours (Janta et al., 2015; Young et al., 2007).

First, the notion of life cycle applies to humans, animals, and plants. From a sociological perspective, it is a metaphor that denotes the passage of an individual through the successive stages of life, from birth to death through childhood, adolescence, adult life, and old age, implying a return to infancy in old age; punctuated by significant life events such as marriage, pregnancy, and divorce ("Life course," 2015). In a study exploring the travel motives and tendencies of Spanish senior travellers, Alén et al. (2017) argued that an individual's life stage is decided by her/his age, employment status, living situation, and so forth. For example, people move to a new life stage when they retire, see their children leave home, lose spouses, or become grandparents.

Not only individuals, but families also have life cycles. Families are not static but should be considered an entity that is always in motion, constantly moving from one life stage to another, rather than a simple snapshot of one point in a certain life stage (Wilson, 1985). Kilkey and Palenga-Möllenbeck (2016) claimed that a family life cycle perspective includes several major concerns: relationship formation, biological reproduction, care circulation within families, child-rearing during working life, and ageing. This classification, however, fails to recognise the diversification of family structures noted earlier, and conflates the concepts of family life stage with significant life event. A transnational family moves to a

new stage, such as childrearing, when its family structure undergoes a major change, as a result of a significant event, the birth of a baby.

Nevertheless, researchers have to face the fact that a family life cycle perspective may not be able to include all ‘traditional’ and ‘emerging’ family structures. Focusing on the cross-border support exchanges within transnational families, Wall and Bolzman (2013) identified three sequential stages in a family life cycle. Firstly, a ‘young couple without children’ stage occurs when young migrant couples gradually build their new family ties, and their careers abroad. At this stage, they actively exchange emotional support with stay-behind family members to preserve family cohesion.

Next, there is a ‘families with dependent children’ stage, where migrant couples have strong responsibilities to take care of their young children abroad. If working, then their stay-behind parents frequently visit them to provide them with childcare assistance. If people have the wherewithal and visa conditions to travel freely, then this type of instrumental support can be intense. As a sojourner myself, my newly established family in New Zealand is clearly at this stage, although my parents cannot yet visit NZ after the birth of their grandchild, because of COVID-19 border restrictions.

Then, a ‘mid-life’ stage occurs when migrant couples are in middle-age and act as the breadwinners and caregivers for transnational families, taking care of stay-behind elderly parents yet with obligations to their own adult children and perhaps young grandchildren. Wall and Bolzman’s (2013) model is inspiring, suggesting that having a family life cycle lens is important to uncover the dynamics behind families’ transnational interactions.

Further, so far, family studies tend to focus on the classification of various life stages, while only a few efforts have been made to clearly define the concept of family life cycle (Wall & Bolzman, 2013). Bryceson, a social geographer, supports this idea, defining family life cycle as “stages of the physical and social reproduction of a conjugal couple beginning

with marriage or cohabitation, followed by the birth of children, child-rearing, generational fission and death” (Bryceson, 2019, p. 3045). Again, this definition is problematic as it fails to respect the diversification of family forms and confuses the concepts of family life stage with significant life event.

As Bryceson (2019) observed, the attempt of defining family life cycle can be dangerous, not only because of the cultural diversification of family forms worldwide, but also due to the fact that family boundaries are constantly fluctuating, as a result of births, adoptions, deaths, and partnership formation and separation (Holtzman, 2008; Turner & West, 2014). Nevertheless, Bryceson’s (2019) definition helps researchers to form a general understanding of family life cycle that comprises successive life stages, in which significant life events are sequentially experienced by all family members.

Family life cycle has attracted scholarly attention in family consumption behaviour (Camacho & Hernández-Peinado, 2009), poverty (Zachary Van & Emanuela, 2018), family living arrangements (Wiemers et al., 2017), and so on. In migration studies, family life cycle is considered important in shaping families’ migration decisions, which are often made with the primary purpose of improving overall family wellbeing, taking most family members’ needs into account (Kobayashi & Preston, 2007; Nauck & Settles, 2001). Family members’ emotional and material needs often change as they move from one life stage to another throughout the family life cycle (Janta et al., 2015; Tu, 2016), acting as key drivers of families’ changing migration strategies (Tu, 2016; Wall & Bolzman, 2013).

For example, the intensifying transnational movements among European countries has produced significant population changes between the countries, as people respond to the changes in their family members’ needs for education, marriage, divorce, and retirement at different stages of the family life cycle (Kofman, 2004). Also, Kobayashi and Preston (2007) indicated that the transnational practices of Hong Kong migrants in Canada evolve

throughout the family life cycle. Young migrant couples tend to live an ‘astronaut’ lifestyle, in which husbands commute between Canada and Hong Kong to assure steady family income, while wives and young children enjoy the socio-cultural environment abroad. Yet, middle-aged spouses in their 40s or older tend to frequently visit Hong Kong to take care of their elderly parents who are increasingly in need of instrumental support.

Moreover, tourism researchers have noticed the strong correlation between family life cycle and tourism. Wells and Gubar (1966) first developed a six-stages family life cycle model that has been widely used as a base for tourism research, and undergone modification by researchers (Hong et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2020; Weaver & Lawton, 2014), even though shortcomings were identified, such as exclusion of diversified family forms (Backer & Lynch, 2017). For example, Lawson (1991) used a modified version of Wells and Gubar’s model to explore the effects of family life cycle on tourist behaviour in New Zealand, such as type of vacation taken and expenditure. Also, Backer and Lynch (2017) used Wells and Gubar’s model as a theoretical foundation to examine the correlation between family life cycle and domestic travel engagement in Australia, while uncovered the differences between VFR and non-VFR travellers.

Family life cycle is closely associated with transnational VR tourism. A theoretical lens of family life cycle helps researchers to better understand the dynamics behind the continuous social interactions within transnational families (Bryceson, 2019), including far-away family members’ changing needs and felt family obligations toward each other (Baldassar et al., 2014; Horn, 2017; Koppenfels et al., 2015). In particular, such needs and felt obligations largely determine their desires and behaviours in participating in cross-border VR visiting and hosting (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017), from which various social exchanges are conducted. For instance, Baldassar found that Italian migrants in Australia and their Italy-based parents undertook transnational movements not merely for economic return, but to give

or receive care in times of need, indicating that “care tends to flow from parents to migrants in the early stages of migration and reverses as parents become less independent” (Baldassar, 2007a, p. 279), echoing Wall and Bolzman’s (2013) three sequential stages of family life cycle.

In addition, family life cycle not only determines far-away family members’ desires and behaviours in participating in transnational social exchanges, but also affects their capability in doing so, such as time and money (Horn, 2017), suggesting other dynamics behind transnational interactions within the families. Therefore, the social interactions, especially VR travel behaviours, within transnational families tend to undergo changes as they continuously move to new family life stages (Janta et al., 2015). However, only a few studies have explored the correlation between family life cycle and transnational VR tourism (Backer & Lynch, 2017).

2.2.5 Summary

This family section forms a picture of transnational families’ lives. After reviewing the family literature, I identified four interrelated constructs that are closely associated with transnational families’ life experiences, collectively uncovering the challenges they face, and the dynamics lying behind the survival of their family ties and family prosperity.

The first construct is transnational family ties. Geographically dispersed family members tend to preserve their ties, which are important for maintaining their wellbeing and ensuring the survival of transnational families. However, they often face challenges in preserving the ties, as preserving such ties requires considerable investment of time and energy. However, their increasing access to diverse communication technologies and cheap transportation contributes to the survival of family ties, through creating more opportunities for them to virtually and/or physically interact with each other.

The second construct is transnational family wellbeing. Geographically stretched family ties not only shape sojourners' identities and feeling of belongingness, but also act as a conceptual bridge that enables the transnational exchanges of financial, emotional, and instrumental support, which help the geographically dispersed family members to confidently confront the challenges in their lives, largely improving their subjective and objective wellbeing. First, remittance is an important form of bidirectional support, which improves economic wellbeing of those who are experiencing hard economic circumstances. Second, mutual emotional support helps family members to overcome mental issues, preserving their subjective wellbeing. Third, exchanging instrumental support is essential to the maintenance of objective wellbeing, especially for stay-behind elderly members or young sojourners who need childcare. These transnational social exchanges in turn form the bedrock of, and continuously strengthen, their family ties.

Of note, such cross-border social exchanges derive from their felt family obligations, family altruism, and filial piety, largely shaped by family members' changing needs throughout family life cycle, guided by socio-cultural contexts/norms within families or wider societies, and greatly facilitated by their increasing access to the means of communication and transportation.

The third construct is VR travel. Their family ties are the primary driving force for VR visiting and hosting. Sojourners not only act as attractions for their stay-behinds and a reliable source of tourism information, but also provide their visitors with various forms of support, such as accommodation, food, and transport, out of felt family obligations. Both visiting and hosting can strengthen their stretched ties and enable/facilitate cross-border exchanges of instrumental and emotional support, resulting in better fulfilled family obligations and improved family wellbeing. Also, participating in VR travel can bring leisure/pleasure benefits.

Nevertheless, sometimes, transnational interactions can be a burden that potentially raises conflicts, weakens family ties, and damages family members' wellbeing, especially during VR travel. Hosts are particularly vulnerable as they may experience reduced quality of life, including loss of privacy, increased daily chores, mental stress, and so on. Visitors may distort the meanings of welcome and hospitality, have unrealistic expectations of their hosts, and experience disappointment and disillusionment, implying the importance of preserving a comfortable distance between VR hosts and guests. This view reflects that the stretched family ties can also become a source of unhappiness if misused.

The fourth construct is family life cycle that determines transnational families' migration strategies, which are designed with the primary purpose of improving overall family wellbeing. Achieving such a purpose needs to consider all family members' changing needs. Also, family members' needs, felt family obligations, and capability in participating in transnational travel tend to undergo changes as families move to a new life stage, resulting in the changes in their cross-border social exchanges, which can be reflected in their transnational interactions, especially the desires and behaviours in participating in VR travel.

Consequently, the aforementioned four interactive constructs collectively portray the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel, while identifying the dynamics behind the family sphere of living transnational lives. This interplay will be conceptualised in the concluding section, together with the portrayal of the role of transnational friendships in shaping sojourners' lives, so that a clearer view of sojourners' lives can be achieved, and research opportunities and research questions identified.

2.3 Friends

This section explores transnational sojourners' life experiences within a 'friend sphere', focusing on their friendships with friends who remain in their countries of origin. It

uses the sociology, anthropology, and mobility literature, in various socio-cultural contexts. Five closely interrelated constructs were identified: (1) friendship, (2) otherness, (3) social inclusion and exclusion, (4) cultural change, and (5) expectation and experience in VF travel. The discussion of these constructs contributes to an improved understanding of the evolving nature and meanings of their friendships, and more importantly, the role of their transnational friendships in shaping the sojourners' lives, as well as the dynamics behind their transnational interactions.

Various terms were used to denote transnational sojourners' friends in their countries of origin, such as 'old friends' (Bell, 2016; Robertson, 2018; Westcott, 2012), 'old networks' (Lobburi, 2012), and 'old ties' (Larsen, 2013). This PhD study adopts the term 'stay-behind friends', which is consistent with the aforementioned concept of stay-behind family members. This section does not elaborate on sojourners' ties and interactions with their new friends in their countries of residence.

The concept of transnational friendship is formed by two subordinate ideas, 'transnational' and 'friendship', which have been variously defined in the literature. As the definitions and meanings of transnational have already been discussed, the next section reviews the nature and meanings of friendship in the literature, in terms of the role of transnational friendships in shaping sojourners' lives.

2.3.1 Friendship

As one of the most important forms of social relationship in our lives, friendship can take many forms. Individuals may intentionally initiate or maintain their friendships due to various motives, such as similarity, mutual-fondness, exchange of practical and emotional support, and the need to share one's secrets (Spencer, 2006). Of note, the core of friendship is its voluntary nature, which differentiates it from kinship (Spencer, 2006). Westcott (2012)

defined friendships as voluntarily built and maintained social ties between acquaintances, colleagues, family, and friends, varying in both quality and nature. Westcott's (2012) definition is inspiring but nevertheless blurs the boundaries between friendship and family ties.

Robertson provided a more precise definition of friendship in an exploration of the interactions between student-migrants living in Australia and their stay-behind friends, defining friendship as “any voluntarily maintained social ties outside of family relationships that vary in degree of intimacy, involving shared social and leisure practices” (Robertson, 2018, p. 543). This definition emphasizes both the voluntary and heterogeneous nature of friendship, while explicitly setting the boundary between friendship and family ties. More importantly, Robertson's definition emphasizes the social interactions/exchanges behind the bonds.

The nature of friendship, however, is not limited to voluntariness. Firstly, just like family members, friends also tend to have a sense of obligation toward each other, in that they consider each other a source of support in difficult circumstances (Maeda & Ritchie, 2003; Spencer, 2006). The exchange of various forms of support leads to improved wellbeing. For example, in Japan, people tend to consider their close friends' problems to be theirs as well, so that they frequently encourage each other to overcome problems (Maeda & Ritchie, 2003).

This viewpoint has been confirmed in transnational contexts (Herz, 2015; Lobburi, 2012; Tsujimoto, 2014; Westcott, 2012), although there are some cultural nuances among different cultures. For instance, highly educated German migrants in the UK tend to emphasize the importance of emotional support that they can exchange with their stay-behind friends (Herz, 2015), while unskilled Filipinos working abroad highly value the instrumental

support from their far-away friends. Such cultural nuances in understanding the obligations between far-away friends reflect the fact that transnationalism differs by cultural context.

Secondly, the friend literature indicates that close friends should be able to understand each other's real thoughts (Adams et al., 2004; Cross & Gore, 2004; Maeda & Ritchie, 2003). Thus, in many cultures, effective communication between friends represents an important indicator of the strength of friendship. For instance, living in a high-context culture, Japanese people have strong expectations that their friends truly understand them (Maeda & Ritchie, 2003). Similarly, in a discussion about the problems in friendships in American society, Cross and Gore (2004) found that people tend to engage in self-disclosure as a way to build mutual-trust between friends so that they can freely convey their values and beliefs. Cross and Gore's (2004) finding reveals another important indicator of close friendship, that is, mutual-trust.

Thirdly, the maintenance of friendship requires investment of time and energy. For example, Filipino migrants in South Korea have more time for their local compatriot friends, participating in various activities together, and therefore enjoy much closer friendships, compared to Filipino migrants in Canada, who do not have such spare time (Tsujimoto, 2014). However, face-to-face interaction is not always highly desirable in friendships, because close proximity may also cause the loss of autonomy (Larsen, 2013), which means people may feel intimidated or exploited as a result of interacting with friends. The literature also revealed other nature/factors that also contribute to closer friendships, such as shared memories (Westcott, 2012) and a feeling of safety (Maeda & Ritchie, 2003). Nevertheless, to date, only a few studies have provided a comprehensive view of the components of friendship in a transnational context.

As with the notion of family tie, the nature and meanings of friendship are culturally and historically situated (Maeda & Ritchie, 2003; Westcott, 2012). People from different

cultures or historical periods tend to understand friendship differently. Maeda and Ritchie explored the meanings of best friend in Japan and United States and identified marked differences between the two cultures. For instance, they found that Japanese enjoy comfort in friendships, while Americans enjoy surprises in friendships. Maeda and Ritchie concluded that “personal relationships must always be understood in their cultural context” (Maeda & Ritchie, 2003, p. 595). This study explores the transnational friendships between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends.

The literature then suggests that four contributing concepts to the notion of transnational friendship: (1) otherness, (2) social inclusion/exclusion, (3) cultural change, and (4) expectation/experience in VF travel.

2.3.2 Otherness

The concept of ‘otherness’ has attracted wide scholarly attention in sociological studies (Avila-Saavedra, 2011; Baofu, 2012; Halkitis, 2019; Makoni, 2012; Odysseos, 2003; Ploesser & Mecheril, 2012). In a transnational context, the same refers to local residents in host countries, while the other denotes migrants. Othering processes create an artificial dichotomy between ‘the Self’ and peoples deemed ‘the Other’ (Halkitis, 2019), in short- or long-term social interactions. Pérez (2014) examined otherness construction among ethnically diverse groups, tourists, and festival performers in the Andean festival of the Virgin of Carmen, suggesting that otherness is linked to experience of the strange in a short-term social interaction, forming a variety of dichotomies based on race, language, culture, and belief, to name a few. Also, othering processes have been found in the confrontation over time between the gay and mainstream communities (Halkitis, 2019), ethnic minorities’ continuous negotiations of cultural identity with mainstream society (Avila-Saavedra, 2011), and the prolonged representation of gendered roles of women (Makoni, 2012).

Otherness is constructed by four interrelated ideas: (1) The Same's perception of the Other, (2) power relations between the Same and the Other, (3) identity formation of the Other/self-othering (how they perceive themselves in relation to the Same), as well as (4) 'Othered Selves', which represent the people who left their Self group and spent a prolonged time living in another group for study, work, marriage, or other purposes are 'othered' and/or 'self-othered', in their interactions with the Self group afterwards. For example, young Asian migrants in Australia experienced frustration in their interactions with stay-behind friends during short-term return visits, and reported that they no longer feeling comfortable with social norms (Robertson, 2018). On the one hand, such an unpleasant experience made them realise that their values/attitudes are increasingly different from those of their stay-behind friends, resulting in the loss of belongingness, and subsequently self-othering themselves. On the other hand, in the interactions, their stay-behind friends noticed the migrants' discomfort, rejection of local practices, and the changes in values/attitudes, so that considered them arrogant, othering the migrants. To date, only a few studies have paid attention to the dynamics behind the emergence of a sense of otherness between these far-away friends (du Plooy et al., 2019; Popa, 2019).

People from 'the Same' group tend to have divergent perceptions toward 'the Other'. For instance, locals from Australian host society tend to have different perceptions toward immigrants (Calcutt et al., 2009). On the one hand, those who have a limited/narrow outlook tend to have a strong sense of otherness toward immigrants, actively resisting their presence. On the other hand, those who are more familiar with and at ease in many different cultures often have less sense of otherness toward immigrants since they are experienced travellers of the world. They thus see immigrants as benign and are willing to accommodate other cultural groups in the larger population (the irony is all 'Australians', except Indigenous first peoples, are immigrants themselves).

However, for people from ‘the Same’ group, developing a sense of otherness toward ‘the Other’ is often more than simply accepting or rejecting those identified as different from themselves. Instead, more frequently, the existence of the Other can be simultaneously perceived as an opportunity and a threat (Balibar, 2005), because a cultural majority may admire some aspects of the Other that they do not possess, while clearly demarking cultural differences (Pérez, 2014).

The othering processes exist among individuals, communities, societies, and regions across the global West and East, also between the Global North and South. For example, Matthews (2019) explored the representation of Japan and disaster-affected communities in the context of US and British media coverage of the 2011 Great East Japan Disaster, indicating that a sense of otherness exists between the West and Japanese societies. In the process of othering, the West has depicted the East in ways that reflect imperialism (Balibar, 2005).

Power relations between the Same and the Other play an important role in reinforcing the othering process. Baofu (2012) argued that public perceptions of the Other in a given society are formed by unequal power-contingent relationships between the Same and the Other, which depend on a wide range of factors, such as race, gender, and ethnicity. Often, it is the group in power who assigns otherness to those who are unlike them, especially if their characteristics are considered strange/exotic (Halkitis, 2019). An example is gendered otherness. One study examined the discursive construction of women in family birth-control pamphlets in Zimbabwe shows that women were commonly depicted as the vulnerable others who need protection, when compared to men, in relation to birth control (Makoni, 2012), which clearly reflects the effect of an unequal gender relationship. Such a sense of otherness can be further reinforced by stereotyping the other (Avila-Saavedra, 2011).

If a majority is xenophobic (Odysseos, 2003), then individuals from the groups marginalized by the process of differentiation may experience discrimination (Espinoza-Herold et al., 2017) and psychological burdens, such as loneliness and depression, which negatively affect their mental health (Halkitis, 2019). However, sometimes, culturally defined migrant groups may welcome such a differentiation and Self-Other dichotomy as a means of preserving cultural norms and language (Cave, 2008). This idea echoes the notion of self-othering.

Indeed, construction of otherness is also linked to how the Other perceive themselves in relation to the Same, suggesting a self-othering process throughout identity formation process. Halkitis's (2019) study of the experiences of gay men in the US emphasized that negotiating a sense of Same versus Other is an important part of identity formation for individuals from both the majority and minority groups. Likewise, U.S. Latinos negotiate a collective identity based on a complex intersection of language, ethnicity, and culture, such as the use of Spanish and the acceptance of Latino family values (Avila-Saavedra, 2011). Thus, the construction of otherness involves a bi-directional differentiation process, or 'mutual othering'.

The notion of 'mutual gaze' echoes the mutual othering process and clearly indicates the power relations behind it. Maoz (2006) conceptualizes 'mutual othering' as a process of mutual gaze in social interactions. Maoz's example was between Israeli backpacker tourists in India, which he interprets as the group in power, and the locals, which he perceives as the vulnerable group. The tourist gaze represents an othering process, while the local gaze is a self-othering process. The backpackers may exercise most of the power in their interactions, sometimes lose control and cause the locals trouble, while the locals also gaze at them, reserve some power and a little control over what happens in their own homes. That is because the locals heavily rely on the backpackers' contribution to local economic

development and thus frequently adjust themselves to meet their needs. The existence of mutual gaze, however, implies that all groups have some power, even the most vulnerable ones, which enables them to participate in the mutual othering process.

This mutual othering process represents the ways tourists and locals imagine, view, and understand/misunderstand each other, which often reinforce the stereotypical views of each other. As Maoz claimed, “everybody gazes at everybody” (Maoz, 2006, p. 225), although tourists rarely feel they are being watched. For example, the backpackers may see locals as primitive and passive servants who accept anything, while locals may consider the backpackers to be shallow, hedonistic, and rude people, who are badly educated and can be easily deceived (Maoz, 2006). Such a mutual gaze then raises mistrust, exploitation, and even hatred between the two sides.

The notion of mutual gaze then leads to the concepts of orientalism/self-orientalism. The tourist gaze derives from orientalism (Maoz, 2006), which is “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the orient and the occident” (Said, 1994, p. 2), representing a system of knowledge about everything from the orient since the late eighteenth century. The ‘orient’ and ‘occident’ cultures have contrasting histories and traditions of thought that mutually support and reflect each other.

Orientalism represents a process of othering/representation, that describes the orient based on a sense of confrontation felt by the groups in power, mostly Westerners, who seek to understand, control, and manipulate a manifestly different world (Said, 1994). “Every statement made by orientalist conveyed a sense of the irreducible distance separating occidental from oriental” (Said, 1994, p. 228). This process reflects the West’s domination over the East. For example, Israelis perceive local Indians as passive people and expect them to satisfy all their needs, while locals actually consider these tourists foolish, aggressive, and demanding (Maoz, 2006). Compared to the tourist gaze, local gaze is often made based on

locals' experiences in their encounters with tourists, producing images that are closer to reality.

The concept of self-orientalism, which is complementary to orientalism, has been discussed in sociological studies. It represents the reaction of non-Western individuals, institutions, and countries to the action of orientalism, accepting and intentionally performing the stereotypes held by Westerners, staging "fictionalised" images (Feighery, 2012, p. 271), in order to gain recognition and better participate in Western-dominated global competition (Kobayashi et al., 2017). In migration studies, self-orientalism refers to the situation in which sojourners depict themselves as the Other in ways that they expect can be understood by the locals. This helps them to better position themselves in host societies (Kempny-Mazur, 2017) and reconfirms the existence of power relations between the Occident and the Orient, the Same and the Other.

To conclude, this construct of otherness has important implications for sojourners' evolving transnational friendships. The construction of a sense of otherness is a mutual process of differentiation, which encompasses four interrelated concepts that represent the negotiation between the Same and the Other in a society, or across societies. In the context of transnational sojourning, 'the Other' refers to the members of a foreign diaspora in a host country, that is, sojourners; whereas, 'the Same' refers to the locals in the host country, where othering is based on migration status (Baofu, 2012). Sojourners and their stay-behind friends are 'Othered Selves' to each other, suggesting an ongoing mutual othering process in their transnational communication and interactions, such as VF travel, as elaborated in the case of young Asian migrants in Australia visiting their hometowns (Robertson, 2018). Such a mutual othering process largely determines sojourners' transnational friendships, which in turn shapes their feelings of social inclusion/exclusion across national boundaries.

2.3.3 Social Inclusion and Exclusion

Social inclusion and exclusion have been widely mentioned in extant sociological literature, especially in the realm of migration studies (Kim, 2011; Seddon, 2010; Taylor, 2013). As two companion concepts, social inclusion and exclusion are interdependent, function as an organic whole, and set boundaries that distinguish ‘inside’ from ‘outside’ in a social group or society (Goodin, 1996). However, as seen in the life stories of Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers in Finland, in the context of transnational sojourning, the two concepts are a continuum of oppositional tendencies, subject to change over time, rather than a dichotomy (Korhonen & Siitonen, 2018).

Social inclusion reflects a deep human need, where individuals from a vulnerable social group, may seek to be accepted as members of selected communities to participate in social life. In the context of sojourning, the nature of social inclusion is twofold because realisation of social inclusion also requires locals to have an open and welcoming attitude toward newcomers. Indeed, the positioning of Latin American migrants in New Zealand’ society indicates that sojourners’ experiences of a sense of belonging is strongly affected by the degree of openness of the host society in accepting new citizens (Dürr, 2011).

Compared to social inclusion, social exclusion has attracted more attention worldwide, because it is related to many human miseries, such as poverty and famine (Benton & Gomez, 2014; Korhonen & Siitonen, 2018; Ryburn, 2016), oppression and marginalisation (Lyons & Huegler, 2012), and xenophobia (Kim, 2011; Perrem, 2018; Seddon, 2010; Taylor, 2013). The concept of social exclusion originates from the process of subordination, through which “some people achieve a privilege at the expense of other people” (Lyons & Huegler, 2012, p. 3). Similarly, Goodin (1996) defines social exclusion as a set of actions of ‘keeping out’, forming the boundaries that delimit ‘inside’ from ‘outside’.

In the context of transnational sojourning, sojourners seek a place to call home, yet their societies of residence and of origin reserve the right to accept or reject such a request. For instance, adolescent children of immigrants in Italy narrate belongingness in terms of the social exclusion they encounter in their host society, which may reinforce a sense of social inclusion in their home societies and vice versa (Colombo et al., 2009). Also, some Western immigrant parents of preschool-aged children residing in Tokyo experienced feelings of social exclusion, so that they tend to interact more with their stay-behind friends and co-present national compatriots, thus, in effect, self-segregating from the local majority (Perrem, 2018). Some student migrants in Australia experienced social exclusion in return visits to their homelands, which strengthened their feelings of belongingness to the host society (Robertson, 2018).

Indeed, social exclusion is closely associated with the mutual othering process in the social interactions that sojourners are involved with in a society. Seddon (2010) explored the construction of identities amongst migrant Yemeni Muslims in the UK and found that they assimilated well and developed new self-perceived identities, reflected in dress, values, and a regional English dialect. However, such identification with a new form of 'Britishness' is rarely accepted by locals, who still 'other' the migrants because of visible ethnicity and race. Such a sense of otherness inhibits the Yemenis' participation in wider society, including making interracial friends, and eventually exacerbates the social exclusion they have experienced in the country. Similar situations were also found in other research contexts, such as Italy (Colombo et al., 2009) and Japan (Perrem, 2018).

Therefore, the construct of social inclusion/exclusion has important implications for sojourners' wellbeing. Of note, although sojourners seek to be accepted by at least one society, either host or home, the reality is multidimensional. Social inclusion or exclusion is determined by various interrelated factors which sojourners do not fully control

(Kirpitchenko & Mansouri, 2014), including: economic status (Korhonen & Siitonen, 2018; Lyons & Huegler, 2012; Ryburn, 2016); cultural capability (Kim, 2011; Seddon, 2010); social relations (Benton & Gomez, 2014; Colombo et al., 2009; Dürr, 2011; Korhonen & Siitonen, 2018); and visible difference (Perrem, 2018). Thus, transnational sojourners sometimes encounter awkward situations in their pursuit of social inclusion, such as ‘double social exclusion’, in which they are simultaneously being rejected by both their host and home societies (Korhonen & Siitonen, 2018). An important factor that shapes sojourners’ experiences of social inclusion/exclusion across national borders is a global reality of cultural change (Zárate et al., 2012).

2.3.4 Cultural Change

Cultural change plays an important role in shaping sojourners’ cross-border social networks, in particular, their friendships with stay-behinds. Interpersonal relationships are embedded in culture (Clark, 2018), where culture is defined as a set of dynamic ideas, beliefs, norms, and behaviours shared by a group inhabiting a geographic location (Varnum & Grossmann, 2017). More broadly, culture is “everything that is socially learned rather than biologically inherited, encompassing the patterns of thought and behaviour, values and beliefs, and social institutions” (Barthel-Bouchier, 2013, p. 11). Therefore, culture is intimately interwoven with and shaped by local, national, and global history.

In a given host society, sojourners represent a sub-culture that is an embedded culture within a wider ‘mainstream’ culture, with its own norms, values, and ways of life, which are different from those of the wider culture (Kidd & Teagle, 2012). In any given society, individuals from a sub-culture have a shared identity, sometimes hold marginalized positions, and often resist wider cultural environments (Haenfler, 2014). For example, Verma (2018) examined the development of the Chinese community in Britain, indicating that Chinese

migrants in Britain tend to preserve their cultural identity as a form of cultural resistance to mainstream society.

Culture may undergo changes in a short time span and is closely associated with changes in social (Hamamura & Xu, 2015; Qi, 2015; Rivkin et al., 2017), economic (Hamamura, 2012; Varnum & Grossmann, 2017; Zhang et al., 2017), and political (Chen, 2017; Steele & Lynch, 2013) environments in a society. Zhang et al. (2017) explored the correlation between social change and the augmentation of individual self-enhancement and indicated that the phenomenon of increasing self-enhancement in contemporary China is closely associated with the rapidly changing socio-economic environment. Likewise, the emergence of new sexual cultures in China are related to political changes, reflecting the government's attitude toward sexual activities (Chen, 2017).

Also, cultural change is associated with intercultural contact between different societies across the globe. For example, as Zhang et al. (2017) noted, both within-culture change and intercultural contact have been transforming urban China into an increasingly multicultural space. It is noteworthy that not only the activities of the social groups in power, but also those of the marginalised groups, can bring cultural changes in a given society (Cameron, 2011).

Traditional cultures, however, still play an important role in societies which have experienced significant cultural changes. Rivkin et al. (2017) found that the core of traditional culture (cultural practices and values) tends to be well preserved in rural Alaska, in spite of the heavy burden of stress due to historical traumas and rapid socio-economic changes exacerbated by Westernization and modernization. In Japan, key traditional cultural elements, such as collectivism, tend to persist and play an important role in shaping the ongoing process of cultural change (Hamamura, 2012), despite modernization since the 1868 Meiji Restoration aimed at embracing Western civilisation (Nedelmann & Sztompka, 1993).

Moreover, traditional culture can coexist with emergent cultures in a given society. Hamamura (2012) found that Japanese people have been increasingly considering independence and individualism as important values, while their perceived importance of unconditional love toward parents, friendship, and social harmony has not changed over time, although in a less obligatory and more voluntary fashion, compared to previous decades. The changing cultural environment in Japan is a harmonious combination of the emergent culture and persisting cultural heritage, which is on a clear parallel with China (Hamamura, 2012). One of the consequences of China's rapid socio-economic changes for individual subjective wellbeing is that Chinese people are increasingly favouring individualism and the accumulation of financial assets, yet retain a sense of collectivism in their value systems, such as renegotiated filial piety (Steele & Lynch, 2013). These studies suggest that some components of traditional culture are likely to undergo reinterpretation following the changes in social, cultural, economic, and political environments (Qi, 2015; Shih et al., 2017).

In a given society, different social groups tend to perceive the same cultural change differently, such as holding positive, neutral, or negative attitudes, according to their socio-demographic profiles (Zárate et al., 2012). An example is that members of the Chinese middle-class show more tolerance toward emerging sexual practices, compared to their working-class counterparts. Also, the younger generation is more likely to embrace a new sexual culture, compared to their older counterparts, implying a role of generational difference in influencing attitudes toward cultural changes (Chen, 2017).

In the context of transnational sojourning, cultural changes widen the gap between the cultural backgrounds of sojourners abroad and their stay-behind friends, which in turn hinders the effectiveness of communication and interactions between the two sides, resulting in a reinforced sense of otherness and reduced wellbeing. As Ploesser and Mecheril (2012) argued, cultural changes in host and home societies facilitate the dynamic process of mutual

othering between sojourners abroad and their stay-behind friends. Increased otherness then weakens their transnational friendships, resulting in the feeling of social exclusion that sojourners experience in their countries of origin. This view echoes Polish migrants' life experiences in Belfast (Bell, 2016). Literature then suggests that VF travel represents an important form of transnational social interaction between sojourners and their stay-behind friends, which may shape their friendships and wellbeing.

2.3.5 Expectation and Experience in Visiting Friends (VF) Travel

The construct of 'Expectation and Experience in VF Travel' is closely associated with the continuous renegotiation of transnational friendships. An exploration of social interactions between migrant hosts and visitors contributes to a better understanding of VF travel (Yousuf & Backer, 2017) and transnational friendship (Capistrano & Weaver, 2018). However, as Capistrano and Weaver (2018) stated in their Philippines-NZ visiting friends travel study, the discussion of social interaction is largely absent from tourism scholarship, especially in VF studies. It appears then, that the perceived nature and meanings of transnational friendship are not static, but appear to continually be renegotiated through transnational interactions between far-away friends, especially during VF travel (Capistrano & Weaver, 2018; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Yousuf & Backer, 2017).

As a determining factor in renegotiating transnational friendships, the perceived quality of social interactions between a sojourner and a stay-behind friend can be evaluated by comparing one's expectation of the way in which a friend is going to treat her/him (expectation) with how s/he is actually treated by the friend during their contact (experience). The latter is largely decided by the friend's expectations of their interaction, or how they should treat each other in the friend's mind. Thus, the far-away friends may perceive their interactions differently, because of the gap in their expectations of VF visiting and hosting.

The expectations for interactions between friends originate from the felt obligations in their friendships, through which people tend to believe that friends have certain commitments to each other, a correlation widely discussed in the literature (Adams et al., 2004; Maeda & Ritchie, 2003; Ryan, 2011; Westcott, 2012). Annis (1987) discussed the important elements of a close friendship, especially the duties between friends, indicating that a friendship produces responsibilities that raise certain expectations for each other, which can be reflected in the mutuality of sharing, concern, and affection. In their investigation of the meanings attached to hosting and being a guest in VF travel in Filipino culture, Capistrano and Weaver (2018) indicated that migrant hosts often have an unwritten obligation: that is, they are expected to provide hospitality and be generous to their visiting friends, and make sacrifices for friends, regardless of the personal cost. A friendship is likely to be abandoned when expectations are repeatedly disappointed (Annis, 1987), and the illusion of a close bond is broken. This echoes a principle of social exchange theory: Friendship formation, maintenance, and dissolution are determined by the evaluation of the value of the ties, through balancing cost against benefit (Hallinan, 1978).

As mentioned in the construct of cultural change, cultural backgrounds largely determine perceived obligations, and the expectations of the interactions during VF travel as a result. In their Philippines-NZ VF travel study, Capistrano and Weaver (2018) indicated that such expectations are largely determined by their respective cultural backgrounds, which become increasingly different as a result of prolonged separation, although they failed to indicate the role of felt obligation as an intermediary between the changing cultural backgrounds and mutual expectations. Thus, a widening cultural gap in perceived obligations toward friends can be reflected in differing expectations of the interactions during VF travel, which in turn shape actual experiences, and perceived nature and meanings of friendships as a result.

First and foremost, hosts and visitors have some shared expectations of their interactions. According to Annis (1987), it is commonly expected that maintaining a friendship benefits both sides, as it requires a set of mutual obligations and certain virtues of reciprocity, such as acting for each other's welfare, mutual liking, sympathy, and trustworthiness. Both Filipino immigrant hosts in New Zealand and their visiting friends from the Philippines expect one another to be generous and reciprocal during VF travel, so that they may feel that their friendships benefit them (Capistrano & Weaver, 2018). This idea reflects the reciprocal principle in the social interactions/exchanges between far-away friends.

During hosting, migrant hosts tend to expect their visiting friends to fulfil certain obligations (Shani, 2013), such as expressing their gratitude and respecting the hosts' daily routines (Aramberri, 2001). An important obligation of visitors is helping their hosts to do household chores as a way to express gratitude. Shani and Uriely (2012) explored the everyday experience of hosting friends and relatives at the Israeli tourism destination of Eilat, indicating that the hosts tend to expect that their visitors 'give a hand' with housekeeping tasks. Likewise, Backer (2019) explored the link between VFR hosting experiences and quality of life in Australia, indicating that migrant hosts often expect their visitors to assist with household chores. Also, hosts often expect their visiting friends to intentionally reduce the negative effects of the visits on their daily routines and quality of life, such as avoid staying in hosts' houses for an extended period of time (Backer, 2019) and sharing the expenses of hosting (Shani & Uriely, 2012), so that their burden can be reduced to some extent. However, although migrant hosts tend to have clear expectations of their visiting friends, their actual hosting experiences often vary greatly.

On the one hand, hosting experiences can be quite enjoyable, resulting in strengthened friendships and improved wellbeing. Migrant hosts in Australia found that their visiting friends were 'like-minded' friends and tend to share similar tastes and interests with

themselves, especially those from the same age group or life stage, so that they often sought to have fun together, participating in a wide range of touristic activities during hosting (Yousuf & Backer, 2017).

On the other hand, prior studies suggest that unpleasant hosting experiences are also likely to be the case in VF travel, frequently resulting in weakened friendships and reduced wellbeing. Some hosts experienced mental stress before and during hosting, because they sought to meet their visitors' expectations through attempting to fulfil many obligations at once (Backer, 2019). Some hosts experienced intensified housekeeping (Shani & Uriely, 2012), especially when their visiting friends do not have a sense of obligation to help them, exacerbating their already exhausting hosting experiences (Yousuf & Backer, 2017). Some hosts experienced hardships in other unexpected situations, such as having to live with their visiting friends for a prolonged period (Backer, 2019), having to share private home spaces, unwillingly change their habits/daily routines, and being financially exploited by their visitors, sometimes putting an end to a friendship (Shani & Uriely, 2012).

Just like their migrant hosts, visiting friends tend to expect their hosts to fulfil certain obligations during their visits. According to Backer (2019), visiting friends often perceive their hosts as playing an important hosting role, so tend to have certain expectations of them, such as meeting their dietary needs, managing household chores, and playing the role of tour guide. Focusing on the sense of 'Home and Away', Shani (2013) explored the VF tourists' visiting experiences in Israel, indicating that tourists tend to expect to enjoy a sense of home during their stay in their hosts' places, which includes familiar language, food, customs, and especially, a welcoming attitude, as well as useful tourism information. Shani and Uriely's (2012) study suggests that such expectations are consistent with the hosts' felt obligations, through which hosts perceive themselves to be responsible for introducing the area and its

attractions to their visiting friends. Similarly, visiting friends in Las Vegas, the US, tend to expect their hosts to accompany them to popular local destinations (Young et al., 2007).

The construct of 'Expectation and Experience in VF Travel' is strongly related to the other constructs discussed above. For instance, for both sides, a sense of otherness is likely to occur when their expectations of VF travel are deeply disappointed, resulting in the re-evaluation and re-positioning of their geographically stretched friendships (Shani & Uriely, 2012). Also, cultural changes in host and home societies potentially widen the gap in their cultural backgrounds, so that their perceived obligations toward each other may be increasingly different, resulting in different expectations of interactions during cross-border VF visits, unpleasant host-guest interactions, weakened ties, and reduced wellbeing.

2.3.6 Summary

Having discussed the role of transnational family ties in shaping the lives of sojourners abroad and stay-behind family members, five interrelated constructs were identified, which collectively explain the dynamics behind the formation, maintenance, and dissolution of the friendships between sojourners abroad and stay-behind friends. Their continuous transnational interactions consist of various forms of social exchanges, and therefore have important implications for their wellbeing.

First, maintaining geographically stretched friendships requires effective communication and social interactions, considerable investment of time and energy, and most importantly, the mutuality of sharing, concern, and affection. Far-away friends tend to consider each other to be a source of emotional, instrumental, and financial support, implying certain expectations for their social interactions, especially during VF travel. Of note, their ever-evolving cultural backgrounds determine their perceptions of the nature and meanings of friendship and their felt obligations toward each other, and, as a result, largely shape their

transnational social exchanges and wellbeing. Also, long-distance friendships can act as a vehicle of mobility, facilitating not only VF travel, but also onward migration. Further, for sojourners, transnational friendships represent a mechanism that they use to negotiate a sense of social inclusion/exclusion and identity.

Second, migration may lead to a rupture of their old friendships. Prolonged separation and continuous cultural changes may lead to widening gap in cultural backgrounds, which reduces the effectiveness of communication and transnational interactions, resulting in a stronger sense of otherness, weakened friendships, and a feeling of social exclusion that sojourners experience in their counties of origin, becoming ‘Othered Selves’. Sometimes, sojourners may be ‘othered’ by both host and home societies, experiencing ‘double social exclusion’.

Third, far-away friends’ social interactions shape their long-distance friendships and wellbeing, especially during VF travel. On the one hand, VF travel is an opportunity for far-away friends to exchange support and preserve their ties, if key social obligations are fulfilled. For instance, hosts often expect their visiting friends to share household chores and respect their daily routines, while visitors expect their hosts to provide them with a welcoming attitude, food, accommodation, and tour guide services. On the other hand, VF travel may lead to conflicts and reduced wellbeing, putting an end to friendships, when hosts and/or visitors feel disappointed, intimidated, or exploited during the social interactions.

Finally, and most importantly, the five constructs interact with each other to portray the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and VF travel, which is elaborated and conceptualised in the concluding section, together with the role of transnational family ties in shaping sojourners’ lives. The next section introduces social exchange theory that underpins the social dynamics behind the survival of sojourners’ ties and ongoing transnational interactions with stay-behinds.

2.4 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is considered an appropriate theory that underpins sojourners' transnational lives in this research context. Therefore, it is used to interrogate the dynamics behind the survival of transnational ties and social interactions between sojourners and stay-behinds. This section introduces the theory and its relevance to the phenomenon being explored, including (1) history, (2) definition/principle, (3) advantages and disadvantages, (4) the usage in prior studies, and (5) the consideration of other theories.

History. Evaluating a theory's relevance and practical application requires researchers to first review the historical context in which the theory was developed (Allen & Henderson, 2016). Social exchange theory is one of the most popular theoretical perspectives from which sociologists investigate the dynamics within interpersonal relationships (Beckman-Brindley & Tavormina, 1978) and social interactions (Cook et al., 2013). Homans (1961) first studied 'social exchange' to explain the dynamics behind every day social behaviours, defining the term quite broadly, as the exchange of activities, either rewarding or costly, between at least two individuals. Blau (1964) perceived the concept as the foundation of interpersonal relationships, and defined social exchange as "voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring from others" (p. 91). Blau's definition reflects the primary psychological dynamics behind social exchange, that is, people tend to participate in social interactions that they believe are beneficial.

Definition/principle. Social exchange theory is summarised as "a model of social structure based on the principle that most social behaviour is predicated on the individual's expectation that his or her actions with respect to others will result in some kind of commensurate return" ("Social exchange theory," 2009). This suggests that people interact with each other based on the rule of reciprocity, and the evaluation of benefits and costs

(Beckman-Brindley & Tavormina, 1978), regardless of the form of the interpersonal tie involved. Failure in practicing reciprocity and the perception of costs outweighing benefits may lead to reduced wellbeing, weakened ties, and inhibited future interactions (Kang & Lee, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Such social exchanges consist of a broad range of material and immaterial forms (Mark & Craig, 1983), such as tangible and intangible goods, as well as practices, which have certain value to each other (Homans, 1961). Of note, in close relationships, people tend to exchange various forms of support with one another, including affection and encouragement, while rewarding exchange often strengthens their ties (Beckman-Brindley & Tavormina, 1978).

Advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of social exchange theory centre on its framework for interrogating the psychological dynamics behind social interactions (Kang & Lee, 2018; Wang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020), potentially offering ‘rich insights’ (McLeod et al., 2021, p. 864). For example, Lai et al. (2021) used the theory to investigate the relationship between residents’ perception of tourism’s impact on their quality of life and their attitudes toward tourists in Macau, China. Also, Stergiou and Farmaki (2020) used the theory to explore residents’ perceptions of developing P2P accommodation in the neighbourhood of Koukaki in Athens, Greece, interrogating residents’ perspectives of their exchanges and interactions with Airbnb guests.

The disadvantages of social exchange theory centre on its limitations (Látková & Vogt, 2012; Sharpley, 2014; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). These include the lack of theoretical sophistication (Ward & Berno, 2011), which suggests that the theory is inadequate to interpret some psychological dynamics behind the formation of attitudes towards social interactions and tourism development. For instance, social exchange theory has been criticised for underestimating the symbolic and altruistic factors that also potentially shape attitudes and behaviours (Daye et al., 2020). In addition, as Maruyama et al. (2019) indicated,

social exchange processes include emotion, such as the feeling of joy, anger, or confidence, so that the emotional aspect of exchange also needs to be considered in the use of the theory.

Taking these limitations into account, I determined that social exchange theory provided enough of a solid foundational theory on which to base my study. This decision was informed by my review of studies that used social exchange theory successfully to examine the dynamics behind the survival of geographically stretched family ties and friendships, and the continual social interactions/exchange between the two sides

Social exchange theory has been used by scholars to interrogate the dynamics behind social interactions within transnational families (Gui & Koropecj-Cox, 2016; Ugargol & Bailey, 2018). For instance, Xu et al. (2018) used the theory to examine the exchange of support between Chinese sojourners abroad and their stay-behind parents in Beijing. They found that the elderly parents who visited host countries to help the sojourners to take care of their young children are more likely to receive eldercare from their migrant children in times of need. This finding indicates that the social interactions in Chinese transnational families follow the principle of social exchange theory, which is consistent with the findings in other cultural contexts, such as India (Ugargol & Bailey, 2018) and South Korea (Oh, 2007).

Of note, the return of resources and attribution of their value is rarely explicitly negotiated. Instead, the interactions between family members are often based on mutual-trust and the principle of reciprocity (Ritzer, 2005; Ugargol & Bailey, 2018). For instance, the stay-behind parents seek to provide their migrant children with essential childcare assistance, while the migrants in turn feel obligated to express gratefulness to their parents by showing them the host country and take care of them in times of need. Social exchange within transnational families then, reflects a nexus of reciprocity and felt obligation (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017). “When we receive rewards from others, we feel a sense of obligation, although not a legally enforceable one, to return the favour” (Stafford, 2017, p. 280).

This is especially the case in Chinese transnational families (Xu et al., 2018). For example, only-child Chinese sojourners in Canada who received support from their stay-behind parents feel morally obligated to bring their elderly parents to Canada, or regularly return to China, to fulfil their filial piety, suggesting a reciprocal action (Gui & Koropeckyj-Cox, 2016). Of note, felt obligation is largely shaped by family members' cultural backgrounds (Clark, 2018) and the family traditions and social norms they are willing to follow (Xu et al., 2018). For example, in Filipino transnational families, the perception of family obligation is greatly shaped by Filipino family traditions of reciprocity and family solidarity (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017). Together such studies demonstrate the potential for enhanced application of social exchange theory within VFR travel.

Social exchange theory is also useful for exploring the meanings of host-guest relationships and interactions during VR travel. For example, Capistrano and Weaver (2017) indicated that social exchange theory is a holistic approach to exploring host-guest interactions between Filipino migrant hosts in New Zealand and their visiting family members from the Philippines, saying: "Should the benefits of hosting or visiting be greater than the resulting costs, the hosts and guests will be more inclined to be involved in the exchange" (p. 409). As this quote indicates, VR travel includes a series of social exchange between both sides, and therefore has profound implications for family wellbeing. Also, VR travel is shaped by a process of balancing benefits and costs. The expectation of improved wellbeing is an essential condition of participating in the travel.

In addition, social exchange theory is also a theoretical lens, through which this PhD study explores the sojourners' lives from a friend sphere. Hallinan (1978) suggested that friendship formation, maintenance, and dissolution are determined by the evaluation of the value of the ties, through balancing costs against benefits, echoing the principle of social exchange theory. That is, people are inclined to participate in social exchange that are

perceived to be rewarding (Blau, 1964). Hence, social exchange theory is suited to an exploration of the psychological dynamics behind the initiating, maintaining, dissolving, and functioning of transnational friendships. For example, for migrant hosts and their visiting friends, the fact that their actual hosting and visiting experiences do not match their expectations may make them consider that the costs outweigh benefits in maintaining their friendships, and therefore potentially devalue/dissolve such unreciprocated relationships.

Consideration of other theories. Other theories that underpin family and friend studies were also examined in the literature review stage, such as interdependence theory (Clark, 2018), facework theory (McBride, 2017), appraisal theory (Metts, 2017), affection exchange theory (Floyd et al., 2017), conflict theory (Allen & Henderson, 2016), attribution theory (Heider, 1958), signalling theory (Yamaguchi et al., 2015), friendship homophily (Zeggelink, 1995), relational dialectics theory (Baxter, 1993), and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). A comparative table is used to compare the advantages and disadvantages of social exchange theory and some other family and friend theories identified in the literature (Table 2-1).

Table 2-1 Comparing social exchange theory and other family and friend theories

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Social exchange theory (family/friend)	(1) Interrogates primary psychological dynamics behind the survival of transnational interpersonal ties and continual social interactions/exchange between the two sides, including VFR travel context (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017). (2) Enquires about the impacts of transnational interactions on wellbeing.	(1) Lack of theoretical sophistication (Ward & Berno, 2011). (2) Underestimates symbolic and altruistic factors that potentially shape attitudes and behaviours (Daye et al., 2020).
Attachment theory (family/friend)	Investigates different strategies people use to manage interpersonal ties and social networks, which reflect different patterns of relational expectations (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018), lead to individual differences in personal relationships and social networks (Gillath et al., 2017).	(1) Lack of theoretical sophistication (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). (2) Requires modification to fit in different types of relationship (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). (3) Underestimates socio-cultural factors (Levinger, 1994).
Relational dialectic theory (family/friend)	(1) Interrogates the contradictions in interpersonal ties, which have important implications for formation, maintenance, and functioning of relationships. (2) Acknowledges the role of contextual factors (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).	The contradictions may interweave in numerous and sometimes ambiguous ways (Rawlins, 1992).
Appraisal theory of emotion (family/friend)	Enquires about the formation and functioning of emotions in social interactions within families, contributing to the understanding of the nature of family (Metts, 2017).	(1) Appraisal process can be unconscious and occurs very quickly (Metts, 2017). (2) Lack of attention to mixed emotions, and some emotions that do not fit the theory, such as the diverse forms of love and desire (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003).

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Interdependence theory (family/friend)	Explores how people are interdependent in close relationships, including situational constraints on social interactions (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), contributing to the understanding of the nature of relationship (Clark, 2018).	Mixed empirical evidence challenges the principles of the theory (Totenhagen et al., 2013).
Conflict theory (family)	Investigates how families distribute power/resources that potentially raises conflicts, and how conflicts are managed (Allen & Henderson, 2016).	The theory is limited in scope, because it oversimplifies some complex social dynamics that contribute to inequality (Allen & Henderson, 2016).
Evolution theory (family)	Interrogates how people evolved to reproduce and ensure the survival of genes across generations (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).	Overlooks the social dynamics behind the formation and functioning of relationship (Clark, 2018).
Attribution theory (family)	Explores the psychological processes by which family members make sense of one another's actions, which have implications for maintenance of ties (Manusov, 2017).	Internal personality traits tend to be overemphasized in comparison to situational factors (Denby & Bowmer, 2013).
Affection exchange theory (family)	Explains the motives in exchanging affection, and the impacts on wellbeing (Floyd, Hesse, & Generous, 2017).	The theory only enquires about affectionate communication, rather than communication in general. Also, it privileges the explication of evolutionary and physiological causes over socially constructed ones (Floyd, Hesse, & Generous, 2017).
Facework theory (family)	Explores how people perform their roles within families, uncovering the effects of actions on the formation and maintenance of identity (McBride, 2017).	The definitions of the concepts in this theory have not been clearly defined. The ways that people have used the theory and its concepts are inconsistent. It is therefore difficult to compare diverse findings and make claims about the theory (McBride, 2017).

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Friendship homophily (friend)	Depicts the dynamics behind the formation of friendships, suggesting that people tend to make friends with those who share similarities with them (Ilmarinen et al., 2016).	Ignores the effects of differences and contextual factors on friendship formation (Baxter & West, 2003).
Signalling theory (friend)	Explores the signalling behaviours between friends, suggesting that people may engage in certain behaviours to communicate commitment, in order to strengthen friendships (Yamaguchi et al., 2015).	Fails to take into account the concealed and ambiguous actions that are costly (Bird & Smith, 2005).

Attachment theory and relational dialectics theory were considered for use in this study. Attachment theory is often used to explain the different strategies people use to manage their family ties (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012) and friendships (Gillath et al., 2017; Levinger, 1994), including three styles, secure, anxious, and avoidance (Ainsworth et al., 1978), which reflect different patterns of relational expectations (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018) and often lead to the differences in personal relationships and social networks (Gillath et al., 2017). Relational dialectics theory explains the contradictions in interpersonal relationship, such as autonomy-connection (Baxter, 1993; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), similarity-difference (Baxter & West, 2003), and openness-closedness (Sahlstein, 2004). These contradictions are distinct yet interrelated and presupposing one another, coexisting as a network of juxtapositions in personal relationships (Baxter et al., 2002; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). For instance, people often seek closeness, while also expect autonomy and privacy (Sahlstein, 2004).

These two theories focus on the management of relationships and could only be used to enquire about a portion of the survival of transnational ties. However, social exchange theory could be used to interrogate the social dynamics behind the survival of transnational ties and the continual social exchange between the two sides, allowing me to look at the bigger picture of living transnational lives, and includes some elements of other theories in the bigger picture. In this respect, this study uses social exchange theory to not only explore the dynamics behind transnational ties and social exchange, but also enquire about the impacts on wellbeing. The next section summarises this literature review chapter.

2.5 Conclusion

This section conceptualises and synthesizes the two sets of dynamics respectively identified from the family and friend literature.

2.5.1 Conceptualising Transnational Sojourning

This chapter draws a line of argument from the research opportunities identified from the literature to the social exchange theory. This concluding section discusses the way transnational dynamics and the theory relate to each other. The conceptual diagram ‘frames’ the dialogue between them, demonstrating the interaction between ‘dynamics identified from literature’ and ‘social exchange theory’ (Figure 2-1). Research questions are derived from these linkages.

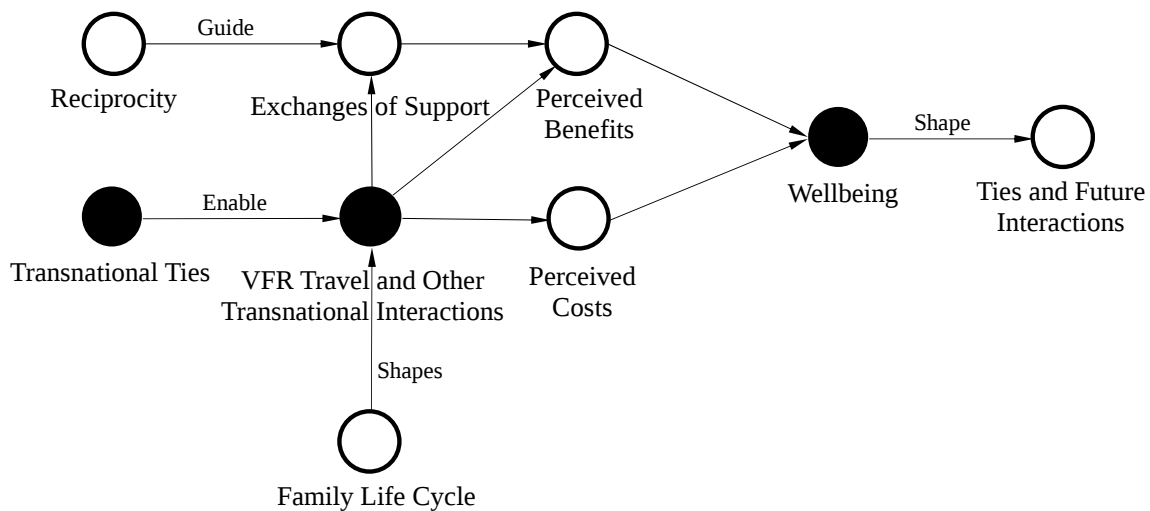


Figure 2-1 Conceptual diagram: Framing the dynamics and the theory

This section explains this dialogue, by elaborating on the theorisation process, which includes the way the dynamics reflect the theory and the way the theory accounts for the dynamics, resulting in the issues/opportunities identified from the literature that apply to the theory. The diagram shows how well social exchange theory embeds in sojourners’ transnational lives, since it appears to explain key dynamics that are linked to sojourners’ lives from both family and friend spheres. First, the geographically stretched ties between sojourners abroad and their stay-behind families and friends enable a variety of transnational

interactions, especially VFR travel, being shaped by their ever-evolving needs throughout the family life cycle.

Second, participating in transnational interactions has certain benefits and costs for both sides, including expected and unexpected ones, greatly shaping wellbeing and interpersonal ties. Some migrant hosts may enjoy hosting their visitors, as various forms of support were exchanged, even though the visits disturbed their daily lives. However, other migrant hosts may feel frustrated about hosting their visitors who only enjoyed the hospitality but forgot to help their hosts with household chores or contribute to the expense of hosting.

Third, as the most important driving force behind their transnational interactions, the exchanges of various forms of support are often guided by the rule of reciprocity, regardless of the nature of the ties. Fourth, sojourners and their stay-behinds are more likely to preserve their ties and participate in future transnational interactions if they perceive their prior interactions as beneficial, that is, the benefits outweigh the costs. Otherwise, the ties may be weakened, and future interactions likely inhibited. This idea echoes social exchange theory. Consequently, the dialogue between the dynamics and the theory implies that there is an interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel in sojourners' lives.

Finally, prior tourism studies using social exchange theory tend to depend on quantitative methods. More qualitative studies are required to examine the theory's role in uncovering the social dynamics and cultural nuances (Hateftabar & Chapuis, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). The review of the literature, and the newly identified dialogue between the dynamics and social exchange theory, lead to the research opportunities and research questions that guide this PhD study.

2.5.2 Research Opportunities

Five research opportunities regarding living transnational lives were identified from the review of the family and friend literature. First, the roles of transnational sojourning in shaping family wellbeing, international travel, in particular, VFR tourism, are worth research opportunities, such as the impacts of adult children's emigration on stay-behind elderly parents' wellbeing (Waidler et al., 2018). Second, prior studies on the nature and meanings of transnational family ties and friendships are still insufficient. Third, more scholarly attention needs to be paid to the roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping the transnational interactions between, and wellbeing of, sojourners abroad and their stay-behind families and friends, especially in the context of VFR travel. Fourth, no prior study has compared the different roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping sojourners' lives. Finally, the role of family life cycle in shaping sojourners' involvement in transnational interactions requires more scholarly attention. This PhD study aims to explore these opportunities, and to examine the role of social exchange theory in explaining the dynamics behind the survival of transnational interpersonal ties and continuous social interactions, thereby contributing to theory development.

2.5.3 Research Questions

To explore these opportunities identified in the literature and form a clearer view of sojourner's transnational lives from both the family and friend spheres, three overarching research questions were developed. First, the review of family literature identifies the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel, which portray sojourners' transnational lives from a family sphere and lead to the first overarching research question.

What is the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and visiting relatives travel in the lives of Chinese transnational families?

Then, the review of the friend literature identifies the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and VF travel, which portray sojourners' transnational lives from a friend sphere and lead to the second overarching research question.

What is the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and visiting friends travel in the lives of Chinese transnational sojourners?

The review of friend literature confirms that transnational friendships can be understood as being formed by several interactive components, such as sharing similar cultural backgrounds, shared memories (Westcott, 2012), mutual-trust (Tsujimoto, 2014), and mutual-understanding and sharing (Davis & Todd, 1985). Therefore, this PhD study explores the nature and meanings of friendships between sojourners and their stay-behind friends, through revealing and interpreting the different components in the context of VF travel, which is the most important form of interactions between far-away friends. A clearer view about their perceived nature and meanings of transnational friendships in turn contributes to an improved understanding of the dynamics behind the maintenance of their ties and the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and VF travel.

In addition, this study explores the primary dynamics behind the two sets of interplay, family and friend, that is, the social exchanges across national boundaries. This leads to the third overarching research question, which is a synthesis of the first two research questions.

What are the nature and meanings of social exchanges behind the interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel?

Answering this question uncovers: (1) the role of social exchanges in shaping sojourners' lives, (2) the commonalities and differences in the nature and meanings of social exchanges between the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives, and (3) the

important factors that shape social exchanges, such as the desire to balance benefits and costs, the rule of reciprocity, family altruism, filial piety, face-saving, widening gap in habitus, and family life cycle. Answering this research question represents the last stop of this research journey, which is a synthesis of the roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping sojourners' lives, compare and contrast the two sets of interplay/dynamics (the family and friend spheres), and critique and evaluate the key findings against the literature, contributing to new knowledge and theory development.

The three overarching research questions are then addressed by, and inform the family and friend finding chapters, and the discussion chapter. To make the research challenge more manageable and add more nuances, the overarching research questions are divided into several contributing questions, which can be found in the corresponding chapters. The next section summarises this literature review chapter.

2.5.4 Chapter Summary

This literature review chapter consists of five sections. First, the introduction section provides the contextual knowledge of the phenomenon, through introducing the concepts of transnationalism, sojourner, and VFR tourism, including the definitions, key characteristics, and research progress. Second, the family section focuses on the life experiences of transnational families, in particular, the role of family ties in shaping the lives of sojourners and stay-behinds. Four interrelated constructs were identified and reviewed in relation to the literature, forming the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel.

Third, the friend section focuses on the transnational friendships between sojourners abroad and their stay-behind friends, in particular, the role of over-stretched friendships in shaping sojourners' lives, identifying five interrelated constructs from the literature. The discussion of the constructs implies that there is an interplay of transnational friendships,

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wellbeing, and VF travel. Fourth, the social exchange theory section explains the reason why this theory underpins sojourners' transnational lives from both family and friend spheres, informs the identification of the research opportunities, and shapes the research questions. This section discusses the theory's origin, development, and role in explaining transnational social dynamics. Finally, a conclusion section conceptualises and synthesizes the two sets of dynamics identified from the literature, and indicates the research opportunities and questions.

This chapter covers a range of socio-cultural contexts in order to identify overarching ideas and honour worldwide societal nuances. The following chapter introduces Chinese transnational sojourners' lives in detail, including their sojourn history, transnational family life experiences, current tensions/challenges, and the role of VFR tourism, among others, providing this PhD study with a clearer research context.

Chapter Three: Research Context

This contextual chapter briefly discusses Chinese sojourners' transnational life experiences in relation to the literature in order to provide my study with a culturally contextualised research context. Given the discussion of the definition and characteristics of sojourner in the Literature Review Chapter, Chinese sojourners can be perceived as Chinese migrants who have a behavioural pattern of multiple and circular trips starting from China, departing for stays with an open-ended length of time. They always have the desire to return home or move to other destinations, based on their family members' changing needs at different life stages of family life cycles. This chapter first introduces Chinese migration history around the world in general, and second, New Zealand in particular.

3.1 Chinese Migration History

Prior to COVID-19, China had become a major migrant-sending country (Guo et al., 2018). Chinese migrants have a flexible and resilient nature (Ip, 2011), as their migration patterns became multiple and circular (Guo, 2016), allowing them to live an increasingly internationally mobile life. Chen (2004) examined Chinese migration history, patterns, and social network management in the small town of Peterborough, Canada, and found that Chinese migrants have embraced the strategy of transnationalism since the late 19th century. They were driven by social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics inside and outside China, such as poverty and natural disasters in China and opportunities in labour markets overseas, as evidenced by frequent mail, remittances, and movements across national boundaries.

However, Chinese people have a long history of transnational migration (Li & McKercher, 2016), which can be traced back to the first century B.C. when religious and politically exiled communities migrated to Japan (Lai, 2004). This history is briefly

summarised in Table 3-1, which shows the key historical developments in Chinese transnational migration history as discussed in the migration literature (Biao, 2003; Chen, 2004; Gao, 2017; Lai, 2004; Li & Chan, 2018; Liu & Norcliffe, 1996).

Table 3-1 Chinese migration history in general

Timeline	Key word	Development	Major motives
Before 14 th century	Intra-Asian Phase	No connection with the West	Dynasty transitions and Silk Road development
Early 15 th century	Seven Overseas Voyages	Zheng He's seven overseas voyages to 30 countries between Southeast Asia and East Africa. Several thousand families of Chinese settlers were found.	
Late 18 th century	Beyond Asia	Chinese people arrived in British North America in 1780s.	
19 th century	Beyond Asia	Poor and single Chinese men joined global mass migration as contract laborers in gold fields and railway lines, travelling to America, Asian-Pacific, and South Africa.	They emigrated for economic reasons, sending remittances to China.
1840s to 1940s	Social Upheavals	About 20 million Chinese people left China. Most of them went to Southeast Asia.	China experienced various chaotic events that brought dramatic changes, while the government failed to maintain order.
Early 20 th century	Europe	Chinese people played a more important role in global migration, acting as miners in South African gold mines and labourers in WWI battlefields in Europe. Early Chinese communities were established in Europe shortly afterwards.	Host countries' need for labourers
Mid 20 th century	Globalization	Chinese were allowed to apply for citizenship in some Western countries, though faced difficulties with integration.	Acceleration of globalization and decline of racism

Timeline	Key word	Development	Major motives
Post-1949	Social Upheavals	Many Chinese people left China for political/economic reasons, while some Chinese patriots returned to China to build 'socialism'. The connections between migrants abroad and their stay-behind families broke down.	China remained a closed society with strict border controls, while experiencing the rise of Maoism, including the land reforms and the Cultural Revolution. Chinese government no longer recognises dual nationality.
1979	Open-Door Policy	Chinese people were allowed to emigrate freely, resulting in a number of Chinese professionals emigrating to developed countries for a better life. Transnational family ties were gradually restored.	Chinese government launched its open-door policy and began to build a market-oriented economic system. International migration was then considered a matter of individual choice.
1980s	Brain Drain	Chinese government began to complain that most Chinese student migrants chose to stay abroad permanently after graduation.	Chinese people sought better socio-economic environments overseas.
1989	Tiananmen Square Protests	This well-known event resulted a new wave of mass emigration in China. Many Chinese students went to the US, while the US congress passed the Chinese student Protection Act of 1992, granting them permanent residency.	The 1989 political upheaval
1990s	Accelerating Emigration	An increasing number of Chinese people migrated to other countries, seeking a better life. About 30-35 million Chinese were living abroad in early 1990s.	China's political liberalisation and fast economic development
21 st century	Mobile Global Citizens	Chinese migrants are less likely to permanently migrate to a host country, as they have become global citizens whose transnational movements are continuous rather than completed.	Globalisation

This summary indicates the factors that played an important role in shaping this history, including the changing social/economic/political environment in China, better opportunities overseas, host countries' needs for labourers, and globalisation. The next section explains Chinese migration history in New Zealand.

3.2 Chinese Migration History in New Zealand

Chinese people have a relatively long migration history in New Zealand. First-generation Chinese migrants in New Zealand strongly perceive themselves as Chinese, but feel at home in both their countries of residence and origin (Ip, 2011), and are becoming increasingly cosmopolitan (Wang, 2016).

However, New Zealand used to be very selective in its migrant source countries, strongly preferring Britain (McKinnon, 1996). Chinese people were consistently mistreated from the late 1860s to the 1950s, for example, only Chinese were subjected to the poll tax and tonnage restrictions from 1881 to 1944 (Fairburn, 2003). Throughout the 20th century, although New Zealand admired some aspects of Chinese culture, such as Chinese lantern, the Chinese tradition of sojourning was misunderstood by locals. Some believed that Chinese people did not intend to integrate into the mainstream culture (Smith, 2011).

Chinese's migration history in New Zealand is briefly summarised in Table 3-2. The table show how the New Zealand government has carefully controlled the number of Chinese people entering the country as discussed in the New Zealand-China migration studies literature (Fairburn, 2003; Ho & Bedford, 2008; Ip, 2006b, 2011; Ip & Liu, 2008; Liu, 2011; Smith, 2011).

Table 3-2 Chinese migration history in NZ

Timeline	Key word	Development	Major motives
Late 1860s	Goldminers	Chinese were brought to NZ's goldfields. Their immigration was widely accepted, though they were treated as itinerant labourers. Family members could not join them.	NZ's needs for labourers
From 1870s	Hostility	Chinese experienced locals' rising hostility. In 1881, the first discriminatory legislation against non-white immigrants was passed.	Locals' fear of competition
1890s	Anti-Chinese Policy	New Zealand's anti-Chinese policy hardened, including significantly increased poll tax and tonnage restrictions, limiting the number of Chinese entering NZ.	
1880s to 1920s	More Legal Restrictions	More legal restrictions against non-white migrants were imposed, while Chinese people were subjected to the most.	
Mid-1930s	Reducing Racism	Racism against migrants was gradually eased, while a few legal restrictions were abolished.	Cultural change
1939	Sino-Japanese War	NZ temporarily opened its door to the wives and minor children of Chinese migrants who had permanent resident status.	NZ's humanitarian gesture
1945	First Chinese Community	A small Chinese community was established for the first time, though immigration policy remained highly restrictive.	
1952	Citizenship	Chinese were finally permitted to apply for citizenship, though faced more restrictive clauses than others.	NZ's needs for labourers
1987	Immigration Act 1987	The 1987 Act opened New Zealand to a much wider range of migrants. Since then, many well-educated/skilled Chinese have migrated to New Zealand, together with their family members.	NZ's economic deregulation
1987 to mid-1990s	Family Reunion	There were no restrictions on entry under family reunion, which was driven by families' needs.	NZ's needs for labourers
1991	Point-Based System	NZ introduced an auto-pass point-based system, which further facilitated the increase of the number of Chinese migrants.	

Timeline	Key word	Development	Major motives
1997	Fast Growing	China became the second largest source country of migrants, second only to UK.	
Late 1990s	Tightening Family Reunion	New Zealand began to tighten the requirements for family reunion.	NZ government expected migrants to bring economic benefits.
Early 21 st century	New Restrictions	NZ's immigration policy was gradually tightened against new applications, restricted the number of new Chinese migrants.	

In general, New Zealand's economic needs and locals' perception of Chinese people played an important role in shaping Chinese migration history in the country. The notion of family played an important role in this history. The next section introduces Chinese transnational families' life experiences, including the challenges they face, transnational support exchange, the role of VR travel, and the family life cycle.

3.3 Chinese Transnational Families

Emigration and continuous cross-border interactions create Chinese transnational families. Chinese transnational migrants tend to simultaneously live in both host and home countries (Chan, 2003), maintaining distant interpersonal ties (Chao & Ma, 2017), especially with their stay-behind family members (Guo et al., 2018). Wang (2016) explored the transnational lives of current Chinese migrants in New Zealand, indicating that they tend to carefully preserve their family life and maintain emotional closeness with their stay-behind family members, which in turn shape their identities and senses of belongingness (Liu, 2013).

Likewise, Chinese migrants' stay-behind parents attempt to maintain close family ties with their migrant children, because they live in a culture that strongly values collectivism within family, and tend to consider family the centre of their lives (Cheng & Chan, 2006b).

Therefore, the distant ties with their migrant children largely determine their perceived quality of life (Cheng et al., 2004).

Importantly, Chinese one-child transnational families have attracted increasing scholarly attention (Feng et al., 2014; Gustafson & Huang, 2014; Ye & Chen, 2014; Zhan, 2013). In these families, stay-behind parents live in China alone, while their only-child children live overseas. It is one of the unexpected consequences of the one-child policy, and the rapid rise of middle-class families in China who can afford to send children overseas (Tu, 2016).

The wellbeing of one-child transnational families' often faces bigger challenges, compared to the families with more than one child, as the migration of an only-child is more likely to cause a lack of emotional and instrumental support for the stay-behind families. Tu (2016) explored UK-China transnational one-child families' life experiences, and found that the migrant children and their stay-behind parents often face unique challenges. For instance, some migrant children worry that they may not be able to cope with emergencies in their parents' lives. The next section further discusses the challenges faced by Chinese transnational families.

3.3.1 Familial Challenges

A traditional Chinese proverb says ‘家和万事兴’, which means ‘a cohesive and harmonious family brings a prosperous life’, implying the importance of family to individual wellbeing. In China, family is “the cornerstone of all types of support” (Xie & Xia, 2011, p. 385) and is traditionally considered the major source of support for its older members (Settles et al., 2013). Adult children are responsible for providing their elderly parents with financial, emotional (Xu et al., 2019) and instrumental support (Chow, 2009; Lou & Ci, 2014). Therefore, older members face challenges to their wellbeing as a result of prolonged

separation from their children, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global human mobility (Gössling et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2020; Martin & Bergmann, 2021).

3.3.1.1 Wellbeing of Stay-behind Parents

Chinese elderly parents' wellbeing faces increasing challenges. The traditional meaning and practice of filial piety have been continuously renegotiated, and since 1978 when the 'open-door' policy took effect, China's population structure (LaFave, 2017), socio-cultural environment (Qi, 2015), and economic environment rapidly and profoundly changed (Hu et al., 2013). Hamamura and Xu (2015) examined the cultural changes in China's society from 1950 to 2008 and found that there was a rise of individualism and a decline of collectivism in Chinese culture in recent decades, influenced by several socioecological factors, such as affluence, urbanization, and the rise of one-child families.

As China's population continues to age, adult children are becoming less capable of taking care of their elderly parents, who now experience reduced familial support (Zhan, 2013). This is a direct consequence of the one-child policy (Liang & Wu, 2014; Ye & Chen, 2014), which causes the prevalence of the '4-2-1 family structure', in which the only-child adult children, that is, the '2' in middle, once married, will have to take care of '4' parents, and '1' child of their own (Zhan, 2013).

Also, as some Chinese sociologists observed, in China, there is an increasing number of stay-behind parents living alone, as their adult children migrated to other cities/countries for various purposes, mainly career development, creating a serious social issue of 'empty-nests' (Du et al., 2004; Feng et al., 2014; Guo et al., 2009). It is increasingly difficult for the only-child generation to achieve their career goals while taking care of their dependent children and elderly parents.

It is noteworthy that the Chinese government failed to respond to the consequences of the one-child policy, while actively promoting the traditional family contract through legislation regarding adult children's family obligations, and deliberately minimizing its own role in long-term care of elderly people (Feng et al., 2011; Gustafson & Huang, 2014; Zhan et al., 2008). For instance, there are laws that force adult children to support (Palmer, 1995), and frequently visit their elderly parents (National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2013).

In Chinese transnational families, the meanings and practices of filial piety have experienced an even more complicated transition, as a result of adult children's international migration (Tu, 2016). This raises concerns about stay-behind parents' wellbeing (Liu et al., 2018), which is largely determined by availability of the emotional and instrumental support from the migrants (Li & Chong, 2012). Therefore, an important social issue raised by the increasing number of empty-nests is the stay-behind elderly parents' reduced emotional wellbeing (Du et al., 2004; Liang & Wu, 2014). It has been shown that the type of living arrangement in their lives can have significant health and psychological outcomes (Chen & Short, 2008; Shin & Sok, 2012; Ye & Chen, 2014). Most Chinese stay-behind parents prefer to live with their adult children and worry about being abandoned in old age (Gustafson & Huang, 2014).

They tend to worry about their emotional closeness with their migrant children (Lai, 2011). Such a concern represents a threat to these parents' emotional wellbeing (Xu et al., 2019). Liu et al. (2018) explored the importance of support from only-child migrant children for stay-behind Chinese parents' emotional wellbeing, indicating that the parents with no child in China were more likely to experience emotional issues, compared to those who had children in China. According to Wang et al. (2016), the one-child policy is one of the leading causes of suicide in China's aged population.

Also, Chinese stay-behind parents are likely to experience the lack of instrumental support, as the prolonged separation from their migrant children creates an almost impenetrable barrier to the practice of traditional filial piety (Liu et al., 2018). As Tu noticed in her UK-China transnational one-child family study, it is increasingly difficult for the only-child Chinese migrants to look after their stay-behind parents, especially when they have to spend considerable energy taking care of their young children (Tu, 2016). Guo et al. (2018) found that Chinese stay-behind parents in Beijing are likely to experience a sense of loss and lack of instrumental support, indicating that adult children's emigration may severely damage Chinese stay-behind parents' physical wellbeing.

Consequently, Chinese empty-nest parents, especially those from transnational one-child families, tend to experience a lack of emotional (Liang & Wu, 2014; Liu et al., 2013) and instrumental support (Tu, 2016). As Tu (2016) argued, Chinese transnational only-child migrants' success abroad is often associated with reduced emotional and instrumental support towards their stay-behind parents. She then suggested that more studies are required to help migration researchers better understand Chinese parents' expectations for their migrant children, and the migrants' perceived family obligations toward their parents.

3.3.1.2 Wellbeing of Chinese Migrants

Just like their stay-behind parents, Chinese migrants' wellbeing also faces challenges. First, the prolonged separation from their stay-behind family members threatens their emotional wellbeing (Abbott et al., 1999; Chen, 2004; Tu, 2016; Wang & Collins, 2015). Chinese migrants often experience various difficulties in host societies, such as devalued credentials, insecure employment, and covert racism (Ho, 2014). Especially, for newly arrived Chinese migrants, intercultural interactions can be very frustrating, often resulting in a sense of social exclusion, which causes loneliness and nostalgia for their homeland (Svašek,

2010; Wang, 2016). Wang and Collins (2015) explored the daily intercultural encounters experienced by new Chinese migrants in New Zealand, indicating that it is particularly painful for these migrants to assimilate themselves into the new socio-cultural environment, because they may experience a series of challenges, such as language barrier, cultural unfamiliarity, and employment discrimination, among others, positioning them in a socially disadvantaged place (Wang, 2018).

Although Chinese migrants tend to experience difficulties in host countries, emotional support from their homeland is often insufficient (Wang & Collins, 2015). As a result of prolonged separation, they gradually lose emotional closeness with their stay-behind family members (Waters, 2010). Waters explored the durability of distant family ties by interviewing Chinese migrants in Canada, and found that the prolonged separation strongly weakened the relationships between the migrants and their family members in China (Waters, 2011). As a result of the reduced emotional closeness, transnational migrants tend to experience the lack of emotional support from their homeland, increasing the feelings of loss, loneliness, and frustration (Collins, 2010). Particularly, Chinese migrants may experience wistful nostalgia for their homeland (Chen, 2004).

In addition, Chinese migrants tend to have a strong sense of guilt because of the prolonged absence from their stay-behind parents, which further damages their emotional wellbeing. Such a feeling about the failure to meet perceived family obligations is quite common in different cultural contexts, such as with Italian (Baldassar, 2007a; Zontini, 2006) and Sri Lankan migrants (De Silva, 2018), raising anxiety among migrants. In her UK-China transnational family study, Tu noticed that the inability to reciprocate parental investment in a “direct and tangible” way often causes great frustration among Chinese migrants (Tu, 2016, p. 8), who believe that they have failed to fulfil important family obligations. Further, as Tu added, for Chinese migrants, receiving reverse remittances from their stay-behind parents

accentuates this feeling of guilt, raising a higher level of emotional pressure, though such “a heavy love” improves their physical wellbeing (Tu, 2016, p. 8).

Moreover, as Tu indicated, Chinese migrants and their stay-behind parents are very selective in their daily exchange of life experiences; that is, only telling each other good news, because they believe that sharing emotional distress may bring anxiety to their far-away family members. This is especially the case for Chinese elderly parents, who do not want to be a ‘burden’ on their migrant children. She thus concluded that “long-distance intimacy also had to do with what was not said by parents and children” (Tu, 2016, p. 12). Concealing the difficulties in their daily lives may further constrains them from receiving enough support from each other.

Consequently, Chinese transnational families’ wellbeing face challenges, so that the transnational exchanges of various forms of support play an important role in their lives (Guo et al., 2018). The next sections discuss the cross-border exchanges of financial, emotional, and instrumental support in Chinese transnational families.

3.3.2 Financial Support

In Chinese transnational families, a traditional form of support is the “prevalent and convenient” remittance made to stay-behind parents (Liu et al., 2018, p. 1). However, for many Chinese stay-behind parents, the maintenance of emotional closeness with their migrant children is their sole concern and remittances from their adult children cannot improve their wellbeing to a large extent (Guo et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018). In their US-China transnational family study, Liu et al. (2017) found that receiving financial support from migrant children cannot alleviate feelings of loneliness and depression among elderly Chinese stay-behind parents. In addition, reverse remittance is increasingly prevalent in Chinese transnational families. Sun (2012) examined how Chinese migrants in the US and

their stay-behind parents exchange various forms of support, indicating that many Chinese parents have been financially supporting their migrant children, instead of receiving remittances, so that the migrants can live a better life abroad.

3.3.3 Emotional Support

For Chinese stay-behind parents, having a close relationship with and receiving ongoing emotional support from their migrant children is important to maintaining their emotional wellbeing (Du et al., 2004; Guo et al., 2018; Liang & Wu, 2014). Indeed, for the parents, a perception of cohesive parent-child relationships is even more important than actual support from their migrant children (Ip et al., 2007). The pursuit of a sense of family unity and its continuity through maintaining emotional closeness with their migrant children neutralises their negative feelings of loss, abandonment, and loneliness (Liu et al., 2018). This is especially the case in one-child stay-behind families, or the ‘empty-nests’, where emotional support from migrant children protects the parents from mental health issues, such as depression (Wu et al., 2010; Zurlo et al., 2014) and compensates for a lack of instrumental support to some extent (Tu, 2016). For example, Chinese only-child migrants in the UK and their stay-behind parents tend to use smartphones to frequently message, talk, and video-chat with each other, maintaining “long-distance intimacy” (Tu, 2016, p. 12).

Chinese migrants abroad are also in need of emotional support from their stay-behind family members, as they face uncertainties and challenges in unfamiliar host societies (Ho, 2014; Wang & Collins, 2015) that prompt feelings of alienation, frustration (Ip, 2006b), and nostalgia (Wang et al., 2016). They therefore tend to consider the face-to-face interactions with their stay-behind family members an enjoyable experience (Liu, 2011; Yan et al., 2014), from which they can better receive emotional support. VR travel therefore plays an important role in Chinese transnational families’ lives, as spending a short but valuable time living with

far-away members improves their emotional wellbeing (Chen & Short, 2008; Ye & Chen, 2014).

3.3.4 Instrumental Support

In China, an increasing number of elderly parents need instrumental support from their adult children, which is reflected in the rapid growth of the country's aged dependency ratio in the first half of the 21st century (Liu et al., 2010). In Chinese tradition, adult children are expected to take care of their elderly parents, because Confucian doctrines value filial piety (Chen & Short, 2008; Lou & Ci, 2014), or family obligation. Also, Chinese parents traditionally consider child-rearing an investment that should be reciprocated with care from their adult children in old age (Gui & Koropecj-Cox, 2016), echoing the principle of reciprocity in social exchange.

In Chinese transnational families, stay-behind elderly parents are commonly in need of instrumental support, as they increasingly face chronic diseases and functional limitations (Liu et al., 2018). This is especially the case in the 'empty-nests'. Also, as mentioned above, the elderly care system in China is still underdeveloped (Tu, 2016), as a result of the Chinese government's lack of adequate policy and planning (Feng et al., 2011; Gustafson & Huang, 2014; Zhan et al., 2008). Therefore, migrant children need to take the responsibility of providing their stay-behind parents with instrumental support.

Additionally, just like the abovementioned 'reverse remittance', many Chinese stay-behind parents provide their migrant children with 'reverse instrumental support', helping them to take care of their young children (Zhou, 2013), rather than receiving support. Zhou (2013) explored Chinese stay-behind grandparents' caregiving experiences in Canada, indicating that Chinese stay-behind parents often visit host countries to help migrant children

to do household chores and take care of their young children, despite the heavy workload they often face. VR travel thus plays an important role in facilitating these practices.

Consequently, both Chinese migrants and their stay-behind parents need various forms of support. Especially, the support from migrant children is of central importance to the stay-behind parents, “meeting their social, economic, and emotional needs” (Guo et al., 2018, p. 625), as Guo and colleagues noticed in their study about the effects of Chinese adult children’s emigration on their elderly parents’ lives. Cheng and Chan (2006b) explored the role of social ties in maintaining Chinese elderly parents’ wellbeing, indicating that elderly Chinese often hope that their adult children can make certain efforts to support them.

3.3.5 Visiting Relatives (VR) Travel

For Chinese transnational families, VR travel is the most important means through which they can exchange various forms of support, resulting in improved family wellbeing. For example, as mentioned above, Chinese migrants often face many challenges in host societies (Wang, 2016) and particularly lack childcare resources (Cooke, 2007). Cooke (2007) explored the life experiences of the wives in Chinese migrant families in the UK and found that migrants are reluctant to use childcare services in the host country, as they face financial constraints and cultural/language barriers.

Therefore, Chinese stay-behind parents are invited to the host countries to undertake caregiving duties (Da, 2003; Y. Q. Zhou, 2012) and are devoted to their grandchildren (Zhou, 2013). Xie and Xia (2011) explored the role grandparents played in US-China transnational families, indicating that Chinese migrants in the US struggle to balance childrearing and work, so that they tend to invite their stay-behind parents to visit them and take care of their young children. Also, during the visits, their parents’ emotional wellbeing may be improved

to some extent, as they can enjoy “a sense of care and love” (Liu et al., 2017, p. 180) from their migrant children, and therefore feel “less lonely and isolated” (Xie & Xia, 2011, p. 386).

However, VR travel sometimes reduces family wellbeing. For example, Chen and Short (2008) explored the correlation between living arrangements and Chinese stay-behind parents’ emotional wellbeing, and found that unpleasant interactions between family members living together may cause conflicts and threaten their wellbeing. Likewise, Liu et al. (2017) examined the effects of family ties on the emotional wellbeing of elderly Chinese parents from US-China transnational families, suggesting that living with migrant children sometimes weakens the parent-children relationships, threatening their wellbeing, as a result of the low quality of daily communications.

3.3.6 Family Life Cycle

Family life cycle plays an important role in shaping Chinese transnational families’ lives, because Chinese people tend to change their migration strategies as they move to a new family life stage, in order to balance the different needs of family members and improve overall family wellbeing (Tu, 2016). In their study exploring the life experiences of Chinese migrants in Canada, Kobayashi and Preston (2007) examined the role of family life cycle in shaping Chinese families’ migration strategies, indicating that family members’ needs tend to undergo changes as the families move to a new life stage, resulting in changes in their migration strategies. For Chinese transnational families, the enhancement of young children’s educational opportunities is the most important need sought through shifts in migration strategy (Ho, 2014). Kobayashi and Preston (2007) noticed that Chinese migrants went to Canada to provide their young children with a better educational environment, even though the migration experiences may be unpleasant for the parents. Therefore, Chinese transnational migrants’ sojourn trajectory is closely associated with their family life cycle.

Finally, in summary, the Chinese tradition of sojourning is a time-honoured necessity and a survival strategy for families (Ip & Liu, 2008). There is a well-known verse of an ancient poem that reflects the prevalence of sojourning in Chinese tradition, “人生如逆旅, 我亦是行人”, by Shi Su, a famous Chinese poet from the Song dynasty. It can be translated as follows: “In this life, people are all travellers, constantly traveling from one place to another. I am also one of them, a traveller.” Consequently, Chinese peoples’ transnational sojourning can be described as a vast, global circuit of return (Liu & Wu, 2017), which is motivated by their family members’ changing needs in different stages of the family life cycle (Guo, 2016; Ho, 2014).

As a researcher, I decided to explore the phenomenon of living transnational lives, because I am interested in Chinese migration history, the ties between Chinese sojourners and stay-behinds, the social exchanges behind the ties, the dynamics that shape the exchanges, and the challenges and tensions in the past, and in particular, the future in which COVID-19 may never be eliminated. The past, present, and future of Chinese transnational migration suggest that this is a fruitful field of research, which potentially contributes to knowledge and practice. For instance, prior studies tend to focus on the financial and emotional support that Chinese migrants abroad provide to their stay-behind parents (Sun, 2012), suggesting a research opportunity in the instrumental support that may be insufficient to the stay-behinds.

Next, the Methodology Chapter discusses my positionality, the paradigm, the role of hermeneutics as an overarching methodology, sampling method, data collection process, participants’ profiles, social protocols and ethical issues, the design of interview questions, and the data analysis process of my study.

Chapter Four: Methodology

In this chapter, I first introduce the role of my positionality in shaping this study's research questions, philosophical basis, and methodological grounds. Second, I discuss the participants and how they were recruited. Third, I discuss the complementary roles of in-depth interviews and focus groups in data collection, how the data were collected, and how important social protocols and ethical issues were managed. Fourth, I explain how the interview questions were constructed and presented. Finally, I explain how the qualitative data were analysed.

4.1 Positionality

It is my contention that worldview and positionality affect research methodology. Most human beings have worldviews (Vidal, 2008), which represent basic beliefs, attitudes, and feelings about reality, guide the ways that lives are lived (Sire, 2004), and how we interpret things around us (Naugle, 2002). In accord with social constructionism, which denies all claims of single reality/truth (Bell, 2017), I understand that multiple realities reside in people's minds. This means that everyone interprets the world differently, guided by various worldviews, derived from personal life experiences, including parenting, schooling, and work experiences, among others.

As a researcher, my worldview influences the paradigm that I follow when conducting social research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). A paradigm is a set of beliefs and feelings about the nature of world that guides the ways we understand and study social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013), and can explain the relationship between the researcher and participants in producing knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Further, paradigm provides a researcher with "a basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba, 1990, p. 17); that is, the instructions of how to conduct credible research (Mansbach & Vasquez,

1981). Once constructed in a researcher's mind, neither a worldview nor a paradigm can be easily replaced (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), though on-going modification may occur as the researcher experiences new things (Yelich Biniecki & Conceição, 2014).

My philosophical position is also determined by my positionality, which clarifies my role in the research and my relationships with the research context and participants (Corlett & Mavin, 2018). My positionality answers three fundamental questions: Why I am interested in this topic? What role do I play in this research? What is the relationship between me and the participants? Thus, a researcher's positionality thoroughly shapes her/his research process and outcome (Mason-Bish, 2018). It is important to first claim one's positionality, acknowledging how one's position may affect one's research, so that reflexivity can be achieved, potential bias reduced, and understanding enhanced (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019).

My positionality derives from my personal life experience, locating me in the middle of a researcher-participant continuum. I thus have a hybrid identity of in-betweenness, or a shifting positionality that allows me to shift my position between being a researcher and a sojourner in this study (Avella-Castro, 2018), facilitating an insider view (Cousin, 2010) and the evolution of understanding about the phenomenon. In 2013, I went to the UK to undertake postgraduate study. In 2015, I came back to China and found a job in Beijing. In 2016, I travelled to New Zealand to pursue a PhD degree. In 2019, I married another Chinese sojourner who had spent eight years in New Zealand. In March 2020, we had our first child, who was born in New Zealand, and who is NOT (yet) a sojourner, but a 'Chinese Kiwi', with a different passport from ours.

Given my own sojourning experiences, I am interested in the transnational lives lived by other Chinese sojourners. And given my extensive personal relationships with other Chinese sojourners, I acknowledge that each sojourner has her/his own life story, from which

s/he develops a unique worldview, so that each understands the world from a different perspective to others, reflecting the assertion of multiple realities.

This in-betweenness influences the research outcome in this study. As a researcher, I notice a question or a puzzle, review the literature, identify potential conflicts/opportunities, and plan data collection and analysis. This perspective gives me the rigour to make sure that I address the emerging ideas in a robust way. Yet, as a Chinese sojourner, I have a similar worldview to, and strong cultural empathy with my participants, so that I am immersed in the same world, understand how to interact with them, acknowledge social protocols and ethical issues, realise socio-cultural nuances behind their narratives. This perspective allows me to ask more relevant questions while encouraged them to share more ideas and true feelings, so that I can interrogate deep meanings and emotions behind their life experiences. Research data are produced through my lens. As an influencer, filter, and potentially a modifier of data, I shape the discourse (Corlett & Mavin, 2018), creating inter-subjectivity.

Therefore, my shifting positionality and empathy potentially produce more unique insights than others could achieve. For example, some sojourners' life experiences of 'stay-behind parents not sharing their health problems' echo my own. My mother used to suffer a great deal from Lumbar Herniated Disc and had to stay in bed for more than a year. However, she deliberately hid this problem for a very long time, so that I only got this bad news after his mother had almost recovered. Then, during September 2020, my father went through major surgery to remove a brain tumour and had to stay in hospital for several weeks. Again, he chose to hide this from his far-away only-child, and avoided video chats with me. In view of my worldview and positionality, I positioned myself within a social constructionist philosophy. This is discussed in the next section.

4.1.1 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism offers a philosophical basis that thoroughly guides this study, from the development of research questions to the interpretation of qualitative data. It is an approach to existence and knowledge (Williams, 2016), which offers a basis for conducting qualitative study and a spirit of openness that leads to creative reinterpretations of the objects of social world (Botterill, 2012). To date, it is one of the dominant approaches among current qualitative tourism research (Butowski et al., 2021). Social constructionism is the foundation for different qualitative research paradigms (Potter, 1996). Researchers using critical paradigms, for instance, tend to focus on societal norms that underpin individual interactions. Researchers using social constructivist paradigms tend to focus on individual understandings of reality.

Social constructionism represents a set of beliefs about the nature of world and the relationship between researcher and participants in producing knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). It therefore has certain ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions. I then outline its major tenets/principles and explain my social constructionist approach.

Ontological position. Ontology refers to assumptions about reality, answering the ontological question: what is the form and nature of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1998)? Social constructionism acknowledges the multitude of meanings across realities, suggesting that there are multiple realities about a social phenomenon (Sarantakos, 1998), which represent respective and relative truths/experiences of individuals/groups (Weinberg, 2014; Williams, 2016). Our ideas about the world are not anchored in the world but are anchored in our minds (Botterill, 2012), with everyone understanding the world differently, as s/he constructs a unique reality in her/his mind based on personal life experience. Also, everything has a transitional nature, always undergoing construction and reconstruction in our minds. Reality is experienced within the boundaries and influence of one's own perceptions (Potter, 1996).

Given that philosophical positions shape research questions, my research questions were designed to explore the diverse life experiences of both sojourners and stay-behinds. I intend to construct meaning from representations of social worlds, such as interview recordings and field notes, and to interpret diverse meanings lying behind discourses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Schwandt, 2003), so that multiple realities can be unveiled.

Social constructionism suggests that reality is socially co-constructed and maintained in human interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Botterill, 2012; Potter, 1996), as people exchange their thoughts/feelings about the world, through empathy. That is, reality is “the product of the subjective and inter-subjective experience of individuals” (Morgan, 1980, p. 608). Inter-subjectivity denotes cognitive agreement between individuals, from which realities are socially constructed/re-constructed. Thus, talk is central to social constructionism because it is in talk that we co-construct our realities. As a result, in my study, how sojourners and stay-behinds talk about their experiences is important.

Epistemological position. Epistemology represents assumptions about the nature and construction of knowledge (Dalmiya & Alcoff, 1993; Longino, 1990), namely the theory of knowledge (Audi, 2003), answering three epistemological questions: What is knowledge? How do I know the world? What is the relationship between the knower and the known (Guba & Lincoln, 1998)? Social constructionism assumes a subjectivist epistemology, which suggests that knowledge is socially produced through language, consciousness, and shared meanings (Botterill, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Klein & Myers, 1999; Weinberg, 2014; Williams, 2016), while being filtered through cultural lenses.

In qualitative research, social constructionism acknowledges knowledge co-production, in which data is (co-) produced through the active negotiation of meanings between researchers and participants, who are merged (Corlett & Mavin, 2018; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Phillips et al., 2013). Therefore, knowledge is always culturally and historically

situated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Williams, 2016) and as a researcher, I need to consider the wider socio-cultural contexts of sojourners and their stay-behind families and friends.

Also, I acknowledge the effects of my pre-understanding of the social phenomenon on this study, so that I practice reflexivity, and consider my positionality an integral part of the whole research process. In addition, I, as the researcher, respect the participants' voices (Ford-Gilboe et al., 1995), and acknowledges that my understanding about the social phenomenon is continuously enhanced as I interact with the participants to learn the multiple realities in their minds that derive from their various life stories. I therefore encourage participants to share their diverse life experiences in in-depth interviews and facilitate group discussions in focus groups, and in so do, we co-produced the research situation.

The use of focus group offers participants greater control over the direction of discussion and sharing of life experiences while respected their frameworks for understanding the world, so that the conversations evolved and knowledge co-produced, as they exchange their thoughts and feelings in a process of negotiation of meanings. As the researcher, I then compare the realities in the participants' minds with the realities suggested by the literature, resulting in the new understanding of the transnational phenomenon.

How does it fit this study? Social constructionism fits this study because it is founded in my worldview and positionality and accounts for the worldviews of the participants. As a Chinese transnational sojourner, I maintain close relationships with my family members and friends in China while developed friendships with other Chinese sojourners. Given my interactions with the people from diverse cultural backgrounds, I have developed a worldview that acknowledges the multiple realities in people's minds. Also, my sojourning experience provides me with a hybrid identity of in-betweenness that allows me to iteratively shift my position between being a researcher and a sojourner (Avella-Castro,

2018). This contributes to the development of socially co-produced knowledge in data collection and analysis.

Further, this study meets the preconditions for social constructionism, including community embeddedness, commitment to social change, and collaborative participation (Botterill, 2012; Tebes, 2017). First, my embeddedness in the community of sojourners is evident in my personal experience of transnational sojourning and the social network I developed in Chinese sojourner community in New Zealand. Second, my commitment to social change is the foundation for my research. I wanted to give voice to Chinese sojourners abroad and their family members and friends remain behind, who have been marginalised in prior tourism and migration studies. I wanted to identify the challenges and frustrations they experienced and provide practical solutions that potentially improve their lives.

Third, collaborative participation is clearly seen in the focus groups, which allows participants to collectively make sense of the social phenomenon and construct meanings around it. It is noteworthy that social constructionism has received some criticisms, which claim that this approach does not provide a precise standard to evaluate research design, or contributions to knowledge. However, as some academics state, researchers should be emancipated to choose their own path to truth, and science should not place a stranglehold on knowledge (Botterill, 2012; Weinberg, 2014).

Alternative approaches. I reviewed other approaches with the potential to guide this study. For example, positivism focuses on testing, verifying, and refining the theories that govern the world. However, positivism aims to achieve absolute truth of knowledge, through careful observation and measurement of the objective reality (Botterill, 2012). This approach fits better with quantitative research than my research, which is qualitative.

Postmodernism aims to give voice to every individual and explore their relative truths (Williams, 2016). It suggests that reality is constructed in mind and has a transitional nature,

undergoing endless interpretations and reinterpretations (Xie, 2018). However, this approach underestimates the importance of bridging differences and finding shared values, so that it is difficult to address fundamental and timeless human needs and make practical contribution that facilitates social progress (Botterill, 2012).

Social constructivism looks similar to social constructionism. Both perspectives acknowledge the subjective nature of reality. Individuals develop unique meanings based on their diverse life experiences. However, social constructivism claims that knowledge is constructed within the mind of individual (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), while social constructionism suggests that knowledge is socially co-constructed and maintained in human interaction (Botterill, 2012; Weinberg, 2014). This latter approach is consistent with my worldview and positionality. In this study, working with participants, I am in a position to encourage the co-construction of new knowledge.

Methodological position. Methodology represents assumptions that address the strategy a researcher uses to explore what s/he believes can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 2004), namely the philosophy of methods and answering the methodological questions: How do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it (Guba & Lincoln, 1998)? My ontological and epistemological positions determine my methodological position, which is that as a researcher, I need to acknowledge my pre-understanding of the phenomenon being explored, which continuously evolves, as I develop new knowledge from the literature and interactions with participants. Given my social constructionist methodological position, hermeneutics is an appropriate choice of methodology to guide the implementation of my study.

4.1.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is a reflexive methodology that echoes the major tenets of social constructionism (Botterill, 2012). It suggests that truth is identified through interpretation,

reflexive participation, and co-construction (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Hermeneutics provides a strong conceptual base, from which tourism experiences can be explored from multiple perspectives (Botterill, 2012; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). It respects both the voices of the literature and the participants, and also acknowledges the roles a researcher's positionality and pre-understanding play in shaping social study, from the development of the research question to the evolution of understanding regarding a social phenomenon. The potential of hermeneutics in enhancing understanding in tourism studies remains largely unexplored (Botterill, 2012; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Therefore, my study helps to realise the potential of hermeneutics through exploring a transnational phenomenon that links tourism and migration.

The core of hermeneutics is that two hermeneutic circles intersect. The first circle describes a process of ever-increasing contextual knowledge. As a study proceeds, the understanding of the overall research context is gradually enhanced by newly acquired knowledge about the different parts of the context, while the enhanced understanding of the overall context helps the researcher to ask more relevant questions during the interviews and better interpret the discourses, facilitating the exploration of the different parts of the phenomenon. For instance, a sojourner might complain that her/his stay-behind parents feel frustrated with the need for a full medical examination every time they apply for a visa to travel to New Zealand. If mentioned several times, this concern might be identified as one of perhaps several procedural challenges for reuniting families. The issue would then be raised in subsequent interviews, and more challenges may be revealed.

The second hermeneutic circle denotes an iterative process, from which a researcher's understanding of the phenomenon is continually evolving, as more knowledge is acquired from the literature, the interaction with participants, and data analysis and interpretation (Botterill, 2012; Debesay et al., 2008). All researchers have a pre-understanding (which

cannot be disregarded) of the phenomenon they seek to explore, derived from their life experience and a wide but focussed review of the literature (Gadamer, 1975; Gallagher, 1992). Such pre-understanding is an integral part of the whole that hermeneutics seeks to understand (Botterill, 2012; Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Schwandt, 2003), because they inevitably and thoroughly shape social studies (Bernstein, 1983), and act as a major source of prejudice (Denzin, 1989; Heidegger, 1962). That is, a researcher is included in the game of interpretation as a whole (Botterill, 2012). In this study, my pre-understanding of living transnational lives originally derived from my personal sojourning experience.

Hermeneutics also suggests that the understanding of life experience is achieved in a process of knowledge co-construction (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). A researcher's understanding of social phenomenon continually evolves, as new knowledge is produced from a series of time-consuming negotiations of meanings between the researcher and the participants, integrating the researcher's pre-understanding of the phenomenon, participants' understandings, and the diverse views of the prior studies, resulting in the construction of inter-subjectivity (Gadamer, 1989; Schwandt, 2003), closing the second hermeneutic circle.

Further, philosophical position shapes the research strategy of collecting and analysing empirical materials, putting paradigm into motion, in order to answer research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). As a researcher, I actively interact with my participants via in-depth interviews and focus groups to collect a wide range of ideas, which reflect the multiple realities in their minds. Also, I act as "the coordinator of the voices" (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 581), using a constant comparative thematic analysis to identify and organise their diverse ideas, so that meaningful themes can be created. Those themes eventually form a conceptual framework that depicts their transnational lives, resulting in an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, habitus and heterotopia are two key

interpretative concepts in my view of hermeneutics, which help me interrogate more social dynamics behind the transnational phenomenon. They are discussed next.

4.1.2.1 Habitus

Bourdieu and Foucault's notions of socially constructed realities are especially helpful in data interpretation and answering the research questions, providing clearer dynamics and more nuances. A Bourdieusian framework helps me to better interrogate the dynamics behind the transnational interactions between sojourners abroad and their stay-behinds, through introducing a dynamic correlation among capital, habitus, and field (Bourdieu, 1990b; Nolan, 2011), which together determine social practices (Bourdieu, 1977). Capital is accumulated labour, which not only provides people with the means to acquire certain social energy in the form of reified or living labour, but also to produce profits and reproduce itself in identical or expanded form (Bourdieu, 1986). There are three main forms of capital, social, economic, and cultural capital. The value of capital is evaluated based on a socially shaped framework of evaluation, so that the same capital may be evaluated differently in different socio-cultural contexts. Such a socially constructed framework is habitus, which represents the way an individual understands the world around her/him, or "a system of long-lasting structures of perception, conception, and action" (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 43) that is embedded in one's mind.

Habitus derives from our life experiences from birth onwards, that is, the internalisation of social expectations and value systems, and continuously changes as we experience new things (Bourdieu, 1977; Dean, 2016; Jenkins, 2002). One's habitus may undergo changes as a result of continuously interacting with people who have markedly different habitus. This process is called cultural mixing, or hybridity (Hollinshead, 1998),

which produces hybrid habitus (Chambers, 1996). Emigration frequently produces such hybrid habitus that allows a sojourner to comfortably live in multiple societies (Nolan, 2011).

The environment within which people develop habitus is called ‘field’. A field can be any society or social space, in a wide range of scope, from a classroom to a society. Every field has unique rules and structure that guide its functioning (Bourdieu, 1990a; Nolan, 2011). The rules represent the habitus commonly shared in the social space, while the structure denotes a social network that consists of different social positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). One’s position is determined by the form, amount, and distribution of capital one has (Bourdieu, 1984; Oldenhof & Wehrens, 2018). Sojourners sometimes find themselves in a new social position after emigration, because their social, cultural, and economic capital are evaluated differently in a new field (Bourdieu, 1984).

The internalisation of the rules and structure constructs/modifies one’s habitus, so that people from the same field tend to have similar habitus. In a field, one’s habitus and social position shape the way s/he thinks and feels, and social practices as a result (Bourdieu, 2002). Living in different societies potentially raises a gap in habitus between sojourners and stay-behinds. Therefore, in this study, the concept of habitus is adopted in data interpretation to interrogate the dynamics behind the emerging tensions, frustrations, and misunderstanding in transnational interactions, especially during VFR travel, which potentially raise a sense of otherness, weaken ties, inhibit the exchange of support, and threaten wellbeing.

4.1.2.2 Heterotopia

For stay-behinds, their migrant hosts’ houses may be hybrid fields that combine home and away, the places of the Selves and the Others. If this is the case, then Foucault’s concept of heterotopia is helpful in investigating the creation of an illusion of staying in a home away from home in host-guest interactions in these social spaces. Heterotopia needs to be

understood in relation to another two concepts, utopia and dystopia. A utopia is an imagined place in which everything is perfect (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986), while a dystopia represents an imagined place in which everything is unpleasant. They are “true opposites” (p. 48) in a utopia-dystopia continuum, while heterotopias are real sites in the middle range of the continuum (Cave, 2008).

A heterotopia has several characteristics that differentiate it from other social spaces. The most important one is that a heterotopia may contain the key cultural elements of multiple social spaces, reflecting them simultaneously, sometimes juxtaposing incompatible ones, such as those hybrid fields that integrate home with away, the Selves and the Others. Therefore, a heterotopia can be a site of illusion, in which people enjoy an illusory life that is contrary to the wider society (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986).

For stay-behinds, their home societies may be utopias, or the places of the Selves, in which everything is familiar, while the host countries may be dystopias, or the places of the Others, strangers, and dangers, in which many things are unfamiliar. Their hosts' houses may be heterotopias, which combine the places of the Selves and the Others, familiar and unfamiliar. Therefore, during their VFR visits, they may find many things/practices that remind them of their home countries, so can enjoy an illusory life that is contrary to the wider host society. For instance, Chinese visitors can speak Chinese dialects, enjoy homemade dumplings, and watch Chinese television shows during their stays, creating an illusion of staying in a “home away from home” (Liu, 2013, p. 20). However, in their hosts' houses and the surrounding areas, they may also find many unfamiliar things/practices, including but not limited to local language, social protocols, food, drink, even waste management styles, somehow breaking the illusion of staying at home.

A heterotopia also has other characteristics. For example, a heterotopia is often not freely accessible, as certain permissions are required when people seek to enter these sites

(Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986), such as purchasing a ticket to enter a museum. For VFR visitors, such permissions are often granted based on their emotional closeness with migrant hosts, and a benefit-cost analysis in their hosts' minds (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017).

Also, just like other social spaces, people need to acknowledge the rules in heterotopias, if they want to achieve a desirable result. For example, VFR visitors need to respect the social protocols that their hosts consider important, and fulfil their obligations as guests, so that they may have pleasant visiting experiences. This echoes the role of habitus in shaping host-guest interactions. Further, people might experience an "absolute break with their traditional time" when they are staying in heterotopias (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986, p. 26). For instance, VFR visitors may enjoy the fleeting time living in their hosts' houses, allowing them to temporarily forget about the things back home that worry them.

4.2 Participants and Recruiting Procedures

This section discusses the participants and how they were recruited. The fieldwork began in China in March 2017 and was completed in New Zealand in September 2017. Both in-depth interviews and focus groups were used, and all the events followed the same schedule. The sequence was designed for the convenience of the participants.

4.2.1 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling is a technique which helps to approach participants who may be difficult to locate (Babbie, 2013; Bryman, 2015), such as non-institutionalized drug-users (Sifaneck & Neaigus, 2001), unemployed men (Atkinson & Flint, 2001), elders (Warren & Levy, 1991), and expatriates (Benson, 2011), in an effective, efficient, and economic way (Arsovska, 2008). A researcher initially samples a small group of people who meet the

sample criteria, sometimes based on her/his own social network (Bryman, 2015). These participants are then asked to introduce the researcher to their social connections who also meet the sample criteria. Next, the researcher approaches these newly obtained connections, who may participate and then suggest others and so on. In this way, the newly acquired social connections are used to develop an ever-extending set of potential participants (Atkinson & Flint, 2001) who meet the criteria for taking part (Noy, 2008).

Snowball sampling has been widely used in migration studies focused on Chinese transnational sojourners and their interactions with their stay-behind social connections (Ip, 2011; Li & McKercher, 2016; Liu, 2011; Yan et al., 2014). As a Chinese transnational sojourner myself, I used my personal network of 'WeChat groups', to invite many participants. Each group is a virtual community for Chinese sojourners residing in New Zealand. These groups fulfil a role of a marketplace, in which the sojourners can sell or buy things, from homemade food to used cars, even houses. Also, they can share much useful information, such as local Chinese community events, job opportunities, and the news about New Zealand and China. Most of the Chinese sojourner participants who meet the criteria were found in these WeChat groups and invited to introduce me to other sojourners, and their stay-behind family members and friends in China.

4.2.2 Matched Sample Method

Mazzucato (2009) argued that transnational phenomena by their very nature, cross national boundaries, so that can be better understood by implementing multi-sited research. The matched sample method has been used in migration studies to collect data from both the sojourners abroad and their stay-behind families and friends (Joarder et al., 2016; McDonald & Valenzuela, 2012; Osili, 2007). For example, Cave and Koloto (2015) interviewed

migrants in New Zealand and their paired stay-behind families in Tonga to explore the dynamics behind the transnational social interactions between the two sides. In particular, the VFR studies that examine the experience of migrant hosts and visitors tend to consider them as inseparable parts of an integrated whole (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017).

Exploring the nexus of migration and VFR tourism, this study uses a matched sample method to collect data about the life experiences of Chinese sojourners abroad and their stay-behind family members and friends in China, so that a clearer view of transnational lives can be formed, and a better understanding of their social exchanges acquired. Paired samples can reveal potential inherent silences in the sample population. For example, a theme might emerge in the sojourner side, which is considered important in transnational interactions with the stay-behind side. However, the stay-behinds might do not mention the theme at all, suggesting a silence, which implies that conflicts may occur in their interactions. This reflects Williams's (2016) argument, "Absence can have as much power as presence" (p. 169).

In matched sample methods, the researcher interviews one side to get information, which the other side may not know about (Poeze et al., 2017). Humbracht (2015) used VFR travel as a social lens to explore migrants' social positions in Sweden, by interviewing paired migrant hosts and stay-behinds. He claimed that the study attempted to avoid restraining the participants from freely sharing unpleasant experiences in host-guest interactions, by interviewing the two sides separately. However, I took the view that Humbracht's (2015) method may not be able to eliminate the risk of participants being reluctant to unreservedly share their hosting/visiting experiences, because they knew that their paired family members and friends were also involved in his study. Therefore, although this is deemed a study limitation, knowing that paired family members or friends were not in the same study encouraged free expression of opinions (Joarder et al., 2016), and offered a dataset of diverse life experiences.

The sojourning group consists of 44 Chinese sojourners who have lived in New Zealand for more than three years, with ‘prolonged stay’ and ‘freedom of movement’ permits, while the stay-behind side includes 36 family members and friends interviewed in China. Some Chinese sojourners and stay-behinds had not participated in VFR hosting and visiting before the interviews but have the intentions to do so in the future.

The samples were matched on paired roles in transnational interactions and nations of residence. The original intention had been to create family tie- and friendship-matched samples in both countries. However, this proved impossible to achieve, because most participants refused to provide their paired counterparts’ contact details, citing privacy concerns. Their concerns derived from the Chinese concept of ‘祸从口出’, which means ‘recklessly expressing opinions may cause unexpected consequences’, well known to those familiar with Chinese culture. This concept includes the Western notion of gossip (or the expression - ‘loose lips sink ships’) but goes further, implying that ‘talking about other people behind their backs’ is not respectful, even if what is being circulated is the truth, as it could potentially ruin a relationship, or relationships. As I observed, this socio-cultural norm has shaped Chinese people’s understanding of politics and participation in social interactions. For instance, Chinese sojourners abroad tend to avoid voting in their host countries, even though they have the right to. Addressing this issue reflects my shifting positionality as not only a researcher, but also a cultural insider, a Chinese sojourner, and an only-child migrant, who has been studying and proudly raising a child abroad.

Initially, attempting to use a matched sample method, I first went to China and interviewed those whose family members or friends had lived in New Zealand for more than three years. Then, I returned to New Zealand and interviewed Chinese sojourners who have family members and friends residing in China. Using a snowball sampling method, in some cases, I had the contacts of both the sojourners and their paired stay-behind family members

or friends. However, I only interviewed one pair of participants (a young sojourner and her stay-behind mother), because the participants may have been reluctant to share their full stories if they knew that their paired family members or friends were involved. Therefore, in this study, the matched sample method can be termed as a modified matched pair sample, given that true matched pairs were not used.

4.2.3 Paired Roles

The participants' roles in the phenomenon being explored are outlined below (Table 4-1). The participants can be categorised into three groups: Chinese sojourners abroad, stay-behind family members, and stay-behind friends.

The sojourners abroad and stay-behinds in China were interviewed separately and matched based on their paired nations of residence, and roles in transnational interactions, rather than on family ties or friendships. Almost all the sojourners abroad and stay-behind family members are not from the same transnational family. All sojourners have both family and friends residing in China, so that their responses encompassed both transnational kinship and friendship. No stay-behind reported that s/he has both family and friends living in New Zealand, so the stay-behinds can be divided into a family group and a friend group.

Table 4-1 Paired participants

Chinese sojourners	Stay-behind family members	Stay-behind friends
44	20	16

In the exploration of the role of transnational family ties in shaping participants' lives, the sojourners may talk about their stay-behind parents, siblings, or cousins, while stay-behind participants may talk about their migrant children, siblings, or cousins. Therefore, it is important to have a clear understanding of who they are talking about in data analysis and

interpretation. Appendix A provides a clear view about their paired roles and who they were mainly talking about during the interviews and focus groups, which are representative of all the 64 participant's views (sojourners and stay-behind family members), without the 16 stay-behind friends in China. This does not apply to the exploration of the role of transnational friendships (both sides only talk about their geographically dispersed friends).

4.2.4 Sample Criteria and Size

The recruiting strategy was developed to ensure that sampled participants were representative, at least to some extent, of the target population (Saunders, 2016). This study focuses on the life experiences of Chinese transnational sojourners abroad, and their stay-behind family members and friends in China, regarding the roles of their family ties and friendships in transnational interactions, in particular, VFR visiting and hosting, and wellbeing as a result. Therefore, the participants needed to meet the following criteria:

(1) On the hosting side, the participants should be Chinese sojourners who have lived in New Zealand for more than three years. They should have hosted, or had the intention to host, their stay-behind family members, or friends from China in the last two years.

(2) On the visiting side, the participants should be residents of China, such as stay-behind parents, siblings, or old friends. They should have visited, or had the intention to visit, their far-away family members or friends (who have been living in New Zealand for more than three years) in the last two years.

(3) The Chinese sojourners should have a long-term work visa, permanent residency, or citizenship, so that they can stay in New Zealand for a prolonged period, or freely change their migration strategies in times of need. Therefore, Chinese international students were not included.

(4) The participants should come from diverse life stages of the family life cycle, such as single, married without children, married with young children, or married with adult children.

(5) There should be an equal number of male and female participants.

In a qualitative study, it is somewhat difficult to determine a sample size (Bryman, 2015). However, there are some suggestions that can be applied. On the one hand, the sample size for a qualitative study should not be too small. A sample size should allow the researcher to categorise the participants into diverse groups, and find various themes, so that research questions can be better answered (Li & McKercher, 2016). On the other hand, a sample size for a qualitative study should not be too large, so that the researcher can analyse the data deeply (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Data collection can stop when a researcher believes that data saturation has been achieved (Ugargol & Bailey, 2018).

This study uses in-depth interviews and focus groups to collect data. There is no ideal number for the sample size of the two methods (Jensen et al., 2013). However, it has been suggested that the minimum number of in-depth interviews should be between 20 and 30 (Jensen et al., 2013; Waters, 2002). For focus groups, an appropriate sample size of a total of 36 participants has been suggested (Jensen et al., 2013). For each focus group, too few participants limit the scope of the discussion, while too many restricts the time available for individual participants to contribute (Cameron, 2005). Thus, a focus group with six to 15 participants has been suggested (Babbie, 2013; Frisina, 2018). Normally, data saturation can be achieved after completing four to six focus groups, which means that no new relevant themes emerge (Cyr, 2019).

In addition, there are some factors that may influence researchers' choices of sample size in qualitative research. For instance, a sample size is greatly affected by the purposes of the research (Bryman, 2015). The broader the scope of a study, the more comparisons

between distinct groups may be required, and the sample size may need to be larger (Morse, 2004; Saunders, 2016; Warren, 2002).

In this study, four focus groups (with a duration of 1.5-2 hours each and video-recorded) and 13 in-depth interviews (with a duration of 1-2 hours each and audio-recorded) were conducted in Beijing from 24th March to 5th May 2017. Then, another four focus groups (with a duration of 1.5-2 hours each and video-recorded) and 21 in-depth interviews (with a duration of 1-2 hours each and audio-recorded) were conducted in New Zealand from 16th July to 11th September 2017, as shown in Table 4-2 below. A few participants attended both the interview and the focus group.

Table 4-2 Sample size

China		
Events	Number of participants	Date
Focus Group 1	6	24th March
Focus Group 2	7	30th March
Focus Group 3	10	8th April
Focus Group 4	7	15th April
In-depth interviews	Number of events	
	13	April-May
Participants in total	43	-
NZ		
Events	Number of participants	Date
Focus Group 5	8	16th July
Focus Group 6	7	23rd July
Focus Group 7	4	30th July
Focus Group 8	5	5th August
In-depth interviews	Number of events	
	21	July-September
Participants in total	45	-

4.2.5 Participants' Profiles

I discuss the participants' profiles, not only to contextualise the findings and give readers a clearer sense of the quotes, but also to identify any potential silence/bias (e.g., lack of voices from a certain group) and address the implications for data interpretation.

4.2.5.1 Sojourners and Stay-behind Family Members

Table 4-3 shows the socio-demographic profiles of the sojourners and stay-behind family members who participated in this study.

Table 4-3 Participants' profile: Chinese sojourners abroad and stay-behind family members

Participants' Profile		Chinese Sojourners	Stay-behind Family Members	Total	Percent
Gender	Male	18	5	23	35.9%
	Female	26	15	41	64.1%
Age	19-25 years	4	0	4	6.3%
	26-35 years	22	7	29	45.3%
	36-45 years	10	4	14	21.9%
	46+ years	8	9	17	26.6%
Personal Income (CNY)	0-100,000	5	7	12	18.8%
	100,000-200,000	6	8	14	21.9%
	200,000-300,000	13	4	17	26.6%
	300,000-500,000	8	0	8	12.5%
	500,000+	3	0	3	4.7%
	Unassigned	9	1	10	15.6%
Educational Background	Bachelor's degree	22	14	36	56.3%
	Master's degree	18	2	20	31.3%
	PhD	3	0	3	4.7%
	Others	1	4	5	7.8%
Marital Status	Single	13	2	15	23.4%
	In a relationship	3	2	5	7.8%
	Married without children	7	1	8	12.5%
	Married with minor(s)	17	7	24	37.5%
	Married and adult children	4	8	12	18.8%
Visa Status	PRC passport	0	16	16	25.0%
	PRC passport with New Zealand student visa	7	0	7	10.9%
	PRC passport with New Zealand working visa	5	0	5	7.8%
	PRC passport with permanent residency	26	3	29	45.3%
	New Zealand Citizenship	6	1	7	10.9%
English Language Skill	Very good	8	2	10	15.6%
	Good	13	1	14	21.9%
	Daily communication	19	6	25	39.1%
	Difficult to communicate	4	11	15	23.4%
Total		44 (68.8%)	20 (31.3%)	64	100.0%

There are more female participants in both groups, although I sought to balance the two genders. However, both genders provided valuable responses, ensuring data richness. Most of the participants are older than 26 (60 of 64).

Half of the sojourners are between 26-35 years of age (22 of 44). The second largest age group is 36-45 (10 of 44), and the third 46+ (8 of 44). This age distribution implies that most sojourners are in earlier stages of their career development. Of the stay-behind participants, there is no participant in the 19-25 age group, which implies a ‘silence’ or lack of input from young family members living in China, potentially limiting the representativeness of the findings. The other three age groups are equally distributed, giving voice to stay-behind parents, siblings, and cousins.

All participants are urban dwellers. The sojourners’ annual personal income is distributed quite equally. Twenty-four sojourners reported an income higher than 200,000 CNY per annum (35 of 44 provided this data). They can be classified as middle- or higher-income earners when compared with living standards in New Zealand, where average annual personal income is \$49,475 (Statistics New Zealand, 2017), roughly equal to 224,122 CNY per annum using an exchange rate of 1:4.53 (16th August 2018).

Compared to the sojourners, most stay-behind family members (n=15) have an income lower than 200,000 CNY (19 of 20 provided this data). Only four have incomes that match the average income in New Zealand. However, these urban dwellers should not be simply considered middle- or lower-income, as their income is still much higher than the average annual income in China (only 25,973.79 CNY) (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). Also, there are no stay-behind members in the 300,000-500,000 CNY and 500,000+ CNY groups, suggesting a silence from the higher income groups in the stay-behind side. There is certainly a considerable gap in personal income between the sojourner

abroad and stay-behind family members, which potentially explains the dynamics behind their transnational interactions from an economic perspective.

Just like personal income, there is also a difference in educational background between the sojourner and stay-behind family members. Although both sides have a large proportion of those who have a Bachelor's degree (22 of 44 for the sojourners, 14 of 20 for the stay-behinds), a considerable number of sojourners reported having a higher degree (18 Master's degrees, 3 PhDs), presumably received in New Zealand, as most of them came to the country as international students. On the contrary, only two stay-behinds have higher degrees. This suggests that the sojourners are likely to have richer life experience, compared to the stay-behinds.

The sojourners' marital status distributes quite equally. The largest groups in the sojourner side are 'married with minor (s)' (17 of 44) and 'single' (13 of 44), followed by 'married without children' (7 of 44). However, most stay-behind family members are from later life stages, and reported having young (7 of 20) or adult children (8 of 20). Only a few stay-behinds are from earlier life stages. Nevertheless, there is no marital status group left unoccupied, so that all stages of the family life cycle were represented. Thus, my study is well-suited to an exploration of the diverse needs, transnational interactions, and migration strategies of Chinese transnational families, at different life stages of the family life cycle.

More than half of the sojourners have New Zealand permanent residency (26 of 44), while only six sojourners have changed their passports to a New Zealand one. This reveals a popular migration strategy of Chinese sojourners. They prefer to keep their Chinese passports, because New Zealand permanent residency does not have any restriction on their annual length of stay overseas, allowing them to leave New Zealand or come back at any time. This ensures that these sojourners can move to a third country or come back to China without worrying that their New Zealand residency may be withdrawn. The rest of the

sojourners have long-term visas (12 of 44). On the contrary, most stay-behind family members do not have a long-term visa that allows them to freely visit New Zealand (16 of 20), implying that the ever-changing conditions of acquiring a visitor visa could be a barrier for them to visit their far-away family members, especially in a post-COVID era. A few stay-behinds have New Zealand permanent residency or citizenship (4 of 20), suggesting that they may have become sojourners themselves.

Regarding their English language proficiency, many sojourners consider themselves to be good or very good English speakers (21 of 44). Nineteen sojourners reported that they can speak English in daily communication. Only four sojourners feel that it is difficult using English to communicate. Surprisingly, quite a few stay-behind family members reported that they can use English in daily communication (9 of 20), implying that they may be able to act more independently during their VR visits. However, for the rest of the stay-behinds who do not speak English (11 of 20), almost everything in New Zealand is unfamiliar, especially language, so that support from their migrant hosts, who are relatively wealthy, well-educated, and culturally proficient, is essential for them to enjoy their VR visits.

4.2.5.2 Sojourners and Stay-behind Friends

Table 4-4 shows the socio-demographic profiles of the sojourners and stay-behind friends who participated in this study.

Table 4-4 Participants' profiles: Chinese sojourners abroad and stay-behind friends

Participants' Profile		Chinese Sojourners	Stay-behind Friends	Total	Percent
Gender	Male	18	5	23	38.3%
	Female	26	11	37	61.7%
Age	19-25	4	1	5	8.3%
	26-35	22	13	35	58.3%
	36-45	10	2	12	20.0%
	46+	8	0	8	13.3%
Personal Income (CNY)	0-100,000	5	7	12	20.0%
	100,000-200,000	6	4	10	16.7%
	200,000-300,000	13	5	18	30.0%
	300,000-500,000	8	0	8	13.3%
	500,000+	3	0	3	5.0%
	Unassigned	9	0	9	15.0%
Educational Background	Bachelor's degree	22	5	27	45.0%
	Master's degree	18	8	26	43.3%
	PhD	3	3	6	10.0%
	Others	1	0	1	1.7%
Marital Status	Single	13	3	16	26.7%
	In a relationship	3	6	9	15.0%
	Married without child	7	4	11	18.3%
	Married with minor(s)	17	3	20	33.3%
	Married and all children have grown up	4	0	4	6.7%
Visa Status	PRC passport	2	11	13	21.7%
	PRC passport with a student visa in NZ	5	0	5	8.3%
	PRC passport with a working visa in NZ	5	0	5	8.3%
	PRC passport with permanent residency in NZ	26	3	29	48.3%
	New Zealand Citizenship	6	2	8	13.3%
English Language Skill	Very good	8	5	13	21.7%
	Good	13	3	16	26.7%
	Daily communication	19	6	25	41.7%
	Difficult to communicate	4	2	6	10.0%
Total		44 (73.3%)	16 (26.7%)	60	100%

First, there are more female stay-behind friends (11 of 16) than male (5 of 16). Even so, both gender groups provided valuable responses, ensuring data richness. The largest age group in the stay-behind side is 26-35 years of age (13 of 16), suggesting earlier life stages, while there are no stay-behind friends in the 46+ age group. This age distribution and the lack of input from the older stay-behind friends potentially cause bias, as the views of the 26-35 age group may be quite different from those of other age groups.

All participants are urban dwellers. A considerable number of sojourners have annual incomes higher than 200,000 CNY (24 of the 35 who provided the data). Compared to their New Zealand counterparts, the stay-behind friends in China have relatively lower personal incomes. Most of them have incomes that are lower than 200,000 CNY per annum (11 of 16). Only five have incomes between 200,000-300,000 CNY, while nobody earns an income more than 300,000 CNY per annum, suggesting a silence from the higher income groups in the stay-behind side, which potentially limits representativeness. One reason is that the average personal income in New Zealand is much higher than in China. Another possible reason is that the participants in China are comparatively younger than those in New Zealand, and still in earlier stages of their career development. Therefore, a sojourner and a stay-behind friend may perceive the value of the same amount of money differently.

The sojourners have good educational backgrounds (22 with a Bachelor's degree, 18 Master's degrees, and 3 PhDs). Similarly, the stay-behind friends are also well-educated. Five stay-behinds have a Bachelor's degree, while the rest have higher degrees (8 Master's degrees, and 3 PhDs). This implies that these relatively young stay-behinds may have a good range of knowledge, and therefore may communicate with the sojourners effectively, although the two sides have very different life experiences in terms of transnational sojourning.

Regarding their marital status, most of the stay-behind friends are at earlier life stages, that is, do not have children (13 of 16), compared to the sojourners (21 of 44 are married and have children). Only three stay-behinds are married and have young children. This distribution of marital status echoes the aforementioned silence from the older stay-behind friends and potentially limits the representativeness of the findings, because the stay-behind friends from later life stages may perceive the nature and meanings of transnational friendships quite differently than those at earlier life stages.

More than half of the sojourners are New Zealand permanent residents or hold a New Zealand passport (32 of 44), so can freely move back and forth between their countries of residence and origin. Most of the stay-behind friends do not have a long-term visa that allows them to freely visit New Zealand (11 of 16). Applying for a visitor visa could therefore be a barrier for them to participate in VF travel, especially in a post-COVID era where governments have tightened border controls. However, a few stay-behinds reported that they are allowed to travel to New Zealand at any time (three have permanent residency, two have New Zealand citizenship). This implies that they are also transnational sojourners, because they used to live in New Zealand but have now moved back to China, and therefore share similar life experiences with the sojourners.

Most of the sojourners can use English in daily communication (40 of 44). Half of the stay-behind friends consider themselves good or very good English language speakers (8 of 16). Six of them can use English in daily communication. Only two stay-behinds feel that it is difficult for them to communicate in English. This distribution suggests that most of the stay-behind friends could travel independently in New Zealand.

4.3 Data Collection

This section discusses the data collection methods which included focus groups and in-depth interviews, their design, and the reason behind the use of the methods. Also, the important social protocols and ethical issues are discussed.

4.3.1 Focus Group

A focus group session is a dynamic process in which a researcher can question several participants simultaneously and systematically (Babbie, 2013; Lambert & Loisel, 2008), allowing various views about a particular issue to be efficiently elicited from the interaction between participants in shorter time spans (Bryman, 2016; Hesse-Biber, 2011). It was once considered a substitute for an in-depth interview (Barbour, 2005). However, it is now widely adopted in qualitative studies as a data collection method in its own right (Bryman, 2015).

Researchers who have a social constructionism paradigm tend to believe in the trustworthiness of focus group data, because a focus group method suggests that achieving an enhanced understanding of a social phenomenon requires the researcher to acquire socially constructed knowledge. That knowledge is produced by the interaction between participants that reflects the ‘multiple realities’ in their minds, rather than isolated thinking (Bryman, 2016).

The most important advantage of the focus group over an in-depth individual interview is the ongoing dynamics within the group, or ‘group effect’ (Morgan, 1996). It is a unique source of knowledge that derives from the interaction between participants when they are collectively making sense of a phenomenon and constructing meanings around it (Hesse-Biber, 2011). Participants are stimulated by group interactions, as they listen, respond to, and sometimes challenge each other’s opinions, while building up and modifying their own views based on others’ voices, making it easier for researchers to uncover the diverse perceptions of

social phenomena and the dynamics behind the construction of the perceptions (Bryman, 2015; Bryman, 2016; David, 2011).

In this way, a focus group provides its participants with greater control over the direction of group discussion (David, 2011). An in-depth interview somewhat constrains the participant's power to freely convey their diverse views about a research topic, since interview questions usually need to be answered in a certain sequence, whereas a focus group gives greater priority to participants' hierarchies of importance and frameworks for understanding the world (Kitzinger, 1994).

Also, compared to in-depth interviews, focus groups provide researchers with more contextual information, as a result of the group effect (David, 2011; David & Richard, 2006; Sim, 1998). Because of accustomed patterns of thought, an individual participant may not be able to think about a topic in every detail (Morgan, 1997). However, the interaction within a group of participants often produces a wide range of information, including valuable knowledge from anecdotes and jokes, which cannot be easily elicited via in-depth interviews (Kitzinger, 1994).

Therefore, the focus group method would be a good choice when a researcher seeks to construct a more comprehensive understanding about the life experience of the target population (Coenen et al., 2012), which in turn facilitates data interpretation. For instance, acknowledging the difficulties the stay-behinds face in applying for a visa to visit New Zealand provides a new perspective from which the sojourners' intention of returning China can be better explained. Further, a focus group provides participants with a relatively comfortable group atmosphere in which the spotlight is not always on a single individual, so that sensitive topics and personal life experience may be discussed more openly (Carey, 1994; Hesse-Biber, 2011).

However, the focus group method also has potential drawbacks (Krueger, 1988). For instance, focus groups are relatively time-consuming to organise (Coenen et al., 2012; Parsons & Greenwood, 2000). Also, the group effect may reduce a group's effectiveness (Babbie, 2013; David & Richard, 2006). Sometimes, a few vocal participants control the discussion, while other participants may be inhibited from freely expressing their ideas and thus pretend to agree with those opinions, potentially producing incomplete or biased results (David, 2011; Greenbaum, 1998). Also, social pressures may cause over-claiming (Greenbaum, 2003), as participants may make assertions that are based on assumptions rather than real experience. Therefore, researchers need to perform the role of moderator to effectively manage the interaction between participants, while always avoiding being too intrusive (Babbie, 2013; Bryman, 2016).

In the focus groups, I acted as a listener and a coordinator, because letting their voice be heard is the aim of my research method. I encouraged the participants to share more details in their life experiences, especially the motives, deep meanings, and emotions. I tried to create group effect and facilitates heated discussions. Also, I motivated each participant to join the discussions. Regarding the participants who shared too much, I politely asked them to give others the opportunity to share different experiences and understandings, so that diverse ideas can be better exchanged.

4.3.2 In-depth Interview

The in-depth interview is also a popular meaning-making process that produces socially constructed knowledge. It can be designed as highly-, semi-, or low-structured. In this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, in which I guided the conversations, using several interview questions, while allowing for flexibility. In this way,

the researcher and participants actively interact with each other, producing meaningful information on a focused research topic (Hesse-Biber, 2011).

Compared to focus groups, in-depth interviews provide researchers with greater control over the depth and flexibility of data collection, so that deep information can be uncovered (Cassell & Symon, 2004), which may not be easily revealed in focus groups (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). Therefore, while focus groups can be used to obtain a wider range of information around an interview question, an in-depth interview is often adopted to dig deeper into an interview question, uncovering the multi-layered dynamics behind a social phenomenon (Johnson, 2002).

4.3.3 Integrating the Focus Group and In-depth Interview

This study integrates focus groups and in-depth interviews. They were conducted in the same timeframe based on the participants' availability, 'showing respect to their schedules'. Integrating the two methods has important implications (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). First, such a strategy has a complementary effect. As mentioned above, there is no single method that is always superior, each method has its own advantages and weaknesses (Denzin, 1970; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Yin, 2003). Therefore, the two methods are not substitutes for each other, rather, this study capitalises on the advantages of each method, while addressing their weaknesses, thereby achieving complementarity (Ho et al., 2006; E. Singh et al., 2012).

On the one hand, the focus groups allowed the participants to collectively make sense of the social phenomenon and constructing meanings around it. It offered them greater control over the direction of discussion while gave greater priority to their hierarchies of importance and frameworks for understanding the world. In this way, they co-produced knowledge. On the other hand, in-depth interviews allowed me to dig deeper into their life

experiences, uncovering deeper meanings and emotions. Therefore, these two methods do different things while help each other.

Second, integrating the two is an effective strategy to produce a comprehensive view of complex social phenomena (Hesse-Biber, 2011; Lambert & Loiselle, 2008), because such an approach enlarges a study's depth and scope (Denzin, 1970; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). For instance, participants in focus groups tend to raise various problems that are experienced by others and all can construct meanings around them. Whereas, participants in in-depth interviews are inclined to raise detail-oriented problems that are more related to their particular experience and elaborate on them (Bryman, 2016; De Jong & Schellens, 1998). As a result of the integration, the exploratory questions can be better answered (Rocco et al., 2003), and trustworthiness enhanced (Gorard & Taylor, 2004; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Of note, the data collected using the two methods are presented and discussed together to ensure simplicity, because presenting the data separately will create repetitions.

Third, from a pragmatic perspective, the two methods can be combined in a single study to facilitate participation, allowing the researcher to gain access to more participants with diverse backgrounds, who may perceive the social phenomenon differently (Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2001), revealing the multiple realities in their minds, so that data completeness can be enhanced (Adami & Kiger, 2005). Focus group was provided as an option for participants who were unable or reluctant to attend an in-depth interview, and vice versa (Taylor, 2005), effectively reducing refusals and withdrawals. Participants were able to choose an option which better fitted their needs and personal schedules (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008).

Integrating focus group and in-depth interview is not without its limits. For instance, such a strategy can be time-consuming, because combining them requires the researcher to spend more time on preparation and organising, such as preparing the aforementioned documents for ethical approval. Also, this approach produces more data, which requires the

researcher to spend more time on transcription, translation, and data analysis (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008; Singh et al., 2012). However, this approach was still adopted in this study, as its advantages greatly outweigh disadvantages.

Given my social constructionist and hermeneutic positions, I acknowledge the evolving nature of my understanding of the phenomenon, and actively interacted with the participants to elicit their various understandings of the interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel, which reflect the multiple realities in their minds.

4.4 Design of Focus Group and In-depth Interview Questions

There was one ‘in-depth interview schedule’ and one ‘focus group guide’ designed for the fieldwork in both New Zealand and China. The schedule and guide present the same interview questions worded in slightly different ways. The questions for the focus groups were phrased in a way to motivate the participants to freely express their views and actively interact with each other, so that a wider range of information may be revealed, while the questions for the interviews were phrased in a way that motivated the participants to think deeply, so that I can continually probe the deeper dynamics behind their responses.

Also, given there is only one set of interview questions, the questions were explained to the participants in a way that matched their roles in the transnational interactions. For instance, on the one hand, I asked the stay-behinds what activities they did, or were planning to do during their VFR visits to New Zealand. On the other hand, the sojourners were asked what activities they did, or were planning to do when hosting VFR visitors. The ways the questions were asked also depended on the situations, such as participants’ mood and the dynamics within the groups.

There are two major sections in the in-depth interviews and focus groups, (1) exploring the dynamics behind the host-guest interactions, (2) their diverse understanding about the nature of their transnational ties, and the role of the ties in their lives. Of note, the interview questions were originally designed to explore how their transnational ties affect their hosting and visiting behaviours, wellbeing, and the local economy. However, as the data analysis and interpretation proceeded, some new insights emerged from the data. As the researcher, I and my supervisors considered that exploring the roles of transnational ties in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds may produce greater contributions to the literature and practice, so changed the direction of this study.

The first section explores visiting and hosting behaviours during VFR travel, and especially, the motives and values lying behind, by exploring their psychological hierarchies. First, the participants were asked to provide the activities they had chosen, or intend to do, during their VFR visiting or hosting in New Zealand, such as cooking at home, visiting museums, or hiking. Second, the participants were asked to provide the motives behind each of their chosen visiting or hosting activities. For instance, the motive for cooking at home could be the desire to strengthen family ties. Then, the participants were asked to provide values behind each of their chosen motives. For example, visiting parents who have a strong desire to strengthen family ties may have a family-centred value, considering their migrant children the most important thing in their lives.

To stimulate the participants to think, some examples were provided, regarding their possible activities, motives, and values, in relation to VFR visiting and hosting. Therefore, the interview questions were asked in a way that sequentially uncovered the psychological hierarchies in their minds, explaining not only ‘what they want to do?’, but also ‘why they want to do it?’. Also, as the events proceeded, the participants were advised to write down their philosophical hierarchies on a blank sheet of paper, in the order of activities, motives,

and values. This helps me to better understand and record their thinking patterns. In this way, the role of VFR travel in their lives can be uncovered, including the effects on their transnational interpersonal ties and wellbeing, reflecting the research questions.

The construction of the hierarchical interview questions is based on a Bourdieusian framework (section 4.1.2.1), and assumes that the participants' visiting and hosting behaviours are shaped by the dynamic correlation between their diverse roles in the transnational social fields, namely positions, and in particular, the different ways they understand the world, VFR travel, and the nature and meanings of their transnational ties, namely habitus.

Also, Foucauldian thinking (section 4.1.2.2) suggests that migrant hosts' houses are heterotopias that simultaneously remind the stay-behinds of home and away, that is, a hybrid field, creating an illusion of staying in a home away from home. Therefore, the interview questions were designed to explore the participants' understanding of living in these unique social spaces, including their perceptions of visiting and hosting roles, and the expected results of visiting and hosting, which can be reflected in the ways they interact with each other.

The second section explores the participants' perceptions of the nature of their transnational family and friend ties, uncovering the factors that they consider important in maintaining these ties, and more importantly, their perceptions of the roles their far-away family members and friends play in their lives, and therefore answering the core research questions. Some examples, such as the important components of the ties, and the benefits of maintaining the ties, were suggested to the participants only for inspiration. Also, this section was partially inspired by the Bourdieusian framework (section 4.1.2.1), which suggests that living in different socio-cultural fields may raise a gap in habitus between the two sides, that is, they may understand the nature of their ties, their respective roles, and the value of certain

capital that are exchanged across national boundaries, differently. This is one of the reasons behind the use of a matched sample method in this study.

It is noteworthy that this question construction suggests that there are multiple realities in the participants' minds (Xie, 2018), regarding the meanings of VFR travel and the nature/roles of their transnational ties. Therefore, the interview questions were deliberately designed to probe these multiple realities, in order to produce new knowledge.

Moreover, the interview questions were intentionally designed in a way that produces the data that can be interpreted using social exchange theory, revealing the psychological processes in which they balance the benefits and costs of (1) participating in VFR visiting and hosting, and (2) maintaining transnational ties. This design contributes to answering several 'why' questions, such as why do they choose to visit or host? Why do they choose certain visiting or hosting activities? Why do they choose to maintain their transnational ties?

At the end of each focus group and in-depth interview, the participants were asked to complete a form that was designed to collect their socio-demographic profile, that is, (a) The participants' profile details – New Zealand, or (b) The participants' profile details – China. The participants were asked to choose the answers that best match the reality in their life experiences. Finally, participants were asked to provide contact details of their family members and/or friends, who may also meet the sample criteria, and give permission for their own names to be provided to those potential participants.

Six documents were designed (in English) to apply for ethical approval from the University of Waikato Management School's Ethics Committee, prior to the commencement of research.

(1) Focus Group Consent Form – *English* (Appendix B)

(2) In-depth Interview Consent Form – *English* (Appendix C)

(3) Focus Group Information Sheet – *English* (Appendix D)

(4) In-depth Interview Information Sheet – *English* (Appendix E)

(5) Focus Group Guide – *English* (Appendix F)

(6) In-depth Interview Schedule – *English* (Appendix G)

These documents were then translated into Chinese for implementation.

(1) Focus Group Consent Form – *Chinese* (Appendix H)

(2) In-depth Interview Consent Form – *Chinese* (Appendix I)

(3) Focus Group Information Sheet – *Chinese* (Appendix J)

(4) In-depth Interview Information Sheet – *Chinese* (Appendix K)

(5) Focus Group Guide – *Chinese* (Appendix L)

(6) In-depth Interview Schedule – *Chinese* (Appendix M)

Another four documents were designed in both languages:

(1) The participants' profile details – New Zealand (Appendix N)

(2) The participants' profile details – China (Appendix O)

(3) Examples used to stimulate participants' thinking and discussion – New Zealand
(Appendix P)

(4) Examples used to stimulate participants' thinking and discussion – China
(Appendix Q)

All the focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted in Chinese, using Chinese versions of schedule, consent form, information sheet, demographic profile, etc. All the questions were explained plainly, slowly, and sometimes repeatedly. During the events, all the participants confirmed that they fully understood all the tasks and questions.

From a hermeneutic perspective, I acknowledge that the interview questions and the manner in which they were asked reflect my attitudes and values (Harding, 2004), namely pre-understandings/preconceptions, and therefore potentially cause bias. Therefore, to address this issue, the participants were actively encouraged to challenge my questions, examples, and ideas. The next section discusses the important social protocols and ethical issues that were considered in this study.

4.4.1 Social Protocols and Ethical Issues

Given my hybrid identity of in-betweenness, all the focus groups and in-depth interviews followed Chinese cultural protocols that are particularly important for building mutual trust between me and the participants, which in turn encouraged the participants to actively engage in the events. For instance, I chose interview locations that were quiet and public places, which were considered comfortable by the participants (Babbie, 2013), such as a café, private rooms in restaurants, and the meeting rooms in the library at The University of Waikato. For each event, quality food and non-alcoholic drinks were available.

Also, a gift-giving protocol was followed, which is a gesture of goodwill, an acknowledgment of the participants' contribution, and crucially, an effective way to build harmonious relationships in China's relationship-based society (Kwek & Lee, 2015; S. X. Liu et al., 2010; Madziva, 2015), in which reciprocal social exchange is considered important (Ye & Angela, 2015; Zhu et al., 2018). As a result, the participants were more willing to actively take part in the events and introduce me to their social connections, driving the snowball sampling process onward (Heckathorn, 1997). This method of stimulating participation has been widely used in social studies in various cultural contexts, such as Singapore (Li et al., 2018), Canada (Guttentag et al., 2017), and Samoa (Gibson et al., 2020).

Further, all the in-depth interviews were audio-taped, so that the participants' feelings underlying their discourses could be better recorded, while all the focus groups were videotaped, in order to make the best of the opportunity to record and analyse not only the participants' words, but also their ongoing interactions, or the 'group effect', especially the non-verbal indicators of feelings and opinions about the topics, providing me with more contextual information from which their discourses can be better interpreted. All participants were happy about these recording methods, once I clearly explained their purposes and how confidentiality would be ensured. Their informed consent was acquired prior to the commencement of each event.

However, this observational method is different from ethnography, because I did not spend a considerable amount of time immersing himself in the participants' lives or conduct 'regular observations' (Bryman, 2016). Nevertheless, as a Chinese sojourner, I have strong cultural empathy with the participants, because my personal social network is also transnational in nature, including many other Chinese sojourners in New Zealand that I have met in the last five years, and my own stay-behind family members and friends in China. Such a positionality allows him to elicit more relevant information from the events and uncover the deeper meanings behind the discourses.

4.5 Data Analysis

All the video and audio data were transcribed verbatim into Chinese transcripts. Then, all these Chinese transcripts were translated verbatim into English transcripts (Table 4-5). This process was suggested by the supervisors and carried out by me.

Table 4-5 Word count for transcription and translation

Transcription		
	Beijing	New Zealand
Focus group	108,044	62,693
In-depth interview	158,230	231,810
Total	560,777	
Translation		
	Beijing	New Zealand
Focus group	46,589	38,213
In-depth interview	62,718	112,691
Total	260,211	

As the transcription and translation proceeded, my in-betweenness allows me to not only clearly understand the language the participants use, but also to capture the important information lying behind their mood, non-verbal language, and silence. Some quotations were closely related to the research questions, so were highlighted in the texts. The results of the translation were reviewed by the supervisors. A major benefit of verbatim transcribing and translating the data is that both me and my supervisors can review the results of data collection, capturing more key ideas that can potentially answer the research questions.

Regarding data analysis process, I first made a clear plan, in which I reviewed the potential challenges identified from the literature, the research objectives, research questions, amount of data, participants' profiles, appropriate data analysis methods, and computer software. The transcription and translation processes produced 260,211 English words to be analysed. Two other sources of data are also included, the participants' self-introduction at the beginning of the events, that is, their brief biographical sketches, and their demographic profiles collected at the end of the events, which enhanced my understanding of the research context.

I then fully immersed myself in the data. The coding process consisted of two major phases, namely open- and closed-coding. A set of 'predetermined' themes was first created

based on my pre-understanding of the phenomenon, which was developed based on my personal experience as a Chinese sojourner.

Open-coding was conducted in Microsoft Word. In this phase, I carefully read the English transcripts and tried to understand the deeper meanings behind the discourses, so that I could elicit the quotations, such as phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, which were closely related to the research questions, and categorise them into different themes based on their diverse meanings. In this process, some quotations were allocated to the predetermined themes, while others formed many emerging themes. Some quotations were meaningful in explaining multiple themes. This open-coding process aims to uncover as many relevant themes as possible (Creswell, 2018), and it continued until all the English transcripts were carefully reviewed, producing a number of themes.

At the end of open-coding phase, a codebook was produced in which all the themes were briefly interpreted by me, to explain their meanings to the supervisors, who then provided valuable suggestions regarding the relationships between the themes, and their roles in answering the research questions. Based on their suggestions, I reviewed the result of the open-coding. Some themes were merged, and some divided, producing a new theme construction. This codebook was continuously modified along with data analysis process, acting as an important analytical tool that helps to enhance the efficiency of data analysis and the trustworthiness of the results.

Next, a closed-coding manual was developed, which reminds me of the research questions, the rules around collapsing themes, and the objectives of the coding process. The themes identified in open-coding phase were then imported to NVivo for closed-coding, along with the participants' names and demographic profiles. NVivo is a computer assisted data analysis software package, which helps me to manage the themes more efficiently, rapidly combining, dividing, and modifying them. Also, using NVivo, I could easily trace the

source of each quotation to a participant, her/his socio-demographic profile, and life experience, which provides contextual information, so the interpretation of the quotation could be enhanced.

Using constant comparative thematic analysis, I carefully examined the themes in NVivo for completeness, while making constant comparisons between the quotations, frequently taking one quotation and examining it against other quotations both within and between the themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Meanwhile, I frequently revisited the English and Chinese transcripts to double-check the quotations' meanings in their context, and to check if any other quotation also answered the research questions.

In this way, the theme construction was continuously revised, as I determined whether or not the quotations were conceptually the same, and could continuously merge, divide, or modify the themes accordingly (Corbin, 2015). This process continued until no new changes could be made to the theme construction. As a result, many themes were combined, which significantly reduced the number of themes, and some new themes emerged, resulting in various interrelated themes at different levels (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Corbin, 2015).

The theme of 'family ties as a pull factor' is used to demonstrate the coding process. First, I created a pre-determined theme of 'family ties determine whether visit NZ or not' based on my intuitive impression of the interview result. Then, another theme of 'family ties determine their travel purposes' emerged as open-coding proceeded. The open-coding result supports both themes, as many quotations emerged. Next, the supervisors reviewed the results, and suggested that some themes share similar meanings and should thus be merged. In closed-coding, all the themes were imported to NVivo. The two themes were found to be conceptually related, after I compared the quotations between the two, so were merged, resulting in a new theme of 'family ties as a pull factor'. As a result, this new theme was

presented and interpreted in Chapter Five, as it answers the research question of ‘what factors influence Chinese transnational families’ VR travel behaviours?’

Then, the closed-coding results were carefully reviewed by the supervisors, who also went through their own coding processes and offered me valuable suggestions. Given their suggestions, I reviewed the themes again, which were further merged, divided, and modified. As a result of this iterative process of reviewing, the theme construction underwent several major changes, continuously modifying my understanding of the phenomenon being explored. Some memos were created along with this coding process, which recorded the key ideas emerged in my mind (Corbin, 2015).

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter first introduces the role of my worldview and positionality in shaping this study, from the formation of research questions, to the important philosophical and methodological implications. I use a social constructionism paradigm that suggests socially constructed multiple realities in peoples’ minds.

Given my social constructionism position, I follow a hermeneutic philosophy, which acknowledges the role of researchers’ pre-understanding in exploring social phenomena, illuminating a circular process of ever-increasing contextual knowledge, and an iterative process of ever-evolving understanding. Bourdieu and Foucault’s notions of socially constructed realities helps me to better understand the dynamics behind their transnational interactions, especially those related to VFR visiting and hosting.

This chapter discusses the participants’ paired roles in transnational interactions, the way the participants were recruited, including the snowball sampling method and matched sample method, and the rationale behind the decisions about the sample criteria and size. The

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participants' profiles were presented, the implications for data interpretation were discussed, and the limitations were indicated.

Next, the construction of interview questions, and the ways the questions were presented, are discussed. The construction was framed with a clear objective of eliciting meaningful information that helps to answer the research questions. The interview questions were designed based on my philosophical position, a Bourdieusian framework (the correlation among capital, habitus, and field), and a Foucauldian notion of hybrid fields.

Further, this chapter introduces the data collection process, which integrates two popular methods, the in-depth interview and focus group. I discussed the advantages and disadvantages of adopting each of the methods, the roles the researcher and participants play in the events, the rationale and philosophical basis of integrating the two, and the implications for data analysis and interpretation. I identified several important social protocols and ethical issues and how these facilitate the data collection process and enhances this study's trustworthiness.

This chapter introduces the way the qualitative data were transcribed and translated, the rationale lying behind those decisions, and the role my positionality plays in enhancing the trustworthiness of the result. Finally, this chapter discusses the data analysis process, which consists of two major phases, open- and closed-coding. I introduced the purposes of the two phases, the ways they were conducted, the role of my positionality, the role of the supervisors, and the expected result. In addition, the documents and software that were created/adopted to enhance the efficiency of the process and the credibility of the outcome were discussed.

The next two chapters discuss the findings that derive from data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I present the 'the findings' and 'the discussion of the findings' separately, while aligning both with the research questions. First, the family and friend finding chapters

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(Chapter Five and Chapter Six) are organised in a way that answers the first and second overarching research questions. Next, the discussion chapter (Chapter Seven) demonstrates the connections between the findings and the literature. Chapter Seven also acts as a synthesis of Chapters Five and Six, as it compares and contrasts the nature, meanings, and dynamics of the social exchanges behind the two sets of interplays (i.e., the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives), and answers the third overarching research question about transnational social exchanges between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds.

Chapter Five: Family Finding

5.1 Introduction

As discussed earlier, policy changes and wealth accumulation have gradually opened the borders of China's once-closed post-socialist society, resulting in the steadily increasing number of Chinese transnational sojourners, who form an important part of contemporary global migration. They continually move between destinations to best match their family members' needs at different stages of the family life cycle (Guo, 2016), creating a global phenomenon of Chinese transnational families. Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members are separated by national borders for prolonged periods of time, while maintaining their family ties and various forms of social interactions. However, as the literature suggests, Chinese transnational families' wellbeing is facing a widening range of challenges, especially the one-child families, because both sides are likely losing essential support. Particularly, the prolonged separation of family members places severe stress on the maintenance of their geographically stretched family ties. Those ties are traditionally considered the core of family wellbeing.

In light of the above, in this chapter, I present and interpret the discourses from Chinese sojourners in New Zealand (Hamilton and Auckland) and stay-behind family members in China (Beijing), to explore the role of transnational family ties in shaping their lives, in particular, the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel, focusing on the social exchanges behind the interplay, the factors shaping the exchanges, and the implications for family wellbeing and ties. In addition, the findings reveal some of the tensions, challenges, and opportunities these families experienced.

This section first identifies the overarching research question and contributing research questions that guide the structure of the chapter and reporting of the findings.

What is the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and visiting relatives travel in the lives of Chinese transnational families?

To better manage the research challenges, clarify the research focus, and add further nuances, three contributing research questions were identified.

How is Chinese transnational families' wellbeing being shaped in their cross-border interactions?

What is the role of visiting relatives travel in shaping their geographically stretched family ties?

What factors influence Chinese transnational families' visiting relatives travel behaviours?

The sub-questions are addressed through the interpretation of meaningful and interrelated themes that were identified in data analysis.

5.1.1 Themes

This chapter addresses the research questions by presenting, explaining, and interpreting the themes, which are summarised below (Table 5-1). Table 5-1 shows the number of mentions (i.e., sample responses) for the first- and second-level themes. Many of the themes were identified based on the number of times they were mentioned. However, some themes were considered important even though they were not frequently mentioned by the participants, because some topics provoked highly emotional reactions from, or heated discussions among, the participants, clearly reflecting their importance to the participants.

Table 5-1 Thematic structure and sample responses

First-Level Themes	Second-Level Themes	Number of Mentions
Contributing Question One		
Family Ties Affect Wellbeing	One-Way Support	32
	Two-Way Support	12
	Comfortable Distance	20
Total		64
Visiting Relatives Travel Affects Wellbeing	Family Reunion	33
	Life Enrichment	44
	Burden	21
Total		98
Contributing Question Two		
Visiting Relatives Travel Affects Family Ties	Strengthening Family Ties	23
	Destroying Family Ties	8
Total		31
Contributing Question Three		
Family Ties Affect Visiting Relatives Travel	Family Ties as a Pull Factor	9
	Hosts as a Source of Support	37
	Escaping from Family Members	3
Total		49
Family Life Cycle Affects Visiting Relatives Travel	-	49

Table 5-1 also highlights the complexity of the thematic structure. The five first-level themes not only constitute the answers to the three contributing research questions, by identifying key dimensions and issues in the phenomenon, but also collectively form the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel. The first-level themes are addressed by introducing the second-, third-, and fourth-level themes. This approach not only presents insightful views, but also creates a hierarchy of ideas, which reflects interactive relationships between the themes.

Therefore, the themes collectively portray the role of transnational family ties in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and stay-behind family members, by uncovering the different aspects of the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel. In particular, the interpretation of the themes produces an enhanced understanding of

the dynamics behind their ongoing transnational interactions, primarily the various forms of social exchanges and the factors shaping the exchanges, which have important implications for family wellbeing and ties. Readers can thus follow the arguments based on what is subsequently presented.

The discussion of the themes focuses on emerging ideas, reflecting the evolving nature of this study and the social constructionist approach. A description of each theme is followed by evidence to support the theme, that is, the participants' comments. The more complex the theme, the more quotes are presented to provide sufficient evidence. The quotes are contextualized by noting the participants' profiles and the context in which the comments were made. Then, the quotes are interpreted by uncovering the dynamics and cultural nuances behind them, rather than presenting redundant descriptions.

5.1.2 Participants' Paired Roles

Participants' paired roles are shown in Table 5-2, which represents the most common types of transnational family ties. Of note, although parent-children ties appear to be the most important transnational connections, my study also explored the roles of other types of transnational family ties, such as the ties between siblings and cousins, in shaping their lives, producing a more comprehensive view of the families' life experiences. This chapter thus also examines the differences between the different types of family ties regarding social exchanges and other dynamics lying behind their functioning.

Table 5-2 Summary of participants' paired roles

Sojourners in New Zealand	Count	Family members in China	Count
Talking about those in China		Talking about those in New Zealand	
Parents	11	Migrant children	7
Parents and other relatives	16	Siblings	5
Other relatives	17	Parents	1
		Spouse	1
		Other relatives	6
Subtotal	44	Subtotal	20
Total		64	

As Table 5-2 shows, a considerable number of sojourners mainly talked about their stay-behind parents in China (27 of 44), implying that stay-behind parents are likely to be their main concern. The rest of the sojourners mainly discussed non-parent family members in China (17 of 44). Regarding the stay-behind family members, the parents who mentioned their migrant children form the largest category (7 of 20). Some participants talked about their siblings in New Zealand (5 of 20). One participant, Relative-5, told me that his parents migrated to New Zealand, leaving him, their only son, to live in China alone. Exploring this very uncommon situation is likely to produce unique insights that may not be easily found in the literature. Another participant, Relative-6, explained that her husband is working in New Zealand, leaving her and their only son to live in China, suggesting a classic astronaut migration strategy. The rest of the participants mainly discussed other types of transnational family ties (6 of 20). Appendix A provides a detailed view about their paired roles and who they were mainly talking about during the in-depth interviews and focus groups.

5.2 Contributing Question One: How is Chinese Transnational Families' Wellbeing Being Shaped in Their Cross-border Interactions?

This section answers the first contributing research question by discussing two first-level themes, (1) Family Ties Affect Wellbeing and (2) Visiting Relatives Travel Affects Wellbeing, which portray the role of transnational family ties in shaping family wellbeing in general, and the role of VR travel in particular, focusing on the social exchanges lying behind their transnational interactions.

5.2.1 Family Ties Affect Wellbeing

This first-level theme suggests that transnational family ties have a dual effect on Chinese families' wellbeing. On the one hand, geographically dispersed family members tend to maintain strong ties with each other, through which various forms of support can be continually exchanged, and family wellbeing improved. On the other hand, the ties may damage their wellbeing when comfortable distance is not well managed, such as the misuse and exploitation of the ties. This dual effect is evidenced by three second-level themes, One-Way Support, Two-Way Support, and Comfortable Distance, which are discussed below.

5.2.1.1 One-Way Support

The provision of financial and instrumental support between Chinese sojourners abroad and their stay-behind family members are one-way flows, which greatly shape the sojourners' wellbeing. Chinese parents not only tend to financially support their migrant children, helping them to acquire academic credentials and purchase houses overseas, but also help in other instrumental ways. For example, many frequently visit the sojourners to

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take care of their young children and help out with household chores, so that the sojourners can spend more time and energy on career development.

5.2.1.1.1 Financial Support

The financial support from stay-behind parents, or reverse remittance, is important for Chinese sojourners' objective wellbeing. More than half of the stay-behind parents mentioned their willingness to help their migrant children to buy a house, or houses, in New Zealand, using their life savings, even though their personal incomes may be much lower than those of their migrant children. For instance, Parent-6 and Parent-7 participated in a focus group in Beijing. They have retired and bought a big house for their young only daughter in New Zealand, Sojourner-V, who has lived in New Zealand for more than nine years and who participated in a focus group in New Zealand. This way, their migrant daughter can enjoy income from renting out some rooms. Likewise, Parent-5 had visited her only daughter, who has lived in New Zealand for many years, several times. She shares:

I am also considering whether I should buy a house [for her] in New Zealand, since I think that it is quite inconvenient for my daughter to keep renting a place to live there (Female, aged 46+).

For these stay-behind parents, their money not only belongs to themselves, but also the whole family, reflecting strong family altruism. Thus, as the core of their transnational families, their migrant children can use their parents' life savings whenever they need to. Talking about her understanding of financial exchange with her only daughter in Wellington, Parent-3 shares:

My money is hers, and her money is mine as well...so there is no need to 'borrow' money between me and my daughter. That's why I want to help her to buy a house in New Zealand (Female, aged 46+).

These stay-behinds' views echo those of the sojourners, who mentioned that they received significant financial support from their stay-behind parents to buy houses in New Zealand. Sojourner-J's elderly parents in Beijing always worry about her, as she is now a single mother of two young children. They helped her to buy two houses in New Zealand, a significant financial support. Sojourner-J says, very gratefully: "I can live in a decent life in New Zealand, because my parents have been helping me financially...constantly helping me!" Of note, in Chinese culture, owning a house is not only a sign of living a decent life, but also an essential condition for getting married, especially for males. Sojourner-W is an only-child sojourner. He is now in his mid-30s and of an age that he should have been married in Chinese tradition. For now, he is still single, so that getting married is his parents' only expectation for him. He shares:

I am very grateful to my parents for their financial support to me when they sold one of our houses in China, just to buy me a house in New Zealand, so that I can live in a better life here (Male, aged 26-35).

In addition, providing their migrant children with financial support is a means by which Chinese stay-behind parents convey their love. Sojourner-W realised that his parents have lived in a very thrifty life in order to buy him the house. He added a touching conclusion, saying: "I can feel their love from what they did for me." Thus, the financial support is also likely to improve migrant children's emotional wellbeing. Nevertheless, his parents' very urgent demand for him to get married causes tension between the two generations.

Surprisingly, although many sojourners received significant financial support from their stay-behind parents, only a few sojourners directly expressed their strong appreciation for their parents, as Sojourner-W and Sojourner-J did. This silence implies that Chinese sojourners tend to consider receiving financial support from their stay-behind parents to be a

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natural thing, a very common practice in Chinese families, reflecting their parents' strong family altruism. This may cause issues, because the parents' selfless financial support to their migrant children may become a burden for themselves.

Of note, most Chinese sojourners do not perceive financially supporting their stay-behinds as essential, although they tend to have a strong feeling of family obligation that derives from Chinese traditions of filial piety. Instead, they tend to consider their priority is to take care of themselves and their newly formed small families abroad. Sojourner-AN has lived in New Zealand for more than eight years and rarely returns or sends remittances to China, because she believes that her parents can take care of themselves, saying: "They just ask me to take care of myself, which is the most important thing to them". A possible reason is that Sojourner-AN is not the only child in her family and her parents are living with her older brother now. In Chinese tradition, the oldest brother has the major family obligation to care for aging parents, while a daughter, especially a married one, has no such obligation.

Only five Chinese sojourners mentioned traditional remittance flows from New Zealand to China, and they emphasized some essential conditions. Sojourner-Q has been running a profitable business in New Zealand. As an only-child migrant, he is willing to financially support his stay-behind parents, but such a sacrifice should not reduce his new family's quality of life, otherwise it would be "unfair and inappropriate". Similarly, Sojourner-T is willing to financially support her stay-behind family members, but with some clear conditions, saying:

I will support my family members financially, if they really need it. However, I can just lend them the money, which means they need to give it back to me when they can do so (Female, aged 26-35).

The comments from Sojourner-Q and Sojourner-T indicate that Chinese sojourners have been actively negotiating the meanings of family altruism and obligation in their social

interactions with stay-behind families. Further, Chinese sojourners tend to interact with non-parent stay-behind family members following the rules of reciprocity, always expecting a commensurate return, which means no monetary loss/give-away. This is clearly evidenced in Sojourner-AH's unpleasant VR hosting experience, which is discussed under the theme of comfortable distance.

The finding shows that the flow of economic capital in Chinese transnational families is dominated by reverse remittances from China to New Zealand. The sample population does not include international students in New Zealand, who are more likely to be dependent on their parents. Also, some sojourners argued that the reverse remittances do not play a major role in preserving their geographically stretched ties, although a few sojourners, such as Sojourner-W and Sojourner-B, mentioned that receiving remittances from their parents makes them feel dearly loved. Sojourner-B and her husband are expecting their first baby and recently bought a house in New Zealand, with the financial support from her parents in Beijing. Even so, she believes that such a significant support does not play an important role in strengthening their ties, saying: "I will not be their slave, just because they supported me financially." Nevertheless, she indicated that she will be "quite disappointed", and their ties may be weakened, if her parents refused to help her financially. She then concluded that there is a big difference in the financial exchange between Chinese and Western families, as most Chinese parents tend to help their adult children to purchase houses, while their Western counterparts do not.

5.2.1.1.2 Instrumental Support

Another important one-way support from stay-behind family members to Chinese sojourners is instrumental support. Chinese stay-behind parents tend to feel obligated to help the sojourners take care of their young children and do household chores. VR visits are

therefore an opportunity for them to fulfil such felt obligation, before the outbreak of the pandemic. In a Beijing focus group, Parent-1 said that her only-child migrant daughter was going to give birth to her first baby, so Parent-1 was going to become a full-time nanny and an international commuter, frequently traveling between the two countries, after the birth of this grandchild. It is clear that her felt obligation to provide her daughter with instrumental support derives from strong family altruism. She believes that such a sense of altruism is widely shared by Chinese stay-behind parents.

For Chinese sojourners, hosting VR travel from their homeland broadens their sources of caregiving, greatly improving their objective wellbeing. A single mother, Sojourner-J, hosted her elderly parents almost every year. They help her to take care of her young children, so she can spend more time and energy on making money to make ends meet. Similarly, although working in a local pharmaceutical factory with a good personal income, Sojourner-F is still struggling in taking care of his young daughter, saying: “We have to leave our daughter in daycare for almost the whole daytime, nearly 11 hours, since we are too busy to take care of her by ourselves.” He therefore invited his parents to visit New Zealand and strongly relied on their childcare assistance. Of note, Sojourner-F has a much better financial status than Sojourner-J, but still desperately needs the instrumental support from his homeland, implying that Chinese migrant families’ need for childcare support is not necessarily associated with the amount of economic capital possessed, but a Chinese tradition of childcare, that is, young children are in safe hands when they are being taken care of by close family members, who are normally parents or grandparents.

For young sojourners who do not have children, their parents tend to help them with household chores during the visits, so that these sojourners can spend more time and energy on their careers. For example, both Sojourner-Q and Sojourner-E are married without children and living very busy lives running their own businesses in New Zealand. Their

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parents thus visit them every year, helping them with grocery shopping, cooking, housecleaning, laundry, and more. However, such visits also frequently cause conflicts between generations, which are discussed under the theme of burden.

Of note, for Chinese sojourners, the sources of instrumental support are not limited to their parents, but also include other stay-behind family members, such as siblings. Relative-4 had visited her older sister, who lives in Wellington, several times. During the VR visits, Relative-4 helped her migrant sister to do household chores and take care of her two young children, she shares:

It is my duty to take them to play outside. These kids will become extremely frustrated, if I don't take them to play outside at weekend (Female, aged 26-35).

Likewise, during her last two visits to her youngest sister in New Zealand, Relative-2 took care of her two nieces and did many household chores, although such a role of babysitter is usually played by stay-behind parents. She shares:

My primary purpose was not to enjoy tourism activities. I just wanted to take care of my nieces and do the household chores during the time they [her sister and brother-in-law] are very busy (Female, aged 46+).

Relative-2's comments suggest that stay-behind non-parent family members may also have a strong sense of family obligation and altruism toward the sojourners. However, in Chinese transnational families, the nature and meanings of family ties between non-parent members can be highly diverse, which can be reflected in their transnational social exchanges. For instance, on the one hand, some participants said that their ties with far-away siblings are more like that of parent-child, in the way they provide each other with various forms of support. On the other hand, as Relative-4 reported, her relationship with her migrant older sister is more like a friendship, in which they mainly provide each other with

suggestions and emotional support in times of need. Sometimes, the ties between siblings can be rather weak. For instance, Relative-13 said that he has not visited his older sister who migrated to New Zealand decades ago. Instead, they just contact each other occasionally to preserve their ties.

Many stay-behind parents emphasized their obligations toward their migrant children, while none mentioned the sojourners' obligation to them, or the need for instrumental and financial support. A possible explanation for this silence might be that Chinese parents do not want to be a burden to their families, so they tend to hide their growing needs from me, the researcher, who resembles their migrant children.

On the sojourner side, only a few participants mentioned the importance of caring for their stay-behind parents. Nevertheless, for those who did mention their perceived obligation, the feelings are remarkably strong, implying that family obligation has diverse meanings in different transnational families, in which different habitus operate. A middle-age sojourner, Sojourner-F, strongly emphasized his desire to fulfil his filial duty to reciprocate his parents' sacrifice. He is aware that his elderly parents visited them just to take care of their young granddaughter. Otherwise, they will "never" want to visit. He further elaborated on this idea:

They feel like staying in a prison here... people in my parents' age have their own fixed living patterns in China that they don't want to change at all (Male, aged 36-45).

A younger sojourner, Sojourner-W, also has a strong sense of obligation toward his parents, who not only bought him a house abroad, but also visited him every year, helping him to do many household chores. He thus wants to stay with them, "no matter what", so that he considered moving back to China when New Zealand suddenly changed its immigration policy in Nov 2016, refusing all applications under the Parent Resident Visa category (it was reinstated in 2019 with stringent requirements). His response not only reconfirms that some

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Chinese sojourners have a strong desire to reciprocate the favours they received from stay-behind parents, through spending more time on family reunions, but also suggests that immigration policy largely shapes Chinese families' migration strategies. Similarly, having received significant financial and instrumental support from her parents, Sojourner-J repeatedly expressed a strong willingness to spend more time with them. She shared remorsefully:

For now, I think that what they really need is the time that we can stay together, rather than the money. I didn't notice this in the past... (Female, aged 36-45).

Of note, Chinese sojourners may be unable to provide their stay-behind parents with adequate support, even though they are willing to do so, because they are often occupied with the challenges of living in a new environment. Sojourner-P has lived in New Zealand for many years and has a strong sense of responsibility toward her stay-behind parents, saying, "I can never ignore my responsibilities to them". However, she did not fulfil her perceived obligation when her father fell sick and badly in need of her presence, because she was very busy running her own restaurant. She shares, very sadly, near to tears:

I was experiencing a tough time because my dad was very sick. To be honest, my older sister [in China] should take most of the responsibility to take care of him. However, she didn't do so... Anyway, there is no place for me to blame her, since I didn't even come back to China (Female, aged 46+).

Just like Sojourner-P, some Chinese sojourners emphasized the importance of traditional filial piety and mentioned their perceived obligations toward their stay-behind parents, which are nevertheless difficult to fulfil as they indicated implicitly or explicitly, because of the heavy pressure of work and the needs of their young dependent children. This finding implies that Chinese sojourners' emotional wellbeing may face challenges when they

fail to fulfil perceived family obligations, causing a strong sense of guilt. Therefore, VR travel may play an important role in enabling/facilitating the exchanges of various forms of support between far-away family members, improving family wellbeing.

Although all the stay-behind parents said that they do not need financial and instrumental support from their migrant children, this study found that Chinese stay-behind parents, especially the empty-nesters, desperately need emotional support, preferably in the form of family reunions, even they often profess that they can live a good life alone. Therefore, many Chinese parents visit New Zealand every year, not only to provide their children with essential instrumental support, but also for family reunions, which are an important source of happiness for them. The next section further elaborates on this idea.

5.2.1.2 Two-Way Support

This finding shows that the provision of emotional support between Chinese sojourners in New Zealand and their stay-behind family members consists of two-way flows, which are important for their emotional wellbeing. Both sides seek to preserve their emotional closeness and actively exchange emotional support, by regularly contacting each other and implicitly expressing their love. The development of communication technologies facilitates such exchange of emotional support.

On the one hand, some sojourners mentioned that they provide their stay-behind parents with essential emotional support by regularly contacting them, although no parent explicitly mentioned the need for such support. On the other hand, the finding shows that Chinese sojourners are also in need of emotional support from their homeland, because they face uncertainties and challenges in unfamiliar host societies.

Regularly sharing daily life experiences is the most common means to make geographically dispersed family members feel that they are still caring for each other,

enjoying an illusory co-presence. Although struggling to take care of two young children by herself, Sojourner-J and her stay-behind mother contact each other daily, sharing all the trivial details of their lives. She shares:

My mom and I never told each other that we miss each other directly. We never had this kind of conversation. However, we usually chat with each other on WeChat every morning and tell each other everything happening in our lives (Female, aged 36-45).

For Sojourner-J and her mother, sharing their daily life experience is an important way by which they implicitly convey their love toward each other, because “just like her, I have a relatively strong personality”. As a single mother who lives far away from her homeland, there is no doubt that the emotional support from her stay-behind parents is also very important for Sojourner-J’s emotional wellbeing, although she did not explicitly express this idea, probably because of her “strong personality”. Similarly, the messaging and social media application, WeChat, provides Parent-5 and her only daughter with a means by which they can contact each other every day. She shares:

We can contact each other at any time, as long as she got time. Sometimes I didn’t sleep the whole night, just for chatting with her. This is what Chinese parents do (Female, aged 46+).

Compared to her migrant daughter, Parent-5 is apparently much more eager for such contact, even she may have to sacrifice her sleep, because she wants to provide her daughter with emotional support across national boundaries, out of family altruism, while such contact also improves her own emotional wellbeing, alleviating her anxiety that derives from living far away from her only daughter. Parent-7 and her migrant daughter, Sojourner-V, often video chat with each other, more than once a day, seven days a week. Parent-7 proudly shares:

We always have many things to share with each other... I always worry about her. Anyway, she also likes to contact me and share everything...She loves us [Parent-7 and Parent-6] so much, such a DUTIFUL daughter!

Parent-7's comment implies that regularly sharing daily life experiences is not only an important way to exchange emotional support, convey love, and alleviate anxiety, but also a means by which migrant children fulfil their filial piety toward their stay-behind parents. Thus, transnational exchange of emotional support between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind parents is not guided by social exchange theory, because such a practice does not involve the evaluation of benefits and costs, nor is it motivated by the expectation of receiving commensurate return, but by a sense of altruism and filial piety.

Of note, Chinese stay-behind parents tend to hide their need for emotional care and conceal the difficulties in their daily lives from their migrant children because they do not want to be a burden or worry these sojourners. Sojourner-Q has lived a very busy life, and forgot to send greetings to his father on Father's Day. His father was very disappointed but chose to hide his upset. It was Sojourner-Q's mother who told him that his father was very upset: "Your father thinks that you have abandoned him!" She asked him to send his greetings to the poor dad "immediately!" Sojourner-Q says, "Yes, our parents may care about these special days so much, but they simply choose not to tell us." He shared another touching story about his mother, saying:

My mom hurt her waist badly last year and had to lie on the bed for more than one week. However, she pretended that nothing happened when I called her. I only got to know this thing after a long time (Male, aged 26-35).

Similarly, Chinese sojourners tend to hide unpleasant things they encountered in their lives abroad from their stay-behind parents, out of the same motive. Sojourner-B contacts her stay-behind parents frequently, but only tells them the good things about her life in New

Zealand, rather than any difficulties, “no matter how heavy the pressure I may have had during that time.” She explained: “I don’t want them to be anxious and worry about me.” As a sojourner, I have strong empathy with Sojourner-B. I always conceal the difficulties I experienced from my parents, because I don’t want them to be anxious. Sojourner-G shares:

I usually share this kind of unpleasant things with my friends, instead of my family members in China...my family members will be very anxious and worry about me, if they know that I am in some kind of trouble and they are not able to help me out (Male, aged 26-35).

As a result, the exchange of emotional support tends to be constrained and their emotional wellbeing may be reduced. Also, Sojourner-G’s comments imply that far-away family members sometimes experience a sense of helplessness, when they find that they are not able to provide each other with essential support in times of need. Therefore, VR travel is an important means for both sides to reunite for a short but valuable time, so that they can better learn each other’s recent life experiences, happiness and/or difficulties, and freely exchange various forms of support.

5.2.1.3 Comfortable Distance

Transnational family ties may enable some practices that lead to reduced family wellbeing. Sometimes, Chinese sojourners’ wellbeing may be threatened, if comfortable distance is not well respected in their transnational family ties, especially for young sojourners who increasingly demand freedom from their stay-behind parents. Eight sojourners clearly indicated that they prefer to keep a comfortable distance from their parents, because they feel that they have been continually controlled by them after emigration, which is a heavy emotional burden.

Sojourner-K is a young only-child sojourner in her mid-20s. She feels that her parents always want to control her remotely in many respects, such as her monthly expenditure abroad, although she is now financially independent. She feels frustrated about this and thus intentionally reduced the frequency with which she contacts them. Besides, her parents keep asking her to come back to China, although she has repeatedly told them that she wants to stay in New Zealand to enjoy a different socio-cultural environment.

Of note, it seems that sojourners' age does not play an important role in affecting stay-behind parents' desire to control their migrant children. As the only child in his family, although Sojourner-W is already in his mid-30s and has lived in New Zealand alone for more than nine years, he still feels that he is tightly controlled by his stay-behind parents. He shares his frustration:

Because I am their only child, sometimes, I thought that my parents were caring about me too much, which made me felt that they were trying to control me every moment (Male, aged 26-35)!

Also, this study found that Chinese parents' desire to control their migrant children may not be necessarily related to their country of residence. Unlike the situation in other families, Relative-5's parents migrated to New Zealand many years ago, leaving him to live in Beijing alone. However, as their only child, Relative-5 always has a strong feeling of being remotely controlled. He believes that such a desire derives from a traditional thinking pattern in many Chinese families. He explains:

The older we are, the more independent we may become...I think that my parents interfere too much in my personal affairs that I cannot accept. In Chinese families, parents always want to make choices for you, because you are always a child in their eyes, no matter how old you are (Male, aged 26-35).

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Relative-5's comments also reflect the irrelevance of children's age in shaping Chinese parents' desire of controlling them, "Always a Child in Their Eyes", which clearly indicates the growing tension between the two sides.

However, Chinese parents normally do not perceive their interference as a burden, but as essential guidance for their adult children. Although her only daughter has lived in New Zealand for more than nine years, managing a house by herself, and about to get her bachelor's degree in engineering, Parent-7 is still trying to tell her what she should or should not do, on a daily basis. Parent-7 believes that she is not interfering in her daughter's life, but "guiding" her to keep her walking on a "right path". She shares:

As her parents, we have experienced many more things than her, so that we can see many things that she may not be able to see...She may think that she made the right choice, even she actually didn't (Female, aged 46+).

Nevertheless, Parent-7 is aware that some conflicts may emerge as a result of her interference, and clearly indicated that the conflicts derive from the gap in their increasingly different worldviews. Surprisingly, her migrant daughter, Sojourner-V, did not complain about Parent-7's interference in her life abroad. A possible reason is that they frequently contact each other and exchange emotional support, so that she understands the goodwill behind the interference. Also, Sojourner-V may intentionally avoid criticizing her mother in front of me and other participants in the focus group she participated in New Zealand, because doing so may be considered rebellious and risk having her comments circulated, as she knows that I personally know and also interviewed her mother in China (they are the only pair of participants who were matched based on family tie).

On the contrary, although living alone in China as an elderly mother, Parent-3 is very hesitant about actively contacting her only daughter who resides in New Zealand, saying:

I don't want to be an annoying mother who is always monitoring her daughter. Young people don't like this. She has the control of her own life now. It is not my business anymore. Not to mention how far she is away from me now. I must respect whatever she chooses to do (Female, aged 46+).

Parent-3's comments reflect that she realises the risk of controlling her migrant daughter, potentially causing tension, and therefore consciously avoids interfering in her life. Also, Parent-3's comments imply that she feels powerless to interfere in her child's life abroad. She trusts her daughter, so wants her to feel free to make any decisions by herself.

A possible explanation for many Chinese stay-behind parents' strong desire to continually control their migrant children is that they cherish their children too much. In particular, an only child is the core of a Chinese transnational family. As an unintended consequence of the long-lasting one-child policy, Chinese parents cannot allow their only-child children to take any risk in their lives, since the loss/failure of an only child would mean the end/failure of the whole clan, especially when the child is a boy, who traditionally inherits the family name.

Further, as Parent-7 noticed, there is an increasingly widening generational gap in the worldviews of Chinese sojourners abroad and their stay-behind parents. Living in the host societies, the sojourners' habitus have been constantly changing, absorbing new values, ideas, norms, and ways of life, so that it is increasingly difficult for the stay-behinds to understand their life choices, consumption behaviours, and even daily routines.

In non-parent-children transnational family ties, the comfortable distance can be easily broken when these ties are misused or exploited, threatening sojourners' wellbeing, and the family ties as a result. This is especially the case in VR travel, which enable face-to-face interactions. More than half sojourners felt exploited during VR hosting, because their non-parent family members only asked for their support but did not provide any

commensurate return. Sojourner-AH is a middle-age Chinese sojourner who has lived in New Zealand for more than ten years, together with his wife and young child. He shared a very unpleasant hosting experience:

Last time, my wife's younger sister-in-law came here to visit us. She was very 'good' and greedy at shopping. She spent thousands of dollars on her souvenirs. However, she doesn't have a job in China, so I had to pay for everything she bought...I was fine with that, but my wife was very angry...Although I can pay for everything she bought because of this unpleasant kinship, this definitely affected our relationship (Male, 36-45).

Sojourner-AH used the phrase ‘倒霉关系’ to describe the tie, which can be interpreted as an undesired and troubled relationship. Although Sojourner-AH has a very good personal income, he still suffered a great deal from hosting his wife's younger sister-in-law, but had to carefully preserve the tie, otherwise he may lose face and his relationships with other stay-behind family members may be negatively affected. His experience astonished other participants in the focus group and resulted in a heated discussion around being exploited by non-parent VR visitors. Sojourner-AQ and Sojourner-AI concluded that such visiting behaviour is unacceptable and will certainly ruin a family tie, echoing the theme of Destroying Family Ties.

Such an unpleasant hosting experience is widely shared by the Chinese sojourners, not only by the participants who have very good personal incomes, like Sojourner-AH and Sojourner-AR, but also by those who only have middle or low incomes, such as Sojourner-D and Sojourner-L, potentially causing financial hardship. This suggests that some VR visitors may have an illusion about hosting, mistakenly perceiving Chinese sojourners as wealthy and obligated to practice hospitality during hosting. Such an illusion leads to unrealistic

expectations for hosting that threaten their hosts' wellbeing, especially those who are still struggling to make ends meet.

However, just like Sojourner-AH, some sojourners said that they have no choice but to spend a great deal of time, energy, and money on non-parent VR visitors, so that they can fulfil the inescapable obligation, and more importantly, save face. Sojourner-AR had hosted her family members many times. However, she complained that some visitors misunderstood the meaning of hospitality in visiting her, expecting to have free meals, accommodation, transportation, even a tour guide service, and only paying for their own airfare. However, to save face, Sojourner-AR had to host them very well and will keep doing so, because she considers saving face is more important than saving money. She believes that most Chinese sojourners will do the same, suggesting that Chinese sojourners' interactions with non-parent stay-behind family members are largely shaped by the Chinese traditions of hospitality and face-saving.

Nevertheless, Chinese sojourners always value reciprocity and evaluate the benefits and costs in their interactions with non-parent stay-behind family members, especially during hosting. Having had many unpleasant hosting experiences, Sojourner-AR indicated that she would have felt better if her visitors helped her to do some household chores during their visits, reciprocating the favours they received from their host. She shares:

The conflicts between the visitors and their hosts may be eased to some extent if they can actively help their hosts to do some household chores, when they are enjoying the free accommodation and food (Female, 26-35).

Sojourner-AR's view evoked strong empathy from Sojourner-AL, who believes that non-parent VR visitors should feel grateful to their migrant hosts for the favours they received during visiting, which need to be reciprocated in one way or another. Sojourner-AL's view is widely reflected by other sojourners, regardless of age and income, who expect

their non-parent VR visitors to respect the rule of reciprocity during VR visiting, otherwise conflicts may emerge, wellbeing reduced, and ties weakened. However, there is a silence from the non-parent stay-behind family members regarding the importance of practicing reciprocity during VR visiting, which implies that the comfortable distance between the two sides is still at risk, that is, family ties are misused or exploited.

Consequently, the comfortable distance between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members may be broken in their social interactions, as a result of the everyday interference from their parents, or the misuse/exploitation of family ties by their non-parent family members during VR visiting, potentially threatening the sojourners' wellbeing and the family ties. This theme is thus closely associated with the theme of Burden.

5.2.1.4 Implications for Wellbeing

Based on data analysis and interpretation, a model emerged, which demonstrates the interactive relationships between the themes that collectively constitute the first-level theme of Family Ties Affect Wellbeing, reflecting the hierarchy of ideas (Figure 5-1). (1) The first-level theme is shown by the ovals with bold text and border. (2) Second-level themes are indicated by the ovals with plain text and bold border. (3) Third-level themes are shown by the ovals with plain text and plain border. (4) Fourth-level themes are shown by the ovals with plain text and dashed border.

The first-level theme of Family Ties Affect Wellbeing comprises three second-level themes: (1) One-Way Support, (2) Two-Way Support, and (3) Comfortable Distance, which, in turn have several third- and fourth-level themes. Together, these themes confirm that transnational family ties have a dual effect on family wellbeing. They simultaneously act as a source of support and a source of frustration and means of exploitation.

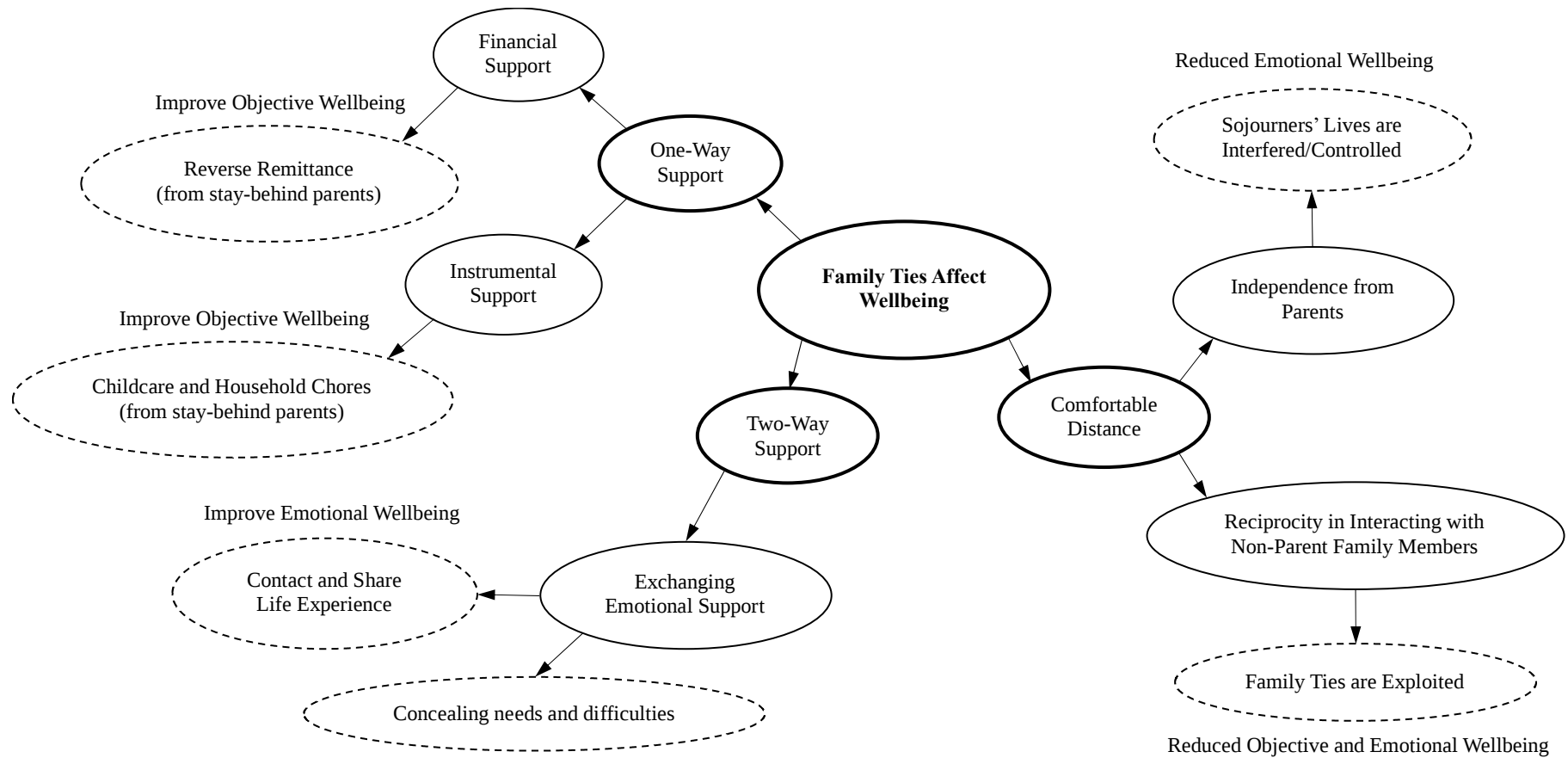


Figure 5-1 First-level theme: Family ties affect wellbeing

First, the theme of One-Way Support consists of two third-level themes, which represent the unidirectional flows of financial and instrumental support that stay-behind family members, mainly parents, provide to Chinese sojourners abroad, out of strong family altruism, greatly improving the sojourners' objective wellbeing. The stay-behinds not only send reverse remittances to them, helping them purchase houses abroad, but also visit New Zealand to take care of young children and do household chores, reflecting a unique way of conveying love.

Second, the theme of Two-Way Support represents the exchange of emotional support between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members. They regularly contact each other and implicitly express their love by sharing their daily life experiences, so that their perceived family obligation can be fulfilled, mental issues reduced, emotional wellbeing improved, and ties strengthened. Of note, far-away family members tend to hide their need for emotional support and the difficulties encountered in daily lives from each other, to avoid bringing anxiety to their beloved ones. This behaviour potentially constrains the exchange of emotional support, resulting in a feeling of helplessness and reduced emotional wellbeing.

Third, the theme of Comfortable Distance suggests that Chinese sojourners value independence in their interactions with stay-behind parents, and reciprocity in their interactions with non-parent family members from China, especially during VR hosting. There is a gap in the worldviews/habitus between Chinese sojourners and their parents, so that they may feel being tightly controlled if their lives are repeatedly interfered with by their parents. Also, they may feel exploited if their non-parent visitors keep asking for their support without any commensurate return. Both situations break the comfortable distance, cause conflict, reduce wellbeing, and weaken ties. The next section elaborates on the role of VR travel in shaping transnational families' wellbeing.

5.2.2 Visiting Relatives Travel Affects Wellbeing

The first-level theme of Visiting Relatives Travel Affects Wellbeing also contributes to an enhanced understanding of the way family wellbeing is shaped in the social interactions between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds. In general, the finding suggests that VR travel plays an important role in shaping Chinese transnational families' lives, because the travel have a dual and perhaps contradictory effect on family wellbeing and family ties, which is evidenced by three second-level themes, Family Reunion, Life Enrichment, and Burden.

5.2.2.1 Family Reunion

VR travel is an important means by which far-away family members can reunite for a short but valuable time, and better exchange emotional and instrumental support, resulting in improved family wellbeing and strengthened ties. First, VR travel improves geographically dispersed family members' emotional wellbeing. This is especially the case for stay-behind parents. More than half of the stay-behind parents clearly indicated that their happiness is highly associated with the presence of their migrant children. Parent-1's only daughter married a New Zealander and has lived in New Zealand for many years, leaving her and her husband to stay in Beijing, and thereby creating a typical empty-nest. She thus visits her migrant daughter's family in New Zealand every year, saying:

Happiness only exists when family members stay together, wherever we are.

Anyway, it will be the best if they can come to Beijing, but I will have to go to New Zealand if they cannot (Female, aged 46+).

Parent-1's interpretation of happiness reflects a value commonly held by Chinese stay-behind parents. That is, they consider family to be the priority in their lives, so that

reuniting with their migrant children is essential for their happiness. This view was repeated by other stay-behind parents and sojourners. Sojourner-Q is the only-child in his family. He believes that he is the “most important thing” in his stay-behind parents’ minds, especially his mother. He shares:

Many people think that there is no religion in China. That’s wrong I think. In China, we always believe in family, rather than any God (Male, aged 26-35).

Sojourner-Q indicated that Chinese people from his parents’ generation have a much stronger sense of family obligation than the younger generation, always devoting themselves to the whole family, their only ‘religion’. His comments also imply a widening gap in the perception of family obligation between sojourners and their parents.

Hosting VR travel is also important to preserve Chinese sojourners’ emotional wellbeing. Approximately one-third of the Chinese sojourners mentioned that they are eager to reunite with their stay-behind family members. Sojourner-L is a housewife and has lived in New Zealand for seven years with her husband and young children. She said that they used to feel very “helpless”, because there is no family member to help them when they have problems abroad, whereas they could always ask family members for help when they were living in China. They thus always feel very excited to host their family members. Hosting them creates a heterotopia that allows Sojourner-L and her husband to enjoy an illusion of being well supported by family members, reducing the feeling of helplessness.

Compared to reuniting with non-parent family members during VR hosting, Chinese sojourners have much stronger desire to host their stay-behind parents. Sojourner-W misses his parents badly, especially the taste of food they cooked. Also, he realised that his parents are gradually aging and are increasingly dependent on him. He says, wistfully:

The longer I live overseas, the more things I experienced. The more things I experienced, the more I want to spend time with my parents (Male, aged 26-35).

Sojourner-W's experience indicates that reuniting with stay-behind parents is particularly important to fulfil the wistful longing and a sense of filial piety in Chinese sojourners' hearts, resulting in improved emotional wellbeing, especially for those who have lived abroad for an extended period of time.

However, many stay-behind parents consciously avoided showing their need for family reunion and emotional support, but emphasized the intention to provide their migrant children with instrumental support during VR travel, such as doing household chores and taking care of their young children. Parent-3's only daughter has worked in New Zealand for more than four years and leaves her to live in Beijing alone. She shares:

I never actively contact her [the migrant daughter]. She always contacts me. There was a time I asked her: "don't you notice that I never contact you actively?" She said that she did notice that. I then told her that I will be there, 24 hours a day, no matter when she needs me (Female, aged 46+).

Parent-3's comments provide one explanation for the silence among the parents. Chinese stay-behind parents do not want to be a '累赘 (burden)', but, rather, a reliable source of support for their migrant children, reflecting strong intergenerational altruism, which has a long tradition in Chinese families.

Family reunion during VR travel is an important opportunity for Chinese stay-behind parents to provide their migrant children with substantial instrumental support. Parent-7's only daughter has lived alone in New Zealand for more than nine years. Parent-7 did many household chores during her VR visits. She shares:

I want to take care of my daughter during the visits. Her life should be different [easier] when she is living with her mom...I want to devote myself to provide her all the support she may need in New Zealand. As a result, my daughter can enjoy the love from her mom in this short period. I want her to feel my love. This is the main motive for me to travel to New Zealand (Female, aged 46+).

Parent-7's comments indicate that providing migrant children with instrumental support is not only the primary motive behind some Chinese stay-behind parents' VR visits, but also an important means by which parents convey their love for their migrant children, resulting in improved objective and subjective wellbeing.

Further, although only a few sojourners clearly mentioned their obligations to their parents in their daily lives, some emphasized that VR travel is a means by which they can fulfil their filial piety to their parents. As the only-child in his family, Sojourner-G has lived alone in New Zealand for more than six years. Realizing his parents are gradually aging and increasingly need his presence, he said that he will definitely accompany his parents throughout their VR travel in New Zealand, no matter in what the costs, because they gave birth to him and helped him a lot at the beginning of his settlement in New Zealand.

Sojourner-G's strong willingness to host his stay-behind parents suggests that the Chinese tradition of filial piety still plays an important role in transnational parent-child social exchanges. Chinese sojourners tend to take care of their stay-behind parents during VR visits without expecting a commensurate return or evaluating benefits and costs, because they have been well supported by these stay-behinds in many ways. Many sojourners have developed hybrid habitus, which leads to a growing tension and having less in common with their parents, but they still highly value filial piety, or '孝顺', so tend to have a sense of guilt

towards their parents, because of their prolonged absence. As a result, they tend to consider themselves morally obligated to take care of their parents during short family reunions.

Moreover, Chinese sojourners were also willing to reunite with non-parent stay-behind family members and provide them with instrumental support, as some participants mentioned, such as tourism information, free accommodation, and driving. Sojourner-D hosted non-parent VR visitors twice and played the role of tour guide, saying:

We have more time to stay and travel together, so that we have more opportunities to communicate with each other. As a result, our relationships can be improved (Female, aged 26-35).

Although Sojourner-D noticed that she spent considerable time and money on hosting, she enjoyed the short family reunion and believes that ties can be strengthened as a result, a benefit that outweighs the costs. Similarly, Sojourner-E and his wife are young sojourners who have lived in New Zealand for more than six years and run a café in Hamilton. He said that they had hosted his wife's older sister's family, providing them with "everything they need" during their short stay. Of note, this sister-in-law financially supported them when they were planning to open a café, saying: "I think that this is a part of our traditional culture, in which people value the equal relationships with mutual-benefits". Sojourner-E's comments suggest that Chinese sojourners value reciprocity in hosting non-parent VR visitors, echoing the theme of comfortable distance. Likewise, non-parent VR visitors also provide Chinese sojourners with instrumental support, such as childcare, during the visits, as mentioned in the theme of one-way support.

Consequently, participating in VR travel enables/facilitates the exchange of emotional and instrumental support between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members, improving family wellbeing. However, some constraints on family reunion are found. As Sojourner-E noted, aging stay-behind parents' state of health tends to decrease as time goes

by, so that it is increasingly difficult for them to fulfil the strict visa requirements under the family reunion category. He repeatedly and bitterly complained that his parents are required to provide full medical examination certification, including a chest x-ray, as proof of good health, every time they apply for a visa. He considers participating in such an examination time-consuming and potentially harmful. This is not an isolated case and raises concern about family wellbeing, as most of the stay-behind family members reported that they do not have a long-term visa that allows them to freely travel to New Zealand.

5.2.2.2 Life Enrichment

This study found that VR travel is not only a means of exchanging emotional and instrumental support, but also an opportunity for both sides to enrich their life experiences and broaden their horizons, resulting in improved wellbeing. First, many Chinese sojourners are aware that there are significant differences between New Zealand and China, from language to traffic rules, so tend to consider showing their stay-behind family members the differences an obligation, and a good way of hosting.

Sojourner-AG is middle-aged and was granted New Zealand citizenship some 20 years ago. Holding both Chinese and New Zealand passports, he lives a transnational commuting life between the two countries, so that he can keep running his fast-growing business in Beijing, while enjoying a comfortable lifestyle in New Zealand. He knows both countries well and considers taking his stay-behind family members to experience a ferry journey in New Zealand a good way of hosting, because he wants to broaden their horizons, by showing them “the highly diversified transportation system in New Zealand”. Similarly, Sojourner-AC is a young sojourner who has lived in New Zealand for more than eight years. He mentioned that he may take his VR visitors to a casino, which is illegal in China, he explains:

I want them to experience something that they can only do outside China...I think the only reason we want to travel overseas is that there are some differences between New Zealand and China (Male, 26-35).

Sojourner-AC's comments reflect his perception of VR visitors' travel motives and evoked a heated group discussion among several participants, about taking family members to do things that are banned in China, including casinos, strip clubs, and drugs. The consensus achieved is that casino is a good choice, but the latter two are clearly inappropriate, implying that boundaries should be made clear during the exploration of the dystopia. Of note, some sojourners believe that taking stay-behind friends to a local strip club is a good way to broaden their horizons, suggesting that hosting family members may follow different rules from hosting friends.

From the visiting side, stay-behind family members also expect that their visits to a dystopia can broaden their horizons. Relative-2 has been retired for a long time and visited her youngest sister in New Zealand twice. Her sister married a New Zealander and has lived in Wellington, for more than ten years. Relative-2 thoroughly enjoyed her visiting experience that significantly broadened her horizons. She shares:

The sea urchins were so fresh, so that we just ate them directly when we found them [on the beach], very impressive...The sunrise in Napier is the first light on earth...I watched the whole sunrise from the beginning till the end, which shocked me so much (Female, aged 46+)!

Apparently, Relative-2 was greatly impressed by the natural environment in New Zealand, not only the stunningly beautiful natural scenery, but also the substantial differences compared to the environment in China. For instance, she will never try to directly eat the seafood in China, because she believes the natural environment has been heavily polluted.

For stay-behind family members, participating in socio-cultural activities during VR visits also enriches their life experience. During relatively long visits, Relative-2 participated in many tourism activities, such as visiting the national museum in Wellington and the wineries in Napier, and also many social activities, such as performing a traditional Chinese dance and cooking traditional dumplings in an international event in Paraparaumu. Also, Relative-2 was surprised that Kiwis are very friendly and enjoyed her daily interactions with the neighbours, which made her feel that “this world is more beautiful and brighter”. As Relative-2 indicated, an important motive behind her active exploration of the place of the Others is that she believes that her visits were not tourist-like travel. She emphasized: “I have family members living there, I want to immerse myself into their lives”. Her comments suggest that VR visitors may have a stronger desire to live like locals during their visits, although the use of the term locals may refer to their Chinese immigrant hosts.

Of note, for some VR visitors who have young children, travel can be a unique opportunity to let their children experience Western education. Relative-1 visited her relatives in New Zealand recently. During the VR visit, she sent her young child to a local pre-school, saying:

Of cause, we visited them [migrant family members] in New Zealand with other purposes. A major one is that I want my son to experience the educational environment in this country during the visit (Female, aged 36-45).

In addition, this study found that hosting family members also broadens migrant hosts’ horizons, although the sojourners reported a higher educational background and richer international/domestic travel experience. Some sojourners found themselves increasingly lacking in knowledge about their far-away homeland, regardless of the diversified means of communication, because they have lived overseas for a prolonged time. Sojourner-AB is a middle-age sojourner. She and her family went back China every year to celebrate Chinese

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New Year. However, she found that they can no longer keep up with the speed of development there, saying: “we had to learn new stuff every year”. Her frustration evoked the same feeling from other participants in the focus group. Sojourner-N has lived in New Zealand with her husband and young children for more than six years, saying:

I don't know the lifestyle and living patterns in China anymore, including the 'bicycle-sharing' service that I haven't tried yet (Female, aged 36-45).

Thus, the face-to-face communication with their family members during VR hosting is considered an opportunity to enhance the sojourners' knowledge about the emerging phenomena in a fast-developing China. Another participant in the focus group, Sojourner-AE, is a young sojourner who has lived in New Zealand for four years and hosted his stay-behind parents several times, normally during Chinese New Year. He shares:

I really enjoyed the opportunity to communicate with them, through which I can learn the current development situation in China (Male, 26-35).

This is a new form of social exchange. VR hosts and visitors participate in knowledge exchange during the short period of visits, which may lead to the mutual enhancement of cultural capital.

Further, the stay-behind family members tend to consider VR travel an opportunity to take a break from the challenges and hardships they face in China, because they can enjoy the slow pace of life during their visits. China's fast development leads to increasing daily pressure on working-class people, especially for those in urban areas. Relative-9 is in his late-20s and works as a professional actor in Beijing, a highly competitive industry. Talking about his expectations of a visit to his older cousin in New Zealand, he shared:

I personally like to take this opportunity to relax for a while when I am visiting my cousin in New Zealand. My daily life in China is extremely busy, making me exhausted (Male, aged 26-35).

Likewise, some Chinese sojourners perceive accompanying their family members during VR visits as an opportunity to not only “discover their own backyard”, but also “have a rest”. Sojourner-J is now in her middle age and works very hard to make ends meet, raising two young children herself. She therefore really enjoyed accompanying her father on fishing trips during his visits, to enjoy a short time of “the easy and comfortable lifestyle...enjoyment, pleasure, and the sense of accomplishment...a sense of relief”. Similarly, as a young sojourner, Sojourner-G has been studying and working very hard, so always enjoys VR hosting. He says:

We travel to somewhere [together] just to relax and ESCAPE from all the rules in our daily life, such as the pressure of work (Male, aged 26-35).

Therefore, for both sojourners and their stay-behinds, VR visiting and hosting represent a journey to heterotopia, in which they can enjoy a fleeting period that is an absolute break with their traditional time. Living such illusory lives allows them to temporarily relax and forget about the things that worry them in their daily lives. This escapism potentially improves their emotional wellbeing. Consequently, for both sides, participating in VR visiting and hosting not only broaden their horizons, but also provides them with an opportunity to have a rest and enjoy the benefits of leisure, resulting in improved subjective and objective wellbeing.

5.2.2.3 Burden

However, sometimes, VR hosting and visiting can be a burden for both sides, threatening their wellbeing. First, some Chinese sojourners considered VR hosting an undesired moral obligation. They were already struggling to make a living abroad, and hosting their family members often requires them to spend a great deal of time and energy,

which can lead to exhaustion. Sojourner-C has lived in New Zealand for more than 16 years and has hosted many family members. She shares:

Last year, I drove my visiting relatives around the South Island...I drove 2400 km in one week...Anyway, I had to work right after the travel. I spent another half month recovering from exhaustion. I felt that I was DYING when I was working after the trip (Female, 36-45).

For Sojourner-C, VR hosting is never an enjoyable experience, but a heavy burden that leads to severely reduced wellbeing. Nevertheless, as she indicated, this is a “job” that she must do, because of family obligation. She had to repeatedly visit the same destinations, just to accompany her VR visitors. Sojourner-C shared her unpleasant hosting experience aggrievedly, which evoked many unpleasant memories shared by other sojourners in the focus group, who commonly perceive hosting as making a sacrifice for family members.

Also, some Chinese sojourners consider hosting family members a heavy financial burden that threatens their objective wellbeing, although the participants’ profile shows that the sojourners’ annual income is much higher than those of their stay-behind counterparts. This study found that VR visitors often expect free accommodation, food, and gifts. Sometimes, the cost of travel also falls upon the migrant hosts when they are accompanying their visitors. Sojourner-A is a middle-age sojourner who has lived in New Zealand for more than five years with his wife and young child. He has hosted his family members from China many times and believes that VR visitors should pay for themselves, rather than expect substantial financial support from their migrant hosts. He provided an extreme example, mentioning that he is hesitant about inviting his own parents to visit New Zealand, if their visit may become a financial burden. He shares:

Your parents can help you financially, if they are rich. If they are poor, you have to spend much money on them during their travel here, so that you may

hesitate before inviting them to New Zealand. For example, their airfare will cost you so much money, right (Male, aged 36-45)?

Sojourner-A's comments indicate that some Chinese sojourners may evaluate benefits and costs in hosting their closest family members, challenging the Chinese tradition of family altruism. Similarly, being asked how she will host her visiting younger brother, Sojourner-T, a Chinese sojourner who married a New Zealander and has lived in New Zealand for more than seven years, shared:

Visiting family members should pay for themselves! I even told my own younger brother that I will host him, but I am definitely not going to pay for him if he is going to visit me in New Zealand. There is no way that I will accept any financial burden he brings to me (Female, aged 26-35).

Nonetheless, many sojourners mentioned the notion of '尽地主之谊', which is an important Chinese tradition, in which hosts are obligated to treat their visitors well, have welcoming attitude, and provide meals, accommodation, and even accompany them to visit popular tourism destinations during hosting, otherwise the hosts will lose face. Thus, although facing financial exigency, unlike Sojourner-T, most Chinese sojourners still devote themselves to meeting their visitors' expectations and are reluctant to explicitly ask their visitors to share the cost, because doing so will certainly make them lose face. Sojourner-L shares:

My life will be negatively affected if my visitors are poor...However, I often cannot refuse their visits, but being morally forced to host them very well, because of the obligation I have (Female, aged 26-35).

Sojourner-L's unpleasant hosting experience suggests that Chinese tradition of hospitality and the desire to save face largely shape Chinese sojourners' VR hosting behaviours, and wellbeing as a result.

Further, many Chinese sojourners have a strong sense of family altruism and tend to sacrifice considerable time and energy to host their closest family members, especially stay-behind parents, without expecting any commensurate return. All these dynamics, such as family obligation/altruism and face-saving, denote an opposite of the rules of social exchange theory, implying that the theory may not be able to explain all transnational interactions between far-away family members.

Of note, some stay-behind family members also consider VR visits a heavy burden. For instance, Relative-9 perceives VR visiting as making a sacrifice, because he believes that New Zealand is not a very attractive tourism destination, compared to the UK and France. Also, Relative-11's older cousin has lived in New Zealand for more than ten years, but she always deliberately avoids visiting her. She explains:

More relatives mean heavier burden for you...I think I may have to do something that I don't want to do if I visit my relatives in New Zealand, such as spending money for them. I will definitely have to spend more money if I visit New Zealand, compared to visiting other destinations (Female, aged 26-35).

Relative-11's comments reflect that non-parent stay-behind family members tend to evaluate the benefits and costs when considering whether to visit the sojourners, with whom they do not have close ties, echoing social exchange theory.

For elderly stay-behind family members, VR visiting sometimes damages their emotional wellbeing, because they may experience depression, loneliness, and helplessness during their stay. Parent-1 is in her 60s. She used to be a volunteer in a non-profit institution in Auckland that aims to improve elderly Chinese migrants' emotional wellbeing. She found that many grandparents were staying in New Zealand merely to take care of the sojourners' young children, and suffered severe mental issues. This view is evidenced by Parent-3's

visiting experience. Parent-3 experienced a strong sense of loneliness during her last visit to her only daughter in Wellington. She has many friends in Beijing. However, it was very difficult for her to make friends in New Zealand, because she does not speak English. She complains:

Old people cannot live there [New Zealand] for a long time. It is very hard for us to live alone at home, when our adult children go to work every day. We suffer from that very much, feeling really bad (Female, aged 46+)!

Parent-3's comments have an important implication. For some visiting parents, weekday daytimes are difficult. They have come to New Zealand for a family reunion, but their migrant children often have to work as usual during the relatively long periods of VR visits, leaving them at home alone. It is difficult for them to find someone to talk to, resulting in a strong sense of loneliness.

Language is likely to be a major barrier for elderly VR visitors who stay in New Zealand for a prolonged period of time. Although Relative-2's overall visiting experiences were really enjoyable, she still experienced some difficulties in New Zealand, especially when her migrant sister went to work, leaving her to stay at home alone. She shares:

I think that language is a big barrier...It is very hard for me to live in New Zealand, because I do not speak English. Actually, I cannot go out without my sister accompanying me (Female, aged 46+).

Relative-2's experience implies that the language barrier not only increases the feeling of loneliness, but also a sense of helplessness in the minds of elderly VR visitors, making them realise that they are staying in a place of the Others, and breaking the illusion of staying in a home away from home. Such a constraint was widely noted by middle-aged and elderly stay-behind family members, whose English proficiency is comparatively low.

Additionally, elderly VR visitors frequently face culture shock during their visits. Relative-13's older sister's entire family migrated to New Zealand from 1996, over 20 years ago. Their elderly mom recently visited them, but only stayed for a very short time, before she strongly insisted on returning. She told Relative-13 that she "will die if she stayed in New Zealand any longer!" She lost face in a great deal during the visit, as there were so many embarrassing moments. Relative-13 shared a story:

During her visit, my mom was looking for some pork ribs in a supermarket, since she wanted to cook a good meal for her grandson. However, she felt really terrible when her grandson told her what she brought to the counter is only for feeding dogs (Male, aged 46+)!

Therefore, for elderly VR visitors, it may be difficult to live a fulfilled and independent life during their visits. Grandparents can only take care of their young grandchildren and do the household chores. On the one hand, their hosts' houses are heterotopias, juxtaposing many familiar and unfamiliar cultural elements. On the other hand, the visitors are reluctant to enter social sites outside their hosts' houses that denote dystopias, or the places of the Others. 'Going outside' results in cultural shock, as they do not know the rules, or habitus, which need to be followed in those sites. As five elderly stay-behinds indicated, this situation often makes elderly Chinese visitors feel like "living in hell", suggesting that the elderly visitors' emotional wellbeing may face severe challenges during VR travel.

Further, conflicts may emerge during VR visits, especially when the visitors are elderly parents whose worldviews are very different from those of their migrant children. Thus, both sides may enjoy each other's presence at the beginning, while tending to feel frustrated after conflicts emerge. Many young sojourners mentioned that they experienced

very frequent conflicts when they were hosting their parents. Sojourner-H had hosted her mother in New Zealand many times. She shared:

My mom has a very bad temper...we had so many fights with each other when my mom visited us in New Zealand...in this kind of situation, she will say something that sounds really offensive (Female, aged 19-25).

Similarly, Sojourner-A shared his unpleasant interactions with his mother-in-law during her visits, saying:

She always spoils my son...I used to communicate with her about this issue, but she didn't change...Sometimes, she even blamed me for my son's faults...For now, to be honest, I don't want her to visit us again...There were so many conflicts in my family during that time (Male, aged 36-45).

Sojourner-A found that his mother-in-law's visits were not only a source of much conflict, but also a threat to his young child's education, which is completely unacceptable. He thus considers her future visits a heavy burden, suggesting that the perceived costs greatly outweigh benefits. Sojourner-E hosted his parents many times. He clearly explained the reason why he doesn't want his parents to stay for an excessive time, saying:

We quarrelled with each other at home very often when our parents were visiting us in New Zealand, because our 'value systems' are different. Therefore, the only benefit of living separately is that we don't need to see each other every day, so that there is no conflict between us over trifles (Male, aged 26-35).

An implication of Sojourner-E's comments is that the prolonged separation may also benefit both sides, whose habitus are increasingly different from each other, by ensuring the maintenance of comfortable distance between them.

Just like their migrant children, stay-behind parents sometimes suffer a great deal from the conflicts that emerge during their VR visits to New Zealand. Parent-1 had some very unpleasant visiting experiences during her annual visits to her only daughter in New Zealand in the first five years, because her daughter had an explosive temper, “crying every day”! Parent-1 had to suffer the conflicts in silence during the visits, to avoid exacerbating the situation.

However, it seems that most elderly parents are reluctant to talk about the conflicts they experienced during the visits. A possible reason for this silence is that I resembled their migrant children, so that they tend to deliberately hide the unpleasant memories in their transnational interactions. Another possible reason is that these parents believe that they were not quarrelling with their adult children, but showing them “better” ways of living, by telling them what to do and blaming them for what they did “wrong”, as Parent-7 indicated. Such a parenting style is considered extremely annoying by many young sojourners, as it ignores the existence of increasingly widening gap in habitus between the two sides.

5.2.2.4 Implications for Wellbeing

This first-level theme of Visiting Relatives Travel Affects Wellbeing helps to answer the first contributing research question. The theme has three second-level themes, (1) Family Reunion, (2) Life Enrichment, and (3) Burden, which explain the positive and negative effects of VR travel on the families’ wellbeing. These second-level themes in turn have several third- and fourth-level themes. As I analysed and interpreted the data, a model emerged, which demonstrates the interactive relationships between the themes, reflecting the hierarchy of the concepts (Figure 5-2).

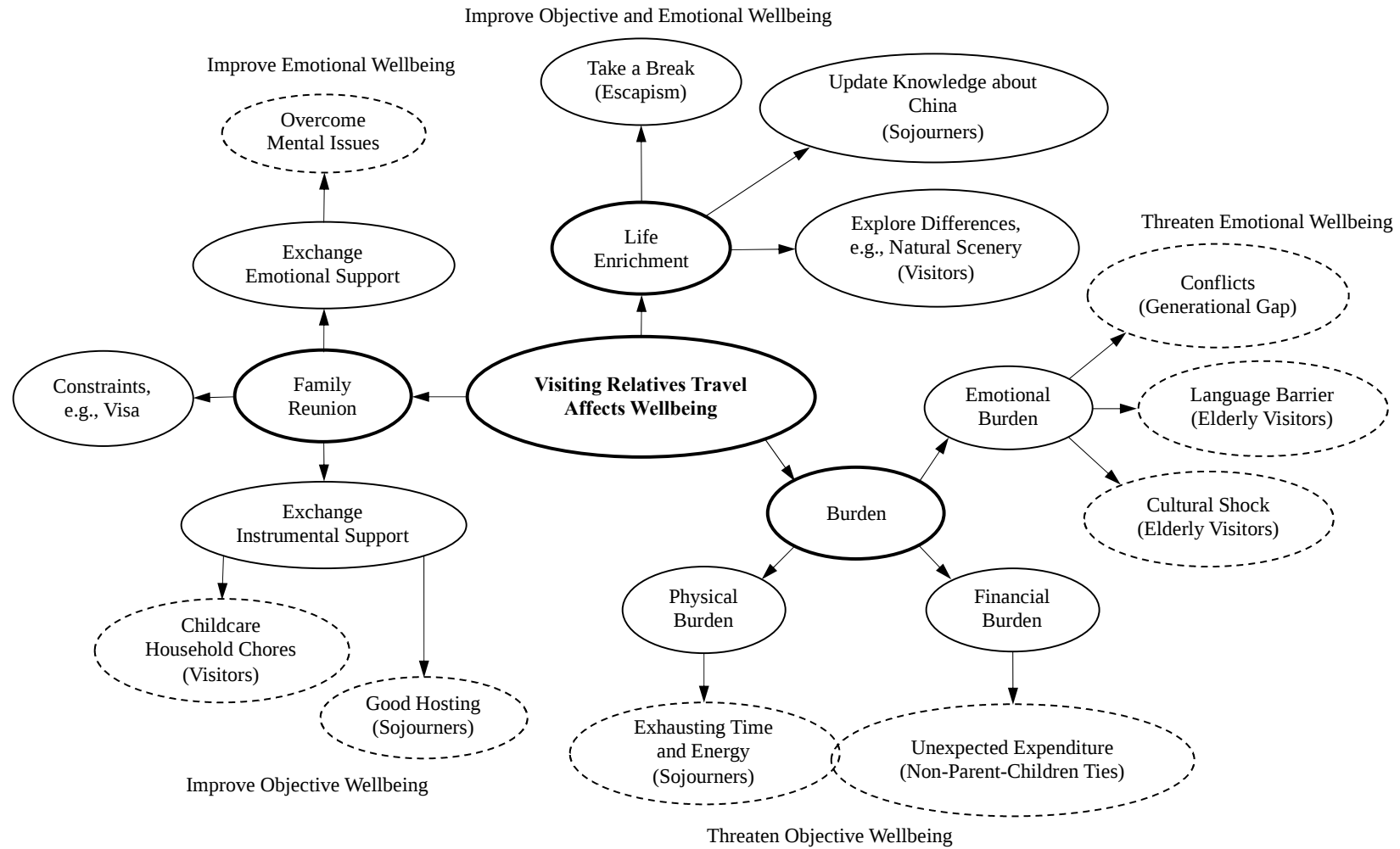


Figure 5-2 First-level theme: Visiting relatives travel affects wellbeing

Figure 5-2 shows that VR travel has a dual and contradictory effect on Chinese transnational families' wellbeing, which is evidenced by the three second-level themes. First, VR travel is an important means by which far-away family members can reunite for a short time, and exchange emotional support, resulting in reduced mental issues and improved emotional wellbeing. This is especially the case in parent-child ties, as Chinese stay-behind parents' happiness is largely determined by their co-presence and emotional closeness with migrant children, while the sojourners can enjoy an illusion of 'being well supported by family members' during VR hosting, reducing the feeling of helplessness.

During family reunions, instrumental support can also be exchanged. On the one hand, Chinese parents help their migrant children to care for young children and undertake household chores, because of intergenerational altruism and the desire to convey their love, resulting in the sojourners' improved objective wellbeing. On the other hand, the sojourners tend to reciprocate the support they receive from their parents, by taking good care of them during hosting, so that their family obligations can be better fulfilled, a sense of guilt alleviated, and the parents' objective wellbeing improved. Similarly, in non-parent-child ties, some visitors may provide their migrant hosts with instrumental support during the visits, such as childcare, while their hosts provide them with food, accommodation, and a tour guide service, reflecting reciprocity. Of note, there may be some constraints on family reunions, such as the difficulty in applying for a visa under family reunion category, especially in an era of COVID-19. Some stay-behind family members, including parents, reported that they used general visitor visa in their VFR visits.

Prior to the pandemic, VR travel represents an opportunity for both sides to enrich their lives and broaden their horizons. The sojourners act as ambassadors, taking their visiting family members to explore the differences between the two countries, such as natural scenery, lifestyle, and socio-cultural environments, while young children (visitors) can

experience a different educational environment. For Chinese sojourners, communicating with their visitors face-to-face is an opportunity to update their knowledge about their homeland. Therefore, VR visiting and hosting represent a process of knowledge exchange, resulting in mutual enhancement of cultural capital and improved wellbeing. Also, some visitors and hosts have very busy lives, so tend to consider visiting and hosting a means of escapism, temporarily escaping from the daily challenges they face and enjoying an illusory life within a fleeting period, resulting in the enhancement of objective and emotional wellbeing.

However, VR visiting and hosting may also lead to reduced objective and emotional wellbeing by placing heavy physical, emotional, and financial burdens on both sides. For Chinese sojourners, hosting non-parent family members may make them feel being exploited, physically and financially, threatening their objective wellbeing. Refusing to fulfil such an inescapable obligation challenges the Chinese tradition of hospitality, potentially making them lose face. A puzzle thus emerged. Likewise, non-parent family members may consider visiting sojourners a burden, threatening their objective wellbeing, because VR visiting requires them to undertake international travel, make excessive efforts, and generate undesired expenditure.

Also, it is difficult for elderly family members to live fulfilled and independent lives during VR visits because they face significant challenges, such as language barriers and cultural shock, resulting in depression, loneliness, and helplessness, which can threaten their emotional wellbeing. Finally, Chinese sojourners and their visiting parents may suffer frequent conflicts while living together, because of the generational gap between them, which derives from the increasingly widening gap between their habitus/worldviews. This may lead to their reduced emotional wellbeing.

5.3 Contributing Question Two: What is the Role of Visiting Relatives

Travel in Shaping Their Geographically Stretched Family Ties?

This section addresses the second contributing research question. Prolonged separation potentially weakens the ties between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members, although the development of communication technologies has facilitated transnational exchange of emotional support. Increasingly, families dispersed across multiple geographical locations have raised questions about how family life can be preserved over time (Janta et al., 2015). Therefore, this section explores the role of VR travel (from home to host countries) in shaping transnational family ties.

5.3.1 Visiting Relatives Travel Affects Family Ties

This first-level theme consists of two second-level themes, (1) Strengthening Family Ties and (2) Destroying Family Ties, because VR travel has a dual effect on family ties. On the one hand, both sides may consider VR visits an opportunity to reunite for a short period of time and preserve their family ties. On the other hand, in some circumstances, VR visits may destroy their over-stretched family ties, if a comfortable distance is not well maintained, or social protocols are ignored. For instance, migrant hosts may feel exploited when their non-parent visitors fail to follow the rule of reciprocity in host-guest interactions.

5.3.1.1 Strengthening Family Ties

This second-level theme suggests that transnational family ties may be strengthened as a result of VR travel. First, VR travel is an important means by which stay-behind parents seek to strengthen family ties with their migrant children. For instance, Parent-7's primary

motive in visiting New Zealand is to improve her emotional closeness with her only-child migrant daughter. She shares:

The only reason I go to New Zealand is to see her [Sojourner-V] ...in case she may not want to talk to me when she stays there alone for a long time (Female, aged 46+).

Parent-7 worries that the emotional closeness with her migrant daughter may be gradually weakened as a result of prolonged separation, echoing Sojourner-Q's perception of his stay-behind mother, "I guess that I am the most important thing for my mom". Similarly, Parent-3 said that she visited New Zealand only to see her migrant daughter. She did not care which tourism activities/destinations her daughter organised for her.

Other family members may also consider VR travel a means of strengthening their ties with the sojourners. Relative-12's cousin has lived in New Zealand for more than ten years. They rarely contacted each other although they were close as children. However, Relative-12 believes that their relationship is still very intimate and expects that her cousin can spend some time accompanying her during her stay, so that their tie can be revived. Similarly, Relative-9 used to have a very close relationship with his migrant cousin and wants to visit her in the future, saying:

I want to live with them and be integrated into their lives during my stay in New Zealand...I just want to preserve our relationship, which is my primary purpose of visiting New Zealand (Male, aged 26-35).

His comments suggest that VR travel allows visitors to temporarily immerse themselves in their hosts' lives, so that they can better understand the ways their migrant family members live their lives overseas. This potentially leads to a bridged gap in habitus, more effective communication, reduced conflict, and strengthened family ties.

This view is then clearly evidenced in other VR visitors' comments. Relative-2's youngest sister is an experienced sojourner, who left home when still in high school and rarely returned to China. She lived in Japan for more than ten years before she finally settled down in Wellington. Relative-2 took her elderly mother and two other sisters to visit her, and she hosted them very well. Relative-2 believes that their reunion is an opportunity for the stay-behinds to learn about the migrant sister's life experiences and better understand her life choices, so that their family ties can be strengthened.

Similarly, Relative-4's migrant older sister left home for New Zealand in 2002 and rarely came back to China, so that they have only had a few face-to-face communications since then. They used to interact with each other based on their respective worldviews/habitus, so many conflicts emerged. For instance, her sister not only always drives very carefully in Beijing herself, but also "nervously" asks Relative-4 and their parents to strictly follow every single traffic rule. Relative-4's primary purpose of visiting New Zealand was to reunite with her sister. She shares:

I didn't understand some of her thoughts and things she did before I went to New Zealand...Anyway, I understand her now, since I have been to New Zealand and seen how people drive there...I have understood her decisions now, because I had lived in the same environment and interacted with the same people...The more knowledge I have about New Zealand and the cultural environment she is living in, the better I can understand her (Female, aged 26-35).

Just like their VR visitors, Chinese sojourners also consider hosting an opportunity to strengthen their geographically stretched family ties. As mentioned above, Parent-7's primary purpose of visiting is to strengthen her tie with her only-child migrant daughter. Similarly, her migrant daughter, Sojourner-V, also wants to take her stay-behind parents to visit local

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restaurants, cafés, and see the beautiful natural scenery, during hosting, because she believes that these activities can strengthen their over-stretched ties, by creating a relaxed atmosphere for them to freely chat with each other face-to-face. Sojourner-AN rarely contacted her stay-behind family members, because she can always feel “a sense of distance” when she was chatting with them on WeChat. She explains:

Communicating face-to-face during the visits is a better way to open our hearts to each other, so that our emotional connections may be strengthened
(Female, aged 26-35).

Despite the rapid development of communication technologies and increasing daily social interactions across national borders, face-to-face interactions during VR travel are still deemed essential, and sometimes obligatory, for both visiting and hosting sides to freely exchange emotional support and strengthen their family ties. As Sojourner-D indicated in the theme of family reunion, she considers strengthened family ties an important benefit that outweighs all the costs that VR hosting generated. This idea was widely mentioned by the participants and associated with the theme of Family Ties as a Pull Factor.

5.3.1.2 Destroying Family Ties

This second-level theme indicates that VR travel may also destroy over-stretched family ties if important social protocols are ignored during the visits. First, in Chinese tradition, hosts are supposed to have a welcoming attitude toward their guests throughout hosting, as a Chinese proverb suggests, ‘有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎’, which means it is always a pleasure to greet a guest from afar. This tradition applies to both family ties and friendships. Thus, VR travel may destroy family ties if visitors perceive that they are being treated badly. Relative-9 is planning to visit his older cousin’s family in New Zealand. He

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believes that they still have a close tie and expects a warm welcome from his host, which largely determines his choice of accommodation, saying:

If their attitudes toward me are not as good as I expected, I may choose to live in a hotel... We can ONLY live together if their attitudes toward me are good (Male, aged 26-35).

Relative-9's comments suggest that his perception of a close tie with the migrant cousin may be ruined by the host's bad attitude toward him during VR visiting, implying disillusionment.

Chinese sojourners also consider treating their VR visitors well is very important to preserve their family ties. Although Sojourner-S has lived in New Zealand for more than 20 years, she still strongly values the Chinese tradition of hospitality, which requires her to always treat her visitors warmly and politely. She says:

We will try our best to make sure that there is a good atmosphere between us during the visit, even we don't have much in common (Female, aged 46+).

For Sojourner-S, a welcoming attitude toward her visitors is the foundation of creating a good atmosphere while hosting, which is considered more important than the actual content of their communication. Similarly, Sojourner-AQ has lived in New Zealand for more than eight years and has hosted her family members several times. She indicated that visitors can easily sense their hosts' attitude toward them, either good or bad, which directly affects their emotional closeness. She shares:

I think that our attitudes toward each other are parts of our emotions. Our emotions can be influenced by other people's emotions when we are interacting with each other (Female, aged 26-35).

Likewise, VR visitors also need to have an appropriate attitude toward their hosts during visiting. In particular, for non-parent family members, showing their migrant hosts

deep gratitude is the most important social protocol that needs to be followed throughout the visit, otherwise their hosts may feel exploited. Chinese sojourners highly value reciprocity in their social interactions with non-parent family members, as the theme of conformable distance shows. Sojourner-Z is a middle-age sojourner and migrated to New Zealand more than ten years ago. She repeatedly complained about some VR visitors' selfish behaviours during visiting, saying:

They thought that they deserve all the efforts we made for them, so that they didn't feel grateful to us at all (Female, aged 36-45).

There is no doubt that such an ungrateful attitude bitterly disappointed Sojourner-Z, because she treated her visitors well to show them respect, whilst expecting that those visitors would show her their respect in return by expressing their gratitude in some way. As Sojourner-AR mentioned, giving a hand with household chores is a good way to show gratitude for the efforts migrant hosts made during hosting. She shared:

There will be some disputes if the visitors are only looking for the free accommodation and food, but don't help their hosts to do any household chores (Female, 26-35).

Of note, only a few non-parent stay-behind family members mentioned the desire to reciprocate the favours they received during VR visits. Such a silence implies that there may be considerable tension between visiting and hosting sides, which derives from the gaps in their understandings of the meanings of hospitality, and perceived visiting and hosting obligations.

Also, non-parent VR visitors should avoid depending on their migrant hosts too much during their visits, which may place a heavy burden on the sojourners, making them feel exploited, resulting in weakened family ties and reduced wellbeing. As explained earlier, Sojourner-AH's sister-in-law financially exploited him during her last visit, "spent thousands

of dollars on her souvenirs”. This clearly ruined their family tie. Sojourner-AL migrated to New Zealand with her husband and child. She strongly agrees with Sojourner-AR’s view about the rule of reciprocity during VR visits, indicating that non-parent family members should be grateful for the favours they receive and avoid asking their hosts to do too many things for them. She concluded angrily: “we don’t owe each other anything!” Nevertheless, Sojourner-AL also believes that hosting ungrateful visitors is a very common situation that sojourners face, a puzzle that she has not yet solved.

This finding suggests that migrant hosts’ houses are not public sites that stay-behinds can freely enter and enjoy all the available resources. Rather, entering these fields requires VR visitors to have a certain emotional closeness with the sojourners. More importantly, the visitors should have a clear understanding of their social positions and the important rules/habitus in their hosts’ houses, so that they can have realistic expectations of their hosts, maintain a comfortable distance, and avoid distorting the meanings of welcome and hospitality. Otherwise, family ties may be ruined.

Further, as mentioned above, stay-behind parents needed to avoid interfering in their adult children’s lives, especially during VR visits, otherwise conflicts may occur. Several sojourners mentioned that they felt frustrated living with their parents for a prolonged period, because of the generational gap between them. Sojourner-W and Sojourner-E always felt strongly controlled when they were hosting their parents, who have lived in very thrifty lives, so insisted that they should always cook at home, rather than “waste” money at a restaurant.

However, no participant mentioned that conflicts between parents and migrant children during visits may reduce their emotional closeness, although some sojourners reported that they experienced intense conflicts with their visiting parents. As Sojourner-H shares: “she got very angry, if we didn’t immediately do what she asked us to do!” This

silence implies that the parent-child ties are very strong in nature, nearly unbreakable, and therefore fundamentally different from non-parent-child family ties and friendships.

5.3.1.3 Implications for Family Ties

Visiting relatives travel can not only strengthen transnational family ties, by providing family members with an opportunity to reunite, but also destroy those ties when important social protocols are ignored in host-guest interactions. Given the knowledge acquired from the data interpretation, a model emerged, which demonstrates the hierarchy of ideas and the interactive relationships between the themes (Figure 5-3).

This first-level theme comprises two second-level themes, which in turn consist of several interrelated third- and fourth-level themes, collectively demonstrating the role of VR travel in shaping transnational family ties. Firstly, VR visits can strengthen long-distance family ties, by providing far-away family members with an opportunity to better communicate face-to-face and freely exchange emotional support. Also, VR travel is a means by which stay-behind family members can immerse themselves in the sojourners' lives abroad, so that the gap in their habitus can be bridged to some extent, conflicts reduced, and emotional closeness improved.

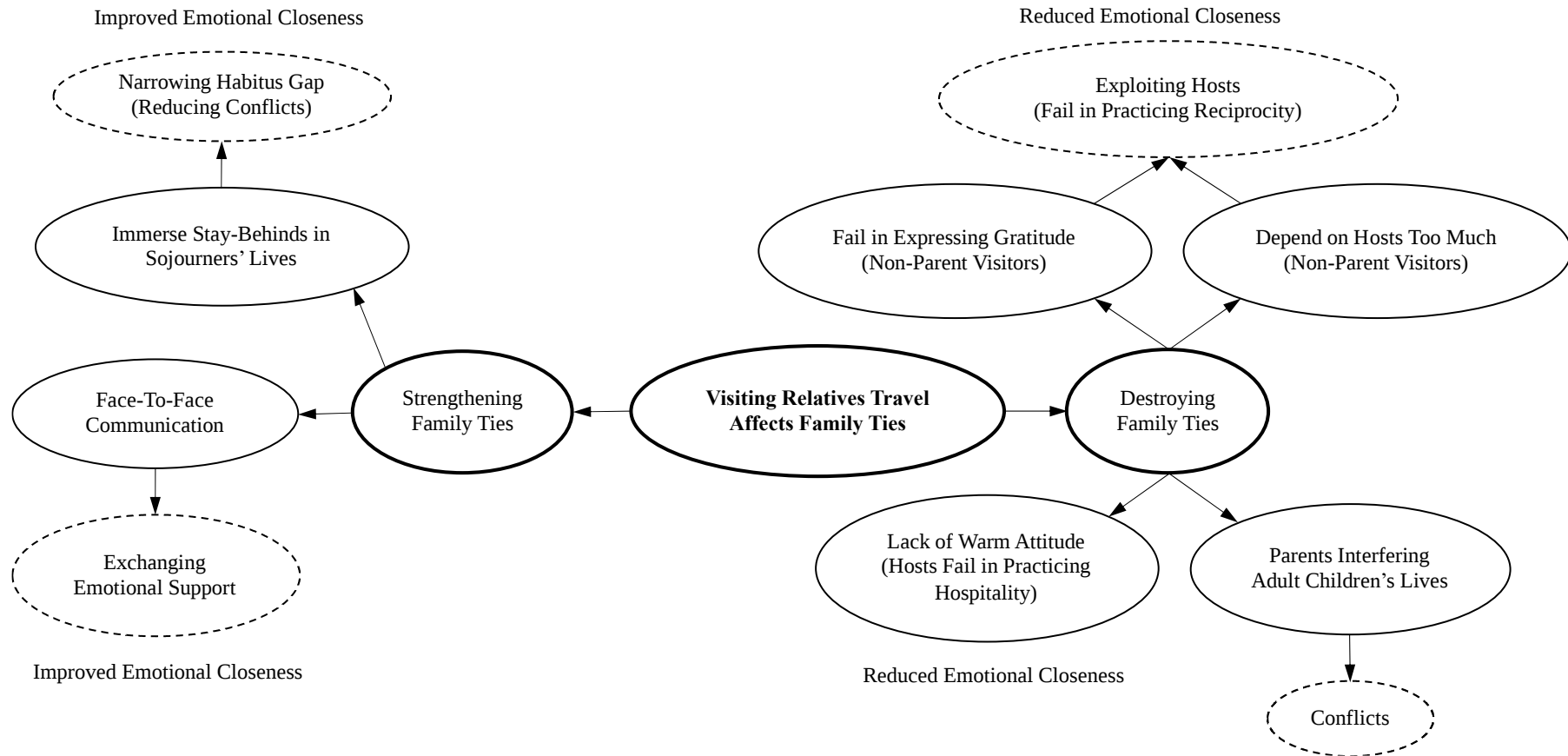


Figure 5-3 First-level theme: Visiting relatives travel affects family ties

Secondly, sometimes, VR visits may destroy family ties, if the two sides fail to follow important social protocols in host-guest interactions. Hosts should have a welcoming attitude toward their visitors and treat them well, following the Chinese tradition of hospitality. Otherwise, visitors may feel that they are not considered important, and the ties may be ruined. Non-parent visitors should have a clear understanding of their social position and respect the rules/habitus in their hosts' houses, by adequately expressing their gratitude for favours they receive from their hosts, in one way or another, and avoid depending on their hosts too much. Otherwise, their hosts may feel exploited, and comfortable distance is broken, resulting in weakened/ruined ties, as Chinese sojourners value reciprocity in their social interactions with non-parent stay-behinds. Also, visiting parents should avoid interfering in their adult children's lives, or their children may feel controlled, potentially causing conflict.

5.4 Contributing Question Three: What Factors Influence Chinese Transnational Families' Visiting Relatives Travel Behaviours?

Given the important role of VR travel in shaping Chinese transnational families' wellbeing and family ties, this section discusses the influencing factors that may affect VR visiting and hosting behaviours, so that a clearer understanding of the families' lives can be achieved. Two first-level themes were identified that are likely to play major roles in explaining their visiting and hosting behaviours, (1) Family Ties Affect Visiting Relatives Travel and (2) Family Life Cycle Affects Visiting Relatives Travel.

5.4.1 Family Ties Affect Visiting Relatives Travel

This section discusses the role of transnational family ties in shaping VR travel, in particular, visiting and hosting behaviours, to produce an enhanced understanding of the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel. The findings indicate that the ties have a dual effect on VR travel. On the one hand, family ties can be a pull factor for both sides to participate in VR hosting and visiting, and an important source of support VR visitors may enjoy during their visits. On the other hand, both sides may intentionally avoid participating in VR hosting and visiting, because of perceived troubled/weak ties and/or undesired obligations.

5.4.1.1 Family Ties as a Pull Factor

First, the existence of strong family ties is the main motive for many stay-behind parents and other family members to visit Chinese sojourners in New Zealand, as the theme of Family Reunion discussed. Experiencing prolonged separation with her migrant only-child daughter, Parent-3 did not care which tourism activities/destinations her daughter organised for her during her visit, because she came to New Zealand just to see her child, saying:

I will not complain at all wherever she takes me to...On the contrary, I may feel either good or bad, if it was one of my friends who took me to somewhere, which I may like or dislike. However, I don't even care where we are going, as long as I am travelling with my daughter. I always feel good when I am with her (Female, aged 46+).

Parent-3's comments imply that the VR visitors who visit migrant children may have very different expectations of hosting, comparing to those visiting other family members, or

friends, because their travel motives are different. Visiting parents consider their VR travel good enough if they can reunite with their migrant children during the visits.

Of note, many young stay-behinds reported that they can use English at least in daily communication, implying that they can be more independent in international travel, compared to older participants who do not speak English. For these culturally proficient stay-behinds, family ties are the major pull actor that attracts them to visit New Zealand, because they do not rely on their migrant hosts' support abroad. Relative-9 speaks English well and has a good personal income in Beijing. Talking about his primary motive in visiting his cousin's family in New Zealand, he shares:

I will not go to New Zealand if I don't have strong emotional linkages with my hosts, since there are so many different countries I can visit around the globe, and New Zealand will not be my first choice (Male, aged 26-35).

However, some non-parent VR visitors do have certain expectations about tourism activities during their visits, although they also consider family reunion one of the main travel motives. For instance, although Relative-13 said that reuniting with his migrant sister's family is the main reason for him to visit New Zealand, "I want to see my nephew and his children in New Zealand", he also has other expectations for the visit, saying:

I wish that they can take us to travel around the country by car...I would like to see the beautiful environment they have told us about. They have a caravan, which I really want to try. I also want to try the spa there, and touch the alpacas. It will be good if we can visit the indigenous Maori village, maybe spend one night there (Male, aged 46+).

A comparison of the comments of Parent-3 and Relative-13 uncovers certain differences in VR travel motives between stay-behind parents and other VR visitors. Parents visit New Zealand mainly for a family reunion, while the others may be more interested in

tourism activities, implying that VR visitors are also heterogeneous, shaped by the underpinning family ties.

Regarding the hosting side, Chinese sojourners believe that their stay-behind family members visit New Zealand mainly to reunite with them, so tend to host them accordingly. For instance, Sojourner-AE shares:

I think the motivation for my friends and relatives to visit me in New Zealand consists of two parts. The first part is for tourism, a 20% proportion. The second part is to spend some time with me, an 80% proportion (Male, aged 26-35).

The way Sojourner-AE hosted his parents reflects his comments. He did not take them to visit many tourism destinations. Rather, they spent most of the time staying at home together, cooking, doing household chores, and going for walks nearby. As he mentioned in the theme of Life Enrichment, he considers VR travel an opportunity for close family members to better communicate with each other, sharing life experiences.

Similarly, Sojourner-AM had hosted her parents once since she migrated to New Zealand. During hosting, they spent a great deal of time at home, chatting, and cooking. She knew that her parents' main travel motive was to see "whether their child is eating well in New Zealand?", so she took them to local supermarkets. She explains:

...to show them how I live in New Zealand, and what I usually eat, and the food prices here... That's all my parents really care about... They are very concerned about whether I am living a happy life (Female, aged 26-35).

Sojourner-AM's comments reflect a widely shared concern among stay-behind parents, which may be a major travel motive. 'Is my child living good life there?' During their annual VR visits, Sojourner-W's parents were not interested in the fancy restaurants that he always wanted them to try, but insisted on cooking at home. As Sojourner-W explains,

apart from the desire to save money, an important reason is that his parents visited New Zealand only for a family reunion and help their migrant child with household chores. This echoes the theme of one-way support, suggesting that Chinese stay-behind parents perceive themselves as obligated to provide their migrant children with instrumental support.

For most of the migrant hosts, family ties denoted a strong sense of family obligation, which is the main pull factor behind hosting their VR visitors and making efforts to create an illusion of a home away from home so as not to lose face. For instance, Sojourner-L and Sojourner-AH believe that they are obligated to host their family members well because of the Chinese tradition of hospitality, although both complained about their unpleasant hosting experiences, during which they were financially exploited. This idea was widely and frequently mentioned among the sojourners and discussed in this chapter. Of note, Sojourner-AH has a much higher personal income than Sojourner-L, implying that hosting obligation may not be closely associated with the economic capital hosts possess. Therefore, for both sides, transnational family ties represent a primary pull factor for VR hosting and visiting, so that far-away family members can reunite, and family obligations fulfilled. Nevertheless, such a reunion does not necessarily lead to reduced mental issues, strengthened family ties, and improved family wellbeing, because conflicts may emerge, as mentioned in the theme of burden.

5.4.1.2 Hosts as a Source of Support

Chinese sojourners represent an important source of support for their stay-behind family members during VR travel, because of the family obligation/altruism that derives from their family ties. First, as mentioned above, Chinese sojourners often provide close family members with free meals and accommodation, sometimes even paying for their airfare.

Talking about hosting his parents-in-law, Sojourner-AG said that he will financially support them from the very beginning, including the visa application costs and airfare, saying:

There is no doubt that I will pay for all their expenditure, such as accommodation and food, during their travel in New Zealand (Male, aged 46+).

Relative-8's oldest sister migrated to New Zealand more than 20 years ago. Relative-8 takes her child to visit her and stays for at least three months every year. Throughout her VR visits, Relative-8 received financial support from her for almost all aspects. She proudly shares:

I don't need to worry about anything every time I visit her, including money. She prepared everything for me, even for the flight ticket (Female, aged 36-45).

Apparently, Relative-8 heavily relies on her migrant sister during the visits. She has a comparatively low income in China and therefore believes that the host possesses much stronger economic capital, which suggests strong hosting obligations. This view potentially causes tension because many sojourners actually strongly value reciprocity and felt exploited when their low-income VR visitors distort the meanings of hospitality and misunderstand hosting obligations.

In a contrary case, Relative-2's VR visiting experience clearly reflects mutual beneficial social exchanges. Relative-2 went to New Zealand to take care of her two nieces for her migrant younger sister, who was too busy to do so herself. To reciprocate the favours, during the three-month visit, her sister hosted her really well and happily paid for everything. Apparently, Relative-2's first visit strengthened their ties, improved wellbeing, and more importantly, left a very good impression on her host. In her second visit to New Zealand, Relative-2 took their elderly mother and other two sisters with her. In this bigger family

reunion, her migrant sister told them that they only need to pay for their airfare, “leave all the rest of the costs to her”.

Accommodation is the major support that Chinese sojourners often provide to their stay-behind family members during hosting, which represents a home away from home and a place of the Selves. Living in their migrant hosts’ houses, VR visitors can experience an illusory life that is contrary to the wider host society, enjoying Chinese dialects, homemade Chinese dumplings, and popular Chinese television shows, among others, frequently evoking a strong sense of safety.

However, as the theme of Destroying Family Ties indicated, visiting those social fields requires VR visitors to have a clear understanding of their social positions and respect the rules/habitus in the fields. Chinese sojourners strongly value reciprocity when they are hosting non-parent family members. Also, as Sojourner-A repeatedly emphasized, visitors should have realistic expectations of hosting, because hosting them should not significantly reduce their hosts’ quality of life, saying:

We all have our own issues to worry about in our daily lives, so that I cannot spend too much money on others (Male, aged 36-45).

Chinese sojourners’ knowledge of the host country is another important form of support for their VR visitors during hosting. They can provide their visitors with useful tourism information, even help them to design their entire travel plan. Sojourner-L always feels “so excited” knowing that her family members are going to visit her. She shares:

Depending on the length of time they can stay in New Zealand, I usually help them to design their travel plans and tell them how they can enjoy a very good time in this country (Female, aged 26-35).

VR visitors also consider their migrant hosts a reliable source of tourism information. Relative-7 expects to visit her migrant niece in New Zealand in the future. She believes that

her niece can provide her with useful information about tourism destinations and good restaurants. She found that most of the tourism websites describe their tourism destinations in a “very superficial” way, she says:

People cannot totally believe in the things on these websites, since they may find them to be different from those descriptions when they are actually visiting the destinations (Female, aged 26-35).

Of note, knowing their hosts can act as a reliable source of information provides the visitors with a strong feeling of safety. For instance, Relative-1 is aware of the practical value of her family ties with her migrant hosts, expecting that they can provide her with useful information “when I meet some problems or in trouble in New Zealand”.

For VR visitors, although the aforementioned financial support and tourism information is very important, their migrant hosts’ actual companionship is more valuable to them, especially for those stay-behinds who do not speak English. Travelling with their migrant hosts, they may be able to visit some places that they would never find by themselves, greatly improving their travel experiences. Parent-4 has visited her only child in New Zealand twice and is now planning to visit him again soon, saying:

I also went to somewhere which is very beautiful. There were some special birds. I took a lot of good pictures. I think I would never have known about that place if my son didn’t take me to there (Female, aged 46+).

Also, Chinese sojourners’ acting as travel companions improves the visitors’ safety. Some visitors may find themselves travelling in dystopias, in which almost all things/practices are unfamiliar, especially the traffic rules. For instance, Sojourner-C spent a great deal of time and energy on accompanying her VR visitors during hosting, frequently playing a role of driver, because she worries that those visitors may not be able to safely drive in New Zealand. Sojourner-U has lived in New Zealand for more than six years. He

believes that hosts' acting as companions are essential for their visitors to safely enjoy their travel, saying:

I think it is not safe for Chinese travellers to drive in New Zealand, since there were many accidents every year. We have very different traffic rules here! Anyway, it will be fine if I drive for them (Male, aged 46+).

Finally, the findings indicate that the desire to participate in VR visiting and hosting is largely determined by the nature and strength of family ties. For instance, some parents visit their migrant children once a year, while some stay-behinds never visit their migrant cousins. Also, only the stay-behind family members who believe that they have very close ties with their migrant hosts expect that they can spend more time staying and traveling together during visiting. Likewise, migrant hosts tend to spend more time, energy, and money on hosting those with whom they have closer ties, such as parents, reflecting stronger family obligation/altruism, and often avoid making excessive efforts to host other visitors. This idea echoes the themes of Burden and Comfortable Distance and is further elaborated below.

5.4.1.3 Escaping from Family Members

Sometimes, the existence of a transnational family tie may not be a pull factor, or a source of support, but an obstacle to international travel. For example, some stay-behind family members may intentionally avoid travelling to the host country to escape from seeing the sojourners, because they consider their family ties relatively weak, or the relationships somehow troubled, and visiting the migrant family members may require excessive time, energy, and money, implying that costs outweigh benefits.

As mentioned in the theme of Burden, Relative-11 always deliberately avoids visiting her migrant older cousin, because she believes that “more relatives mean heavier burden”. She believes that a VR travel requires her to spend more time and money, compared to a pure

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holiday trip to any other destination. Another reason she gave is that they have had a troubled relationship, although they grew up together. Also, her aunt, that is, her migrant cousin's mother, will think negatively of her, if Relative-11 went to New Zealand but did not visit her cousin. Therefore, New Zealand is a destination that Relative-11 may never choose, as she summarised:

I don't want to be forced to stay at my cousin's home, which will make me feel frustrated (Female, aged 26-35).

Sometimes, transnational family ties are neither an obstacle, nor a pull factor for international travel. However, visitors may still adopt some escape strategies to avoid staying in a host's house for too long, and to keep a comfortable distance, especially when those ties are not very close. Although Relative-1 enjoyed a prolonged visit to New Zealand, she intentionally visited her migrant hosts for "only a very short time", by booking a group tour, because she did not want to interrupt their daily lives. A deeper reason is "we are only distant relatives", as she emphasized. She believes that too many interactions during the visit may be more likely to ruin their already "very delicate" ties, rather than strengthen them. Also, to avoid involving her hosts in her plans too much, she adopted a visiting strategy, that is, she did not share her detailed travel plans with them, saying:

The weaker our relationship is, the fewer details I may share with my host (Female, aged 36-45).

As the theme of burden illustrated, Chinese sojourners sometimes do not enjoy hosting family members, especially those with whom they do not have close ties. However, directly refusing to host may cause them to lose face. Thus, just like Relative-1, they tend to use some escape strategies to ease the burden of hosting. A popular strategy is to suggest the stay-behinds book a group tour, so that someone else can take care of their family members, minimising the hosting effort. Sojourner-P booked a group tour for her nephew after she

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hosted him at home for a few days, because she was very busy at that time. However, Sojourner-P implied that she may spend more time and energy on hosting if they had a closer tie, saying:

He is not my immediate family member. He is the son of my older cousin.

However, I have a very close relationship with this older cousin, so I was willing to take care of this nephew (Female, aged 46+).

Another escape strategy that Chinese sojourners often adopt is to provide their VR visitors with selective tourism information about the host country, emphasizing the negative aspects, and more importantly, to clarify the boundaries of support the visitors can expect during their travel. Sojourner-C found that some VR visitors visited New Zealand just to exploit their family ties, so that she avoids hosting. She shares, frustratingly:

I tried my best to prevent them [the visits] from happening. I just told them that the weather will not be good during the time they are planning to visit New Zealand. Also, they need to pay for everything themselves (Female, aged 36-45).

Sojourner-C's comments echo those of Sojourner-T, indicating that migrant hosts may actively help their VR visitors to build reasonable expectations of hosting obligations, and better understand the meanings of hospitality, prior to VR visits. This echoes the theme of Destroying Family Ties, which indicates that a clear understanding of social positions and realistic expectations of hosting obligations should be developed prior to the visits.

5.4.1.4 Implications for Visiting Relatives Travel

Consequently, a model emerged, which demonstrates the hierarchy of ideas, as well as the relationships between the themes, regarding the dual effect of transnational family ties on VR travel (Figure 5-4). The first-level theme of Family Ties Affect Visiting Relatives

Travel comprises three second-level themes, which in turn consist of several third- and fourth-level themes, collectively illustrate the dual effect. First, family ties represent the major pull factor that motivates Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds to participate in VR hosting and visiting, so that family members can be reunited for a short but valuable period of time and exchange various forms of support, potentially resulting in strengthened emotional closeness, fulfilled family obligations, and improved family wellbeing.

Second, migrant hosts may act as a source of support for their VR visitors, out of felt family obligations, providing them with meals, accommodation, tourism information, and creating an illusion of staying at a home away from home. Visitors should respect the rules in their hosts' houses and have realistic expectations of hosting obligations. Sometimes, migrant hosts may act as a tour guide, greatly improving their visitors' travel experiences and safety. The efforts hosts are willing to make with hosting are largely determined by the nature and strength of family ties.

Third, weak or somewhat troubled family ties may represent an obstacle to VR travel, because both sides tend to carefully evaluate the benefits and costs of participating in VR travel and may use some strategies to escape from visiting and hosting, if they believe that (1) the costs outweigh benefits; (2) the meanings of hospitality are likely to be misunderstood; (3) or that too many host-guest interactions may ruin their delicate ties. Their social interactions do not always reflect social exchange theory, but are also shaped by other social dynamics, such as the nature and strength of family ties, and social obligations and norms, among others. An important social dynamic that may shape VR visiting and hosting behaviours is the family life cycle, which is discussed below.

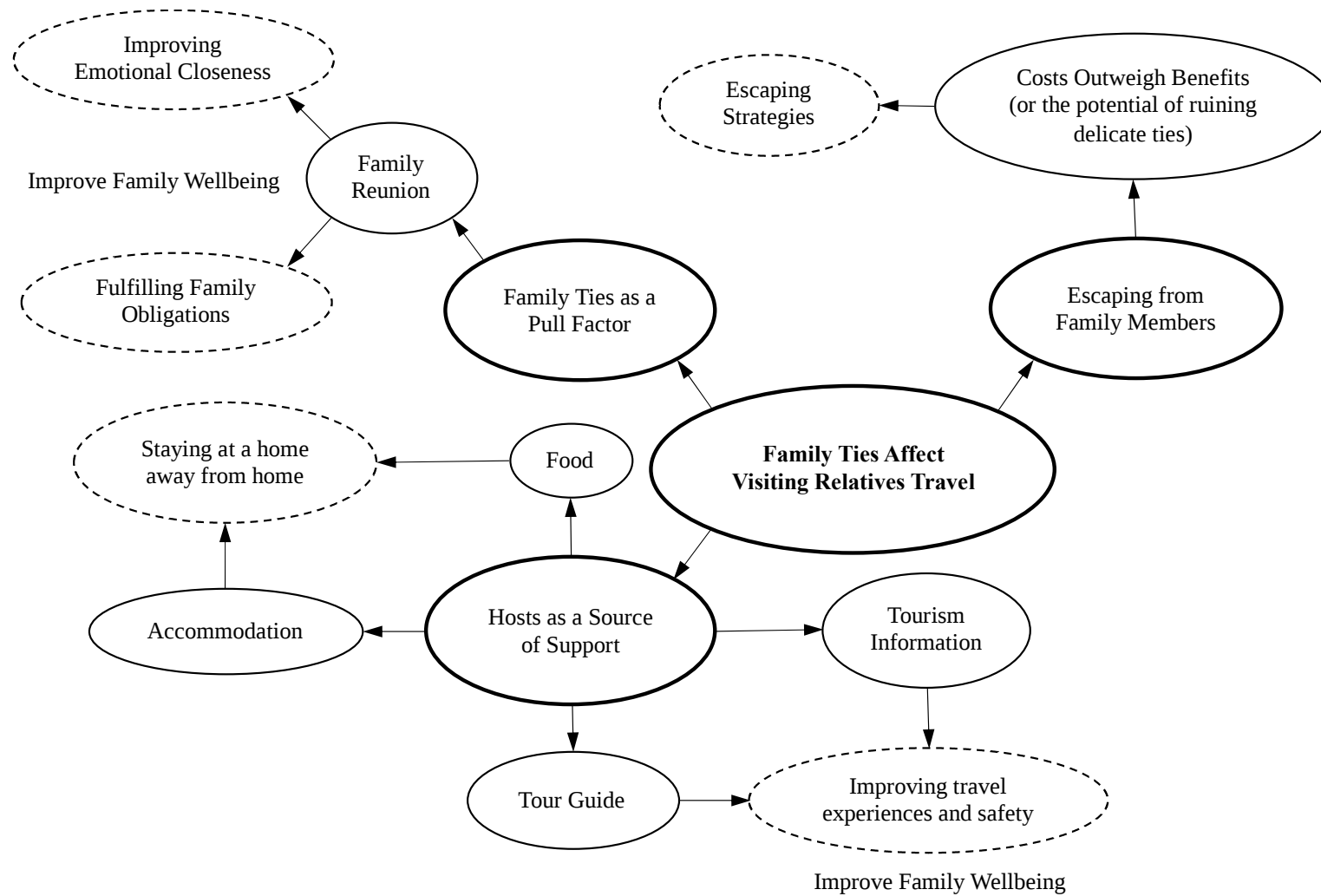


Figure 5-4 First-level theme: Family ties affect visiting relatives travel

5.4.2 Family Life Cycle Affects Visiting Relatives Travel

Data analysis and interpretation triggered an emerging idea, which led to an enhanced understanding of the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel. That is, not only transnational family ties, but also the family life cycle plays an important role in shaping VR visiting and hosting behaviours.

First, VR visiting behaviours often undergo changes as Chinese transnational families move to a new stage of the family life cycle, punctuated by significant life events, such as marriage, the birth of children, retirement, or death. For instance, several years ago, Sojourner-W's parents had to stay with their elders during Chinese New Year to fulfil the Chinese tradition of filial piety, as this festival has an important meaning for family reunions. However, the elders have passed away, so his parents can visit their migrant child during Chinese New Year, while helping him with household chores. As Sojourner-W says: "We can then stay together as a family, no matter what." For his stay-behind parents, the death of the elders means that their family members' needs have undergone significant changes, resulting in the changes in their felt obligations, as well as VR visiting behaviours.

Another common life event that signals significant changes in family members' needs and felt family obligations is the birth of children. Parent-1 used to visit New Zealand for family reunions and leisure purposes. Her migrant daughter's Kiwi father-in-law took her to travel around both the North and South Island. She shares:

...to see the famous lighthouse...the white beach, and others...we basically visited all the tourism attractions...my in-laws are locals. They all have their own villas nearby the sea. So, I visit their villas quite frequently (Female, aged 46+).

However, after her migrant daughter gave birth to her first grandchild, Parent-1's primary purpose of VR visiting changed to providing her daughter with childcare support,

rather than enjoying leisure activities, becoming a “full-time nanny”. For Parent-1, the newborn evokes a strong family obligation in her mind, which provides a stronger reason for her to visit New Zealand. It also significantly shaped her choice of activities during the visits, from leisure to caregiving, and potentially, the frequency of visiting. Parent-1’s experience mirrors that of Sojourner-W’s parents, suggesting that the felt family obligations tend to undergo changes as a result of significant life events, and greatly affect the social exchanges within Chinese transnational families.

In another case, Relative-6 visited New Zealand every year to reunite with her migrant husband, who has been working abroad for almost ten years. During the VR visits, they visited many tourism destinations and enjoyed the stunningly beautiful natural scenery. However, now, they have a young child, her son’s happiness has become her priority and “the main motive behind many activities” during her annual VR visits:

We want to make our child happy...we consider many things from our child’s angle, so that we were always looking for playgrounds for our child [during the visits] (Female, aged 26-35).

Of note, for migrant hosts, moving to a new life stage often leads to changes in their need for support, potentially resulting in changes in their desire to host VR visits. For instance, it seems that the sojourners who have young children tend to have a stronger desire to host stay-behind parents, compared to those who do not need childcare assistance. For those with young children, hosting the VR visits broadens their sources of caregiving, so that their objective wellbeing may be improved. This is clearly evidenced in Sojourner-F’s experience that was discussed in the theme of Instrumental Support.

5.4.2.1 Implications for Visiting Relatives Travel

Given the themes identified and discussed above, a model emerged, which demonstrates the hierarchy of, and relationships between, the themes/ideas that constitute the first-level theme of Family Life Cycle Affects Visiting Relatives Travel (Figure 5-5).

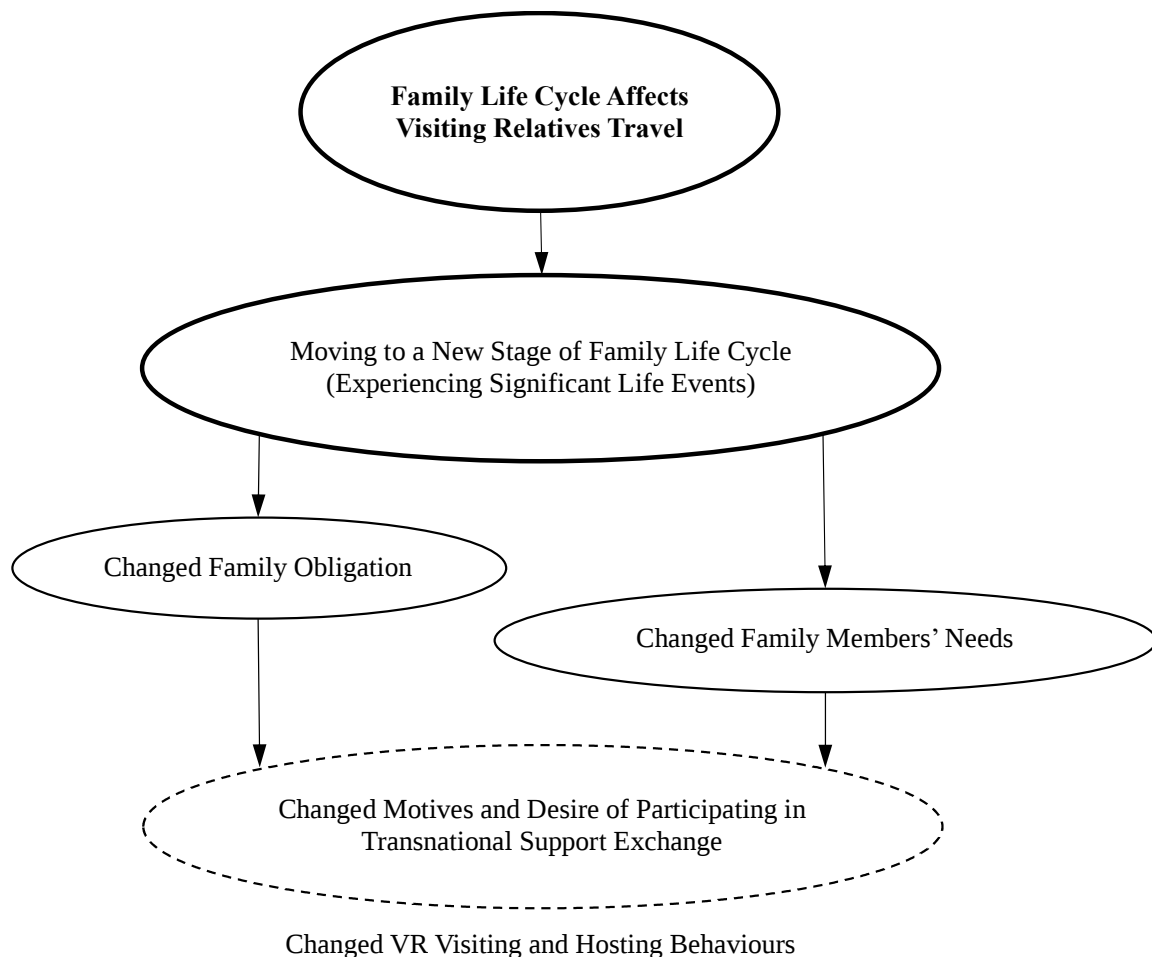


Figure 5-5 First-level theme: Family life cycle affects visiting relatives travel

This first-level theme explains the dynamics behind Chinese transnational families' changing VR visiting and hosting behaviours. As a family experiences significant life events and moves to a new stage of the family life cycle, family members' needs and felt obligations tend to undergo major changes, resulting in changes in their motives and their desire to participate in transnational support exchange, which are then reflected in their VR visiting

and hosting behaviours. In addition, moving to a new life stage may also facilitate (perhaps also inhibit) other forms of social exchange. For instance, stay-behind parents tend to provide more reverse remittances to the sojourners after the birth of their grandchildren. This is evidenced in the experiences of Sojourner-J and Sojourner-B (their parents helped them purchase houses in New Zealand after they became new mothers).

5.4.2.2 Three Stages of Family Life Cycle

The analysis process uncovered three stages of family life cycle in Chinese transnational families, based on the participants' diverse profiles and actual life experiences. Although Wilson (1985) argued that a family should be considered an entity that is always in motion, rather than a simple snapshot at one point in a certain life stage, recent studies indicated that a clearer view about the life stages of transnational families' life cycle provides researchers with a theoretical lens from which the dynamics behind families' transnational interactions can be better uncovered and interpreted (Baldassar et al., 2014; Bryceson, 2019; Janta et al., 2015; Wall & Bolzman, 2013).

5.4.2.2.1 Stage One: Sojourners are Single or Married without Children

Sixteen sojourners were single, and seven sojourners were married without children. Most are in the early stage of their career development, live busy lives, and often do not actively seek childcare assistance from their homeland. Their stay-behind parents are still of working age, relatively young, and mostly in good health, so can live independent lives. However, both sides do miss each other and need to ensure that their far-away family members are living good lives, so they tend to regularly communicate using WeChat, to share life experiences, trivial or exciting, and exchange emotional support, discussed under the theme of Two-Way Support. In Chinese tradition, owning a house is often considered an

important prerequisite for getting married, or is a sign of living a decent life. Some stay-behind parents thus have a strong sense of family obligation/altruism to send reverse remittances to their migrant children, helping them to purchase houses abroad, although the sojourners are already financially independent, paying most bills themselves.

5.4.2.2.2 Stage Two: Married Sojourner with Young Children

Nine sojourners were married and had young children. They share similar needs with those from Stage One, in that they continually exchange emotional support with their stay-behind parents by regularly sharing life experiences on WeChat. Some of them have purchased houses in New Zealand, financially supported by their parents. Of note, before the outbreak of the pandemic, they tended to consider their parents an important source of childcare assistance. Likewise, most of their parents have a strong sense of family obligation to help them take care of their young children and do household chores during VR travel.

Thus, compared to the first stage, both sides have a stronger desire for visiting and hosting, resulting in more frequent and prolonged VR travel from China to New Zealand. I myself am at this stage of life. This seems especially the case in a pandemic-aware world, wherein China is widely criticized for its role as the origin of the virus, and New Zealand is well-known as a COVID-free society (in the condition that there is no new case emerge). For Chinese sojourners at this life stage, hosting VR travel provides them with essential instrumental support (after the lifting of border control), while minimising the health risk of participating in international travel.

5.4.2.2.3 Stage Three: Middle-Age Sojourners with Adult Children

There were four middle-aged Chinese sojourners with adult children. The number of participants in this life stage is relatively small, but the problems they may be facing could

potentially cause severe tension and deep concern. This is evidenced in Sojourner-P's experience, in which she failed to fulfil her felt obligation to take care of her dependent elderly stay-behind father, because she had to take care of her new business in New Zealand, as mentioned under the theme of One-way Support. At this life stage, sojourners no longer need any form of support from their homeland. However, their stay-behind parents increasingly face health issues, so desperately need their presence, while it is increasingly difficult for those elderly people to visit New Zealand, because of their worsening health conditions. Thus, given the Chinese tradition of filial piety, the sojourners are morally obligated to return to China in times of need, providing their elderly parents with essential instrumental and emotional support.

Consequently, the family life cycle determines family members' needs and felt family obligations, resulting in their ever-changing practices of transnational social exchange. Of note, this study does not further elaborate on the categorisation of family life stages, which appears to be beyond my current research focus. Rather, I attempted to innovatively addresses the important role of the family life cycle in shaping Chinese transnational families' lives, not only VR visiting and hosting behaviours, but also other aspects in which various social exchanges are made.

5.5 Transnational Family Ties, Family Wellbeing, and VR Travel: An Emerging Conceptual Model

Overall, in this chapter I have attempted to address the role of the over-stretched family ties in shaping Chinese transnational families' lives, through portraying an interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel. The fundamental research focus is the dynamics behind the interplay, that is, the various forms of social exchange across national boundaries, which are shaped by a range of factors, such as the desire to balance

benefits and costs, felt family obligations, family norms and values, and the family life cycle, among others. Also, the findings help to explain how transnational family ties are maintained, and illustrate the continual renegotiation of the meanings embedded in the ties. As this study proceeds, a new conceptual model begins to emerge, portraying the lives of Chinese transnational sojourners and stay-behind family members (Figure 5-6).

This conceptual model is constructed by integrating the five first-level themes discussed in this chapter, reflecting the correlations among the key ideas identified from the qualitative data. As this model demonstrates, all the first-level themes, except for the last one regarding the family life cycle, collectively portray the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel, while the correlations among the themes denote the continual social exchanges between both sides, the important factors shaping the exchanges, and the implications for family wellbeing and ties. The last first-level theme identifies an innovative lens of the family life cycle, from which the dynamics behind the interplay can be better identified and explained.

First, the maintenance of transnational family ties has both benefits and costs. On the one hand, it enables cross-border social exchanges, which include financial, instrumental, and emotional support, resulting in improved family wellbeing and strengthened family ties. On the other hand, in transnational social interactions, the comfortable distance between the two sides may be broken, potentially threatening sojourners' wellbeing and family ties. These ideas echo the first-level theme of Family Ties Affect Wellbeing.

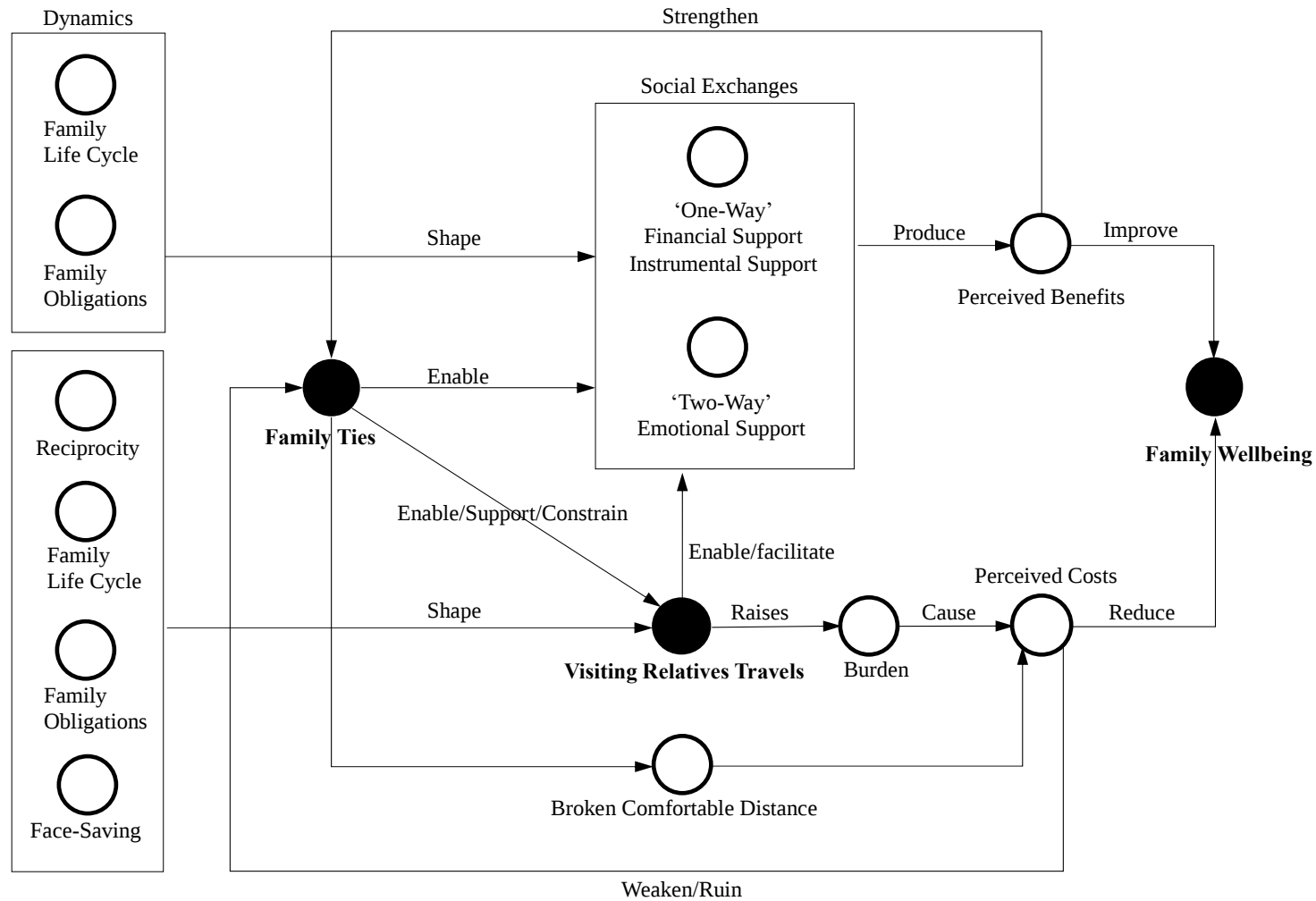


Figure 5-6 Conceptual model: Interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and visiting relatives travel

Second, transnational family ties shape VR travel. On the one hand, they constitute a pull factor that motivates VR visiting and hosting and represent a reliable source of support that visitors may enjoy during the visits. On the other hand, both sides may deliberately avoid visiting and hosting, using escape strategies, because of weak/troubled family ties and/or perceived burdens. These ideas echo the first-level theme of Family Ties Affect Visiting Relatives Travel.

Third, VR travel has both benefits and costs. On the one hand, they allow geographically dispersed family members to reunite for a short period, so that transnational social exchanges can be enabled/facilitated, the gap in habitus narrowed, family ties strengthened, life experience enriched, and leisure benefits acquired. On the other hand, sometimes VR visits may be a burden for both sides, especially when important social protocols are ignored, resulting in reduced wellbeing and weakened ties. These ideas echo the first-level themes of Visiting Relatives Travel Affects Wellbeing and Visiting Relatives Travel Affects Family Ties.

Fourth, the family life cycle determines family members' needs and felt family obligations, thus greatly shapes transnational social exchanges, especially VR visiting and hosting behaviours. These ideas echo the first-level theme of Family Life Cycle Affects Visiting Relatives Travel.

Finally, this model illustrates the way social dynamics reflect social exchange theory and the way the theory accounts for the dynamics. It seems that social exchange theory alone is insufficient to explain the dynamics behind transnational social interactions, in particular, VR visiting and hosting behaviours, because the interactions are not only shaped by the constant evaluation of benefits and costs, and the rule of reciprocity, but also associated with other important influencing factors, such as felt family obligations and the desire to save face.

Chapter Five: Family Finding

The construction of this model integrates the five first-level themes and helps to answer the three contributing research questions, which in turn answer the first overarching research question. Of note, this new model portrays the interplay quite differently from the model that was constructed based on my life experience and review of the literature, echoing the evolving nature of my understanding of the phenomenon. To achieve further understanding of Chinese sojourners' transnational lives, the next chapter (Chapter Six) interprets the qualitative data, regarding the nature and meanings of transnational friendships, that is, the sojourners' ties with old friends in China, in order to explore the role of the friendships in shaping their lives. VF travel from China to New Zealand is used as the research context. As a result, the enhanced understanding of living transnational lives, from a family sphere and a friend sphere, can be discussed against the literature in the Discussion Chapter (Chapter Seven), contributing to knowledge, theory, and practice.

Chapter Six: Friend Finding

6.1 Introduction

This Friend Finding Chapter explores the phenomenon of living transnational lives from a friend sphere. For Chinese sojourners, the geographically stretched friendships with stay-behind friends in China play an important role in shaping their lives, although the ties face challenges, as a result of prolonged separation, the widening cultural/habitus gap, and the rise of a sense of otherness. Therefore, this chapter addresses the second overarching research question:

What is the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and visiting friends travel in the lives of Chinese transnational sojourners?

In so doing, in this chapter, I attempt to answer the three contributing research questions.

What is the nature of transnational friendships?

What roles do transnational friendships play in shaping sojourners' lives?

What roles does visiting friends travel play in shaping sojourners' lives?

In this chapter, the themes are organized around the first contributing research question, representing the interrelated components that constitute transnational friendships and reveal the nature and meanings of the ties. Meanwhile, the interpretation of the themes answers the other two contributing research questions, because a clear view of the nature and meanings of transnational friendships offers an enhanced understanding of the roles of the over-stretched ties and VF travel in shaping sojourners' lives (this view is evidenced in the interpretation of the themes and further explained in the end of this chapter). In particular, the interpretation uncovers the transnational social exchanges between the sojourners and stay-behind friends, the factors that shape the exchanges, and the implications for their wellbeing and ties. Further, the findings reveal some of the tensions, challenges, and opportunities the

sojourners experienced in their continual interactions with their old friends. Therefore, the findings in this chapter and those from the Chapter Five (Family) interact, collectively portraying the phenomenon of living transnational lives.

6.1.1 Themes

Table 6-1 illustrates the complexity of the thematic structure and shows the number of mentions (i.e., sample responses). As in Chapter Five (Family Finding Chapter), most of the themes were identified based on the number of times the concept was mentioned. However, a few themes are considered important, even though they were not frequently remarked on by the participants, because those topics resulted in highly emotional reactions from, or heated discussions among the participants, reflecting the importance of these issues in shaping the friendships and wellbeing.

In Table 6-1, the hierarchy of ideas is constructed of three thematic levels. In general, there are two first-level themes: (1) Closeness-Distance (internal factors) and (2) Interactional Dynamics (external factors). Each has two second-level themes, which in turn are made up of several third-level themes. These themes are interrelated in their role of forming a clear view of the nature and meanings of the transnational friendships, and collectively uncovering the role of the ties in shaping Chinese sojourners' lives. The discussion of the themes focuses on the ideas emerged from the discourses, reflecting the evolving nature of my understanding of the social phenomenon.

For each of these themes, I provide a description of what the theme is about and evidence (in the form of participants' comments) to support the interpretation of the theme. Given my hybrid identity of in-betweenness (iteratively shifting between a researcher and a Chinese sojourner), some deeper dynamics and cultural nuances behind the quotes were uncovered. The participants' quotes are contextualized by presenting the participants'

profiles, life experiences, and the context in which the comments were made. The following sections discuss the themes identified from the analysis of the data.

Table 6-1 Thematic structure and sample responses

First-level themes	Second-level themes	Third-level themes	Number of mentions
Closeness-Distance	Similarity-Difference	Similar Worldviews	42
		Value-Based Mutual Understanding	98
		Cultural and Social Closeness	62
		Similar Socio-Economic Status	21
	Subtotal	-	223
	Emotional Closeness	Willingness in Helping Each Other	55
		A Sense of Obligation	39
		Fond Memories	27
		Mutual Trust	9
	Subtotal	-	130
Interactional Dynamics	Characteristics of Transnational Interactions	Good Communication	37
		Regular Contact	37
		Good Behaviours	24
	Subtotal	-	98
	Social Protocols	Friendly Attitude	32
		Comfortable Distance	26
	Subtotal	-	58

6.2 Closeness-Distance

The data analysis identified two first-level themes, which shape the maintenance, functioning, and dissolution of transnational friendships: (1) Closeness-Distance and (2) Interactional Dynamics. The theme of Closeness-Distance describes the bonds and tensions between Chinese sojourners in New Zealand and their stay-behind friends in China and has two second-level themes: (1) Similarity-Difference and (2) Emotional Closeness. These are discussed next.

6.2.1 Similarity-Difference

The second-level theme of Similarity-Difference refers to the situation that Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends are alike in certain ways, such as sharing the same values or characters, which lays a solid foundation for the initiation, maintenance, and functioning of friendships. As Gareis (1999) stated, similarity is perceived as important in many cultures where people tend to interact with similar others. This second-level theme consists of four interrelated third-level themes: (1) Similar Worldviews, (2) Value-Based Mutual Understanding, (3) Cultural and Social Closeness, and (4) Similar Socio-Economic Status, which are discussed below.

6.2.1.1 Similar Worldviews

The notion of worldview plays an important role in shaping transnational interactions and ties between the sojourners and stay-behind friends. Our worldviews represent our basic attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about reality, guiding the ways we live our lives (Sire, 2004) and interpret the things around us (Naugle, 2002). The concept of habitus may be used an alternative term for worldview. It represents our different “structures of perception, conception, and action” (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 43), which can be reflected in our different ways of talking, moving, and making things, among others (Jenkins, 2002).

There was an increasingly widening gap in the worldviews of the sojourners abroad and their stay-behind friends in China. Sojourner-N and her family have lived in New Zealand for many years. She noticed that her worldview has changed a great deal, after migrating to New Zealand, resulting in the widening gap between her and her stay-behind friends. She explains:

I have been living in a different environment from theirs, interacting with different people. I believe that has changed my value system about the world and my life to some extent...For now, I think that there are some differences between the cultures we have (Female, aged 36-45).

She found that such a growing worldview/habitus gap results in a sense of otherness, so that it is increasingly difficult for her to join her stay-behind friends' discussions on WeChat, because she worried that misunderstandings may easily occur, saying: "I just keep quiet...I am really cautious about sharing my opinions with them."

In addition, the cultural environment in China's society has been rapidly and profoundly changing, further widening the gap in their worldviews. Friend-3 used to live in New Zealand and came back to China many years ago. He says: "The environments [China] we are living in have changed to a great extent, so that our worldviews have also changed a lot." Similarly, talking about the construction of a worldview, Friend-8 strongly emphasized the role of China's fast-developing society, saying:

[living in China] The angles you consider something from may be different from those of your friends, who have lived in New Zealand for a long time. That's because you and them have been living in two different countries with different social and cultural environments...For some Chinese people who have lived in New Zealand for a long time, their image of China hasn't changed, so that they may think that the life in their home country is still the same as when they left many years ago (Male, aged 26-35).

The emerging gap in their worldviews frequently gives rise to a sense of otherness, largely shaping their transnational friendships. As Sojourner-L mentioned: "Your friendships may be getting weak gradually, if you find that your worldviews are quite different from each other now." This is clearly evidenced in Sojourner-T's life experience. She met her New

Zealand husband in China many years ago and then migrated to New Zealand as her husband's mom was experiencing severe health issues. She has rarely visited China since then. Now, staying with her old friends in China makes her "very uncomfortable", because she is no longer interested in their topics of conversation. She therefore repeatedly emphasized that she does not want to "waste" her time on them, reflecting a strong desire of self-othering. She says: "I am not like them anymore!" Similarly, Sojourner-X has lived in New Zealand for many years. She intentionally preserves her ties with only a few stay-behind friends in China, because she believes that good friends should be "like-minded", sharing similar worldviews. Most of her friends in China no longer meet this requirement.

For stay-behind friends in China, sharing similar worldviews with the sojourners is also an important influencing factor in the maintenance of their over-stretched friendships. Friend-4 indicated that she only intentionally preserves close relationships with two old friends in New Zealand, whose worldviews are similar to hers, because the gap in their worldviews may frequently result in conflicts in their transnational interactions. Similarly, Friend-8 recently enjoyed a three-months visit to his migrant best friend in New Zealand. He believes that the reason their friendship will last is that their value systems are still largely "compatible".

As a result of the emerging gap in their worldviews, Chinese sojourners may worry that VF hosting may result in conflicts and therefore become increasingly reluctant to host their stay-behind friends. Sojourner-AB said that she only wants to host visiting family members, rather than friends, because of many unpleasant VF hosting experiences. She found that she could never meet her visiting friends' expectations of her. Her friends believe that she has certain responsibilities to them, while Sojourner-AB strongly disagrees. She then explained that there is a huge gap between their worldviews/habitus, saying:

We have been living overseas for too long, so that our mind becomes very simple and naïve, compared with people from China (Female, aged 46+).

Therefore, given the widening gap between their worldviews, it is increasingly important for far-away friends to respect each other's differences, while considering the interests of others in their transnational interactions, to avoid causing conflicts that potentially weaken their ties and threaten wellbeing. This idea leads to the next component of transnational friendship, that is, value-based mutual understanding.

6.2.1.2 Value-Based Mutual Understanding

The theme of Value-Based Mutual Understanding consists of three important virtues in the interactions between far-away friends: (1) respect each other's differences, (2) consider the interests of others, and (3) practice reciprocity. First, close friends should always respect each other's differences. Friend-8 indicated that people should "learn to accept both the positive and negative parts of our friends". He believes that it is completely normal that we do not agree with our far-away friends over something. He explains:

The angles from which you consider something may be different from those of your friends who have lived in New Zealand for a long time. That's because you have been living in two different countries... We didn't experience each other's life, so that we don't know each other's pain and the historical contexts (Male, aged 26-35).

He therefore believes that close friends "need to compromise with each other when there is a dispute". He explained: "It is very difficult to change a person's mind." Similarly, Sojourner-E indicated that good friends should respect the differences between their worldviews, because they may have different life experiences. Then, although some

differences between them may be inevitable, some participants do enjoy the transnational interactions with their far-away friends, with whom they share similar cultural backgrounds.

Second, more than half of the Chinese sojourners strongly emphasized the importance of considering the interests of others in their interactions with their stay-behind friends. Sojourner-S and her husband are in their fifties. They have hosted many VF visits from China. The standard she uses to evaluate visiting friends is very simple. She shares:

They don't need to be very polite and have good manners in every detail, just want them to be able to consider the interests of others (Female, aged 46+).

Similarly, Sojourner-F is a middle-aged sojourner who lives in New Zealand with his wife, young daughter, and elderly parents. He believes that good friends should “put themselves in others’ shoes”. Talking about borrowing money between friends, he said that he will not blame a friend for refusing lend money to him, because “you don’t know whether this friend was also experiencing some difficulties”. Also, Friend-8 believes that his best friend in New Zealand can always “consider his interests” so he strongly relied on this migrant friend during his last VF visit, who also provided him with much useful information about migrating to New Zealand. He shares:

He knows what I should do during a tough time. That's also what I normally do to my friends (Male, aged 26-35).

Sojourner-F and Friend-8’s experience suggests that “considering the interests of others” is not only important for far-away friends to reduce conflicts in their social interactions, but also enables/facilitates the exchange of valuable information/suggestions across national boundaries.

Of note, Chinese sojourners often find themselves to be particularly vulnerable and easily exploited when their friends do not consider their interests during VF visits, often

resulting in unpleasant hosting experiences and weakened/ruined ties. Sojourner-AB strongly complained about some friends' visiting behaviours, saying:

They think that I have a responsibility to accompany them throughout their travel in New Zealand, without considering my interests at all! I also have very limited and precious time outside my work...I don't want to be too tired and exhausted...We don't want to visit the tourism destinations that we have visited many times...I also have my own things to do! My husband had to work (Female, aged 46+).

Sojourner-AB's comments clearly explain why some sojourners consider this theme very important in evaluating far-away friendships. For them, considering the interests of others means that their visiting friends understand their hosts' difficulties and therefore have reasonable expectations of hosting. Sojourner-AL is always very busy, because she has to work and take care of her young son by herself. She thus cannot spend a lot of time with her visiting friends. However, she believes that her stay-behind friends understand her difficulties, especially those with whom she has close relationships.

Third, the virtue of considering the interests of others is closely related to another significant cultural value, the notion of Reciprocity, which is associated with the expectations of receiving commensurate return in transnational interactions. This idea of Reciprocity was widely and repeatedly mentioned by both the sojourners and stay-behind friends. This finding supports social exchange theory, suggesting that people are inclined to participate in social exchanges that are perceived to be rewarding (Blau, 1964). Sojourner-G has lived alone in New Zealand for more than six years. He considers reciprocity a common expectation between him and his close friends in China. He shares:

If we help others, we may expect some favours in the future in return (Male, aged 25-35).

Similarly, Friend-4 studied and worked in New Zealand for almost 10 years, before finally returning to China. She keeps in contact with her friends abroad and considers reciprocity “the deeper reason why we need to maintain our friendships with each other”. She shares:

They can help us to do something in New Zealand. Likewise, sometimes, they also need our help in China, since most of their family members are still living in China, such as their parents. We can therefore help their family members to solve some problems if it is necessary (Female, aged 26-35).

Friend-4’s comments indicate that stay-behind friends may consider social exchanges an important motive behind the maintenance of their transnational friendships. In their transnational interactions, reciprocity is not simply a practice of exchanging favours, but often considered an important virtue that reflects an essential moral standard, or “美德”. Sojourner-AO has run a café with her husband for more than ten years. She perceives reciprocity as an important social protocol and moral obligation, which reflects “a shared value” between friends, saying:

In Chinese culture, we believe in reciprocity, which means that you should pay for the dinner this time, if your friend paid for the last...[otherwise] You should have brought some gift for your friend if you don’t pay for the dinner (Female, aged 36-45).

Sojourner-AO’s comments imply that the way of practicing reciprocity is flexible. Several participants spontaneously mentioned, “there is no set rule for how to practice reciprocity...It’s a tacit understanding.” As a tacit understanding, they do not need to explicitly mention the concept in their interactions. Sojourner-L has hosted her friends from China several times, describing reciprocity as “a part of human nature”. She says, “I would treat my visitors in a better way, if they helped me financially.” Sojourner-AG lives in New

Zealand with his young son and wife. He believes that reciprocity is a part of traditional Chinese culture, namely “礼尚往来 (courtesy demands reciprocation)”, which makes people feel as though they are “being treated fairly”. He explains:

There is no need to calculate each other's expenditure too precisely, just make people feel that they are not being exploited (Male, aged 46+).

Sojourner-AG's comments suggest that the evaluation of commensurate return is not rigorous, but based on the subjective perception of the respect received from others, in one way or another.

In light of the above, practicing reciprocity in their transnational interactions reflects that both sides are in equal social positions, honouring mutual respect (the notion of mutual respect also lays the foundation for the virtue of respecting each other's differences). Friend-4 perceives reciprocity as “extremely important”, because she believes that a close friendship should be built based on the principle that “we are equal”. Sojourner-W hosted his two best friends in New Zealand and occasionally visits his old friends in China. He strongly believes that real friends should be in equal positions, saying:

As friends, we should give roughly the same as we receive from each other, reflecting that we are in the equal status and respect each other. Otherwise, you are not friends.

Sojourner-W's comments indicate that friendships may be ruined if reciprocity is not well practiced. Most of the participants mentioned that they do not like friends who exploit their ties. Friend-11 has had several unpleasant experiences of being exploited by her friends. She believes that people who exploit their friendships have a value system that is “against common moral principles”. Similarly, Sojourner-T described those people as “greedy and demanding”. These comments were repeatedly mentioned in the context of the sojourners' unpleasant hosting experiences.

In the context of VF travel, more Chinese sojourners in New Zealand emphasized the importance of practicing reciprocity, compared to their counterparts in China. Those migrant hosts tend to perceive themselves as particularly vulnerable to being exploited by their VF visitors during hosting. They found that some friends visited them in New Zealand only to enjoy free accommodation, meals, and transportation. Sojourner-AO considers reciprocity very important in her interactions with her VF visitors. She always feels “frustrated” when her guests “don’t pay anything” during their visits. She emphasized: “your relationship cannot be good if the things like that happen!” Similarly, Sojourner-AB is now in her late fifties. She found that her friendships with some old friends in China are “very weak and fragile”. Those friends visited her in New Zealand, only to “exploit our friendship”. They not only asked her to provide them with free food and accommodation, but also asked her to travel with them and pay for the costs, which placed “heavy pressure” on her. Eventually, some friendships were ruined because she failed to fulfil her visitors’ expectations of her.

However, a few sojourners mentioned that they do not mind being “exploited” by their VF visitors, as long as they get pleasure from their company and enjoy hosting them. Sojourner-AA is a young sojourner who has not hosted VF visitors from China. He shared his expectation of hosting stay-behind friends, saying:

I can find enjoyment from spending money on them when we are having a dinner and drinking together. We can discuss different topics very deeply, which make me feel very comfortable (Male, aged 26-35).

These hosts are aware that their visiting friends may exploit their ties during their visits, but still consider their interactions rewarding, because they believe that hosting provides them with leisure benefits, resulting in improved wellbeing. This reflects the evaluation of benefits and costs of VF hosting.

Nevertheless, although they face the risk of being exploited, Chinese sojourners are often reluctant to directly complain about undesirable visiting behaviours, since they believe that they may lose face if they do so. Sojourner-AR has lived in New Zealand for more than 16 years and hosted many VF visitors who did not reciprocate the favours they received, but she still hosted them graciously to avoid losing face. She said that some hosts tend to consider hosting their friends even more important than hosting family members, “because they don’t want to lose face in front of their friends”. Sojourner-AR says:

I want to take good care of my friends who visit me in New Zealand, so that they can tell others that I am a good friend when they return to China
(Female, aged 26-35).

Her comments suggest that Chinese sojourners may evaluate the benefits and costs of hosting and perceive enhancing their social status in their homeland as a form of return from their hosting investment, even though the social exchanges during VF hosting are somewhat unbalanced/unfair.

As a result, to avoid being exploited by their VF visitors, many Chinese sojourners said that they tend to suggest that their friends in China join a group tour during their travel in New Zealand, so that their hosting commitments are reduced, an escape strategy.

Nevertheless, not all visiting friends want to exploit their friendships with their hosts. Some stay-behind friends also value reciprocity and emphasized that they do not want to bother their hosts too much during their visits. Friend-13 has a very close friend living in New Zealand. However, she said that she will certainly pay for herself during her visit, because “I don’t want to take advantage of others, nor bother them.” Likewise, talking about her expectations for her hosts during a VF visit in New Zealand, Friend-5 repeatedly expressed the idea that she does not want to be a “burden” to anyone else.

Further, the tension between VF hosts and visitors can be eased to some extent, if the visitors can actively reciprocate the favours they received, in one way or another. For instance, Friend-11 left some money for her hosts in her last visit to New Zealand, because “they took me to many places and treated me very well during my stay”. She believes that monetary return is a good way to reciprocate the kindness from her hosts.

Interestingly, no stay-behind friend mentioned that they want to reciprocate the favours from their migrant hosts, through providing them with childcare assistance, or helping them to do some household chores. However, in the context of VR travel, both the hosts and visitors mentioned that providing childcare assistance and doing household chores can be a good way for visitors to reciprocate the favours they received. A possible explanation is that in Chinese tradition hosts will lose face if their friends have to do household chores during their visits. However, this tradition does not apply to the host-guest interactions during VR visits, because family members are often considered an important source of instrumental support. Therefore, this finding suggests that hosting friends and hosting family members may follow different rules, which underpin different social exchanges, and shape wellbeing and ties differently.

6.2.1.3 Cultural and Social Closeness

This theme of Cultural and Social Closeness consists of two major dimensions: (1) Cultural Closeness and (2) Similar Characters/Moral-Qualities. The cultural closeness between Chinese sojourners in New Zealand and their stay-behind friends in China plays an important role in shaping their cross-border social interactions and geographically stretched ties. Sojourner-S enjoys hosting friends whose cultural backgrounds are close to hers, because they not only have more topics of conversation in common, but also feel more “comfortable” in their interactions. Similarly, Friend-4 used to study and work in New

Zealand. She said that she normally has a strong feeling of social inclusion when she is interacting with people with whom she shares a similar cultural background. For instance, she agreed to participate in this study because she feels that she has a close tie with me, saying: “I can feel that we have a relatively close relationship after you told me that you are studying in New Zealand”. Their experience suggests that closer cultural backgrounds potentially facilitate transnational interactions, and social exchanges as a result.

Chinese sojourners’ cultural backgrounds often undergo considerable changes because they have experienced more changes in their living environments as a result of their emigration, compared to their counterparts in China. This is reflected in many participants’ comments. The participants’ perceptions of the meanings of cultural background, worldview, and value system overlap. These terms and the notion of habitus are thus used interchangeably in data analysis.

There is an increasingly widening gap in the habitus between these far-away friends, which in turn leads to the rise of misunderstandings and loss of topics of conversation in common, which constrain them from exchanging valuable information and emotional support, and therefore threaten their over-stretched friendships. As Sojourner-AQ explains, it is the differences between her life experience and those of her stay-behind friends in China that created the difficulty in their communication. She believes that these differences can only increase, as time goes on, clearly concluding: “We are what we experienced”. Before emigration, Sojourner-F and his old friends in China used to understand each other very well when talking about something in detail. However, he has lived in New Zealand for many years and finds that it has become “very difficult” to understand the things those friends are talking about.

Sojourner-P is now middle-aged and has lived in New Zealand for many years. She found that it is increasingly difficult for her to understand many things happening in China,

and the topics she is interested in are now quite different from those of her stay-behind friends, including her very best friend, although they used to have “endless heart-to-heart conversations” before her emigration. She says: “We have been living in an environment and lifestyle that are totally different from those in China for many years”. Therefore, as she reluctantly admitted, her friendships with her stay-behind friends have been gradually weakening.

Some stay-behind friends also noticed this widening gap in habitus and its obvious effects on their transnational friendships. Friend-14 is a transnational sojourner herself. She went to New Zealand in 2006 to pursue higher education and returned to China in 2012. She has worked in Beijing as an accountant for five years. She still maintains contact with some migrant friends in New Zealand. However, she found that it is very difficult for them to find common ground now. She shared sadly: “I found that the feeling has changed [in their interactions]”, implying an increase in a sense of otherness and weakening ties between these far-away friends.

Additionally, as both sides indicated, China has been developing very fast, so that life in China is rapidly changing, while much Chinese sojourners’ knowledge and understanding of their homeland has not changed. This fact furthers the already widening gap in their cultural backgrounds. Sojourner-AB said that she had to learn some new things, such as bicycle-sharing service and WeChat payments, every year she and her family visited China, saying:

We can no longer keep up with the speed of development in China, no matter how long ago we left the country (Female, aged 46+).

Sojourner-AJ has lived in New Zealand for more than six years. She felt that she had “fallen behind” her old friends every time she returned to China, because there were many new things she did not know about. Similarly, although Sojourner-N got her PhD degree in

New Zealand, she found that she has no idea about many things her old friends in China talk about, saying: “Some terms they use are totally unfamiliar to me.”

However, the development of communication technologies, especially social networking sites (SNSs), provides Chinese sojourners with an opportunity to freely access information about developments in China, which in turn narrows the cultural gap between far-away friends. Sojourner-AN said that she can get information about China online, saying: “We are now living in a world in which everything can be connected through the internet.” Sojourner-AL and Sojourner-AR told me that they know “almost everything about what is happening in China” without going back there, through reading the posts/news on WeChat, although may not be in a “timely manner”. As a result, they can have more topics of conversation and interests in common with their friends in China.

Nevertheless, it was increasingly difficult for far-away friends to understand each other, regardless of the increasingly diversified means of communication, because of the widening gap in their habitus. This is evidenced in Sojourner-W’s “disappointing and awkward” experience during his return visits. Before the pandemic, he used to return to China and meet his old friends every year. However, the face-to-face interactions made him realise that they are now very different in almost all aspects. As he pointed out: “Most of the things among us have undergone changes.” He therefore no longer wants to express his opinions in front of those friends, because they can no longer understand each other properly. He concluded that the reason behind those changes is the fact that they have been living in different socio-cultural environments. Consequently, the dimension of cultural closeness suggests that the gap in the cultural backgrounds between far-away friends plays an important role in shaping their transnational interactions, exchange of information/emotional support, and as a result, their over-stretched friendships.

Another dimension of the theme of Cultural and Social Closeness was the extent to which two friends share similar moral qualities, or similar characters. Many participants emphasized the importance of good character to achieve pleasant social interactions and maintain friendships. Friend-1 studied and worked in New Zealand for more than seven years before she returned to China. She still maintains close friendships with her far-away friends in New Zealand. They always enjoy their interactions, as she explains: “There is almost no conflict between us”. She believes the reason is that she has a “good character”. In this context, the concept of good character may be seen in terms of being a good person.

Chinese sojourners are more likely to emphasize the importance of good character to preserving friendships, compared to their counterparts in China, implying that the sojourners may worry about hosting VF visitors with undesirable characters. Sojourner-S is always reluctant to seek close relationships with her stay-behind friends in China who seem to have different characters than her, saying: “I have to consider whether we can accept each other’s characters.” She considers moral quality very important in maintaining their ties and often has a strong sense of otherness toward the friends, whose moral qualities have proved to be poor.

Therefore, discovering undesirable characters often leads to a sense of otherness and loss of friendships. As Sojourner-AH shared: “Others will not be friends with you if they find that there are some problems with your character.” Sojourner-AQ strongly agreed with Sojourner-AH’s view and concluded with an old Chinese proverb, that is, “物以类聚，人以群分”, which means “People with bad characters can only make friends with those who are similar to them”. Although Sojourner-Z only communicates with her stay-behind friends occasionally, she noticed some problems with some friends’ moral characters when they posted some obscene images in their WeChat groups (i.e., instant chatrooms), she says: “They may consider those behaviours to be normal, while I perceive them as unacceptable”.

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As a result, she realised that she can no longer have close relationships with those stay-behind friends.

Some Chinese sojourners noticed problems with their visiting friends' moral qualities during hosting, frequently resulting in a sense of otherness. Sojourner-S said that she only enjoys hosting the friends who are "reasonable, honest, and always talk straight", saying: "It will leave a bad impression if my guests always talk big and pretend to be rich in front of me." The sense of otherness may shape the hosts' attitude toward their visitors, and host-guest interactions as a result. This is evidenced in Sojourner-AH's recent hosting experience. He felt very uncomfortable about some things a VF visitor did during hosting, which implied an undesirable character. He therefore deliberately kept a distance from him throughout the visit although their friendship used to be very close. He shares:

My impression of some friends used to be very good before they visited me in New Zealand, so that I was happy about their coming visits. However, I found when I met them in New Zealand that they have changed so much from my prior impression, which in turn changed my attitude towards them (Male, aged 36-45).

Finally, the dimension of similar character is closely associated with the notion of reciprocity, because Chinese people consider the failure to practice the virtue of reciprocity to be a strong indicator of bad character. Sojourner-F said that there is no point in helping the friends who exploit friendships (break the rule of reciprocity), because they do not have a decent character. He says: "they will never give you something back in return!" Similarly, Sojourner-E repeatedly mentioned that he does not like friends who take advantage of others, which implies a mismatch in their respective characters. For Chinese sojourners, transnational friendships that are not rewarding are unlikely to be carefully preserved.

6.2.1.4 Similar Socio-Economic Status

The theme of Similar Socio-Economic Status represents the situation in which the sojourners and their stay-behind friends have similar economic capital and social positions. However, the participants tend to emphasize the importance of economic capital, i.e., assets that are convertible into money (Bourdieu, 1986), in determining their socio-economic status, using financial capability and social class interchangeably.

The participants tend to build and maintain closer ties with friends who have a similar socio-economic status to themselves. As Friend-4 pointed out, “Our close friends’ financial capabilities shouldn’t be much higher or lower than ours.” Similarly, for Sojourner-T, financial capability is the second most important influencing factor, after moral character, when she is evaluating a friendship. Also, Sojourner-W’s emigration to New Zealand greatly improved his personal income, so that he found it increasingly difficult for him to maintain friendships with some old friends in China. He says:

It may be difficult for us to choose a restaurant to have a dinner together, since our budget for this dinner may be very different. I therefore think that our friendships are largely affected by the amount of economic capital we have (Male, aged 26-35).

Sojourner-W’s comments suggest that the increasingly widening gap in their financial capabilities potentially constrains them from participating in many social activities together, which leads to reduced social interactions, and weakened ties as a result.

Some participants believed that the closer their socio-economic statuses are, the more likely they may help each other in the future. Such potential largely decides their perceived value of the transnational friendships, reflecting a process of evaluating the benefits and costs of preserving the ties. This is described by Sojourner-AL as “a very realistic issue”. Friend-3 still maintains a few transnational friendships in New Zealand since his return to China

several years ago. He strongly emphasized the importance of sharing a similar socio-economic status. He explains:

I want to maintain some friendships in New Zealand, so that I can ask them for help when I have some troubles, which can only be solved in New Zealand. Likewise, my friends in New Zealand may intend to maintain our friendships, so that I can help them to deal with some problems, which can only be solved in Beijing (Male aged 26-35).

Friend-3's comments indicate that far-away friends may perceive their transnational ties as potential resources, which need to be accumulated in advance, so that they can exchange support in times of need. He describes such expectation as "a tacit understanding between us".

In addition, the far-away friends may be more likely to have topics of conversation and interests in common, and closer ties, as a result of their similar socio-economic status. Friend-4 clearly indicated that she and her husband always avoid making friends with the people whose financial capability is "not matched" with theirs, since they may not have anything in common. Sojourner-AP had just hosted a visit by his stay-behind friend's entire family. He emphasized the importance of similar financial capabilities to creating topics of conversation in common and closer ties, saying:

I cannot make friends with a person who likes to spend a lot in a single day, since we don't have common topics to discuss (Male, aged 36-45).

Sojourner-I agreed with Sojourner-AP in the group discussion. He has a PhD degree and used to work in a very high position in China. He concluded:

You can only have topics in common with your friends when you are in the same level, in terms of your knowledge and economic status (Male, aged 46+).

As Sojourner-AP mentioned, Chinese people may be reluctant to seek closer friendships with far-away friends whose socio-economic status is much higher than their own. Sojourner-Z noticed that her stay-behind friends in China are now hesitant to contact her, even though they used to be very close. She explains: “After I migrated to New Zealand, they may think that my financial capability has become much better than before”. As a result, Sojourner-Z has to interact with them very carefully to avoid “hurting their feelings”.

Further, the gap in their socio-economic status may shape their visiting and hosting experiences, and thus their transnational friendships as a result. Friend-4 had visited her friends in New Zealand several times. She thinks that the closeness of their socio-economic status is very important in creating a pleasant visiting experience, saying: “Otherwise, some disputes may occur when you are living and playing together.” From a hosting side, Sojourner-AG believes that a similar socio-economic status is “becoming more and more important” in the maintenance of friendship. Talking about his VF hosting experiences, he shared:

Our friendships may not be able to continue after they left New Zealand, if I found that they were very ungenerous and cannot afford anything during their travel...You don't want to pay for everything during their trips (Male, aged 46+).

Nevertheless, sharing similar financial capabilities or acting in a generous manner in social interactions may not necessarily lead to closer friendships, as Sojourner-Z shares:

In China, there are some rich people who don't have any educational background. I always avoid having any connection with these kinds of people (Female, aged 36-45).

Her comments reflect that the strength of transnational friendships cannot be determined by a single component, but needs to be understood in a more comprehensive way.

For instance, the similarities in worldview, cultural background, and moral quality also play important roles, as mentioned above.

6.2.1.5 Similarity-Difference: Shapes Transnational Friendships

Given the knowledge acquired from data analysis and interpretation, a model emerged, which demonstrates the interactive relationships between the themes that collectively constitute the second-level theme of Similarity-Difference, reflecting the hierarchy of ideas (Figure 6-1). (1) The first-level theme of Closeness-Distance is shown by an oval with bold text and border. (2) The second-level theme of Similarity-Difference is indicated by an oval with plain text and bold border. (3) Third-level themes are shown by the ovals with plain text and plain borders. (4) Fourth-level themes are shown by the ovals with plain text and a dashed border.

This second-level theme consists of four third-level themes. First, the participants tend to interact with the friends with whom they share similar worldviews, because a gap in their worldviews/habitus often causes misunderstandings and conflicts, resulting in a sense of otherness, weakened ties, and reduced wellbeing. Second, the participants value mutual understanding between friends. They believe that real friends should not only respect each other's differences, but also consider the interests of others, by putting themselves in others' shoes, for instance, visiting friends should understand their hosts' difficulties and have reasonable expectations of hosting. Also, the far-away friends highly value reciprocity, considering it a tacit understanding, an important virtue, and an essential means for them to show each other mutual respect, declare equal social positions, and save face in transnational interactions. Ignoring this virtue may be considered the exploitation of friendship, and potentially leads to weakened ties and reduced wellbeing.

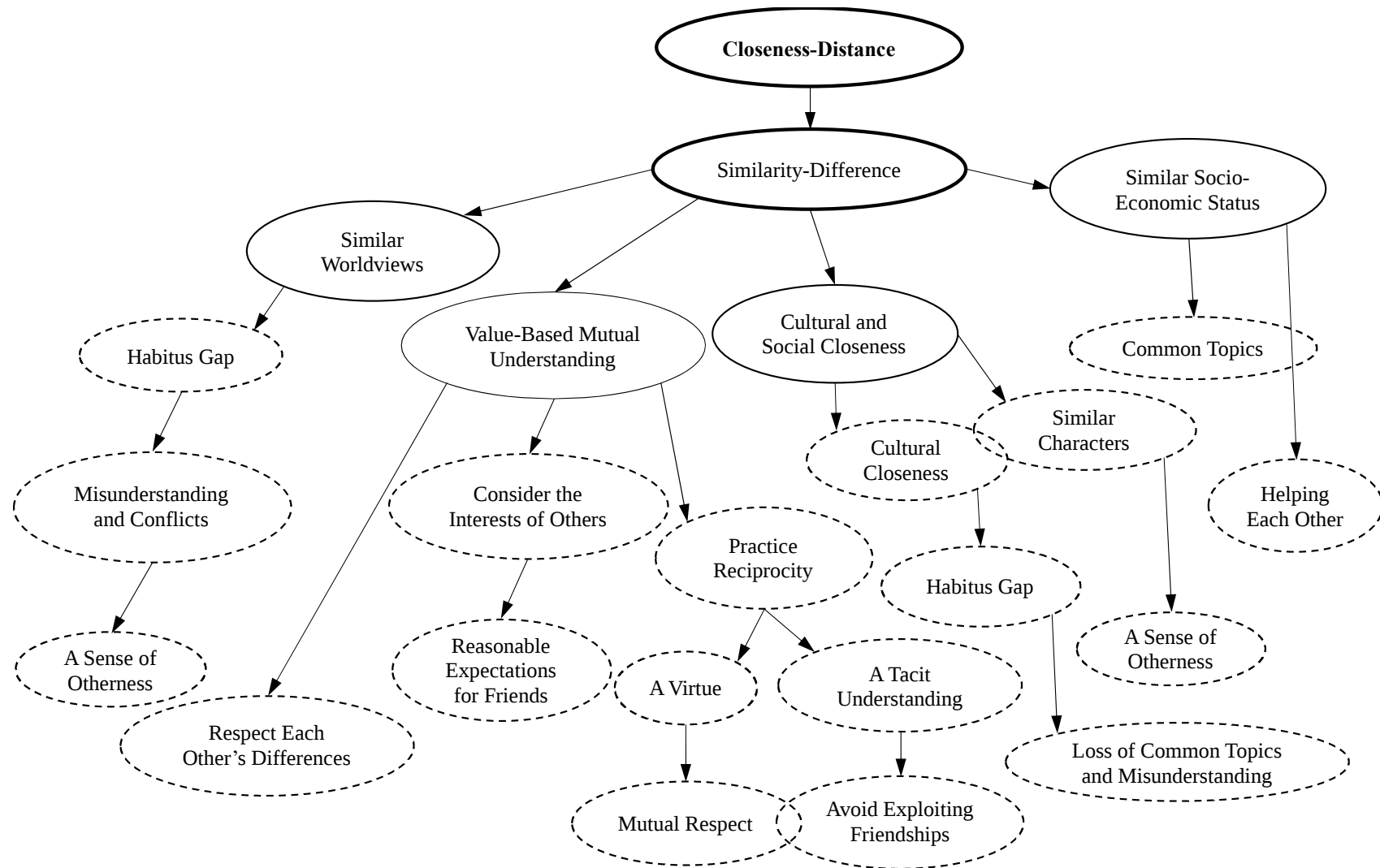


Figure 6-1 Thematic summary: Similarity-difference

Third, the increasingly widening gap in the cultural backgrounds (or *habitus*) between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends often leads to a loss of topics of conversation in common and an increase in misunderstandings between the two sides. Also, Chinese people tend to build and maintain friendships with those who have good characters (or moral quality). VF travel is a good opportunity to observe each other's characters. Revealing an undesirable moral quality in social interactions often leads to a sense of otherness, which in turn weakens a friendship.

Finally, far-away friends tend to consider sharing a similar socio-economic status an important condition to build and maintain friendships, because they believe that they are more likely to have topics of conversation in common, and more importantly, help each other in the future, if they are from similar social positions/classes. The next section discusses another second-level theme of Emotional Closeness.

6.2.2 Emotional Closeness

Having discussed the second-level theme of Similarity-Difference, this chapter then discusses another second-level theme of Emotional Closeness, which reflects the first-level theme of Closeness-Distance from an emotional perspective. This theme refers to the emotional closeness between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends. It derives from their shared memories, and a sense of belongingness that remains in the sojourners' minds. Cole and Bradac (1996) explored satisfaction with close friendships, and found that emotional closeness is often considered an important factor in evaluating friendships. As a result of data analysis and interpretation, four interrelated third-level themes emerged, which collectively reflect the emotional closeness between the far-away friends: (1) Willingness to Help Each Other, (2) A Sense of Obligation, (3) Fond Memories, and (4) Mutual Trust.

6.2.2.1 Willingness to Help Each Other

The willingness to help each other plays an important role in evaluating the strength of transnational friendships. As Sojourner-W pointed out: “It reflects the strength of our relationships whether we can help each other when we are in trouble”. Friend-4 still owned a house in New Zealand when she returned to China many years ago. She asked some friends to take care of the house. However, only a few friends actively helped her, while the rest of them did not really want to help her at all. As a result, she shared:

For the friends who helped us, our relationships have been improved a lot. We will definitely help them when they need us (Female, aged 26-35).

Friend-4’s experience suggests that exchange of support plays an important role in shaping transnational friendships and wellbeing. Also, her comments illustrate the principle of reciprocity, suggesting that close friends often seek to return the favours they receive from each other.

Chinese sojourners often cherish the ties with their stay-behind friends who can help them in times of need. Sojourner-E said: “we should help each other when we are in trouble”. He considers most of his far-away friends to be fair-weather friends, and their friendships are “useless” to him. He explains: “your relationships may seem very close, but they may not be able to help you when you are in trouble. This kind of relationships are useless.” In contrast, Sojourner-Q experienced a very difficult time when he started his own banking business in New Zealand. His close friends in China voluntarily helped him to take care of his stay-behind parents during that tough time. He therefore highly values their friendships and visits those friends every time he came back to China. Sojourner-Q’s parents used to complain that he spent more time visiting his friends than his relatives. However, he still considers reciprocating the favours the most important thing, saying:

I may be not related to my friends by blood, but they did help me to take care of my [stay-behind] parents when I was in New Zealand (Male, aged 26-35).

In this way, Sojourner-Q's experience echoes that of Friend-4, suggesting that instrumental support is an important part of transnational social exchanges between far-away friends, and the willingness to provide instrumental support in times of need greatly shapes transnational friendships.

Participants tend to consider exchanging financial support to be a critical means by which they can test their far-away friendships, as Friend-8 described: "They may not be your true friends, if they don't want to spend money on you". Friend-8 was applying for a visa to visit New Zealand, which required him to prove that he had enough money to support himself during the trip. He therefore tried to borrow some money from his friends, with whom he thought that he had "very close relationships". However, those "close friends" did not lend him the money he badly needed. Surprisingly, a friend who did lend him the money was someone who he thought did not have a close relationship with him. As a result, this experience changed his perceived strengths of relationships with some friends. Similarly, Sojourner-F said that people should cherish the friends who have helped them financially. He believes that people may have "the feeling of estrangement" and feel "very disappointed" when their friends refuse to lend them money, which results in the dissolution of friendships.

Most of the participants indicated, however, that they normally borrow money from their close family members, rather than friends. Instead, these far-away friends normally provide each other with valuable advice in times of need, especially when someone is in trouble. As an only child, Sojourner-V has lived alone in New Zealand for more than 10 years. She normally asks her stay-behind friends for advice when there is something bothering her, saying:

I think this means that your relationships are very strong. You only talk about these kind of things with the people you consider to be very close friends (Female, aged 19-25).

From the stay-behind side, Friend-1 believes that close friends are obligated to provide each other with valuable advice in times of need. She explains: “You are not a real friend if you said nothing when you found your friend was doing something wrong.” Moreover, a few participants indicated that far-away friends may help each other to find employment opportunities overseas and enable/facilitate onward migration. Friend-14 worked in New Zealand for many years and still has many friends there. She believes that she may need help from these far-away friends if she wants to return to New Zealand and find a good job, saying:

They may be able to help me by providing me with a reference letter or something else (Female, aged 26-35).

The abovementioned theme of Willingness to Help Each Other derives from a sense of obligation between far-away friends, which is discussed next.

6.2.2.2 A Sense of Obligation

Most of the participants believe that far-away friends should have a sense of obligation towards each other. However, such felt obligations did not include regular and frequent exchanges of financial, emotional, and instrumental support, so are quite different from the obligations between far-away family members.

A mutual obligation between far-away friends is that they should take time to visit each other when they happen to be in the same city. Friend-9 worked in New Zealand for several years before she returned to China. She still has many friends living in New Zealand.

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She said that she wants to do many tourism activities during her next trip to New Zealand, especially visiting good restaurants. However, she emphasized:

My priority is to meet my friends there, because they are more important than food for me. And then, we can have good food together (Female, aged 26-35).

Sojourner-M is a mother of two young children and travels to China several times a year. For her, seeing her old friends is an obligation that she must fulfil during her trips. She is therefore always very busy meeting them during that time, as she described: “I had to have two dinners within one day with two different friends who wanted to see me.” For her, seeing her old friends during the visits has become a burden.

In the context of VF travel from China to New Zealand, a sense of obligation is the most important motive for migrant hosts to spend money, time, and energy on hosting, as Sojourner-S shares: “The only thing I can do is to fulfil my responsibility when I am hosting them in New Zealand”. She believes that traditional Chinese culture asks hosts to take care of their visitors to a high standard. Likewise, Sojourner-H and her family members live in New Zealand. She has a strong sense of obligation toward the VF visitors who have close relationships with her, so that is “willing to sacrifice my work [time] and money”, as she shares:

I will treat my best friends as the first priority, if they are going to visit me in New Zealand (Female, aged 19-25).

The sojourners mentioned two important ways they fulfil their perceived obligations to their visiting friends. First, in Chinese culture, it is the hosts’ obligation to treat their visitors to a good meal as a welcome party. Sojourner-AN usually takes her visiting friends to “fancy restaurants” to show them her welcoming attitude, saying: “Only in this way, they may feel that you fulfilled your responsibilities as their host.” Second, migrant hosts sometimes play a role of tour guide, showing VF visitors their backyards. Sojourner-AG

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shares: “As a host, you must take your guests to some famous places, so that all your obligations can be fulfilled.” Similarly, Sojourner-Z said that she will take her VF visitors to see the black-sand beach in Raglan, and other tourism destinations, such as Rotorua and Tauranga. She says:

I do have the responsibility to spend several days with these visitors during their stay in the North Island, since they travelled a very long distance to New Zealand (Female, aged 36-45).

The visiting friends often have a strong feeling of safety when their migrant hosts fulfilled the abovementioned obligations, providing them with a range of instrumental support. Friend-9 believes that the feeling of safety means that she can rely on her migrant hosts during a trip to New Zealand, saying: “You know that there will be someone to pick you up at airport, and you will have a place to live when you arrive New Zealand.” Similarly, Friend-8 had a strong feeling of safety during his last visit to his migrant best friends, saying:

Before I started this journey, I know that I don't need to worry about anything, since my friend will pick me up at airport and provide me with whatever I need, such as food and accommodation (Male, aged 26-35).

Of note, VF visitors also have a sense of obligation toward their hosts, which requires them to behave well, intentionally reduce the impacts of visiting on their hosts' daily lives, express gratitude, practice reciprocity, and sometimes follow the social protocol of gift-giving during their visits.

6.2.2.3 Fond Memories

The findings suggest that fond memories were the most solid foundation for the continuity of the geographically stretched friendships, because it is old memories that remind friends of their shared past, which constitutes not only their affection for their long-lasting

friendships, but also a part of themselves as a human being. Friend-2 and her migrant best friend grew up together, from kindergarten to high school. Although this friend has lived in New Zealand for many years, they still have a strong emotional bond which derives from their shared memories. She explains:

I believe we can still communicate very fluently and warmly, without any estrangement or misunderstanding between us, just like the old times when we were together (Female, 36-45).

Although Friend-2 did not consider the potential widening gap between their ever-evolving habitus in shaping their communication, her comments indicate that fond memories may improve the effectiveness of communication between far-away friends.

Such fond memories can be evoked easily, as Sojourner-Z shares, even an old letter can raise a strong feeling of nostalgia. She felt “very warm inside and out” when she was reading the letter a stay-behind friend wrote to her many years ago. Similarly, Sojourner-E and his wife recently returned to China to get married. In their wedding ceremony, they met his old friends and talked about their shared memories that reminded them of the “old-times”. He then realised that they still have a strong emotional bond.

Some participants pointed out that their friendships left them with many unforgettable memories, because these ties are the “purest (most genuine)” relationships they have ever built. Sojourner-M indicated that her transnational friendships with her friends in China were built up “when we were very young”, so that are “very pure”. They did not consider each other a potential source of support when they met the first time. Similarly, Friend-4 believes that her friendships with her friends in New Zealand are “relatively pure”, because they did not know each other’s backgrounds when they first met, saying, “I used to decide whether I want to make friends with someone only based on whether I like them or not at the first glance.” For now, Friend-4 often make friends based on an evaluation of their socio-

economic status, “because I believe that I may need their help in the future”. Therefore, for some far-away friends, their fond memories represent their most authentic friendships that were built without considering the potential of future social exchanges.

Of note, such fond memories are especially precious for older participants, playing an important role in preserving their transnational friendships. Sojourner-AG is in his late fifties. He felt “very comfortable” in hosting his old friends from China, although they had not met each other for more than 20 years. He believes that their emotional bond can only become stronger with the passage of time. His experience echoes a Chinese proverb, “历久弥香”, which means “an old memory is like a bottle of fine wine that only gets better with age”. Similarly, Sojourner-AB’s friendships with some old friends in China have lasted for almost 40 years. She proudly says: “our relationships are more like kinships”. Further, their fond memories and shared past lay the foundation for mutual trust, which is discussed below.

6.2.2.4 Mutual Trust

The findings suggest that both sides tend to participate in social interactions with far-away friends with whom they have built a strong mutual trust, because they believe that those friends will always act truthfully and helpfully, implying a sense of safety. Only a few sojourners and stay-behind friends mentioned this theme. However, for those who did mention it, they believed that mutual trust is fundamentally important in their interactions. Friend-8 was planning to migrate to New Zealand. Although he could find essential information from his migration agency, he considers his migrant friend in New Zealand a more reliable source of information, saying, “he is different from migration agencies, which only provide you with the information that they want you to know”. Friend-8 explains:

I believe all the things the friend told me to be the truth, because I trust him and believe that he can consider my interests (Male, aged 26-35).

Their long-lasting transnational friendship underpins such strong mutual trust, which enables/facilitates the exchange of valuable information, facilitating onward migration.

Friend-3 interprets the concept of mutual trust from an economic perspective. He believes that mutual trust between friends is fundamentally important for them to feel safe to do business with each other. He explains:

Since I know that they will never lie to me, even they may want to earn more money than me (Male, aged 26-35)

This theme of mutual trust is also closely associated with other aspects of the nature of transnational friendships. First, some participants indicated the basis of building mutual trust is good character (i.e., good moral quality). Sojourner-W only considers the people who have good character to be his close friends and fully trust them, so that believes that all the things his friends do for him are out of kindness, saying: “I trust my friends with my whole heart. They will never say anything bad about me.” Sojourner-J found that there is a strong mutual trust between her and her old friends in China, although they do not contact each other very frequently since her emigration. These friends sometimes ask her to buy something for them in New Zealand and always give her the money in advance. She explains:

We know each other's character [moral quality] ...since we had been studying together for many years (Female, aged 36-45).

Sojourner-J's experience also clearly indicates that mutual trust is the foundation of transnational social exchanges between friends.

Fond memories also play an important role in building mutual trust. Sojourner-G believes that there is still strong mutual trust between him and his stay-behind friends, with whom he has built genuine friendships, sharing many fond memories. They can therefore “share everything” with each other “without hesitation”. Of note, for Sojourner-G, mutual trust is not necessarily related to good character. He says, “you know that they will not hurt

you intentionally, no matter what kind of people they have become.” He further explains: “I may become a bad guy. However, I cannot hurt my old friends”. His comments therefore conflict with those of other participants, implying that the rules people follow in their transnational social interactions with their far-away friends may vary.

Further, the findings show that far-away friends trust each other, and sometimes share secrets with each other, because of the distance between New Zealand and China. Sojourner-Z has a stay-behind friend, whose husband used to cheat on her. This friend desperately needed someone to confide in. However, she could not talk to someone geographically close to her, because doing so may risk leaking out and she still wanted to save the marriage. Therefore, she told Sojourner-Z this terrible secret, reflecting that she “completely trusts” her. However, Sojourner-Z believes that there is another reason. She explains:

They [far-away friends] can tell me something that they cannot tell the people who live close to them, because we are living in a great distance, so that they don't need to worry about any potential consequence [leaking out] (Female, 36-45).

Sojourner-Z's life experience suggests that the geographical distance between far-away friends somehow ensures the confidentiality of their communication, and therefore improves mutual trust and facilitates their exchange of emotional support.

6.2.2.5 Emotional Closeness: Shapes Transnational Friendships

Given the abovementioned discussion, a model emerged, which illustrates the interactive relationships between the themes that collectively constitute the second-level theme of Emotional Closeness, reflecting the hierarchy of ideas (Figure 6-2).

This second-level theme of Emotional Closeness consists of four third-level themes, which reflect the emotional closeness between far-away friends. First, the willingness to help

each other largely reflects the strength of the friendship. Far-away friends not only perceive themselves as obligated to provide each other with valuable advice in times of need, but also may exchange instrumental support, reducing the impacts of distance on their wellbeing. They sometimes provide each other with employment opportunities, facilitating onward migration. The exchange of financial support is the most important means by which they can test their transnational friendships, although they normally avoid borrowing money from friends. Of note, far-away friends often seek to reciprocate the favours they receive from each other, whenever possible.

Second, these far-away friends believe that they have some obligations toward each other, which are different from those between family members. They often feel obligated to visit each other when they happen to be in the same city. Especially, migrant hosts are inclined to make considerable efforts with hosting. They not only provide their visiting friends with good meals, accommodation, and transportation, but also occasionally play the role of tour guide. Such efforts often provide their visiting friends with a strong feeling of safety during their visits.

Third, the fond memories far-away friends share remind them of their shared life experiences, producing a feeling of nostalgia. For some far-away friends, their ties were built many years ago, without considering the potential of future social exchanges, which laid the foundation for mutual trust. Finally, they are more likely to participate in transnational social interactions/exchanges with the far-away friends, with whom they have built strong mutual trust, because they believe that those friends will always act truthfully and helpfully, providing them with a strong sense of safety.

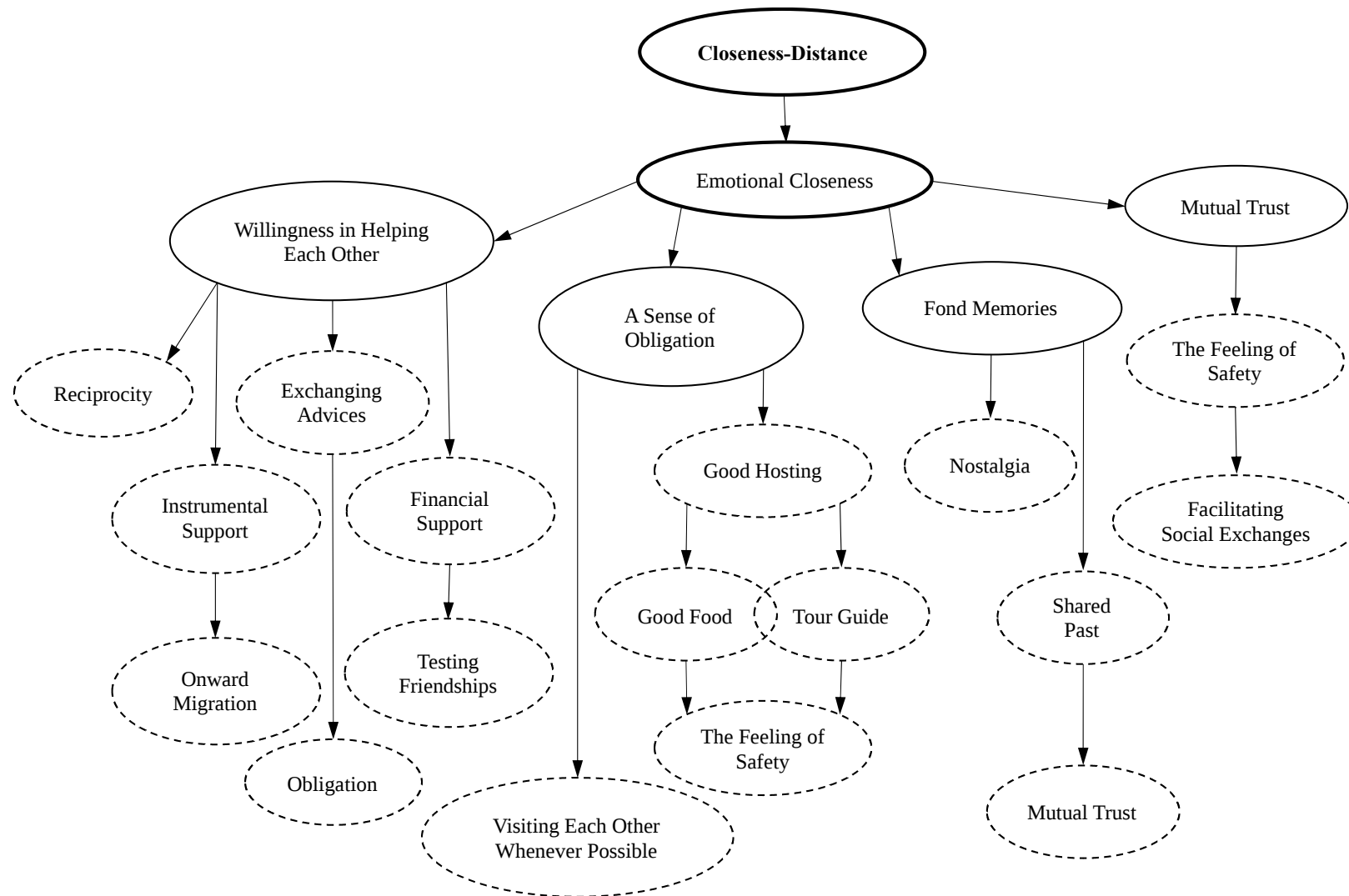


Figure 6-2 Thematic summary: Emotional closeness

6.3 Interactional Dynamics

The theme of Interactional Dynamics refers to the characteristics of interactions that shape the maintenance and functioning (i.e., social interactions) of those transnational friendships. This theme consists of two second-level themes: (1) Characteristics of Transnational Interactions and (2) Social Protocols.

6.3.1 Characteristics of Transnational Interactions

The second-level theme of Characteristics of Transnational Interactions concerns the continual transnational interactions between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends, including the contexts of everyday communication and VF visiting/hosting. The importance of meaningful and enjoyable social interactions in preserving transnational friendships was repeatedly mentioned by the participants from both sides. This theme consists of three third-level themes: (1) Good Communication, (2) Regular Contact, and (3) Good Behaviour.

6.3.1.1 Good Communication

The participants enjoy the communication with the far-away friends with whom they can easily understand each other. Both sides commonly mentioned the importance of good communication in maintaining their transnational friendships. As Sojourner-P concludes:

The strength of our friendships simply depends on whether we can communicate with each other 'In the Same Channel [on the same wavelength]' (Female, aged 46+).

Sojourner-F further elaborated on this idea, suggesting that meaningful communication between friends should be able to “leave each other with a deep impression”

and “arouse strong empathy”. He explains: “My close friends should be able to say something that I always want to say but didn’t know how to express.”

Overall, the sojourners tended to consider their stay-behind friends an important source of emotional support. Sojourner-Z has many emotional interactions with her friends in China, saying: “We may discuss the things that happened in our respective families and try to comfort each other.” Five sojourners reported that they only had frequent emotional interactions with their stay-behind friends, rather than family members. As Sojourner-X pointed out: “We do have meaningful communication with each other, but mostly between friends” (see Chapter Five for reasons that sojourners and stay-behind family members avoid informing each other of any difficulties). Of note, only a few stay-behind friends, such as Friend-8, mentioned that they may seek emotional support from their migrant friends in times of need, implying that cross-border emotional support may be more important for sojourners than stay-behind friends, who may have better access to such support.

Conditions for meaningful communication between far-away friends were also identified, which Sojourner-F described as “arousing strong empathy”. For instance, Sojourner-AQ believed that their intelligence needs to be in the same level, if she and her far-away friends want to “understand each other well” in their communication. Also, Sojourner-H believed that an essential condition for her and her friends in China to be able to have “heart-to-heart communication” is that they have very similar worldviews.

Further, some participants believed that achieving good communication requires that they have interests in common. Friend-8 likes to chat with his best friend in New Zealand, because he enjoys “sharing different opinions”. They have many common topics, including “some academic issues, news in our societies, or work-related problems”. His comments imply that some far-away friends may enjoy transnational communication, as they may be able see the world from a different perspective. Of note, as mentioned in the theme of

Cultural and Social Closeness, there was a widening gap in the habitus between these far-away friends, which makes it increasingly difficult for them to effectively communicate with each other in the same channel.

Therefore, VF travel plays an important role in facilitating far-away friends' communication. During the visits, they often share their life experiences and provide each other with emotional support, so that not only their emotional wellbeing can be improved, but also their over-stretched friendships can be strengthened. Friend-14 has visited her friends in New Zealand several times. She spent most of the time at home and chatting with them, "even gossip about someone we all knew". She believes that this is "a necessary process", from which their friendships can be preserved and possibly strengthened.

From the hosting side, Sojourner-AA found it enjoyable to host his visiting friends, even if he needs to spend considerable time, energy, and money, because "We can discuss different topics very deeply, which makes me feel very happy/comfortable." Also, Sojourner-AN considered hosting VF travel an opportunity to strengthen her friendships with her visiting friends, because she can communicate with those friends face-to-face. She believes that this is better than online communication, from which she can always feel "a sense of distance". She further explains:

I want to tell my visitors the things deep inside my heart, so that we can understand each other better. I think that this can improve our relationships to some extent (Female, aged 26-35).

An important means to achieve good communication is the maintenance of regular contact, which is discussed next.

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6.3.1.2 Regular Contact

The findings indicate that the maintenance of transnational friendships requires the Chinese sojourners abroad and their friends in China to contact each other occasionally. Otherwise, their friendships may be weakened, resulting in reduced social exchanges. Friend-7 has a very close friend who has lived in New Zealand for many years. She shares:

As friends, we must keep contacting each other. Otherwise, our friendship cannot be maintained, since friendship is not like kinship, which doesn't require regular contact (Female, aged 26-35).

Her comments indicate that the maintenance of transnational friendships requires more effort from both sides, compared to maintaining far-away family ties. From the sojourner side, Sojourner-AJ believes that contacting each other regularly is the “most effective and easiest” means to maintain her transnational friendships. Sojourner-F concludes:

In general, the more we contact each other, the stronger our emotional bond may be (Male, 36-45).

Findings show that the Chinese sojourners were more likely to contact their far-away friends, compared to the stay-behind friends in China. A possible reason is that these sojourners often consider their friends in China an important source of emotional support, especially at the beginning of their settlement abroad. Friend-7's best friend suffered a great deal from homesickness at the beginning of his new life in New Zealand. However, he received a lot of emotional support through contacting Friend-7 in a regular basis. As Friend-7 shares:

At the beginning of his study in New Zealand, he was very lonely, so we did video chat very frequently (Female, aged 26-35).

In the context of VF travel, for some sojourners, maintaining regular contact is an essential condition for them to be willing to host their stay-behind friends. Sojourner-AJ claimed: “I will not make too much effort to take care of them, if my [VF] visitors haven’t contacted me for a long time.” Similarly, Sojourner-L believed that the stay-behind friends who have not contacted her for a long time will not visit her in New Zealand, because it looks like they are “taking advantage of her”, if they only contact her right before their travel to New Zealand. During VF visits, migrant hosts’ houses are heterotopias that are not freely accessible like a public place (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). Rather, maintaining emotional closeness is an essential condition for the stay-behind friends to be welcomed to enter these social sites.

The importance of WeChat in maintaining the transnational friendships was commonly noted by the sojourners. Sojourner-Z repeatedly emphasized the impacts of the development of the means of contact on the maintenance of her transnational friendships, saying: “For me, I am very grateful to WeChat, through which I can contact so many old friends who I haven’t contacted for so many years.” Similarly, Sojourner-B and her former classmates in China have a WeChat group, through which they can chat with each other, sharing their trivial or interesting daily life experiences freely and instantly, so that virtual co-presence is achieved. Running a very profitable business, Sojourner-AG has been commuting between New Zealand and China for more than 20 years. He thus has many friends in both societies, concluding:

We can communicate with each other easily like that using WeChat...I think

WeChat has been facilitating our communication worldwide (Male, 46+).

However, although contacting far-away friends has become much easier than it once was, some sojourners find that they are too busy to contact their stay-behind friends regularly, perhaps just once a year, because they have to spend most of time tackling the

challenges they face in their country of residence. Sojourner-F lives a very busy life in New Zealand, so does not have time to contact his old friends in China, although he always wants to. He asserted: “It is inevitable that the number of friends we have in China gradually decreases after migrating to New Zealand.”

Nevertheless, a few sojourners expressed the idea that the maintenance of transnational friendships does not require them to contact each other very frequently. They would rather keep a comfortable distance from their stay-behind friends, leaving each other with more time to enjoy their own lives. Sojourner-W has three close friends in China, who visited him several years ago. They rarely contact each other in their daily lives, but he believed that they still have “very close ties” and “completely trust each other”.

Moreover, not only contacting each other in a regular basis, but also occasional face-to-face meetings play an important role in preserving transnational friendships. Although Friend-4 used to have many migrant friends in New Zealand, she noticed that those transnational friendships were weakening because they had not met each other for a long time since she returned to China years ago. Likewise, Sojourner-F suggested that far-away friends should meet each other occasionally, maybe just to “have a meal together”, otherwise their relationships cannot last long. Sojourner-Y has lived in New Zealand for many years with her husband and young son. They rarely go back to China. As a result, she found that her relationships with her stay-behind friends are rather weak now, saying:

Our friendships will be weakened if we cannot see each other for a long time, no matter how intimate those friendships used to be (Female, aged 26-35).

It may not be easy for many Chinese sojourners in New Zealand to visit their homeland and meet their stay-behind friends, since they have their own lives in their country of residence, and more importantly, the next generation to raise. Sojourner-F spends most of his time on his job and taking of his young daughter. He gradually realised that his ties with

stay-behind friends are now very weak. He explains: “After I migrated to New Zealand, it became very difficult for us to meet each other even once a year”. Therefore, the transnational friendships between the two sides face challenges as a result of their prolonged separation, so that hosting VF travel in New Zealand was a good opportunity for them to meet each other in person and strengthen their ties.

6.3.1.3 Good Behaviour

Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends often expect each other to behave well in their interactions. First, some participants emphasized the importance of sending greetings to each other during important festivals, such as Chinese New Year. They believed that this practice is an important means by which they can show respect to each other. Sojourner-AH sends his greetings to his close friends in China “during every major festival”. He believes that the effects of this social protocol on maintaining transnational friendships “should never be underestimated”. He explains: “I will certainly remember a person, if this guy sent me a greeting for every festival.” Sojourner-F further elaborated on this idea. He considers mutual respect very important in evaluating a friendship and perceives sending greetings as “a part of our traditional Chinese culture”. He pointed out: “Whether you send your greetings to them during the festivals reflects your manners, learning, and knowledge.”

Another important practice in transnational interactions is gift-giving. Sojourner-W always brings gifts for his old friends when he returns to China, saying: “I bring them fruits from New Zealand, because doing so can show them my respect and make them feel that I consider our relationships very important.” Sojourner-E perceives gift-giving as a tacit-understanding. Receiving gifts from his far-away friends makes him feel that they consider him important. He perceives failure to practice gift-giving as “inappropriate”. He explains:

Chinese people never tell you that they are expecting some gifts from you, but they do indeed expect gifts (Male, aged 26-35).

Sojourner-Z likes the feeling of receiving gifts from her visiting friends; it was “so sweet”, because this means that her friends can consider her interests. However, Sojourner-Z also complained that practicing gift-giving was not enjoyable, but a burden for friends. She pointed out: “Our behaviours are highly controlled by some traditions. Our friends may be angry with us, if we come back from a journey without bringing them any gifts.” Of note, many sojourners perceive gift-giving as an obligation between far-away friends, while almost no stay-behind friend mentioned it, implying a potential conflict between the two sides during VF visits.

Further, there were more Chinese sojourners who considered this theme important, compared to their stay-behind counterparts. A possible explanation is that migrant hosts believe that their VF visitors should reciprocate the favours they received during their visits, by practicing gift-giving. For instance, Sojourner-AL believes that gift-giving is an important means for her visitors to reciprocate her efforts on hosting, saying:

Gift-giving is an important custom in China, since we value reciprocity very much...It will be a shame if they visited us without bringing any gift for us (Female, aged 36-45).

Another important practice during VF visits is that visitors should respect their hosts living habits and intentionally reduce the impact of their visits on their hosts’ daily lives. This practice of respecting hosts’ routines is important for visiting friends to make a good impression on their hosts. Friend-15 pointed out the importance of respecting her migrant host’s living habits during VF visits, saying:

We should get to know each other's habits, especially the things they don't like, before we visit them in New Zealand, so that we can avoid doing somethings wrong (Female, aged 26-35).

In other words, Friend-15 was emphasizing that people should consider the interests of others during VF travel, echoing the theme of Value-Based Mutual Understanding. Also, her comments imply that the hosts' houses are heterotopias. During VF visits, visitors should have a clear understanding of their roles/social positions and important rules/habitus in the social fields, and interact with their migrant hosts accordingly, so that they may enjoy pleasant visiting experiences (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986).

6.3.1.4 Transnational Interactions: Impacts on Transnational Friendships

Given the abovementioned ideas, a model emerged (Figure 6-3), which reflects the hierarchy of ideas and demonstrates the relationships between the themes, which make up the second-level theme of Characteristics of Transnational Interactions.

This second-level theme consists of three third-level themes, which collectively portray the role of social interactions in shaping transnational friendships and wellbeing. First, being able to understand each other easily is often considered very important in maintaining close friendships across national boundaries. Good communication between friends should arouse deep empathy, or common feelings, acting as an important source of emotional support. To achieve good communication, friends need to have similar worldviews and topics of conversation in common.

Second, occasionally contacting each other is considered important for far-away friends to maintain their over-stretched ties. The development of means of communication, especially the emergence of WeChat, has made cross-border contact much easier than it once was. Of note, face-to-face communication still plays an important role in preserving their ties.

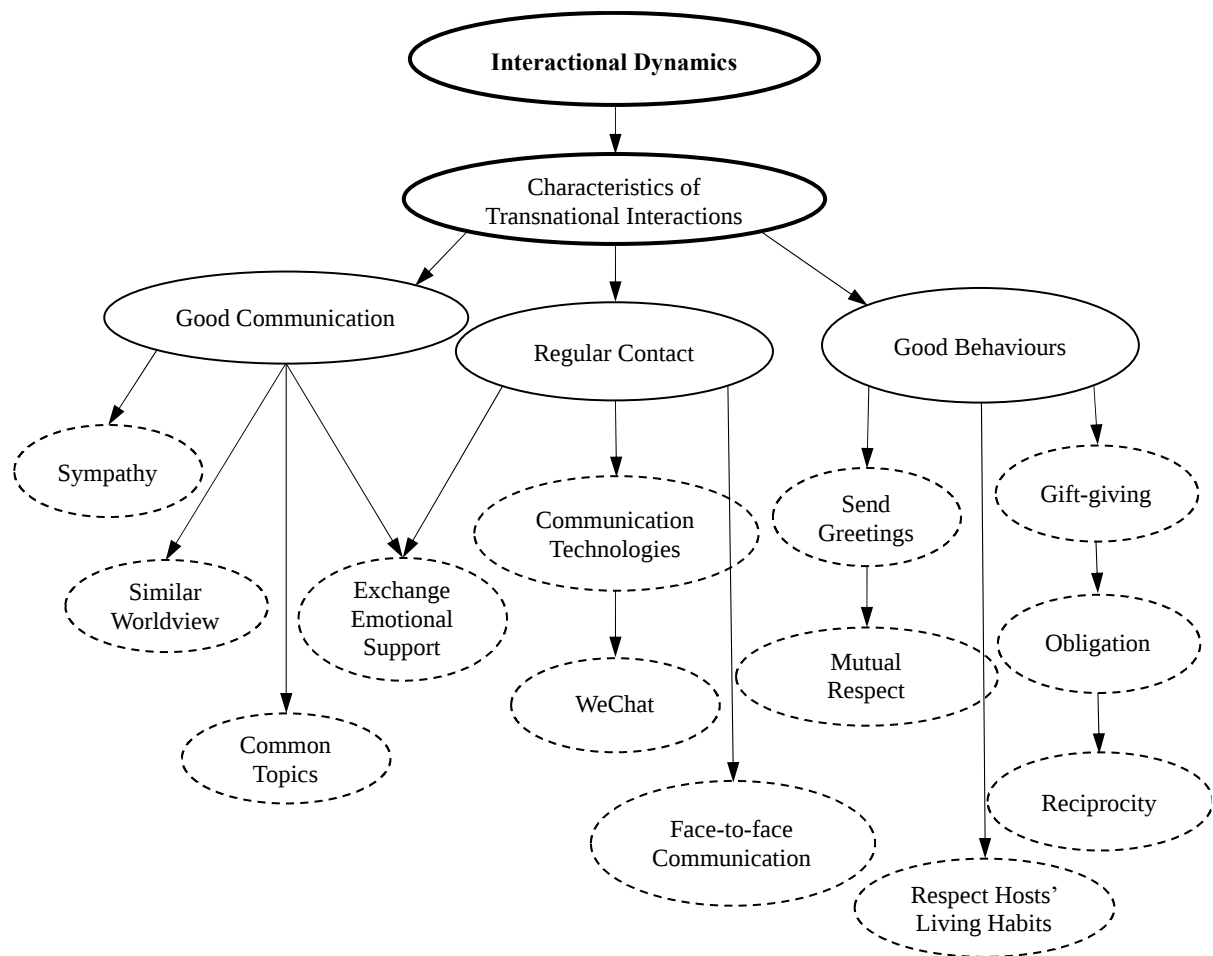


Figure 6-3 Thematic summary: Characteristics of transnational interactions

Third, far-away friends often expect each other to behave well in their transnational interactions. They believe that close friends should send greetings to each other during important festivals, in order to express mutual respect. Also, it is a tacit understanding that far-away friends should present gifts to each other after a prolonged separation. Especially, in the context of VF travel, visitors are often considered obligated to present gifts to their migrant hosts, in order to reciprocate the favours they received during their visits. Finally, during VF visits, visiting friends should respect their migrant hosts' living habits, and intentionally reduce the impact of their visits, in order to keep a comfortable distance and make a good impression on their hosts. The next section discusses the most important social protocols that should be followed in almost all social interactions between far-away friends.

6.3.2 Social Protocols

The second-level theme of Social Protocols concerns the important conditions of achieving pleasant social interactions, and preserving the over-stretched friendships, between Chinese sojourners abroad and their stay-behind friends. This theme includes two third-level themes: (1) Friendly Attitude and (2) Comfortable Distance, which were mentioned by all participants. The ideas discussed in this section have important implications for various forms of social interactions between the two sides, from VF host-guest interaction to the exchange of advice in times of need.

6.3.2.1 Friendly Attitude

A friendly attitude plays an important role in shaping transnational interactions between far-away friends, and their friendships as a result. As Friend-4 indicated: “We do care about whether their attitudes are warm hearted or not when we contact our far-away friends.” Although Sojourner-Z found that there are only a few interests in common between her and her visiting friends, she still emphasized that she always treats those friends as well as she can. She explains: “They may think that I don’t care about them, if I don’t treat them cordially”.

A possible explanation is that their attitudes reflect their emotional closeness. Sojourner-W explains: “Your attitude towards a person can easily reflect whether you like him/her or not, even though you may pretend to be very polite to someone who you actually don’t like.” More importantly, having a good attitude to each other is often a prerequisite for the creation of good atmosphere in their interactions, in which people should feel “very relaxed and happy”, as Sojourner-R described. Sojourner-AN emphasized the importance of having a friendly atmosphere in transnational interactions between friends, saying: “You

don't even want to spend time with them, if the atmosphere is not good when you meet each other."

Chinese people tend to feel that they lose face when they find that their far-away friends lack a good attitude in their social interactions, frequently resulting in weakened friendships. As Sojourner-E indicated: "We must be unhappy if others are cool toward us, since we all need to save face for ourselves". Sojourner-F pointed out that many Chinese people like to concentrate on their smartphones, no matter where they are and what they are doing. He therefore emphasized that we should give each other respect by paying attention to the friends who are talking to us, instead of our phones. He felt "very disappointed" and lost face when he found that his visiting friends only wanted to look at their phones, rather than talk to him, because that means they do not perceive him as important to them at all, implying a bad attitude. Sojourner-F further elaborated on his personal experience, indicating that attitudes between far-away friends tend to be "respectful but fake", saying: "Most of the time, our communications don't have any meaning at all, only a pretence". However, he believed that the fake attitudes are also "essential things", by which they can save face.

More Chinese sojourners emphasized the importance of having a friendly attitude in transnational interactions between friends, compared to their counterparts in China. A possible explanation is that migrant hosts tend to expect good attitudes from their VF visitors, after spending considerable time, energy, and money on hosting them. Another possible reason is that migrant hosts often have a strong sense of obligation to make their friends feel at home during their VF visits, so they seek to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere in host-guest interactions. Sojourner-S normally treats her visiting friends cordially with "a good meal and a cup of tea" at home. She believes that this is an important virtue and "a part of traditional Chinese culture". Similarly, Sojourner-AN wants her visiting friends to feel that they are sincerely welcomed by her, so that they may perceive her as a good host who

fulfilled her hosting obligations. The next section discusses another important principle in transnational interactions between far-away friends.

6.3.2.2 Comfortable Distance

Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends tend to keep a comfortable distance from each other, which means that they are inclined to intentionally avoid exploiting their friendships or interfering in their far-away friends' daily lives. In a context of VF travel, Chinese migrant hosts are more likely to emphasize the importance of keeping a comfortable distance, compared to their stay-behind counterparts. An important reason is that these sojourners tend to worry that their visiting friends may exploit their ties during the visits, asking them to make too much effort on hosting. Sojourner-AG lives a busy life, frequently commuting between New Zealand and China, while taking care of his young son. He indicated that visiting friends should not ask their migrant hosts to spend too much time on them, because their hosts also have their own work to do and families to take care of. His comments reflect the principle of mutual understanding, suggesting that far-away friends should try to put themselves in each other's shoes in their transnational interactions.

Failure to keep a comfortable distance during VF visits may make migrant hosts feel exploited, which in turn often ruins their friendships. Sojourner-N has lived in New Zealand for more than eight years. A former colleague told her that he wanted to visit her during his travel in New Zealand. She thought that this person was just showing his "kindness" to her and welcomed him into her home. Surprisingly, this visitor stayed in her home for an entire week, which was completely unexpected. Also, Sojourner-N had to play a role of tour guide, although she was pregnant at the time. More dramatically, she added, "we never received a word from him after he left, not even a message to tell us he had arrived in China safely...This is so weird!" Apparently, such visiting behaviour broke the comfortable

distance and left a very bad impression on Sojourner-N, resulting in the complete dissolution of their friendship, which is considered not rewarding, but “terrible”, for her.

In addition, the Chinese sojourners preferred to enjoy their new lives in the host country without too many interruptions from their stay-behind friends in China. Sojourner-G enjoys his private time after work, saying “Sometimes, I drive to Raglan to have fish and chips there by myself...I enjoyed watching the sunset there [alone]”. However, a far-away friend kept sending him messages about their shared hobby, car modification, “on a daily basis”, as Sojourner-G complained, “very annoying!” He thus indicated: “We do have our own things to do. It may bother other people that you contact them frequently without much to talk about”. Similarly, Sojourner-AN emphasized that she wants to keep a comfortable distance from her stay-behind friends, because she needs private time and space abroad. She explains this idea, using a traditional Chinese proverb: “君子之交淡如水”, which means that social interactions between gentlemen should be as simple as possible. Sojourner-Z said that her time and energy is “very limited”, because she has two young children to take care of. She thus cannot contact her friends in China too frequently in her daily life, but is willing to help them in times of need, saying: “We should leave each other alone in our daily lives, especially when we don’t have any specific topic to talk about”.

Further, some participants indicated that real friends should respect each other’s life choices, instead of forcing others to do something they do not like. As mentioned above, Friend-8 completely trusts his migrant friend in New Zealand and used to ask him for advice about migrating to New Zealand. However, he also indicated that people may feel that they lost face and have a strong feeling of resistance, if they found that their life choices were interfered with by their friends. Similarly, Sojourner-AL emphasized that people should respect their friends’ independence, saying: “I will not insist others accept my suggestions.”

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Sojourner-AI considers respecting others' life choices the most important condition for maintaining a close friendship, saying:

That's good enough if you can respect others' choices. Otherwise, you may find that other people made a choice, or did something only intend to go against you (Male, aged 26-35).

Moreover, some participants mentioned that people should be careful about pointing out their friends' mistakes in their social interactions. Otherwise, their friends may feel that they have lost face. Sojourner-S believes that pointing out others' little mistakes may badly hurt their self-respect, because "we are all adults". She therefore chose to intentionally ignore some small mistakes her visiting friends made during their visits. On the contrary, Friend-1 believes that true friends should point out each other's mistakes, which is an important way to help each other in times of need. However, as she also indicated, "a tactful approach is required", in order for our friends to save face'. She further explains:

We should tell each other what to do by focusing on the solution of the current problem itself, rather than each other's mistake (Female, aged 19-25).

6.3.2.3 Social Protocols: Impacts on Transnational Friendships

As a result of identifying the key social protocols, a model emerged, which reflects the hierarchy of ideas and demonstrates the interactive relations between the themes which collectively constitute the second-level theme of Social Protocols (Figure 6-4).

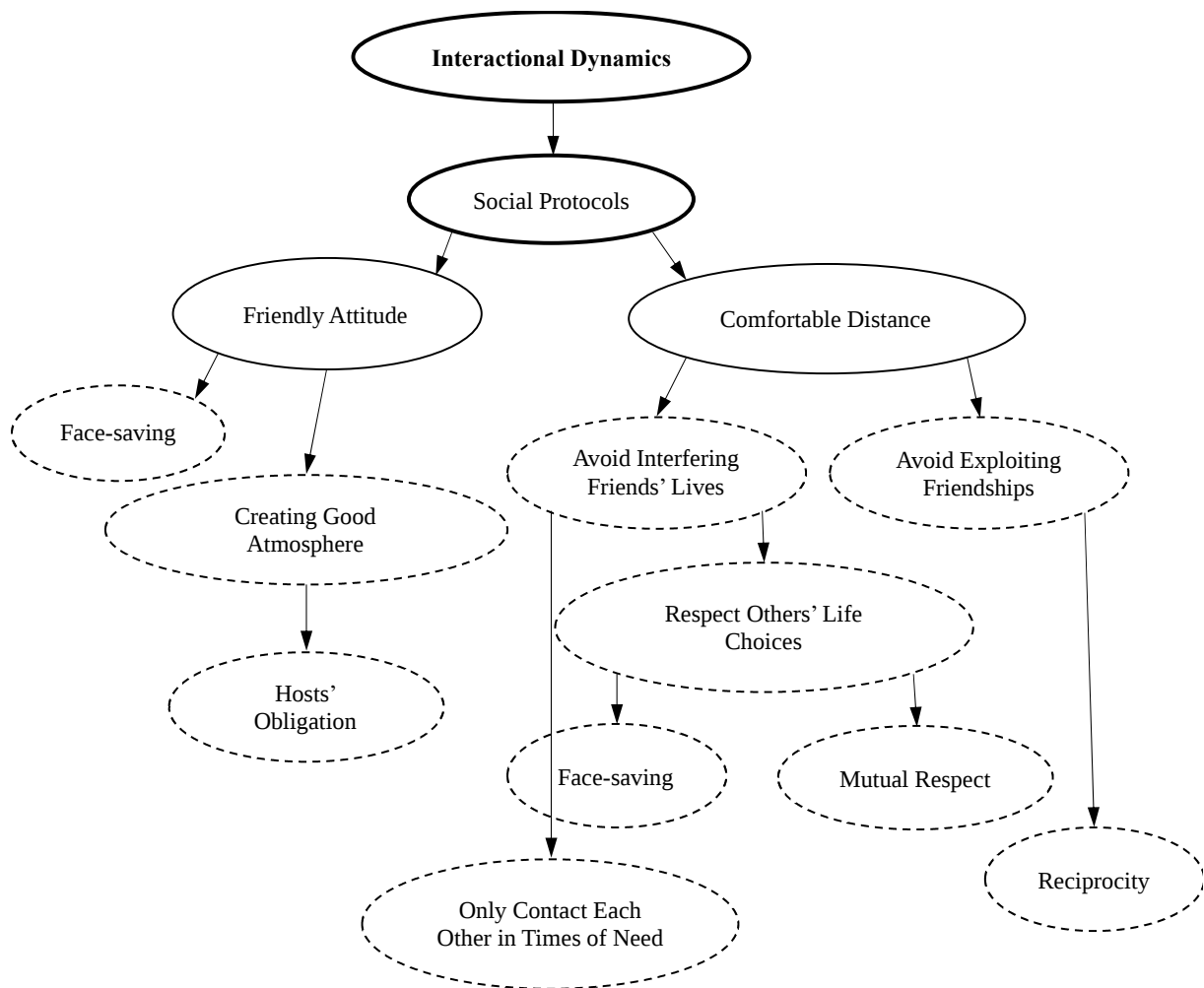


Figure 6-4 Thematic summary: Social protocols

This second-level theme includes two third-level themes. First, the interactions between far-away friends require a friendly attitude, which is a prerequisite for creating a good atmosphere. Chinese people often feel that they have lost face when they found that their far-away friends lack a good attitude in their interactions. Therefore, in the context of VF travel, migrant hosts often feel obligated to warmly welcome their visitors, creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

Secondly, far-away friends tend to keep a comfortable distance from each other. In the context of VF travel, Chinese sojourners often expect their visitors to be aware of the principle of reciprocity, intentionally avoid exploiting their friendships, and always having reasonable expectations of their hosts during the visits. Also, far-away friends should avoid

interfering in each other's lives, and only contact each other in times of need. More importantly, they should respect each other's life choices, because they are independent individuals. Deliberately interfering in others' life choices is often considered breaking the rule of mutual respect between friends, which may cause them to lose face, resulting in weakened/ruined ties.

6.4 An Enhanced Understanding of Transnational Friendship

Consequently, my understanding of the nature and meanings of transnational friendships between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends has been continuously evolving throughout the different stages in this study, closing the second hermeneutic circle. Therefore, a model was developed to demonstrate the interactive relations among the aforementioned first-, second-, and third-level themes, showing the structure and components of transnational friendships (Figure 6-5).

The transnational friendships between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends are shaped by (1) Closeness-Distance, (2) Interactional Dynamics. The first-level theme of Closeness-Distance consists of two second-level themes: (1) Similarity-Difference and (2) Emotional Closeness, while the first-level theme of Interactional Dynamics comprises another two second-level themes: (1) Characteristics of Transnational Interactions and (2) Social Protocols. As the findings illustrate, these themes and their sub-themes act as an organic whole in explaining the initiation, maintenance, dissolution, and functioning of the over-stretched friendships. In addition, the interpretation of the themes uncovers the role of transnational friendships in shaping Chinese sojourners' lives, from a social exchange perspective, which is further elaborated next.

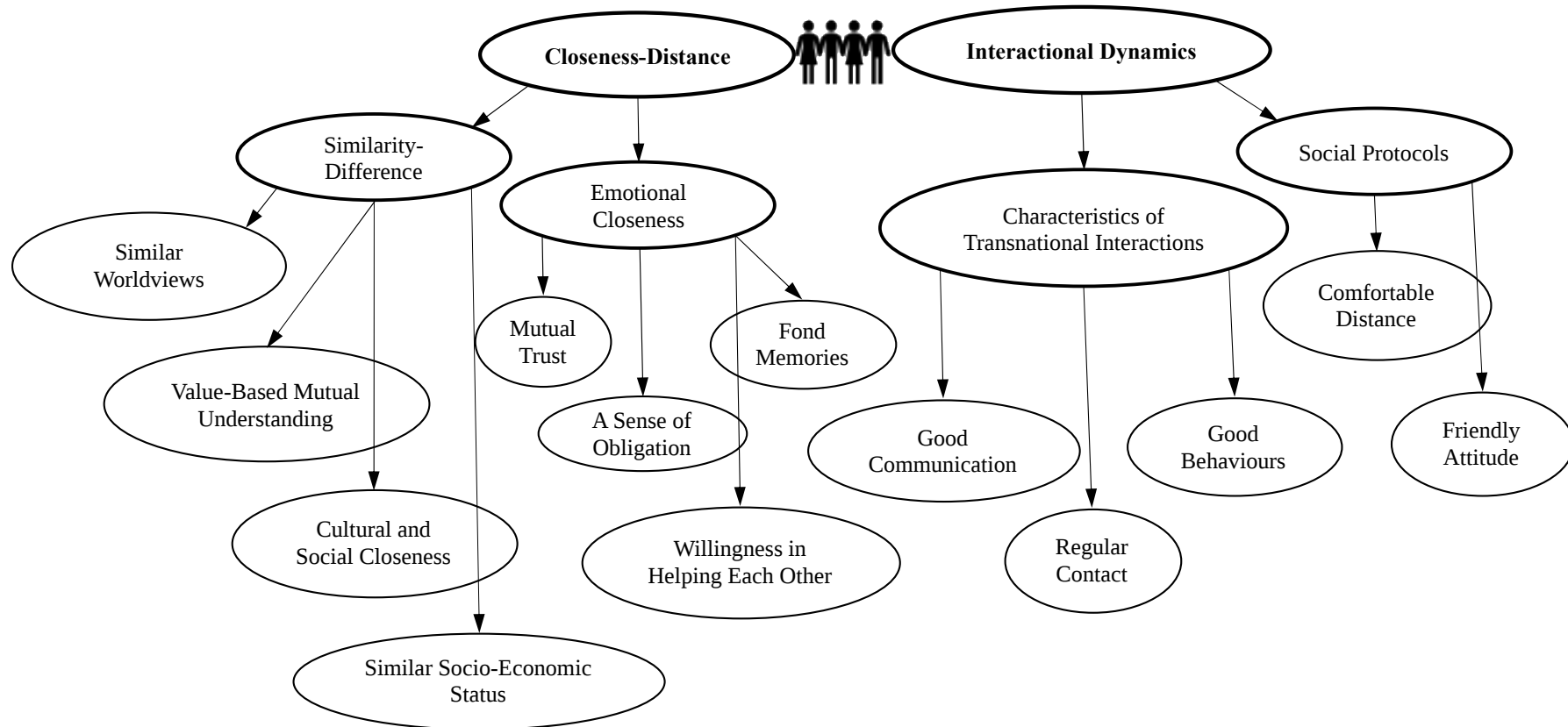


Figure 6-5 Thematic summary: Transnational friendship

6.5 Transnational Friendships, Wellbeing, and VF Travel: An Emerging Conceptual Model

Using VF travel from China to New Zealand as a sociological lens, this chapter explored the nature and meanings of the friendships between Chinese sojourners abroad and their stay-behind friends in China, by identifying the various components that collectively explain the maintenance, functioning, and dissolution of the ties, answering the first contributing research question.

Meanwhile, the interpretation of the themes contributes to an enhanced understanding of the roles of transnational friendships and VF travel in shaping Chinese sojourners' lives, so that the second and third contributing research questions were also answered. In particular, the interpretation uncovers the transnational social exchanges between the two sides, the factors that shape the exchanges, and the implications for their wellbeing and ties.

For example, the theme of Willingness to Help Each Other suggests that the far-away friends are obligated to provide each other with instrumental support in times of need, such as valuable advice, and helping a far-away friend to take care of her/his sick parents. The virtue of reciprocity guides such exchange of support, which plays an important role in shaping wellbeing and ties. Also, the theme of Good Communication suggests that the sojourners consider their stay-behind friends an important source of emotional support, which shapes their subjective wellbeing, although the widening gap in habitus potentially reduces the effectiveness of their communication. The theme of Value-Based Mutual Understanding indicates that both sides have the expectations of receiving commensurate return in transnational interactions. However, sometimes, VF visitors may ignore the virtue of reciprocity and exploit the friendships with migrant hosts, threatening wellbeing and ties.

Consequently, a clearer view of the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and VF travel was achieved, answering the second overarching research question. Therefore,

a new conceptual model emerged (Figure 6-6), which originates from the conceptual diagram proposed in the conclusion section of the Literature Review Chapter, portraying Chinese transnational sojourners' lives from a friend sphere.

This emerging model represents the key ideas and correlations about the role of transnational friendships in shaping Chinese sojourners' lives. First, the maintenance of transnational friendships has both benefits and costs. On the one hand, it enables social exchanges between far-away friends, which include emotional, instrumental, and financial support, potentially resulting in improved wellbeing and strengthened friendships. Of note, far-away friends are more likely to exchange emotional support, and valuable advice with each other, rather than financial support, confirming prior studies (Herz, 2015; Lobburi, 2012). Also, both sides value reciprocity, and therefore tend to participate in rewarding social interactions. As Annis (1987) indicated, a friendship should benefit both sides, reflecting the mutuality of sharing, concern, and affection. On the other hand, in their transnational interactions, comfortable distance may be broken, potentially threatening their wellbeing and over-stretched ties.

Second, transnational friendships enable VF travel from China to New Zealand, and act as a reliable source of support that visiting friends may enjoy during their travel, supporting Capistrano and Weaver's (2018) study of the meanings attached to VF hosting and visiting in Filipino culture. The visits in turn enable/facilitate their social exchanges. Of note, some migrant hosts worry that their friendships may be exploited by their VF visitors, so tend to expect their visiting friends to have reasonable expectations of hosting. Sometimes, hosting VF visits can be a burden for migrant hosts, potentially resulting in reduced wellbeing and weakened ties, confirming Backer's (2019) finding in a study of the link between VFR hosting experiences and quality of life, which suggests that hosts may experience mental stress, as a result of fulfilling hosting obligations.

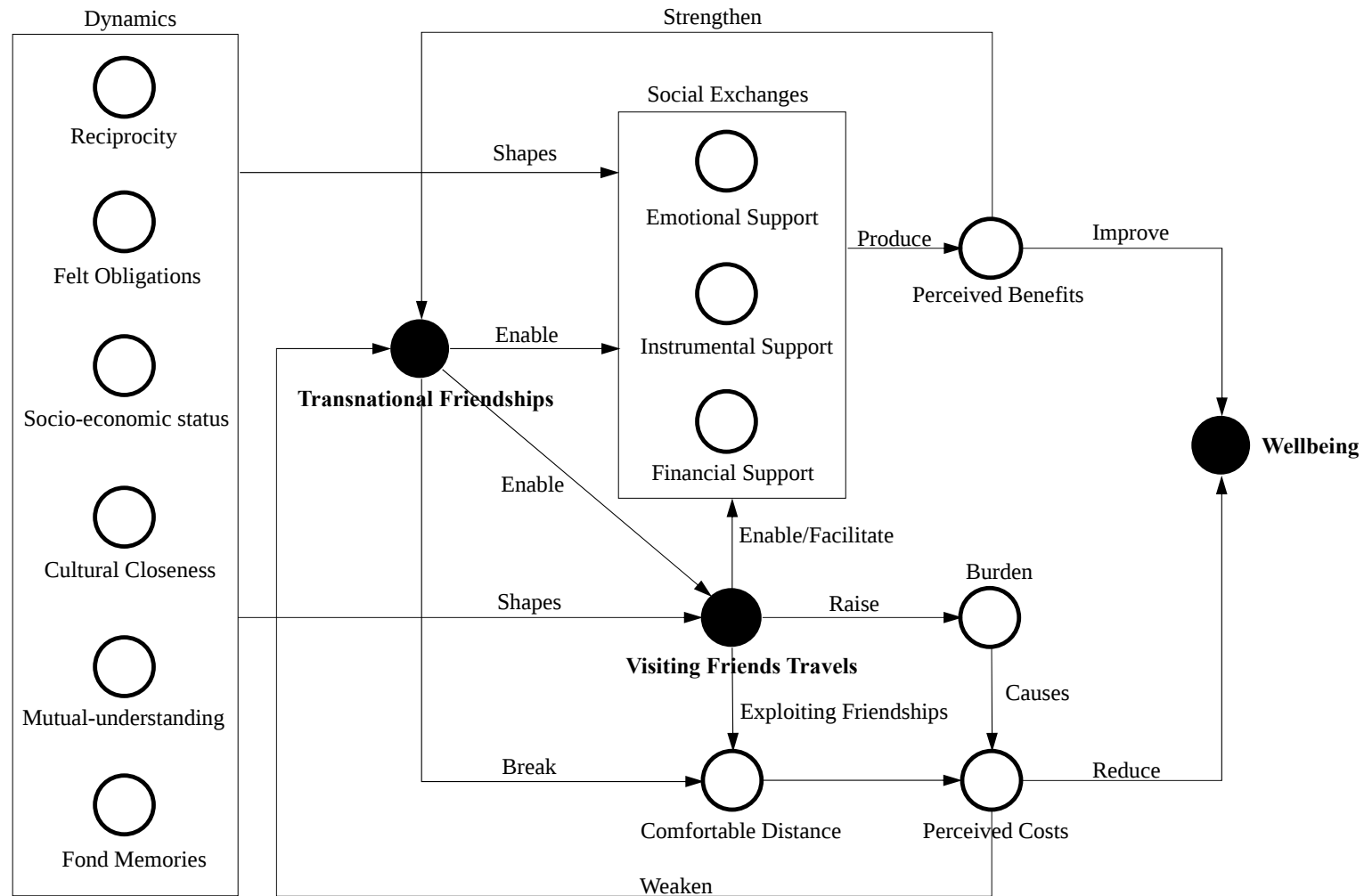


Figure 6-6 Conceptual model: Interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and visiting friends travel

Chapter Six: Friend Finding

Further, the findings provide an enhanced understanding of the way the social dynamics reflect social exchange theory and the way the theory accounts for the dynamics. It seems that social exchange theory alone is insufficient to explain the dynamics behind transnational social interactions, in particular, VF visiting and hosting behaviours, because their interactions are not only shaped by the evaluation of benefits and costs, and the rule of reciprocity, but also closely associated with other influencing factors, such as felt obligations, socio-economic status, cultural closeness, mutual understanding, fond memories, the desire to save face, and so on.

The next chapter (Chapter Seven: Discussion) evaluates and critiques the findings against the literature. In addition, it integrates Chapters Five (Family) and Six (Friend) to uncover the commonalities and differences in the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges between the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives, resulting in an enhanced understanding of the diverse roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping Chinese sojourners' lives.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Introduction: The Steps to Address the Overarching Research

Questions

In this chapter, I first explain how (1) Family Finding Chapter, (2) Friend Finding Chapter, and (3) this Discussion Chapter address the three overarching research questions, so that readers have a clearer view of the thesis structure and the dynamics behind the evolution of my understanding of living transnational lives.

The Family Finding Chapter and Friend Finding Chapter presented the findings. The data analysis and interpretation uncover the roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and stay-behinds (family members and old friends), so two conceptual models emerged, which respectively portray (1) the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel, and (2) the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and VF travel. Therefore, the first and second overarching research questions, regarding the two sets of interplay, were answered.

Then, the purpose of this Discussion Chapter is to answer the third overarching research question, which is related to a comprehensive view of the social exchanges between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds, integrating the family and friend spheres. Therefore, this chapter uses social exchange as a lens to evaluate and critique the key findings against those in the literature, explaining how these findings are consistent with or contradict those of prior studies, either supporting, challenging, or extending them, so that my study's contributions to the tourism and migration literature (and the nexus of both) are identified, and future research opportunities revealed.

Using social exchange as a lens, this Discussion Chapter focuses on the various forms of social exchange identified from the two sets of interplay that emerged in Chapter Five and

Six, the influencing factors that shape the exchanges, and the implications for wellbeing and ties.

The discussions of the different forms of social exchange that are respectively enabled by transnational family ties and friendships were intentionally structured in parallel construction (financial-instrumental-emotional), so that the following section (integration) can compare and contrast the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives, by discussing the commonalities and differences between the two spheres, regarding the nature, meanings, and dynamics of each form of social exchange. That is, the instrumental support enabled by family ties is compared and contrasted with the instrumental support enabled by friendships.

That way, in the integration section, I integrate the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives, by using a social exchange lens to explore the diverse roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds. Consequently, a clearer view of the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges behind the interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel, is achieved, so the third overarching research question is addressed.

Of note, this process leads to an emerging conceptual model, which integrates the two models identified in Family and Friend Finding Chapters, reveals common threads across the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives, and extends the dialogue between the social dynamics and the social exchange theory that was identified in the literature. This model is presented and discussed in the Conclusion Chapter, which indicates this study's implications, identifies limitations, and provides directions for future research.

Highlights

First, my study explores the lives of Chinese sojourners, which represent a new area that has not been studied before. I investigated the life experiences of the sojourners and their

stay-behinds in a context of VFR travel, creating a fruitful field of research that represents a nexus between VFR tourism and migration literature. Also, I identified the socio-cultural nuances that may differentiate them from other transnational sojourners.

Second, my study adds to migration literature, by indicating that transnational family ties and friendships play common, but also very different roles in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners, evidenced by the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges that are respectively enabled by the family ties and friendships. In particular, the social interactions/exchanges in parent-children ties often follow different rules from those in other geographically stretched ties, so shape wellbeing differently.

Third, my thesis responds to the call for studies in the social aspects of VFR tourism (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Yousuf & Backer, 2015; Yousuf & Backer, 2017), because the exploration of the phenomenon of living transnational lives uncovers the role of VFR travel in shaping their transnational social exchanges, wellbeing, and interpersonal ties.

Fourth, my study contributes to theory development, by pointing out that the social exchange theory is insufficient to explain the dynamics behind transnational social interactions between the two sides, because a range of previously unidentified dimensions also affect transnational interactions, such as Chinese values, norms, and family life cycle.

Finally, several emerging challenges were identified that Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds may face as a result of prolonged separation and continual renegotiation of the meanings of their over-stretched ties. Also, my study addresses key research opportunities, by discussing the findings against the literature.

7.2 Transnational Family Ties: The Family Sphere of Living

Transnational Lives

This section evaluates and critiques the key findings from Chapter Five (Family), focusing on social exchanges and factors shaping those exchanges, which were identified as the primary dynamics behind the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel. First, the findings confirm the prior studies, which indicate that transnational families' wellbeing may face challenges as a result of prolonged separation (Boccagni, 2013; Janta et al., 2015; King et al., 2014). My study extends the understanding of the challenges by indicating that both Chinese sojourners and stay-behind parents face challenges, and identifying the socio-cultural nuances in the context of Chinese transnational families. For instance, Chinese sojourners often need childcare assistance from homeland, while stay-behind parents need emotional support from their migrant children.

Given the challenges, Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members, especially parents, tend to carefully preserve their family ties (Chao & Ma, 2017; Wang, 2016), because the ties underpin essential social exchanges and therefore are fundamentally important for the maintenance of family wellbeing (Guo et al., 2018; Xie & Xia, 2011). My finding is consistent with the studies in other socio-cultural contexts (Baldassar et al., 2016; Boccagni, 2015; Bryceson, 2019), which often describe families as a source of “unconditional love and constant support” (Turner & West, 2014, p. 7).

The findings extend Chinese migration literature by indicating that transnational family ties are likely to have a dual effect on family wellbeing, simultaneously acting as a source of support, a source of frustration, and sometimes, a means of exploitation. Although some family studies from other socio-cultural contexts have mentioned such a dual effect (Baldassar et al., 2014; McKie & Callan, 2012; Turner & West, 2014), it should be examined in the context of Chinese transnational families. Also, the findings address the research

opportunity that is identified by Wall and Bolzman (2013), by uncovering the continual renegotiation of the meanings of transnational family ties. The next section discusses the one-way flow of financial support in Chinese transnational families.

7.2.1 Financial Support: The One-Way Flow of Reverse Remittances

The findings indicate that the flow of economic capital within Chinese transnational families is dominated by reverse remittances that are important for Chinese sojourners' objective wellbeing. For example, stay-behind parents help their migrant children to buy houses, pay tuition, and perhaps raise young children. This finding confirms the research regarding Chinese transnational families (Liu et al., 2018; Sun, 2012; Tu, 2016), but challenges some studies in other socio-cultural contexts (Graham & Jordan, 2011; Kapur, 2010; Martone et al., 2011; Zharkevich, 2019), which claim that it is normally sojourners abroad who send remittances to their stay-behind families. This finding contributes to migration literature, by not only confirming that the exchange of financial support within Chinese transnational families is different from those in other geographically dispersed families, but also indicating the dynamics behind the phenomenon, as shown below.

A possible reason for this difference is that China's rapid development has provided Chinese stay-behind parents with adequate economic capital to not only take care of themselves, but also financially support their migrant children. In my study, there is no stay-behind parent mentioned the need for financial support. Rather, many parents expressed strong desire of helping their migrant children to purchase house abroad. Some have done so. Some Chinese authors state that Chinese stay-behind parents' only concern has become the emotional closeness with their migrant children, rather than their own objective wellbeing (Guo et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017).

Another possible dynamic behind the practice of sending reverse remittance is Chinese parents' intergenerational altruism. Some stay-behind parents' incomes are lower than those of their migrant children, but they tend to use their lifetime savings to help the sojourners acquire academic credentials, purchase houses, and raise the next generation in New Zealand. This finding is consistent with prior studies in Chinese transnational families (Liu et al., 2018; Sun, 2012; Tu, 2016), and some studies from other socio-cultural contexts (Boccagni, 2015; Singh et al., 2012). Of note, in Chinese tradition, owning a house is not only a sign of living a decent life, but also an essential condition for getting married. Also, the reverse remittances are found to represent a means of conveying love and therefore strengthen family ties. Although some studies in other contexts mentioned such a role of remittance (Kastner, 2010; Zharkevich, 2019), it is a new idea in Chinese migration study.

Further, this study contributes to Chinese migration study, by indicating that Chinese sojourners tend to consider the reverse remittances a common practice in Chinese families, and rarely consider themselves obligated to financially support their stay-behinds. Rather, these sojourners consider their priority to be taking care of their newly formed small families abroad. This finding is new, and in conflict with the traditional understanding of filial piety, suggesting that Chinese sojourners have been actively renegotiating the traditional meanings of filial piety. This confirms Tu's (2016) argument, which suggests that emigration leads to a complicated transition of the meanings and practices of family obligations in Chinese transnational families.

Moreover, the findings extend the current research boundary in Chinese migration literature, by indicating that Chinese sojourners often interact with non-parent stay-behind family members following the rules of reciprocity, which means no monetary give-away. For instance, as some participants in New Zealand mentioned, they may lend money to their stay-behind non-parent family members in times of need, such as siblings, but the stay-behinds

need to give it back after overcoming their financial difficulties. This finding suggests that Chinese sojourners may interact with their stay-behind parents, non-parent family members, and old friends, following different rules.

7.2.2 Instrumental Support: A Sense of Family Altruism behind the Visits

The findings show that the instrumental support in Chinese transnational families is also dominated by reverse one-way flows, challenging Wall and Bolzman's (2013) argument, that the provision of instrumental support in transnational families is bidirectional. Given their strong intergenerational altruism, Chinese stay-behind parents perceive themselves as obligated to provide their migrant children with substantial instrumental support, frequently visiting them to take care of their young children and perform household chores, so that sojourners can spend more time and energy on their careers.

This finding echoes Zhou's (2013) study on Chinese stay-behind grandparents' caregiving experiences in Canada, which indicates that the stay-behinds are an important source of instrumental support for Chinese sojourners, despite the heavy workload they often face. This finding is also consistent with some studies in other contexts, which emphasized the important role of stay-behind parents in providing the sojourners with familial care (Baldassar et al., 2007; Horn, 2017; Leung & Lee, 2005).

However, this finding adds to VFR literature, by indicating that family reunions during VR travel represent a good opportunity for stay-behind parents to fulfil their felt obligations and convey their love, resulting in improved family wellbeing and strengthened ties. In my study, all stay-behind parents had visited their migration children, with the purpose of providing them with childcare assistance and/or help with household chores. As the literature indicates, VR travel is a prevalent means for various forms of support to be

directly and effectively exchanged within transnational families (Baldassar, 2008; Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; De Silva, 2018).

Next, for Chinese sojourners, hosting VR travel from their homeland broadens their sources of caregiving, resulting in improved objective wellbeing. In my study, almost all the participants in New Zealand who have young children reported that they received childcare assistance from their visiting parents, regardless of the sojourners' income, while many sojourners who do not have children said that their visiting parents helped them with household chores. This finding confirms those of prior studies in Chinese transnational families (Cooke, 2007; Da, 2003; Xie & Xia, 2011; Y. R. Zhou, 2012; Zhou, 2013), and the studies in other cultural contexts (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; De Silva, 2018). Of note, the finding highlights that Chinese sojourners tend to perceive receiving the instrumental support from their stay-behind parents as a natural thing, a very common practice in Chinese transnational families. Only a few sojourners emphasized their gratitude to their parents. I thus argue that such a widely shared perception potentially devalues the efforts made by the visiting parents, and the important role of their VR visits in shaping family wellbeing.

In addition, my study extends knowledge in the nexus of migration and VFR literature, by indicating that the sources of instrumental support in Chinese transnational families are not limited to visiting parents, but also include non-parent stay-behind family members, such as siblings, who also have a sense of family obligation that enables cross-border provision of childcare assistance. A few participants in China told me that they visited their migrant siblings, mainly for providing them with childcare assistance. Therefore, the role of non-parent visiting family members in shaping migrant hosts' lives is a research opportunity identified in this thesis.

Further, the results indicate that Chinese migrant families' need for childcare support is not necessarily associated with the amount of economic capital possessed, but a long

tradition, which suggests that young children should be taken care of by closest family members, rather than professional caregivers. Both high- and low-income sojourners expressed strong needs for childcare assistance. This finding adds to VFR literature, by indicating that the providing and receiving childcare assistance represent important motives behind VR visiting and hosting in Chinese transitional families, while the outbreak of COVID-19 may have broken such a tradition and forced Chinese migrant families to change the way they raise their young children. This finding also contributes to theory development, by suggesting that Chinese traditional value and norms play an important role in shaping VR visiting and hosting behaviours, adding new nuances to the use of social exchange theory in explaining transnational interactions.

7.2.2.1 Silence: Sojourners and Stay-Behind Parents Hide Needs from Each Other

A ‘silence’ was identified in the findings: No stay-behind parent mentioned the need for any form of support, or complained about the loss of support as a result of their children’s emigration. Also, no one mentioned their migrant children’s obligation to them. This emerging silence challenges the prior studies in Chinese transnational families, which claim that Chinese migrant children’s instrumental support plays an important role in meeting their elderly stay-behind parents’ needs (Guo et al., 2018; Li & Chong, 2012; Liu et al., 2018).

However, some Chinese sojourners indicate that prolonged separation does threaten their stay-behind parents’ wellbeing. They believe that their parents were just hesitant about showing their need for support, because they want to be a reliable source of support for their migrant children, rather than a burden, out of a sense of family altruism. The perception of these sojourners is consistent with the literature, which states that adult children’s emigration fundamentally shapes their parents’ lives, from affective, relational, and material perspectives (Boccagni, 2013; Janta et al., 2015; King et al., 2014; Marchetti-Mercer, 2012). I also noticed

that some parents were intentionally concealing the difficulties they met, while emphasizing the practice and desire of sending reverse remittances to their migrant children and visiting New Zealand to provide them with childcare and help with household chores.

The silence suggests that those Chinese stay-behind parents strongly value family altruism and devote themselves to helping their migrant children, without expecting any commensurate return, or evaluating the benefits and costs. For example, some parents in this study explicitly or implicitly expressed the strong desire of becoming a “full-time nanny” to take care of their grandchildren during VR visits, happily. This finding not only confirms some prior family studies, which argue that the interactions between close family members do not follow the rule of reciprocity (Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006; Finch, 1989; Weston et al., 2012), but also adds to VFR literature, by revealing that the sense of family obligation in Chinese stay-behind parents’ minds acts as the major motive behind their VR visiting.

In contrast, only a few Chinese sojourners mentioned felt obligations to their stay-behind parents. This finding is inconsistent with some prior studies which argue that social exchanges in Chinese transnational families follow the rule of reciprocity (Gui & Koropecj-Cox, 2016; Xu et al., 2018). This finding also challenges the Chinese tradition of filial piety, which is the core of Confucian doctrine (Chen & Short, 2008). This tradition requires adult children to reciprocate the favours they received from their parents by taking care of them in times of need (Lou & Ci, 2014; Settles et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2019).

This finding contributes to migration literature, by suggesting that the meanings of filial piety have been continually renegotiated and reinterpreted following Chinese sojourners’ emigration, supporting Tu’s (2016) finding in her UK-China transnational one-child family study. In particular, it seems that Chinese sojourners’ sense of family obligation to their parents tends to reduce after emigration, while the parents’ felt obligation to their children remains the same. Another possible explanation for the silence is that China’s socio-

cultural environment has been continuously changing, increasingly favouring individualism (Hamamura, 2012; Hamamura & Xu, 2015; Steele & Lynch, 2013), resulting in young people's reinterpretation of the meaning of filial piety (Qi, 2015), but the stay-behind parents' feeling of family altruism remains unchanged.

Further, another possible reason behind the inconsistency between this finding and the literature is that Chinese sojourners are now increasingly unable to provide their stay-behind parents with adequate support, even they are willing to do so, because they are already occupied with the challenges of living in a new environment, facing pressures from work and the needs of their young children, as Tu (2016) indicates in her UK-China transnational one-child family study. This idea is evidenced in the findings, as some sojourners told me that they were struggling to make the ends meet in New Zealand and strongly in need of childcare support from their parents. Some sojourners also said that the prolonged separation creates an impenetrable barrier to the practice of filial piety, mirroring some prior studies in Chinese transnational families (Guo et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018), and other transnational families (Boccagni, 2015; Conkova & King, 2019; Janta et al., 2015).

The findings also contribute to migration literature by indicating that Chinese sojourners' emotional wellbeing may face challenges as a result of their prolonged absence from stay-behind parents and the failure to fulfil perceived family obligations, causing a strong sense of guilt. A few participants mentioned that they experienced the strong feeling of frustration, because they did not return to China and take care of their sick parents in times of need. Such a feeling of frustration/regret was discussed in some prior studies in other transnational families (Baldassar, 2007a; De Silva, 2018; Zontini, 2006), but rarely mentioned in Chinese migration studies (Tu, 2016). Therefore, this finding suggests a research opportunity about the negative impacts of the prolonged separation with stay-behind family members on Chinese sojourners.

Moreover, the emerging idea of the one-way flows of financial and instrumental support implies that Chinese stay-behind parents' wellbeing may face significant challenges. They may live very thrifty lives to save money so that they can financially support their migrant children. Also, they may deliberately hide their increasing need for instrumental support from their migrant children (Guo et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2019), as there is no well-developed elderly care system in China (Tu, 2016), because of the government's wilful ignorance (Feng et al., 2011; Gustafson & Huang, 2014; Zhan et al., 2008). This is especially the case in the empty-nests, in which the stay-behinds may face more difficulties (Liu et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2013). This finding contributes to migration literature, by providing a new and potentially fruitful field of research.

The findings also contribute to VFR literature, by suggesting that VR travel plays an important role in enabling/facilitating the exchange of support between far-away family members, and improves family wellbeing, while indicating the existence of some constraints on VR travel, such as stay-behind parents' deteriorating health condition, which increases the difficulty of fulfilling the strict health requirements in visa applications, as a few participants mentioned, as well as the impacts of the recently emerged coronavirus disease that leads to stricter border control, prolonged travel bans, and unpredictable lockdowns.

7.2.2.2 Visiting Relatives Travel: The Role of Migrant Hosts

Transnational family ties can be a pull factor for sojourners to participate in VR hosting, and an important source of support for the visitors, who may enjoy free food, accommodation, transportation, and tour guide service during the visits. A few sojourners strongly expressed felt family obligations toward their stay-behind parents, implying that the nature and meanings of family ties may vary from one transnational family to another, in which different habitus operate (Clark, 2018; McKie & Callan, 2012; Xu et al., 2018). These

sojourners tend to consider themselves morally obligated to host their parents during family reunions, without expecting any commensurate return or evaluating benefits and costs, so that they can fulfil their filial piety and reciprocate their parents' lifetime dedication to them.

This finding is consistent with some prior studies, which argues that migrants' social obligations can be met as a result of hosting VR travel (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Griffin, 2015). Also, this finding shed light to the use of social exchange theory, suggesting that the Chinese tradition of filial piety plays an important role in shaping transnational parent-children interactions, although renegotiation has been observed (Xu et al., 2018). Studies in other socio-cultural contexts also confirmed that traditional cultures tend to persist in an era of modernisation and globalisation (Hamamura, 2012; Rivkin et al., 2017).

In addition, the findings show that Chinese sojourners also have a sense of obligation to host their non-parent stay-behind family members and make efforts to create an illusion of 'staying in a home away from home' for them, supporting prior VFR studies (Backer, 2019; Griffin, 2017; Schänzel et al., 2014; Yousuf & Backer, 2017). The findings contribute to VFR literature, by indicating that Chinese sojourners' strong desire to save face and the rule of reciprocity frequently play an important role in hosting non-parent VR visitors. Many participants in New Zealand complained about their unpleasant hosting experiences, in which the rule of reciprocity was broken, but mentioned that they still hosted their visiting family members graciously, only to "save face".

Chinese sojourners often provide their VR visitors with free meals, accommodation, and sometimes pay for their costs of travel. Staying in their hosts' houses, or the heterotopias, the visitors may enjoy an illusory life that is contrary to that of the wider host society (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986), including Chinese dialects, homemade Chinese dumplings, and popular Chinese television shows, among others. Also, given their knowledge about the host countries, Chinese sojourners frequently act as a reliable source of tourism information

for VR visitors, and sometimes travel with them, to show them interesting sights that may not be listed as popular destinations. In particular, Chinese sojourners tend to consider showing their visitors “something new” as a hosting obligation and a good way of broadening their visitors’ horizons.

This finding confirms prior VFR studies, which indicate that VR hosting involves a variety of responsibilities, such as entertaining, feeding, offering accommodation and transportation, and providing valuable tourism information (Backer, 2019; Griffin, 2014; Schänzel et al., 2014; Young et al., 2007). Also, the findings are consistent with previous research, which argue that the advice from migrant hosts largely shapes VR visitors’ travel behaviours, such as choice of activities, length of stay, and expenditure (Cave, 2016; Yousuf & Backer, 2015; Yousuf & Backer, 2017). However, my study extends VFR literature, by arguing that the staged/illusory life in migrant hosts’ houses greatly shapes VR visiting experience and therefore requires more scholarly attention.

As a result, tourism information and companions may greatly improve VR visitors’ travel experiences, and more importantly, create a sense of safety, because visitors may find themselves travelling in dystopias, in which almost all practices are unfamiliar, especially the traffic rules. For example, some elderly VR visitors told me that they cannot even leave their migrant hosts’ houses (i.e., their familiar heterotopias) and visit local supermarkets by themselves, because they may be lost. Of note, it was found that felt hosting obligation may not be closely associated with the economic capital hosts possess but is largely shaped by the nature and strengthen of family ties, so that migrant hosts often make more efforts when hosting closer VR visitors, while avoid making excessive efforts when hosting others. Nevertheless, Chinese sojourners often expect that their non-parent VR visitors can reciprocate the favours they received during the visits, through actively helping their hosts to do some household chores. These findings add to VFR literature.

7.2.2.3 Family Life Cycle: Changing Needs Shape Social Exchange

Family life cycle plays an important role in shaping the social exchanges within Chinese transnational families. As a family experiences a significant life event and moves to a new stage in the family life cycle, family members' needs and felt obligations tend to undergo changes, resulting in changes to their motives and desire to participate in transnational support exchanges.

On the one hand, for Chinese stay-behind parents in my study, a new-born in the migrant family signals significant changes in their family members' needs, which causes a strong sense of family obligation, and an increased desire for VR visiting to provide the sojourners with childcare assistance. Some stay-behind parents told me that they intended to visit their migrant children and help with childcare, although they emphasized that they actually do not enjoy staying in New Zealand, a dystopia where they feel socially excluded. On the other hand, the findings show that the Chinese sojourners who have young children tend to have a stronger desire to host stay-behind parents, compared to those who do not have the need for childcare assistance.

This finding contributes to the nexus of migration and VFR tourism literature, by pointing out that family life cycle greatly shapes the motives behind transnational social exchange within Chinese families, in particular, VR visiting and hosting behaviours (i.e., a major means of support exchange). So far, such a correlation was only mentioned in a few prior studies in Chinese transnational families (Guo, 2016; Liu & Wu, 2017; Tu, 2016), and other transnational families (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Horn, 2017; Kobayashi et al., 2017), so deserve more scholarly attention.

Therefore, this thesis contributes to the research opportunity offered by Backer and Lynch (2017). They suggest that studies which explored the correlation between family life cycle and tourism, particularly VR travel, are still insufficient, even though this relationship

has been attracting scholarly attention and providing tourism studies with unique insights for quite some time (Hong et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2020; Lawson, 1991; Weaver & Lawton, 2014; Wells & Gubar, 1966). In conclusion, family life cycle is a theoretical lens through which researchers can better understand the dynamics behind the social interactions within transnational families, supporting migration literature (Baldassar et al., 2014; Bryceson, 2019).

7.2.3 Emotional Support: Sharing Everyday Life Experiences

The findings indicate that the provision of emotional support within Chinese transnational families is based on two-way flows, where family members tend to have high expectations of mutual affection. Many participants point out that close family members, especially stay-behind parents and their migrant children, inevitably need, and actively participate in, transnational exchange of emotional support, via which their subjective wellbeing can be improved, and emotional closeness preserved. This finding supports some prior studies in transnational families (Baldassar, 2007b; Turner & West, 2014).

However, this finding challenges some previous studies in Chinese transnational families, which emphasize stay-behind parents' needs for emotional support and emotional closeness with their migrant children (Guo et al., 2018; Liang & Wu, 2014; Liu et al., 2018), and claim that it is predominantly Chinese sojourners who provide emotional support to their stay-behind parents (Sun, 2012). This finding therefore adds to migration literature, by indicating that Chinese sojourners are also in need of emotional support from their homeland (Wang, 2016; Wang & Collins, 2015), because they often face uncertainties and challenges in host societies, that is, the dystopias that they have been gradually exploring. This idea supports Bryceson's (2019) argument, which suggests that stay-behind family members are the most important source of emotional support for sojourners. To date, the social

implications of sojourners' need for emotional support have been largely overlooked in migration literature.

Nevertheless, in Chinese one-child transnational families, receiving emotional support from far away is more important for stay-behind parents, compared to the sojourners. Some Chinese researchers argue that the emotional support from migrant children effectively protects empty-nest parents from mental health issues (Wu et al., 2010; Zurlo et al., 2014), and sometimes compensates for the lack of instrumental support (Tu, 2016). This finding is also consistent with Baldassar's (2008) Italy-Australia transnational family study, which clearly points out the importance of the emotional support from migrant children to parents' emotional wellbeing.

Of note, my study contributes to Chinese migration literature, by identifying the most common means, through which Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind parents implicitly convey their love across national boundaries, making each other feel that they are still caring for each other, and therefore enjoying an illusory co-presence. That is, they tend to regularly contact each other and share trivial or interesting everyday life experiences. In this way, not only can emotional support be continuously exchanged after emigration, but also Chinese stay-behind parents' anxiety for their far-away migrant children can be alleviated, sojourners' filial piety toward their parents can (to some extent) be fulfilled, and long-distance intimacy between the two sides can be maintained. This finding mirrors some previous research in Chinese transnational families (Chao & Ma, 2017; Guo et al., 2018; Tu, 2016; Wang, 2016), and some from other contexts (Baldassar, 2008; Pertierra, 2006).

Of note, the findings indicate that the exchange of emotional support may not be guided by social exchange theory, because the exchange is often motivated by a sense of family altruism and filial piety, rather than the evaluation of benefits and costs, or the expectation of commensurate return. For sojourners, it is a part of their everyday lives. For

stay-behind parents, the everyday video chat is the only opportunity that they can see their young grandchildren. Also consistent with the literature (Bryceson, 2019; Buffel, 2017; Griffin, 2014; Jerves et al., 2018), the findings show that regular contact and exchange of emotional support between far-away family members are greatly facilitated by the development of communication technologies. As Liu et al. (2018) note, technological developments make frequent contact much more feasible and affordable than it once was.

However, an emerging idea is that there are some constraints on the everyday exchange of emotional support. Both sides tend to be very selective in their exchange of life experiences, deliberately hiding their need for emotional care, while concealing the difficulties in their daily lives, such as physical/emotional illness, from each other, because they don't want to be a burden on, or bring anxiety to, their far-away family members. As Tu (2016) argues, long-distance intimacy also had to do with what was not said. These constraints were also found in other transnational families (Baldassar, 2007a, 2008). As a result, a sense of helplessness is likely to be felt by both sides, and emotional wellbeing threatened, which is consistent with some prior studies (Wang & Collins, 2015; Waters, 2010). Of note, some authors argue that Chinese stay-behind parents from transnational one-child families are more vulnerable than others (Liang & Wu, 2014; Liu et al., 2013), offering a research opportunity that explores the life experiences of Chinese empty-nesters.

7.2.3.1 Visiting Relatives Travel: Facilitate the Exchange of Emotional Support

Given the abovementioned constraints, VR travel can be considered a good opportunity for both sides to reunite for a short but valuable time, so that they can better learn about each other's recent life experiences, joys or sorrows, and exchange emotional support, resulting in reduced mental health issues and improved emotional wellbeing. This idea has been widely mentioned by participants, especially the elderly stay-behind parents, who

emphasized the link between family reunion and happiness. This finding confirms previous research in Chinese transnational families (Liu, 2011; Yan et al., 2014; Ye & Chen, 2014; Zhou, 2013; Zurlo et al., 2014), and VFR studies from other socio-cultural contexts (Backer, 2019; Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; De Silva, 2018; King & Lulle, 2015). Face-to-face interaction enables far-away family members to fully experience significant others, confirming their wellbeing (Baldassar, 2008).

Therefore, transnational family ties are the main motive for them to participate in VR visiting and hosting. On the one hand, sojourners represent a powerful attraction for their stay-behind family members (Cave & Hall, 2015; Young et al., 2007). This is especially the case for Chinese stay-behind parents, whose happiness is likely associated with the presence of their migrant children, that is, the priority in their collectivist value system (Chen, 2006; Cheng et al., 2004). Therefore, these parents visit New Zealand, not only to provide their migrant children with essential instrumental support, but also for a family reunion, which is an important source of happiness. This is a new idea in the nexus between VFR and migration literature, and has been evidenced in a few migration studies in the context of Chinese transnational families (Liu et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017; Xie & Xia, 2011), and some VFR studies from other socio-cultural contexts (Alén et al., 2017; Backer, 2019; Backer & King, 2017).

On the other hand, the findings show that Chinese sojourners enjoy hosting close family members, especially parents, which often creates a fleeting heterotopia (defined in Chapter Four) that allows them to enjoy an illusion of being well supported by close family members, temporarily alleviating the feeling of helplessness. A few young sojourners strongly emphasized this idea. Hosting family members made them feel that they were not alone. This view is mentioned in a few VFR tourism studies (Janta et al., 2015; Yousuf & Backer, 2017). Also, hosting may fulfil their wistful longing for, and a sense of filial piety to,

their stay-behind parents, resulting in improved emotional wellbeing. These emerging ideas add to VFR literature and should be further explored in the future.

Of note, the findings imply that VR visitors are heterogeneous in some ways, shaped by the nature of over-stretched family ties. As data interpretation indicates, from a perspective of expectation of hosting, visiting parents' expectations of hosting tend to be different from those of other VR visitors. Family reunion is often the primary travel motive for visiting parents, while other VR visitors also have other major travel motives, such as leisure and pleasure, which are reflected in their diverse expectations of hosting and choices of tourism activities during VR visits. This emerging idea extends the understanding of VR travel, as the prior studies tend to focus on examining the differences between VF and VR travel (Backer et al., 2017; Yousuf & Backer, 2017), treating VR travel as a homogenous segment.

In addition, despite the development of means of communication, face-to-face interactions during VR travel are still considered essential and obligatory, so that both sides can better exchange emotional support and strengthen their family ties. This idea is evidenced in the discourses from both the sojourners and stay-behind family members, reflecting some studies in Chinese transnational families (Ip et al., 2007; Lai, 2011; Xu et al., 2019), and some VFR studies in other socio-cultural contexts (Backer & Lynch, 2017; Griffin, 2015; Janta et al., 2015), which suggest that VR travel helps far-away family members to overcome time and mobility issues so family ties can be better strengthened.

My study highlights that some stay-behind parents regularly visit New Zealand because they worry about their emotional closeness with migrant children, confirming similar findings in the literature (Lai, 2011; Xu et al., 2019). As some studies note, Chinese stay-behind parents' emotional wellbeing is closely associated with their emotional closeness to their migrant children (Guo et al., 2018; Liang & Wu, 2014; Xu et al., 2019), which partially

neutralises their negative feelings of loss, abandonment, and loneliness (Liu et al., 2018). Of note, this idea was strongly emphasized by a stay-behind mother during in-depth interviews, implying that parents may intentionally avoid showing their strong emotional dependency on their migrant children.

Other benefits of VR travel that are indicated in the literature were not widely mentioned, such as improving hosts' attachment to host societies (Shani & Uriely, 2012), or strengthening the second generation's emotional closeness to their extended families (Schänzel et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the findings indicate that VR travel allows stay-behind family members to temporarily immerse themselves in their migrant hosts' lives, so that they can better understand the way the sojourners live their lives abroad (and make life choices), potentially narrowing the gap in their respective habitus, resulting in more effective communication, reduced conflict, and strengthened family ties. A few stay-behind siblings explicitly mentioned this benefit of VR visiting in in-depth interviews. This emerging idea hasn't been mentioned in VFR and migration literature, suggesting a research opportunity.

Of note, the findings show that the social interactions during VR visiting and hosting may also weaken/ruin over-stretched family ties, if important social protocols are not properly practiced. For instance, Chinese tradition requires hosts to have a welcoming attitude toward their visitors, no matter whether hosting family members or friends, while visitors need to express deep gratitude to their migrant hosts, in one way or another, reflecting the rule of reciprocity. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the parent-children interactions during VR travel do not follow the rule of reciprocity, but are shaped by a sense of family obligation/altruism and filial piety.

Further, the findings show that VR travel may also threaten wellbeing. For instance, visiting parents may suffer severe mental issues during the visits, such as depression, loneliness, and helplessness. Their migrant children often need to work during the daytime on

weekdays, leaving them at home alone, but it can be difficult for these parents to find someone to talk with, because of the language barrier and culture shock. This situation may break their illusion of staying in a home away from home. Also, visiting parents are reluctant to enter social sites outside their hosts' houses that denote dystopias, the places of the Others, as they do not know the rules/habitus of those sites (i.e., cultural exclusion). Thus, it may be difficult for them to live a fulfilled and independent life during VR visits. This idea was mentioned by some participants in China. Moreover, as some sojourners mentioned, the gap in the habitus between visiting parents and their migrant children may raise conflicts, resulting in frustration with their interactions. These ideas extend knowledge in VFR literature, and imply that the prolonged separation may also benefit both sides, through ensuring the maintenance of comfortable distance. Future studies should thus pay more attention to VR travel's negative impacts on family wellbeing.

7.2.4 Comfortable Distance between Family Members

The findings add to migration study, by indicating that transnational social interactions/exchanges between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family members may threaten their wellbeing if a comfortable distance is not maintained. Some young sojourners emphasized that they value independence, and often become frustrated with interference by their stay-behind parents in daily interactions. The feeling of being continuously controlled after emigration can be a heavy emotional burden for these sojourners, who consider the interference "extremely annoying". This issue often raises conflicts between the two generations, especially during VR hosting, as some young sojourners emphasized. However, as a stay-behind mother indicate, the parents may perceive their interference as essential guidance, rather than a burden, for their migrant children. This emerging idea is only noted in a few migration studies (Tu, 2016).

A possible explanation for Chinese stay-behind parents' desire to control their migrant children is that they cherish their children too much, as some participants indicate. This is especially the case in transnational one-child families - an unintended consequence of the one-child policy in China. Another possible explanation for the increase in conflict between the two generations is that there is a widening gap in the habitus between them. Chinese sojourners' habitus have been constantly changing, absorbing new values, norms, ways of living, and approaches of childrearing, so that it is increasingly difficult for both sides to understand each other. This idea was mentioned by the participants in both the two sides, and in some studies of Chinese families (Chen & Short, 2008; Liu et al., 2017; Xiao, 2016), clearly reflecting the ever-evolving nature of habitus (Bourdieu, 2002). VFR and migration studies should pay attention to the role of the gap in habitus in shaping host-guest interactions, wellbeing, and ties.

However, it seems that the conflicts between parents and children during VR visits may not reduce their emotional closeness, implying that the parent-child ties are very strong, almost 'unbreakable', as some participants claim, and therefore fundamentally different from non-parent-child family ties and friendships. This emerging idea challenges Liu and colleagues' (2017) study of the emotional wellbeing of elderly Chinese parents from US-China transnational families, which claim that the parent-child ties may be weakened as a result of unpleasant daily communications during VR visits.

Regarding the transnational interactions with non-parent stay-behind family members, Chinese sojourners highly value reciprocity, and always evaluate the benefits and costs. Although the idea of reciprocity was widely mentioned by both sides, many sojourners strongly complained that some VR visitors only expected free food, accommodation, and transportation, without considering their hosts' interests. This finding is consistent with some previous research, which argue that there is a general expectation of some type of return

within transnational families (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Ugargol & Bailey, 2018; Xu et al., 2018). Therefore, during VR visits, comfortable distance may be broken, if non-parent visitors have unrealistic expectations of hosting, distort the meanings of hospitality offered, and exploit their migrant hosts (Janta et al., 2015).

The findings contribute to VFR literature, by pointing out that such undesirable visiting behaviours potentially cause conflicts, threaten the sojourners' wellbeing, making them physically/emotional exhausted and financially vulnerable, and result in weakened family ties. This finding confirms some prior studies (Backer, 2019; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Wang, 2016). For instance, Polynesian migrant hosts in New Zealand sometimes consider hosting VR visitors a heavy burden, or an undesired obligation, because they are often expected to share everything with their visitors, according to the Polynesian tradition of unconditional hospitality (Schänzel et al., 2014). Of note, the findings show that migrant hosts from all income groups may face the risk of being exploited during VR hosting, including the participants who are still struggling to make ends meet. VR hosts' wellbeing thus deserves more scholarly attention.

Therefore, my study adds to VFR literature, by suggesting that non-parent VR visitors should have a clear understanding of their social positions and the important rules/habitus in their hosts' houses, so that they may have realistic expectations for hosting obligations, and maintain a comfortable distance. This idea is mentioned in a few prior studies (Baldassar, 2008; Janta et al., 2015; Nolan, 2011). Notably, as some sojourners and stay-behinds indicate, VR visitors should also adequately express their gratitude to their hosts, through actively reciprocating the favours, in one way or another. This finding suggests that the social exchange theory can be used to explain the dynamics behind some VR host-guest interactions.

Nonetheless, the theory may not be able to explain all the dynamics, since the findings show that the Chinese tradition of hospitality and the desire to save face largely shape Chinese sojourners' VR hosting behaviours. Although facing the risk of exploitation, Chinese sojourners still tend to spend considerable time, energy, and money on meeting VR visitors' expectations, so that their hosting obligation can be fulfilled, and face saved. Also, to save face, these hosts are reluctant to explicitly ask their visitors to share the costs of hosting. This finding mirrors some previous studies (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Clark, 2018; Xu et al., 2018). As Finch (1989) note, family members have an inescapable obligation to support each other in times of need. Therefore, my study adds to the theory, by indicating that Chinese values and norms need to be considered when social exchange theory is used to explain the dynamics behind their transnational interactions.

As a result, the findings add to VFR literature, by indicating that Chinese sojourners tend to use some escape strategies to ease the burden of hosting non-parent VR visitors and maintain a comfortable distance from them. For instance, they may suggest that VR visitors join tour groups to minimise their own efforts in hosting. Also, they may deliberately provide their stay-behinds with negative tourism information, such as bad weather and boring destinations, while clearly clarifying their hosting obligations prior to VR visits, helping the visitors to better understand the meanings of hospitality. Of note, sometimes, their stay-behinds may also use some escape strategies to avoid visiting the sojourners or staying in the hosts' houses for too long, so that comfortable distance can be better maintained. As a few participants mentioned, they may intentionally avoid sharing clear and detailed travel plans with their migrant hosts. They believe that too many interactions during VR visits may weaken/ruin their already delicate family ties. This idea also extends VFR literature.

Having discussed the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges within Chinese transnational families, the next section then discusses the social exchanges between

Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends, the factors shaping the exchanges, and the implications for sojourners' lives and the over-stretched friendships.

7.3 Transnational Friendships: The Friend Sphere of Living

Transnational Lives

This section evaluates and critiques the findings from Chapter Six (Friend Finding Chapter) and compares them to those found in the literature. The focus is on the social exchanges and factors shaping those exchanges, which are the primary dynamics behind the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and VF travel. The findings indicate that Chinese sojourners abroad and their stay-behind friends tend to preserve their over-stretched friendships, which enables various forms of social exchange across national boundaries after emigration. This idea contributes to Chinese migration studies, although it was mentioned in some studies from other social contexts (Herz, 2015; Robertson, 2018; Tsujimoto, 2014).

As the findings suggest, it is fond memories that lay a solid foundation for the continuity of their affection for each other, mutual trust in their social interactions, and over-stretched friendships as a result, confirming Westcott's (2012) study of the way transnational sojourners negotiate their emotions towards stay-behind friends. This idea was mentioned by some participants in both the host and home countries. A few sojourners told me that the memories sometimes evoke a strong feeling of nostalgia. Also, it was found that an important factor that enables their transnational social exchanges is their felt obligations to one another. Although this finding was also mentioned in some prior studies (Annis, 1987; Lobburi, 2012; Ryan, 2011), my study highlights that face-saving is an important motive for Chinese people to fulfil felt obligation in friendships. Some sojourners told me that they unwillingly hosted their friends, just because they wanted to save face.

Although the findings show that the felt obligations between far-away friends are somehow different from those between far-away family members, still, participants from both sides clearly denoted the importance of willingness to help each other. For some participants, this decides whether their friendships can continue or not. Argyle and Henderson (1984) argue that friends highly value voluntary help in times of need. It was found that Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends tend to perceive their friendships as potential resources, which need to be accumulated in advance, so that various forms of support may be exchanged in times of need. Although this emerging idea mirrors the findings from a few previous studies (Herz, 2015; Lobburi, 2012; Tsujimoto, 2014), it however contributes to an enhanced understanding of the dynamics behind the maintenance of transnational friendships, by highlighting the importance of social exchange, which is discussed in the following sections.

Of note, it was found that both sides tend to maintain closer ties with far-away friends who have a similar socio-economic status. Some participants believe that the closer their socio-economic statuses, the higher the likelihood that they may share common interests/topics, and more importantly, be able to help each other in times of need. They believe that a gap in their possession of economic capital potentially constrains them from participating in social activities together and raises conflicts in their social interactions, resulting in reduced wellbeing and weakened friendships, especially during VF travel. The role of the gap in socio-economic statuses in shaping VF host-guest interactions therefore represents a research opportunity in tourism study.

7.3.1 Financial Support: A Means to Test the Strength of Friendships

I identified a clear gap in migration literature regarding financial support between transnational sojourners and their study-behind friends. The findings in my study suggest that

financial support may only be exchanged between the two sides in extremely difficult circumstances. Chinese sojourners normally exchange financial support with their stay-behind family members, rather than friends. However, as a few participants clearly indicate, far-away friends tend to consider the exchange of financial support to be the best means through which they can test their over-stretched friendships. That is to say, financially helping a far-away friend is likely to evoke strong affection, resulting in greatly strengthened friendship, while refusing to provide financial support is likely to ruin friendships. Nevertheless, the findings show that those far-away friends are more likely to exchange instrumental and emotional support in times of need, as discussed in the following sections.

7.3.2 Instrumental Support: Values and Norms Shape Social Interactions

The findings indicate that an important form of social exchange between far-away friends is instrumental support. Many sojourners and stay-behind friends indicate that they tend to feel obligated to provide each other with valuable advice in times of need. This idea echoes a few migration studies (Herz, 2015; Lobburi, 2012). My study adds to migration literature, by indicating that Chinese sojourners may help their stay-behind friends to find employment opportunities overseas by providing them with reliable information and/or job referrals, which enable emigration. This idea echoes a few migration studies, which argue that transnational friendships may act as vehicles of mobility (Ryan, 2011; Tsujimoto, 2014)

The host-guest interactions during VF travel represent an important means through which migrant hosts provide their visiting friends with various forms of instrumental support. Most of the sojourners told me that they have a sense of obligation to spend time, energy, and money on hosting their stay-behind friends, creating an illusion of staying at a home away from home during the VF visits. This finding confirms Capistrano and Weaver's (2018)

study, which argues that migrant hosts have an unwritten obligation to provide hospitality and be generous to their visitors, regardless of personal cost.

It was found that Chinese tradition of hospitality requires migrant hosts to provide their VF visitors with good meals, sometimes a welcome party, useful tourism information, and comfortable accommodation. This idea supports some prior VFR studies (Backer, 2019; Shani, 2013), regarding VFR hosting obligations. Also, the findings show that Chinese migrant hosts may need to play a role of tour guide, showing VF visitors their backyards, in particular, some well-known sights, and sometimes have to pay for the cost of travel. This obligation was mentioned by some participants from both sides.

Although this idea mirrors some VFR studies (Backer et al., 2020; Griffin, 2017; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Yousuf & Backer, 2017), my study still adds to VFR literature, by highlighting that fulfilling those hosting obligations often provides VF visitors with a strong feeling of safety. Some participants in China strongly value such a sense of safety, so that expect that they can rely on their migrant hosts during VF visiting. However, as a result of fulfilling VF visitors' expectations, heavy pressure is sometimes felt by the hosts, while failure to provide instrumental support during VF hosting may weaken/ruin their friendships (Shani & Uriely, 2012). This dilemma was commonly experienced by the sojourners, who strongly complained about the negative impacts of VF hosting on their wellbeing and ties.

The findings show that both sides tend to expect each other to exhibit good behaviour during VF visits, following important social protocols. For instance, as many participants indicate, having a benevolent attitude to each other is a prerequisite for creating a good atmosphere in host-guest interactions, which largely determines visiting and hosting experience. Otherwise, both sides may lose face, resulting in weakened friendships. Also, VF visitors should always avoid exploiting their friendships with migrant hosts. Many Chinese sojourners perceive themselves as at risk of being exploited by their VF visitors, so expect

visitors to consider others' interests, and to intentionally minimise the impacts of their visits on their hosts' daily lives, while they enjoy the free meals, accommodation, and transportation. Although this finding echoes some prior VFR studies (Backer, 2019; Shani, 2013; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Yousuf & Backer, 2017), it offers a research opportunity about the role of key social protocols in shaping VF visiting and hosting experiences.

However, the findings indicate that Chinese sojourners are often reluctant to directly complain about their exploitation, because they may lose face as a result of conflict with their visiting friends. Thus, it seems that the desire to save face plays an important role in shaping VF hosting but has not been remarked on in VFR literature, suggesting a research opportunity. Also, although facing the risk of being exploited by their VF visitors, some migrant hosts are still willing to host their friends, because they enjoy the leisure benefits of host-guest social interactions. As Yousuf and Backer (2017) note, some migrant hosts in Australia enjoy participating in a wide range of touristic activities with like-minded VF visitors, with whom they share tastes and interests in common. This emerging idea adds to the social exchange theory, by indicating that the sojourners take a range of factors into account in their evaluation of the benefits and costs of VF hosting. For example, some sojourners perceive improving their social status in their homeland as a benefit of VF hosting.

Nevertheless, not all VF visitors seek to exploit their transnational friendships while visiting. Instead, it was found that both sides tend to value the rule of reciprocity, which is an important virtue that reflects an essential moral standard in Chinese tradition, largely shaping transnational social interactions. As participants commonly state, reciprocity is a tacit understanding between far-away friends, emphasizing the importance of commensurate return in their transnational social exchanges. This emerging idea contributes to the nexus of VFR tourism and migration literature, suggesting that VF visitors should actively reciprocate the favours they received, in one way or another, honouring equal social positions and mutual

respect. This finding mirrors a few previous VFR studies (Capistrano & Weaver, 2018), and suggests that the social exchange theory play an important role in guiding social interactions between far-away friends.

Therefore, my study highlights that failure to practice reciprocity during VF visits is often considered an exploitation of friendship, frequently resulting in conflicts, reduced wellbeing, and dissolution of ties, as many sojourners strongly complained. This finding reflects those of prior studies (Capistrano & Weaver, 2018; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Yousuf & Backer, 2017), which argue that over-stretched friendships may be renegotiated based on social interactions between friends, especially during VF visits.

Of note, the findings add to the nexus of VFR and migration literature, by pointing out that the method of practicing reciprocity is flexible, and the evaluation of commensurate return is not rigorous, but based on the subjective perception of the respect received from friends. For instance, during VF visits, an important means of showing respect is gift-giving, although some participants consider preparing gifts a burden. Many sojourners indicate that this protocol is an important means through which their VF visitors can reciprocate the favours they received during visits. However, I noticed that there is almost no stay-behind friend mentioned gift-giving, implying a potential conflict/tension. This finding supports some prior studies (Kwek & Lee, 2015; S. X. Liu et al., 2010), which argue that the Chinese tradition of gift-giving is an important way to build harmonious relationships.

However, this finding challenges some previous studies from other socio-cultural contexts, which claim that VF and VR visitors should practice reciprocity, by helping their migrant hosts with household chores (Backer, 2019; Shani & Uriely, 2012). A possible explanation is that Chinese hosts may lose face, if their visiting friends have to do household chores during their stay, although some sojourners expect their visiting family members to help with household chores. This emerging idea adds to VFR literature, by implying that

Chinese sojourners may have different expectations of the ways that their VF and VR visitors reciprocate the favours received during visits.

Consequently, for Chinese sojourners, hosting VF travel is a good means through which they can examine their stay-behind friends' characters. For example, migrant hosts tend to consider the failure to practice the virtue of reciprocity in host-guest interactions to be a strong indicator of an undesirable moral quality. This emerging idea adds to VFR literature. Also, as some sojourners indicate, revealing the gap between their characters during VF travel may cause a strong sense of otherness and consequently weaken/destroy their transnational friendships.

7.3.3 Emotional Support: Contact Each Other in Times of Need

The findings add to migration literature, by indicating that Chinese sojourners tend to consider their stay-behind friends as an important source of emotional support, sometimes even more important than their stay-behind family members. The sojourners explain that they are often reluctant to tell their stay-behind family members the difficulties they face abroad, because they don't want them to be anxious. As Green notes, Brazilian migrants in Japan tend to consider their stay-behind friends a reliable source of support, describing them as "kind, generous, full of human warmth" (Green, 2011, p. 377).

For far-away friends, regular contact is an important means of exchanging emotional support and preserving their over-stretched friendships, which usually underpin VF hosting and visiting. It is noteworthy that Chinese migrant hosts' houses are heterotopias that are not freely accessible like public places (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). Rather, as some participants in New Zealand indicate, maintaining emotional closeness is an essential condition for their stay-behind friends to be welcomed to enter these social sites and enjoy

the hospitality. This finding contributes to VFR literature, by uncovering the correlation between emotional closeness and the desire of VF hosting, offering a research opportunity.

As a few participants in China mentioned, Chinese sojourners are more likely to frequently contact their stay-behind friends for emotional support at the beginning of their overseas settlement, i.e., the time during which they may face various challenges. The prior studies state that Chinese sojourners often face a range of difficulties abroad (Ho, 2014; Ip, 2006a; Wang, 2018; Wang & Collins, 2015), such as covert racism (Ho, 2014), loneliness and nostalgia (Wang et al., 2016).

The development of means of contact was found to greatly facilitate the cross-border contact between far-away friends, which supports the literature (Bucholtz, 2019; Westcott, 2012). In particular, the role of WeChat in facilitating the exchange of emotional support was widely mentioned by the participants, who can share their trivial or interesting life experiences with far-away friends freely and instantly.

However, the findings indicate that the far-away friends are too busy to frequently contact each other, although some sojourners and their stay-behind parents may contact each other daily to create an illusion of living together. Chinese sojourners who have settled well in New Zealand often face continual challenges, such as child-rearing and household chores, so that they only contact their stay-behind friends in times of need, or to exchange greetings on important days, such as Chinese New Year and birthdays. Although this finding echoes a few prior studies (Bell, 2016), it nonetheless highlights that the exchanges of emotional support between far-away friends is often practiced differently from those between far-away family members, so contributes to migration literature.

It was found that VF travel plays an important role in facilitating the exchange of emotional support between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends, by allowing a short period of reunion. Some Chinese sojourners explains that emotional support can be

better exchanged in face-to-face interactions during by VF visiting and hosting, compared to online communication, so their over-stretched friendships can be better preserved. This idea mirrors some prior migration studies (Bell, 2016; Herz, 2015; Tsujimoto, 2014; Westcott, 2012), while highlights that the diverse means of contact, such as WeChat and Zoom, may be insufficient to preserve over-stretched friendships.

Regardless of the means of communication, online or face-to-face, the finding indicates that emotional support can be better exchanged if the communication between far-away friends is effective and meaningful. Some participants indicate that their communication should be able to “leave each other with a deep impression” and “arouse strong empathy”. This finding reflects some prior studies, which argue that close friends should be able to understand each other’s real thoughts (Adams et al., 2004; Cross & Gore, 2004; Maeda & Ritchie, 2003). In addition, the far-away friends should have topics of conversation in common, although some participants reported that it is increasingly difficult for them to find common ground, mirroring some prior studies (Westcott, 2012). These emerging ideas contribute to migration literature, by suggesting that the gap in habitus potentially inhibits the exchange of emotional support between far-away friends. This is discussed next.

7.3.3.1 The Role of Habitus: Raising Misunderstandings and Conflicts

Therefore, my study indicates that sharing similar habitus is an essential condition for the communication between far-away friends to be effective and meaningful, and emotional support better exchanged. However, some participants said that there is an increasingly widening gap in the respective habitus/worldviews between the two sides, which frequently leads to misunderstandings, loss of common interests, reduced exchange of emotional support, and weakened friendships. Although this finding echoes previous migration studies

(Bell, 2016; Brettell, 2016; Robertson, 2018; Westcott, 2012), my study adds to migration literature, by identifying the dynamics behind the widening gap, as discussed below.

The findings show that Chinese sojourners' habitus often undergo changes after emigration, as a result of experiencing different socio-cultural environments, reflecting the ever-evolving nature of habitus (Bourdieu, 2002; Jenkins, 2002; Varnum & Grossmann, 2017). This idea was mentioned by both the sojourners and stay-behind friends. Also, it was found that the stay-behind friends' habitus has also been evolving, because China's socio-cultural environment has been rapidly changing (Chen, 2017; Qi, 2015; Zhang et al., 2017), supporting Zárate, Shaw, Marquez, and Biagas's (2012) argument, which suggests that cultural change is now a global reality. These facts collectively contribute to the widening gap in the habitus between Chinese sojourners and stay-behind friends.

In addition, my study indicate that some Chinese sojourners' perceptions of their homeland haven't profoundly changed after emigration, although the development of means of communication allows them to freely access to the information about what is happening in China. As some sojourners spontaneously mentioned, they don't know the lifestyle and living patterns in China anymore. This fact furthers the already widening gap in the habitus between the two sides, raising a strong sense of otherness and social exclusion that Chinese sojourners may experience in their transnational interactions with stay-behind friends. As Ploesser and Mecheril (2012) state, cultural changes in host and home societies facilitate the dynamic process of mutual othering between sojourners abroad and their stay-behind friends.

Given the widening gap in their respective habitus, Chinese sojourners tend to worry that hosting VF travel may cause conflicts between the visiting and hosting sides and therefore become increasingly reluctant to host their stay-behind friends. This is one of the most frequently mentioned issue among the participants in New Zealand, supporting some prior studies of VF hosting experience (Capistrano & Weaver, 2018; Shani & Uriely, 2012).

Therefore, to avoid conflict with their migrant hosts, VF visitors should respect the differences in the habitus between the two sides, while considering their migrant hosts' interests in host-guest interactions. The sojourners who have unpleasant VF hosting experiences strongly emphasized this idea. My study adds to the nexus between VFR and migration literature, by indicating that both sides may also benefit from the widening gap in their respective habitus, because they may be able to see the world from a different perspective in their communications. A few participants mentioned this idea. As Baxter and West (2003) state, the differences between friends also involve positivity, which contributes to individual growth.

7.3.4 Comfortable Distance between Friends

The findings add to the nexus of VFR and migration literature, by indicating that Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends tend to maintain a comfortable distance from each other, which requires them to (1) consider the interests of others in their transnational interactions, and (2) always avoid interfering in their far-away friends' lives. First, in the context of VF travel, Chinese sojourners often expect that their visitors can understand their hosts' difficulties and have reasonable expectations for hosting. Some sojourners emphasize that they cannot put excessive efforts into VF hosting, because they have their own work to do and families to take care of.

Therefore, the findings show that VF visitors' unrealistic expectations for hosting may be considered exploitation of their migrant hosts, potentially resulting in unpleasant visiting and hosting experiences, reduced wellbeing, and weakened/ruined friendships. This emerging idea evoked painful memories in the minds of some sojourners and therefore raised heated discussion in some focus groups. Also, it was found that migrant hosts tend to expect their visiting friends to respect their living habits and intentionally reduce the impacts of VF

visits on their daily lives, such as minimizing their length of stay and sharing the cost of hosting, echoing some prior VFR studies (Backer, 2019; Shani & Uriely, 2012).

This finding mirrors Foucault and Miskowiec's (1986) portrayal of heterotopias. Migrant hosts' houses can be perceived as the social fields, in which VF visitors should have a clear understanding of their roles/social positions and important rules/habitus, so that they may have pleasant visiting experiences. To better maintain the comfortable distance from their visiting friends, some sojourners tend to suggest the friends to join tour groups, so that their burden of hosting is eased to some extent. Thus, migrant hosts' responses to potential exploitation, or escape strategies, represent a research opportunity.

Second, my study contributes to migration literature, by indicating that maintaining comfortable distance requires the far-away friends to avoid interfering in each other's lives. Both sides believe that they should only contact each other in times of need, leaving their far-away friends with more time to enjoy their own lives. A few sojourners complained that some stay-behind friends contacted them too frequently, without important things to discuss. As Larsen (2013) state, people may feel intimidated or exploited as a result of frequently interacting with friends, because close proximity may cause the loss of autonomy. This finding has important implications for the everyday social interactions between far-away friends, in particular, the exchange of emotional support.

Also, the findings show that far-away friends should respect each other's life choices, rather than forcing others to do something they don't like. Otherwise, people may feel that they have lost face and have strong feeling of resistance. Further, some participants indicate that people should be careful about pointing out their friends' mistakes in their social interactions, to avoid making them lose face, echoing the literature (Baxter, 1993; Rawlins, 1992). The next section integrates the aforementioned two sets of social exchanges that are

enabled by transnational family ties and friendships to form a clearer view of living transnational lives.

7.4 Integrating Family and Friend Spheres: Commonalities and Differences

This section integrates the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives. The Literature Review Chapter suggests that there are two sets of interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel, which underpin various forms of transnational social exchanges. Then, the Family Finding Chapter and Friend Finding Chapter analyse and interpret a wide range of life experiences, constructing a clearer understanding of the two sets of interplay, the social exchanges that are enabled by the ties, the factors shaping those exchanges, and the implications for wellbeing and ties. Finally, using social exchange as a lens, this Discussion Chapter not only discusses the findings with respect to the VFR and migration literature, but also compares and contrasts the diverse roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping Chinese sojourners' lives, through identifying the commonalities and differences in the nature, meanings, and dynamics of the social exchanges between the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives.

7.4.1 Financial Support

Both family tie and friendship may enable the transnational exchange of financial support. However, Chinese sojourners often exchange financial support with stay-behind families, and only consider their old friends a source of financial support in extremely difficult circumstances (and have no access to family support). Of note, Chinese stay-behind parents' strong family altruism underpins the reverse remittances sent to their migrant

children, significantly improving the sojourners' objective wellbeing. Sometimes, financial support may be exchanged between Chinese sojourners and non-parent stay-behind family members, following the rule of reciprocity.

7.4.2 Instrumental Support

Transnational family ties and friendship underpin very different forms of instrumental support that shape Chinese sojourners' wellbeing in different ways. On the one hand, the flow of instrumental support between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends is dominated by the exchange of valuable advice in times of need. Sometimes, Chinese sojourners may provide their old friends with useful information about migrating overseas.

On the other hand, stay-behind family members represent a reliable source of instrumental support for Chinese sojourners. In particular, Chinese parents often have a strong sense of family altruism/obligation to frequently visit the sojourners and help them to take care of their young children and/or do household chores, without expecting any commensurate return, or balancing benefits and costs, while tending to intentionally hide, underestimate, or ignore their own need for familial support.

This finding reflects that transnational family ties and friendship are different in terms of the nature of obligations they underpin, confirming prior studies (Finch, 1989; Spencer, 2006). Of note, the findings indicate that the flows of instrumental support in Chinese transnational families are largely shaped by the family life cycle, which is reflected in their changing VR visiting and hosting behaviours.

During VFR travel, both VF and VR visitors may enjoy instrumental support from their migrant hosts, although some conflicts may occur because of the increasingly widening gap in their respective habitus. Given the Chinese tradition of hospitality, Chinese sojourners are obligated to provide their VF and VR visitors with good meals, comfortable

accommodation, reliable tourism information, sometimes act as a tour guide, and even pay for costs of travel, thereby greatly improving their visitors' travel experiences. As Backer and Weiler (2018) argue, VFR visiting allows visitors to escape their everyday lives, while enjoying support from their migrant hosts. Also, as some stay-behinds indicate, receiving instrumental support from their migrant hosts creates a strong sense of safety during their VFR travel in New Zealand, confirming Backer and colleagues' (2020) study of VFR hosting in Turkey.

The finding shows that the nature and strength of their over-stretched ties shape the amount of time, energy, and money that the migrant hosts may be willing to spend on hosting. It is noteworthy that hosting parents and hosting other VFR visitors follow fundamentally different rules. On the one hand, although Chinese sojourners tend to retain a sense of obligation to host non-parent visitors, their host-guest interactions are often guided by the rule of reciprocity and shaped by the desire to save face. Hosting these visitors may place a heavy burden on the sojourners (Backer, 2019), especially when reciprocity is not properly practiced, making them vulnerable to be physically and/or financially exploited.

On the other hand, hosting their stay-behind parents is often considered a way of fulfilling their wistful longing and a sense of filial piety, so that the expectation of commensurate return or the evaluation of benefits and costs are often irrelevant, although some conflicts may occur in their interactions, because of their generational/habitus gap. This finding furthers Yousuf and Backer's (2017) study of hosts' perceived differences between hosting friends (HF) and hosting relatives (HR) in Australia, which argue that HF and HR are not a homogenous group, but are enabled by different motives that underpin different ways of hosting. My study thus extends VFR literature, by indicating that hosting stay-behind parents and hosting other VFR visitors are also different in many ways.

7.4.3 Emotional Support

Given the development of means of contact, both transnational family tie and friendship increasingly enable exchange of emotional support across national boundaries, denoting the two-way flows, which improve Chinese sojourners' subjective wellbeing and preserve the over-stretched ties. However, the exchange of emotional support between far-away family members is often practiced differently from the exchange between far-away friends, so they play different roles in shaping Chinese sojourners' wellbeing.

On the one hand, Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind parents tend to exchange emotional support, through regularly contacting each other, sometimes daily, to share trivial or interesting life experiences, actively creating an illusory co-presence and implicitly conveying love, so that not only the parents' anxiety for their migrant children can be partially alleviated, but also the sojourners' filial piety can be fulfilled to some extent. Such an exchange is not guided by social exchange theory, but a sense of family obligation. As Baldassar (2007a) note, family obligation is the core of support exchange within transnational families.

On the other hand, Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends merely exchange greetings during important festivals or birthday, to preserve their over-stretched friendships. Besides, they only contact each other in times of need, because they are often very busy facing the challenges in their own lives. However, Chinese sojourners tend to consider their far-away friends an important source of emotional support when they are experiencing difficulties abroad, especially at the beginning of their settlement, rather than their family members, in order to avoid worrying them.

Both VR and VF travel facilitate the exchange of emotional support between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds, resulting in improved subjective wellbeing and strengthened ties. However, it seems that VR travel plays a much more important role in

improving Chinese sojourners' subjective wellbeing, compared to VF travel. In their regular contacts, Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind parents tend to deliberately hide their need for familial care and conceal the difficulties in their lives, sometimes raising a sense of helplessness. Therefore, VR travel is an opportunity for them to reunite for a short but valuable time, so that they can better learn each other's life experience, fulfil their wistful longing, and exchange emotional support.

Also, as the finding indicates, for Chinese sojourners, hosting family members creates a fleeting heterotopia that allows them to enjoy an illusion of being well supported, reducing their feeling of helplessness. Further, compared to VF visitors, VR visitors are likely to stay in their migrant hosts' houses longer, and often have stronger desire to temporarily immerse themselves in their hosts' lives, so that the gap in their respective habitus may be bridged to some extent, resulting in more effective and meaningful communication, which potentially reduces conflicts and facilitates their exchange of emotional support.

7.4.4 Comfortable Distance

Nevertheless, Chinese sojourners' wellbeing may be threatened, if comfortable distance is not well maintained in their social interactions/exchanges with stay-behind family members and friends. In their daily lives, Chinese sojourners tend to become frustrated with the interference from their stay-behinds. Of note, stay-behind parents and friends tend to interfere in the sojourners' everyday lives in different ways, which shape their lives differently.

On the one hand, Chinese sojourners' autonomy/independence may be threatened, if their parents keep attempting to control them, potentially causing emotional burdens and conflicts, although both sides often feel comfortable to frequently contact each other, sometimes daily, to share life experiences, which is an important means of exchanging

emotional support and implicitly conveying love. On the other hand, to give each other more privacy, far-away friends should not only respect each other's life choices, but also avoid frequently contacting each other in their daily lives, although both sides value the exchange of advice in times of need.

Also, comfortable distance may be broken during VFR travel, making Chinese sojourners physically and/or emotional exhausted, and sometimes financially vulnerable. This finding echoes Backer's (2019) study of the link between VFR travel and quality of life, which argues that VFR hosting can be exhausting for the hosts who make excessive efforts to fulfil their hosting obligations. Visiting parents may break the comfortable distance differently from non-parent VR visitors and VF visitors. On the one hand, visiting parents may interfere in their migrant children's lives during the visits, attempting to change their hosts' daily routines, consumption behaviours, or even the ways the sojourners educate their young children, so that some conflicts may occur, and sojourners' wellbeing reduced.

On the other hand, in hosting non-parent VR visitors and VF visitors, Chinese sojourners not only value reciprocity, but also tend to expect that their visitors to reduce the impacts of visiting on their daily lives. However, some visitors may have unrealistic expectations of hosting, distort the meanings of hospitality, ignore the rule of reciprocity, and therefore exploit their migrant hosts, physically and/or financially, so that conflicts may occur, sojourners' wellbeing reduced, and over-stretched ties weakened/ruined. Of note, the widening gap in the habitus between Chinese sojourners and their VFR visitors is likely to be a driving force behind conflicts that arise during hosting.

In this Discussion Chapter, I discuss the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges behind the two sets of interplay identified in the Family and Friend Finding Chapters, in relation to the literature. Also, to achieve a synthesis of the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives, I compare and contrast the diverse roles of transnational

Chapter Seven: Discussion

family ties and friendships in shaping Chinese sojourners' lives, through discussing the commonalities and differences in the various forms of social exchanges that are respectively enabled by the family ties and friendships. The next Conclusion Chapter addresses the 'so what' question, through discussing the implications of my study for the fields of migration and VFR tourism, theory development, practice (e.g., tourism planning and management), and future research. Also, some research limitations are addressed.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The purpose of this Conclusion Chapter is to present a synthesis of the research in relation to implications for theory and practice. However, as I write this chapter, COVID-19 has resulted in closed borders across the world and restricted international travel of Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind family and friends. Internal travel has also been impeded by serial regional lockdowns in various countries. Although this impact is beyond the scope of my study, the breadth and depth of COVID-19's impact on sojourners' everyday lives, their geographically stretched family ties and friendships, and VFR tourism behaviours warrants comment in this final chapter. Therefore, this chapter discusses my study's implications for: (1) Living transnational lives (2) the field of VFR tourism, (3) social exchange theory (4) practice and management, followed by the limitations of this study. Finally, I address future directions for research considering the recent and ongoing impacts of COVID-19, and end with commenting on my new positionality after completing this PhD journey.

8.1 Implications for Living Transnational Lives

My study suggests that transnational family ties and friendships perform common, but also very different roles in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds, as evidenced by the perspectives (and dynamics) of social exchanges that are enabled by the two forms of over-stretched tie. First, from a financial perspective, transnational family ties often enable reverse remittances that are made from stay-behind parents to their migrant children, significantly improving the sojourners' objective wellbeing. Such a practice derives from family altruism and acts as a way of conveying love. The remittance between Chinese sojourners and non-parent stay-behind family members follows the rule of reciprocity. Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends rarely exchange financial support, except in extremely difficult circumstances.

Second, from an emotional perspective, transnational family ties represent an irreplaceable source of emotional support for Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind parents, although both sides tend to conceal their needs and difficulties from each other, potentially inhibiting themselves from receiving essential support. Chinese sojourners often avoid worrying their parents, so consider their transnational friendships a source of emotional support, although it seems that stay-behind friends are less likely to consider the sojourners a major source of emotional support, because they have sufficient emotional support from their social networks within China.

Of note, the exchange of emotional support between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind parents is often practiced differently from those between non-parent-child family members and those between friends, so that shapes the sojourners' wellbeing differently. On the one hand, given the development of means of contact (e.g., WeChat), Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind parents regularly contact each other, sometimes daily, to share trivial or interesting everyday life experiences, thereby creating an illusory co-presence and implicitly conveying love. This (to some extent) alleviates the parents' negative feelings of loss, abandonment, and loneliness. On the other hand, far-away non-parent-children family members and friends only contact each other to exchange emotional support in times of need, because they are often busy facing challenges in their own lives.

Third, from an instrumental perspective, transnational family ties represent the most important source of instrumental support for Chinese sojourners, as their stay-behind parents often have a strong sense of family altruism to participate in VR visiting and provide their migrant children with childcare assistance and help with household chores (i.e., another way of conveying love). Sometimes, other close family members, such as siblings, may also play the role of caregivers. In contrast, the flow of instrumental support between far-away friends is dominated by the exchange of valuable advice in times of need, although other forms of

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

support may be exchanged occasionally, such as sharing employment opportunities that enable onward emigration.

An important reason behind the difference is that the felt obligations that underpin the exchanges are different. In particular, the social exchanges between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind parents are likely to follow very different rules from all the other social exchanges the sojourners may participate in. For instance, although Chinese sojourners feel obligated to provide all VFR visitors with instrumental support (e.g., feeding, providing accommodation, and entertaining), they often have a strong sense of filial piety to host their parents, without expecting any commensurate return. However, they often host other VFR visitors following the rule of reciprocity, always evaluating the benefits and costs of hosting. Hosting family members (HF) can therefore be divided into hosting parents and hosting non-parent family members.

Nevertheless, my study indicates that the maintenance of over-stretched family ties and friendships has both benefits and costs for wellbeing, conceptually denoting a dual effect, because the ties may not only represent a source of support for both sides, enabling continuous support exchanges that improve wellbeing, but also potentially become a source of tension, frustration, and exploitation, especially when a comfortable distance is not maintained in interactions. For example, sojourners sometimes feel being continually controlled by stay-behind parents after emigration, which creates a heavy emotional burden and raises conflicts between the two generations, especially during VR hosting. Therefore, prolonged separation may benefit both sides, whose habitus are increasingly different from each other, by ensuring the maintenance of comfortable distance.

8.2 Implications for the Field of VFR Tourism

This section summarises the major implications of my study to the field of VFR tourism. First, it was found that transnational family ties and friendships have a dual effect in shaping VFR travel. On the one hand, the ties represent a pull factor that enables/motivates VFR visiting and hosting and shapes the social exchanges between the two sides, potentially resulting in improved wellbeing, fulfilled obligations, and strengthened emotional closeness. On the other hand, both sides may deliberately avoid participating in VFR visiting and hosting, using some escape strategies (e.g., book group tour, avoid sharing detailed travel plan), because of weak/troubled ties, felt burden, unpleasant prior visiting/hosting experience, or the perception of the gap in habitus.

Second, VFR travel has a dual effect on wellbeing and over-stretched ties. On the one hand, VFR travel allow geographically dispersed family members and friends to reunite for a short period, so that various forms of social exchange are enabled/facilitated, resulting in improved wellbeing and strengthened ties. Also, VFR travel represent a means of escapism, through which both sides can take a brief break from the challenges they face and enjoy the benefits of leisure, a fleeting period of living illusory lives. VFR visiting enriches visitors' life experience and broadens their horizons, while VFR hosting may enhance migrant hosts' knowledge about the fast-developing China. Of note, during VR visits, stay-behind family members can immerse themselves in the sojourners' lives, so that the gap in habitus between them may be bridged to some extent, potentially resulting in more effective communication, reduced conflicts, and strengthened ties.

On the other hand, VFR travel may be a heavy burden on both sides, resulting in reduced wellbeing and weakened ties. First, Chinese sojourners may feel obligated to spend excessive efforts on hosting, so that become physically, emotionally, and financially exhausted. Second, some visiting parents face severe challenges, such as language barriers,

cultural shock, and loneliness, so that it is difficult for them to live fulfilled and independent lives during the visits. Third, non-parent VFR visitors may also consider visiting a burden, which may require them to make excessive efforts to travel and incur unexpected expenditure. Of note, important social protocols may be broken during VFR travel, such as comfortable distance, reciprocity, and friendly attitude, resulting in emerging conflicts, reduced wellbeing, and weakened ties. For example, given their generational gap, visiting parents may interfere in sojourners' lives. Also, non-parent VFR visitors may distort the meanings of hospitality and have unrealistic expectations of hosting.

8.3 Implications for Social Exchange Theory

My study contributes to the theory, as, to date, few studies have paid attention to the role of social exchange theory in explaining the survival of transnational family ties and friendships, and the dynamics behind the transnational interactions between sojourners and their stay-behinds (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017). As Koerner (2018) state, the purpose of studying interpersonal relationships is to develop theories which can be used to predict and explain human behaviour. Therefore, my study not only confirms, challenges, and extends prior understanding of the roles of over-stretched family ties and friendships in shaping the lives of transnational sojourners and their stay-behinds, but also develops theory, by achieving an enhanced understanding of the way social dynamics reflect social exchange theory and the way the theory accounts for the dynamics.

This section first revisits (1) the initial conceptual diagram developed from the Literature Review Chapter, and (2) the new 'family' and 'friend' models respectively presented in the Family and Friend Finding Chapters. Then, I discuss how the Discussion Chapter uses a social exchange lens to integrate the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives. Finally, given the integration, the final model emerged, which integrates

the family and friend models. In this way, I demonstrate the process in which new knowledge developed from my study reframes and extends the initial dialogue between the dynamics and the theory. The models are discussed below with reference to previous research and new developments with regard to the use of social exchange theory in explaining the dynamics behind transnational social interactions in the nexus of VFR tourism and migration.

8.3.1 The Initial Conceptual Diagram

The review of the literature produced the initial conceptual diagram that demonstrates a dialogue between the family and friend dynamics and social exchange theory (Figure 8-1).

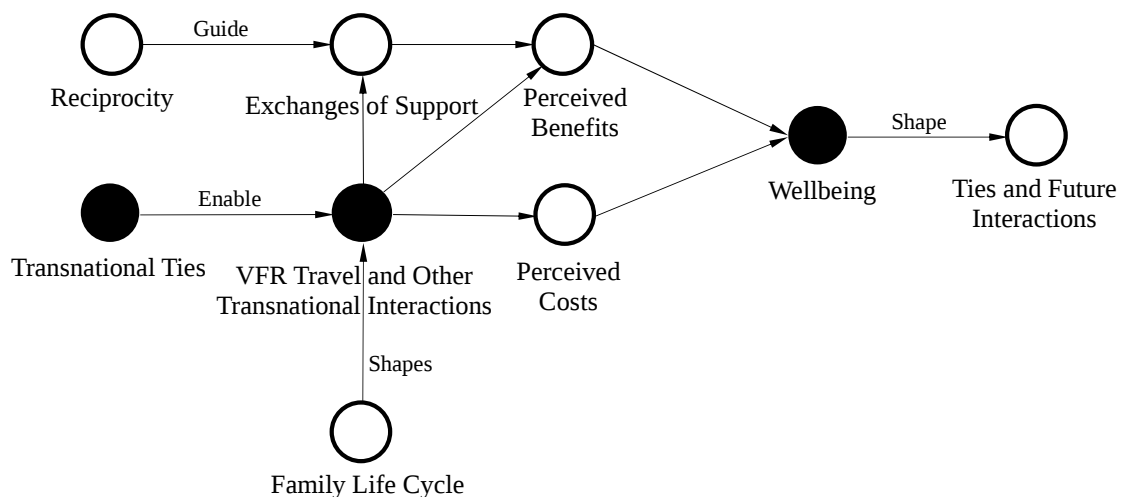


Figure 8-1 Conceptual diagram: Framing the dynamics and the theory (from Chapter Two: Literature Review)

This diagram integrates the two sets of interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel identified from the literature, which represent the roles of over-stretched family ties and friendships in shaping the lives of sojourners and stay-behinds. The transnational ties enable various social interactions, including VFR travel, which are shaped by family life cycle. The major driving force of the interactions is the exchange of various forms of support that are guided by the rule of reciprocity, regardless of the nature of the ties.

The interactions and exchanges have certain benefits and costs that shape the wellbeing of sojourners and stay-behinds. Both sides are more likely to preserve their ties and actively interact if they consider the interactions beneficial, that is, benefits outweigh costs.

8.3.2 New Models for Family and Friends

I then revisit the two models respectively emerged in the Family and Friend Finding Chapters, focusing on the dialogue between the dynamics and the theory, and explain how the initial understanding of the dialogue was revised and extended.

Figure 8-2 demonstrates the dynamics behind the interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and VR travel. Given the new ideas developed, Figure 8-2 reframes and extends the initial dialogue between the dynamics and the theory, suggesting that the social interactions/exchanges between the far-away family members are not only shaped by the rule of reciprocity and the evaluation of benefits and costs, but also closely associated with other influencing factors, such as the family life cycle, family obligations, and the desire to save face, among others.

Those newly identified concepts may override the role of social exchange theory in explaining the social dynamics. For instance, Chinese stay-behind parents tend to have a strong sense of family altruism to continually provide their migrant children with remittances and childcare assistance, without expecting any commensurate return.

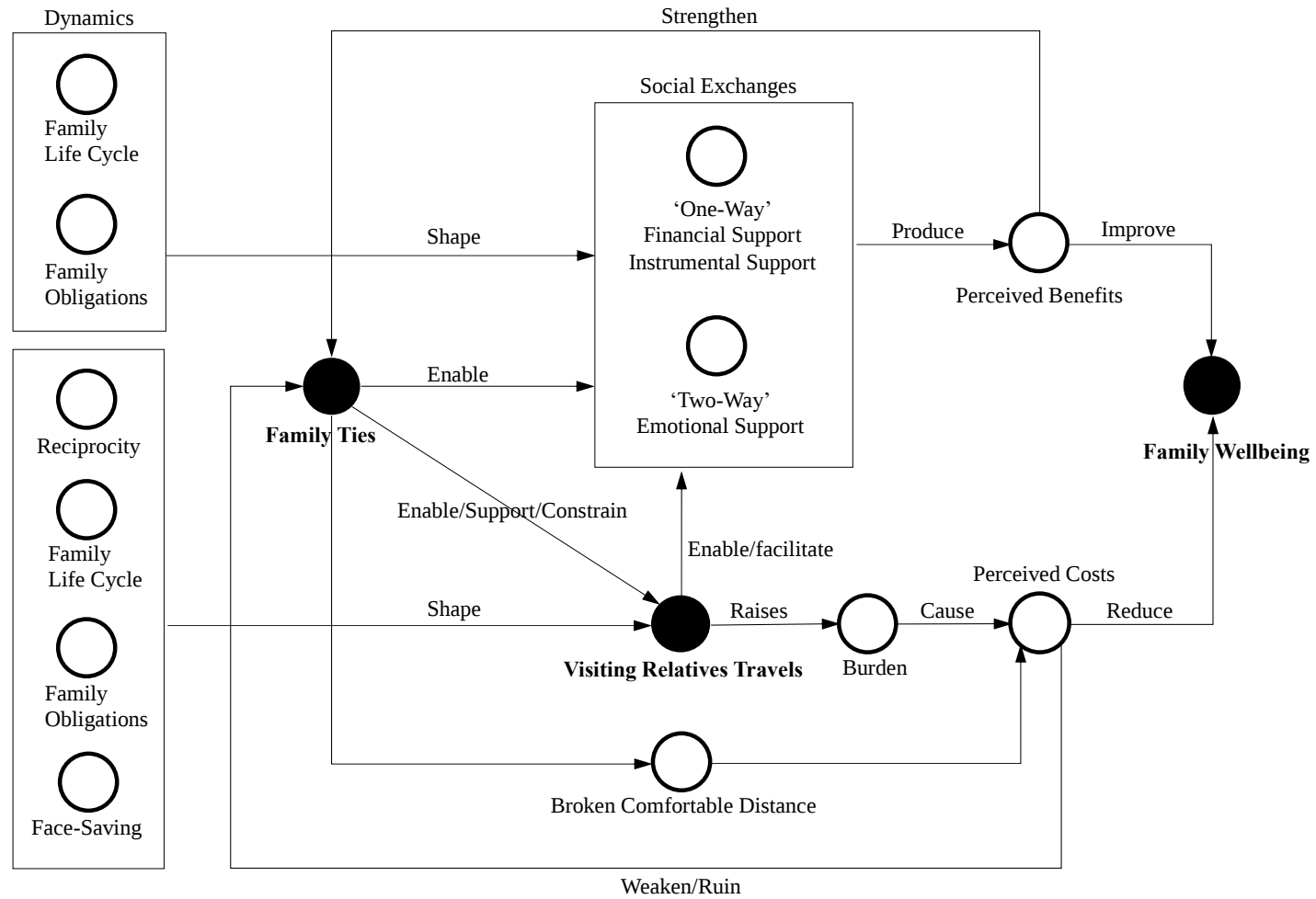


Figure 8-2 Conceptual model: Interplay of transnational family ties, family wellbeing, and visiting relatives travel (from Chapter Five: Family)

Figure 8-3 demonstrates the dynamics behind the interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and VF travel. This emerging model suggests that the social interactions between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind friends are shaped by some influencing factors, other than the rule of reciprocity and the evaluation of benefits and costs. For instance, cultural closeness plays an important role in shaping their social interactions/exchanges, and over-stretched friendships. This is evidenced in the widening gap in habitus between the two sides, which leads to misunderstanding and loss of common topics of conversation that constrain them from continually exchanging emotional and instrumental support. Also, this gap frequently raises a sense of otherness, even though the culturally required rule of reciprocity was followed.

The new family and friend models are different mainly in two ways. First, some influencing factors (i.e., emerging concepts) in the two models are different. For example, socio-economic status shapes the interactions and ties between friends, not family members. Second, some social exchanges in the two new models appear to be different. Although the family model should demonstrate the social exchanges between Chinese sojourners and stay-behind family members (two-way flows in general), it nevertheless intentionally reflects the social exchanges between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behind parents, which have most important implications for wellbeing and follow very different rules from all the other social interactions the sojourners may participate in, enabling the one-way support flows from China to New Zealand. The next section presents and discusses the final model in-depth, emphasizing on the re-working and contribution to the theory.

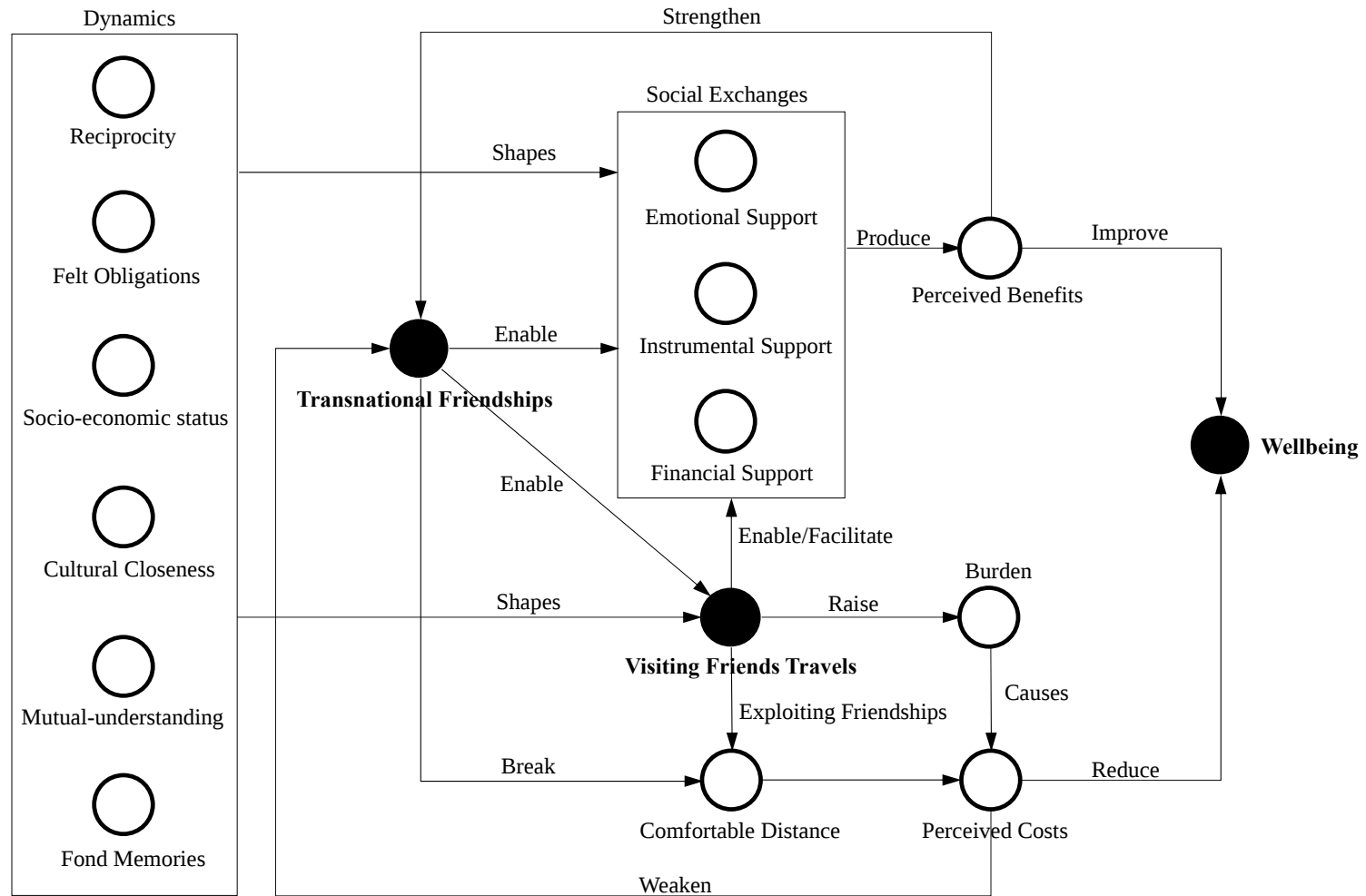


Figure 8-3 Conceptual model: Interplay of transnational friendships, wellbeing, and visiting friends travel (from Chapter Six: Friends)

8.3.3 An Emerging Conceptual Model: A Synthesis of Family and Friend Spheres

Using a social exchange lens, the Discussion Chapter discusses the various forms of social exchange within the two sets of interplay formed in the Family and Friend Finding Chapters, against the literature, because the social exchanges greatly shape wellbeing and ties. Then, the Discussion Chapter compares and contrasts the diverse roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping Chinese sojourners' lives, through discussing the commonalities and differences in the nature, meanings, and dynamics of social exchanges that are respectively enabled by the family ties and friendships.

This process of integrating the family and friend spheres of living transnational lives then uncovered the final model in this thesis (Figure 8-4), which synthesizes the family and friend spheres, by revealing common threads across the family and friend models, while reframes and extends the initial dialogue between the dynamics and the theory. I thus discuss this final model in-depth, by explaining how it furthers my understanding of transnational social exchanges between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds, and adds to the initial conceptual diagram identified in the Literature Review Chapter.

My study confirms that social exchange theory can be used to explain the dynamics behind some transnational social exchanges in non-parent-children family ties and friendships. In their transnational interactions, in particular, VFR visiting and hosting, Chinese sojourners and their non-parent stay-behinds strongly value reciprocity (i.e., the expectation of commensurate return) and tend to evaluate the benefits and costs of interacting with each other. Reciprocity is perceived as a social protocol, a tacit understanding, an important virtue, and a moral obligation, reflecting a shared value. This finding supports some prior VFR studies (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Xu et al., 2018).

Failure in practicing reciprocity (a strong indicator of bad character) and the perception of costs outweigh benefits may lead to reduced wellbeing, weakened ties, and inhibited future interactions. For example, for migrant hosts, frustration, exhaustion, and exploitation caused by VFR hosting reduce wellbeing, weaken ties, and inhibit future hosting. Both sides may intentionally avoid participating in the interactions, if they believe that the rule of reciprocity is likely to be broken, and/or, the costs may outweigh benefits. For instance, Chinese hosts may adopt some escape strategies to avoid VFR hosting, such as clarifying hosts' obligations prior to hosting.

However, my study suggests that the prior understanding of social exchange theory is insufficient to explain some social dynamics behind transnational interactions between the sojourners and stay-behinds. It was found that some influencing factors also shape the social interactions/exchanges between the two sides, such as their emotional closeness, the gap in habitus, and ever-evolving socio-cultural norms/values (e.g., Chinese tradition of hospitality and face-saving). These emerging concepts contribute to identification of new nuanced dimensions to the use of social exchange theory. They can be used to better interrogate the social dynamics, sometimes override the rules of reciprocity and the desire of balancing benefits and costs in social interactions. These findings therefore provide a theoretical solution to the weakness of the theory and important implications for theory building.

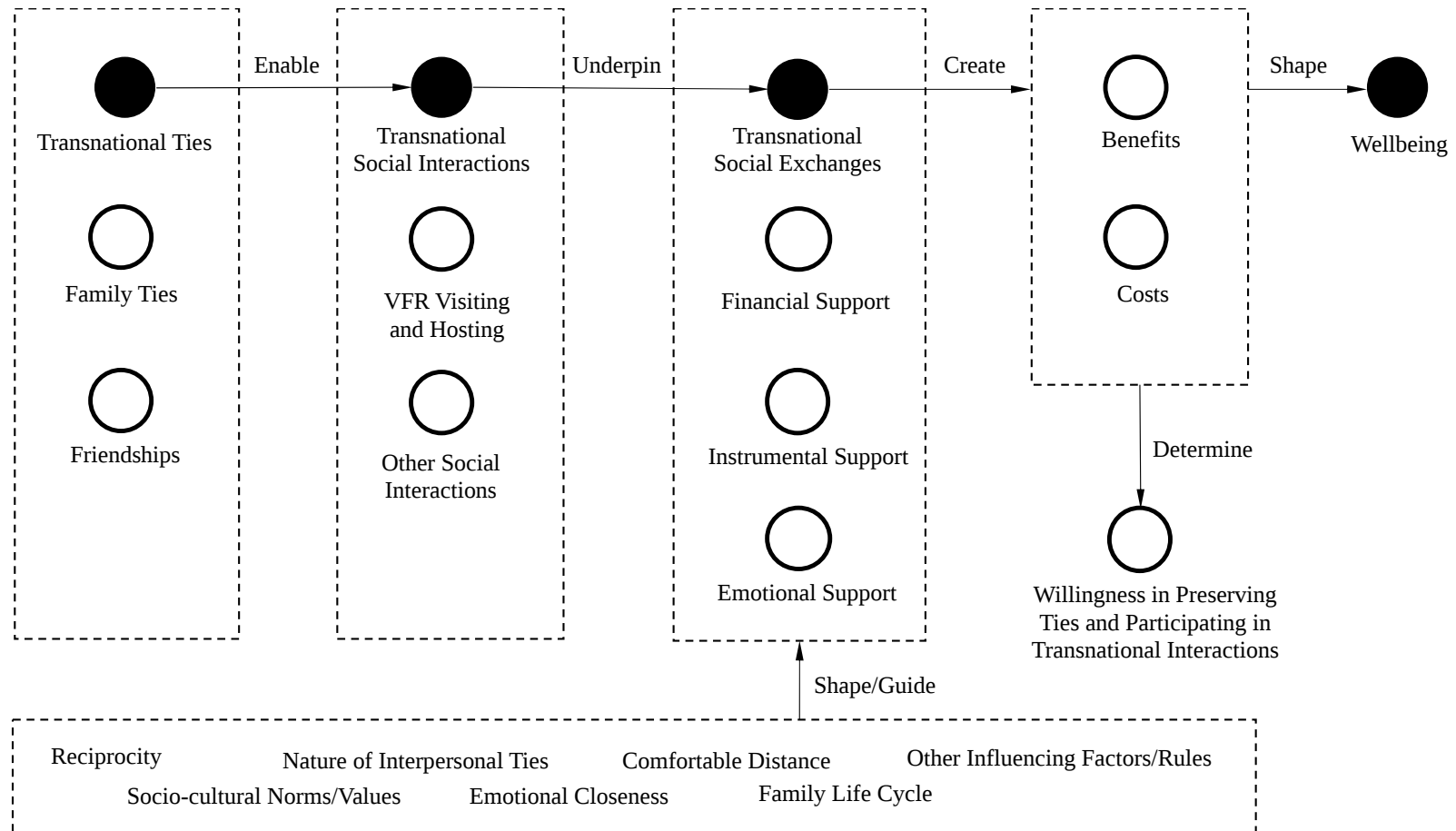


Figure 8-4 Conceptual model: The dialogue between transnational social exchanges and social exchange theory

I therefore discuss the seven emerging concepts identified in the Family and Friend Finding Chapters (Discussion Chapter contributes to more insights), explaining how these influencing factors contribute to new understandings of transnational social interactions/exchanges, in particular, VFR visiting and hosting. Of note, the identification of all the factors is beyond this exploratory study's purpose, not to mention that the factors are contingent on the research context.

Emotional closeness. For Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds, emotional closeness derives from their shared memories and past, greatly shaping their felt obligations and mutual trust toward each other, and social interactions/exchanges as a result. This idea echoes the literature (Westcott, 2012). In particular, emotional closeness largely shape the desire of participating in VFR visiting and hosting. For instance, some stay-behind siblings frequently contact the sojourners, with whom they maintain close ties, and feel obligated to visit New Zealand and provide them with childcare assistance, while other stay-behind siblings merely contact the sojourners during important festival to preserve ties. In addition, emotional closeness shapes the amount of time, energy, and money that the migrant hosts are willing to spend on VFR hosting. For example, some sojourners host the visiting friends, with whom they maintain very close ties, without evaluating benefits and costs, while tend to host other stay-behind friends following the rule of reciprocity.

Socio-cultural norms/values. It was found that some socio-cultural norms and values shape the social interactions between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds from many aspects. In the context of VFR hosting, given the Chinese tradition of hospitality, the sojourners have an unwritten and inescapable obligation to have a welcoming attitude, and be generous to their visitors, actively providing them with meals, accommodation, transportation, and so on, regardless of personal cost. This view supports prior VFR studies (Backer, 2019; Griffin, 2017; Yousuf & Backer, 2017).

Also, although VFR hosting sometimes leads to reduced wellbeing, and raises the risk of being exploited by visitors, Chinese sojourners still tend to host their visitors well, intentionally maintain friendly attitude and atmosphere, and are reluctant to directly complain about undesirable visiting behaviours, because they have to fulfil the unwritten obligation, otherwise they may lose face. This emerging concept of face-saving mirrors the literature (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Clark, 2018; Xu et al., 2018), clearly denoting an opposite of the rules of social exchange theory. Nevertheless, non-parent VFR visitors need to show their hosts deep gratitude in one way or another (Capistrano & Weaver, 2018), otherwise the sojourners may feel exploited, resulting in weakened ties and inhibited future interactions.

In addition, the survival of ties and continual social exchange between Chinese sojourners and stay-behinds requires that they share similar moral qualities (value). Their social interactions would be unpleasant, and ties may be weakened, if undesirable moral quality is identified, even reciprocity was well practiced. Further, a Chinese tradition suggests that young children are only in safe hands when they are being taken care of by close family members, so that stay-behind parents often feel obligated to visit the sojourners and help with childcare. This idea leads to the next emerging concept, felt obligation.

Felt obligation. My study suggests that felt obligations play an important role in enabling, facilitating, and sometimes inhibiting transnational social exchanges in family ties and friendships, although it was found that the meanings of the obligations have been continually renegotiated (Tu, 2016; Xu et al., 2018). Stay-behind parents have a strong sense of family altruism, so frequently devote themselves to providing their migrant children with financial (remittance) and instrumental support (childcare and household chores), reflecting that family obligation is the core of support exchange within transnational families (Baldassar, 2007a). Chinese sojourners often have a sense of filial piety to stay-behind

parents (Lou & Ci, 2014; Xu et al., 2019), so feel obligated to take care of them during VR hosting, without expecting commensurate return or evaluating benefits and costs.

Given their feelings of filial piety and family altruism, Chinese sojourners and stay-behind parents frequently contact each other to share everyday life experience and exchange emotional support, so that love is conveyed, and anxiety alleviated. Of note, given their felt obligations, they may intentionally conceal their needs and difficulties from each other, potentially inhibiting the exchange of essential support (Wang & Collins, 2015). In addition, felt obligations also enable the social exchanges between Chinese sojourners and stay-behind friends, supporting the literature (Annis, 1987; Lobburi, 2012; Ryan, 2011). However, the felt obligations between far-away friends are different from those between sojourners and stay-behind parents, so often enable different social exchanges.

The locational and generational gap in habitus. My study found that the concept of habitus shapes transnational social interactions/exchanges. It was found that there is a widening gap in the habitus between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds (or generational gap between parents and children), supporting prior studies of Chinese families (Chen & Short, 2008; Liu et al., 2017; Xiao, 2016). This gap frequently causes the difficulty in communication, misunderstanding, and conflicts in their interactions, especially during VFR visiting and hosting, which inhibit the exchange of support, weaken ties, and threaten wellbeing. Their cultural closeness therefore facilitates transnational social interactions/exchanges, in particular, VFR visiting and hosting. Both sides enjoy the interactions with the far-away family members and friends, with whom they share similar cultural backgrounds. In such interactions, they feel more comfortable and have more topics of conversation in common. This idea supports Yousuf and Backer's (2017) study in VFR hosting.

Comfortable distance. The emerging concept of comfortable distance is an important influencing factor, or more precisely, a highly desired social protocol, that shapes/guides the social interactions between the two sides. Failure to maintain comfortable distance may lead to emerging conflicts, reduced wellbeing, and weakened family ties and friendships. Of note, stay-behind parents, non-parent family members, and friends may break the comfortable distance in different ways, which impact Chinese sojourners' lives differently. In the context of VFR hosting, Chinese sojourners sometimes feel frustrated with interference from their visiting parents, who help them with childcare and household chores, but attempt to change their migrant children's daily routines, consumption behaviours, or the way they educate young children. In contrast, during VFR visiting, some non-parent family members and friends may misuse/exploit the ties, have unrealistic expectations of VFR hosting, causing their migrant hosts to become physically and/or emotional exhausted, and financially vulnerable. This idea supports some prior studies (Backer, 2019; Janta et al., 2015; Wang, 2016).

Socio-economic status. It was found that the gap in socio-economic status between Chinese sojourners and non-parent stay-behinds shape the maintenance of their over-stretched ties, and social interactions. Both sides perceive the concept of socio-economic status as the possession of economic capital (some also value professional and educational background). In friendships, some sojourners and stay-behinds consider their ties a source of support that need to be accumulated in advance. This view reflects some prior studies (Herz, 2015; Lobburi, 2012; Tsujimoto, 2014). They thus tend to intentionally preserve the ties with the far-away friends, with whom they share similar socio-economic statuses, because they believe that the closer their socio-economic statuses are, the more likely they may help each other in the future.

In both family ties and friendships, the gap in socio-economic status shapes the social interactions between Chinese sojourners and stay-behinds. Such a gap potentially constrains them from having topics of conversation and interests in common, and participating in leisure activities together, potentially resulting in reduced social interactions and weakened ties. In particular, some sojourners believe that this gap may lead to unpleasant VFR visiting and hosting experience, because their low-income visitors are more likely to financially rely on them during the visits, creating a heavy burden.

Family life cycle. The emerging concept of family life cycle has important implications for the social interactions/exchanges between far-away family members, because their needs and felt family obligations tend to undergo changes as the families experience significant life events (e.g., elders pass away, birth of children) and move to new life stages, resulting in the changes in their motives and desire to participate in transnational support exchanges (Guo, 2016; Liu & Wu, 2017; Tu, 2016), and migration strategies. In particular, family life cycle shapes transnational families' VR visiting and hosting (e.g., choice of activities, frequency of visits), in which various forms of support are exchanged. Of note, based on the participants' diverse profiles and life experiences, three major stages of family life cycle in Chinese transnational families' lives were identified in the Family Finding Chapter, which can be further examined in future studies, and used as a lens to explore the dynamics behind their changing transnational interactions. This idea echoes migration literature (Baldassar et al., 2014; Bryceson, 2019). However, it is not clear if family life cycle also shapes the social interactions between far-away friends.

As a result, the abovementioned seven emerging concepts are integrated in the final model (not all concepts are presented), contributing to new dimensions that need to be considered when social exchange theory is used to interrogate the dynamics behind

transnational social interactions/exchange between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds, especially VFR visiting and hosting.

The use of social exchange theory in this study enhanced understanding of living transnational lives and advanced the field of VFR travel. First, the findings confirm that the theory can be used to enquire about the dynamics behind host-guest interactions, supporting prior VFR studies (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Xu et al., 2018). In particular, the previously unidentified dimensions nuance the theory for VFR context, offering new perspectives from which the dynamics behind VFR visiting and hosting can be investigated. Second, the usage and development of social exchange theory in this research context encourage future VFR research to interrogate the previously underestimated social aspect of the travel, especially the psychological dynamics behind host-guest interaction, social exchange, and the impact on wellbeing and transnational ties. In addition, the findings suggest that the theory provides a means which allows VFR research to compare and contrast VF and VR travel from a social perspective.

8.4 Implications for Practice and Management

My study has important implications for practice and management in helping the real world, from micro-, meso-, and macro-levels, as Cave and Koloto (2015) identified. These three levels include: (1) Chinese sojourners, stay-behinds, VFR visiting and hosting behaviours, (2) tourism planning and management, and (3) immigration policy. Some suggestions are provided to address the current challenges and tensions.

8.4.1 Micro-level: Family Ties, Friendships, VFR Visiting and Hosting

My study has implications for Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds. The findings may help them better understand each other's needs, obligations, and how their respective

roles in transnational interactions shape the wellbeing of all participants and transnational ties, especially in a VFR travel context.

Transnational family ties. It was found that prolonged separation threatens the wellbeing of stay-behind parents, who often need the support from their migrant children, especially emotional support, while the new means of contact and the illusory co-presence it creates are insufficient to preserve their emotional wellbeing. Also, sojourners are increasingly unable to take care of their parents, because of the pressure of work and the needs of their young children.

Therefore, although the meanings of filial piety have been continually renegotiated and reinterpreted, Chinese sojourners need to pay attention to their stay-behind parents' wellbeing, in particular, protecting them from mental health issues. Therefore, VR visiting may be encouraged, as it plays an important role in neutralising the parents' negative feelings of loss, abandonment, and loneliness.

In addition, my study indicates that Chinese sojourners and stay-behind parents tend to conceal the needs they have, and the difficulties they face, from each other. I therefore suggest that both sides need to avoid such a behaviour, which constrains them from receiving enough support from each other in times of need. Sharing emotional distress is an important means, by which both sides can receive emotional support, and alleviate a sense of helplessness, although it may cause anxiety to their far-away family members.

Transnational friendship. Regarding the ties between Chinese sojourners and stay-behind friends, it was found that prolonged separation weakens their over-stretched friendships. Therefore, far-away friends may contact each other occasionally and exchange greetings during important festivals (e.g., birthday, Chinese New Year). However, some Chinese sojourners prefer to enjoy their lives abroad without too many interruptions from

their stay-behind friends, so both sides need to negotiate how to intentionally keep a comfortable distance from each other.

VFR visiting and hosting. My study found that stay-behind parents, non-parent family members, and friends tend to have different purposes and expectations of VFR travel, because their travel motives are different. For example, visiting parents enjoy family reunion so tend to stay at home with their migrant children, while other visitors may enjoy participating in a range of tourism activities so expect their hosts to play the role of tour guide. Therefore, migrant hosts may want to host these visitors differently, according to their different expectations of hosting.

Hosts may offer their visitors essential support, which often improves visitors' travel experience and raises a strong sense of safety in their minds. Living in migrant hosts' houses offers visitors with an illusory life, allowing them to speak Chinese dialects, enjoy homemade Chinese dumplings, and watch popular Chinese television shows, among others. Hosts may also drive for visitors who do not familiar with local traffic rules.

However, migrant hosts tend to perceive themselves as particularly vulnerable to being exploited during VFR visits. Therefore, visitors need to have reasonable/realistic expectations of hosting obligations. This includes having a clear understanding of their social positions and the important social norms in their hosts' houses, understand their difficulties, and intentionally manage the impacts of VFR visiting on their hosts' daily lives. Hosts need to help their visitors to build reasonable expectations of hosting obligations, and better understand the meanings of hospitality, prior to VR visits. Visiting parents may need to find ways of helping without being seen as interfering in their migrant children's lives.

Also, non-parent visitors need to find ways to practice reciprocity, which reflects their equal relationships and mutual respect. Chinese sojourners have different expectations of the ways that their VR and VF visitors practice reciprocity. Visiting family members may offer

to help with household chores, while friends may perform the social protocol of gift-giving, which is a tacit-understanding that reflect mutual respect (Kwek & Lee, 2015; Liu et al., 2010).

8.4.2 Meso-level: Tourism Planning and Management

In a pre-COVID-19 world, my study has important implications for tourism planning and management, helping New Zealand and Chinese tourism and hospitality industries to identify key VFR visiting and hosting motivators (e.g., the need for childcare assistance), understand visiting and hosting patterns (e.g., family life cycle) and influencing factors (e.g., socio-cultural norms/values), so that better support the international traveling populations and their migrant hosts (e.g., visa requirements, border control).

My study suggests that motivating Chinese sojourners is a useful means to facilitate the development of VFR tourism, echoing Yousuf and Backer's (2017) finding. This suggests that tourism destinations may consider new ways to motivate migrants to actively engage in VFR travel, because they not only act as an important attraction and a source of support for VFR visitors, but also tend to generate considerable expenditure on VFR hosting, substantially contributing to local economy.

In particular, my study suggests that encouraging VFR tourism from China to New Zealand may contribute to tourism recovery in a post-COVID, pandemic-aware world. This view echoes Backer and Ritchie's (2017) study, which shows great foresight, by pointing out the importance of forming appropriate tourism recovery strategies after crises/disasters. They indicate that developing domestic VFR tourism benefits host societies, as local needs can be met, while remaining health risks can be minimised.

However, although receiving international VFR travel may carry more health risks, as they state, the findings from my study suggest that the travel may greatly benefit host

societies from not only an economic perspective, but also a social perspective. This is especially the case for the first-generation migrants who are likely in need of emotional and instrumental support from their homeland (just like me). International VFR travel effectively enables the exchange of various forms of essential support between the migrants and their stay-behinds, as long as health risks can be well managed, or “until after it [the crisis] is declared over (Backer & Ritchie, 2017, p. 408)”.

In addition, COVID-19 has domestic travel implications. It was found that the pandemic has brought enduring changes to the nature and dynamics of human mobility worldwide (Cresswell, 2021; Miao et al., 2021; Rose-Redwood et al., 2020), especially tourism and travel. Tourists’ behaviours have greatly changed (Bratić et al., 2021; Chua et al., 2021; Neuburger & Egger, 2021). A trend of localisation in tourism sector is likely to emerge worldwide in a post-COVID era (Bratić et al., 2021; Lapointe, 2020; Miao et al., 2021; Neuburger & Egger, 2021). In New Zealand, the opportunity for developing domestic travel has been well recognised, clearly evidenced by the ‘Do Something New, New Zealand’ campaign launched by Tourism New Zealand in mid 2020 (Tourism New Zealand, 2020). Therefore, my study suggests that the development of domestic travel may pay more attention to Chinese sojourners who have become hesitant about returning to China or visiting other global destinations. In the future campaigns, Tourism New Zealand may want to encourage Chinese migrant families to discover their backyard, the beautiful Aotearoa.

8.4.3 Macro-level: Immigration Policy

My study contributes to immigration policy, which shapes the social exchange within Chinese transnational families, and their migration strategies. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, New Zealand’s changing immigration policy and border control regulations have had strong impacts on Chinese transnational families’ VR travel, and their wellbeing as a result.

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For instance, it has been difficult for elderly parents to fulfil the strict visa requirements, as their state of health tends to decrease as time goes by.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the New Zealand-China border remains largely closed, which is an unprecedented situation for the families. For the stay-behinds, the opportunities of VR visiting have never been so restricted (if possible at all). The border is open only to returning citizens and permanent residents who are required to complete managed isolation or quarantine. The result is the sudden breakdown of VR travel from China. It seems that this situation could become the so-called ‘new normal’, which significantly constrains the support exchanges between the geographically dispersed family members, and therefore threatens their wellbeing and ties.

For instance, prior to COVID-19, stay-behind close family members, mainly parents, used to be a major source of childcare assistance for Chinese migrant families. However, since COVID-19 emerged, such a tradition has been broken as stay-behind family members can no longer freely visit the sojourners and support them with childcare assistance and help with household chores, forcing Chinese migrant families to change the way they raise their young children.

Also, VR visiting used to be an important means, by which stay-behind parents can reunite with migrant children, so that their negative feelings of loss, abandonment, and loneliness can be alleviated. The pandemic causes continuous border control and travel bans, which threatens stay-behind parents’ emotional wellbeing. Also, the elderly parents are increasingly facing health issues, so desperately need their migrant children’s presence, while it is very costly for Chinese sojourners to return to China during the pandemic (e.g., expensive airfare, strict quarantine, works, young children), although they are morally obligated to return in such a situation.

Given the challenges, a good way to look after the Chinese migrant families stuck in New Zealand is to allow their stay-behind parents to visit them in times of need, in a world in which COVID-19 may never be eliminated. A possible solution is to launch a travel bubble between New Zealand and China that only allows close family members (e.g., parents, grandparents) in China to visit the sojourners (citizens, permanent residents, and long-term workers), after the pandemic is well managed (elimination or suppression), vaccinations sufficiently administered, and the risk of traveling officially estimated. Managed isolation or quarantine may be required on arrival. Also, similar travel bubbles may be launched between New Zealand and other countries, which have successfully managed the pandemic. Developing such an immigration policy is important, because the ignorance of the challenges faced by transnational families may risk losing human, economic, and cultural capital, because some sojourners may have to permanently return to homeland (i.e., return migration), if it is clear that their elderly parents cannot visit in the foreseeable future.

8.5 Limitations

As with other studies, this research has limitations, which nevertheless do not undermine its unique contributions. The first limitation is that there was no stay-behind family member from the 19-25 age group, and only a few stay-behind family members are from earlier life stages (marital status), such as ‘single’ or ‘in a relationship’. This implies a lack of input from young family members residing in China, potentially limiting the representativeness of the findings. Also, all the stay-behind friends are from low- or middle-income groups. This can be explained by the fact that the average personal income in China is much lower than in New Zealand.

A second limitation is the sojourners in New Zealand and stay-behinds in China were matched based on their paired nations of residence and roles in transnational interactions,

rather than family ties or friendships. This approach potentially limits the effectiveness of comparing and contrasting the opinions between the sojourner and stay-behind sides. Even so, the focus on life experiences rather than exact matched relationships, offered a solid dataset. Also, catering for participants' privacy concerns and the role of Chinese political/cultural traditions, encouraged free expression in the in-depth interviews and focus groups, mirroring prior studies (Joarder et al., 2016; Poeze et al., 2017).

A third limitation may have been the snowball recruiting method. A few stay-behind parents who participated were introduced by their migrant children (not participants). Thus, these parents may be reluctant to share the difficulties they face and the needs they have. They do not want to risk allowing any negative feelings and unpleasant life experiences to become known, because they do not want their migrant children to worry about them, although I reassured them that all the information provided would be kept confidential. This idea reflects a benefit of matching the participants based on their paired nation of residence, rather than family ties or friendships.

8.6 Implications for Future Research

My study identified some possible directions for future research. First, my study offers an enhanced understanding of the diverse roles of transnational family ties and friendships in shaping the lives of Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds, creating a view of living transnational lives in a Chinese context. Further studies on this field of research would be worthwhile, so more dynamics behind the transnational interactions between the two sides may be uncovered, contributing to an enhanced understanding of transnational social exchange, VFR travel, and the use of social exchange theory in this field of research. Of note, the changing role of communication technologies in shaping transnational ties and family wellbeing should be further investigated. Also, future studies may interrogate the role

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of gender in shaping transnational interactions and social exchange between sojourners and stay-behinds, including VFR travel behaviours. For example, do stay-behind grandmothers play a more important role in providing childcare assistance than grandfathers? Further, transnational sojourners' social connections with their homelands may not be twofold. Further studies may explore sojourners' social connections with their homelands, other than family ties and friendships, so that a more comprehensive view of living transnational lives can be achieved.

Second, my study focuses on a nexus of the fields of VFR tourism and migration, through exploring two sets of interplay of transnational interpersonal ties, wellbeing, and VFR travel. It was found that exploring this nexus produces important implications for the two separate fields in their own right, supporting Williams and Hall's (2000) argument. Future research may further explore such a nexus in fruitful topics. For instance, my study explored the role of VFR travel in shaping the lives of sojourners and stay-behinds, from wellbeing to over-stretched ties, uncovering both opportunities and tensions, answering the call for more studies of the social aspect of VFR tourism (Backer, 2019; Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Yousuf & Backer, 2015; Yousuf & Backer, 2017).

Third, future directions for research considering the impacts of COVID-19 are suggested. (1) Future research may want to investigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the exchange of various forms of support between Chinese sojourners and their stay-behinds, and their wellbeing and ties as a result. (2) Given VFR travel plays an important role in enabling/facilitating social exchanges, more studies may be conducted to develop solutions that enable stay-behind family members to visit the sojourners, while carefully manage health risk. (3) If border control has to remain in place in the foreseeable future, more studies may be required to develop alternative strategies that support migrant families and the stay-behinds whose wellbeing face challenges as a result of the breakdown of transnational social

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exchange. (4) As COVID-19 greatly impacts tourism industry, more scholarly attention may be paid to the field of post-COVID tourism recovery, to identify the changes in tourism and travel, the opportunities and challenges, such as the aforementioned localisation trend. (5) Future research may want to investigate the implications of the pandemic for global human mobility, such as the ‘halt’ in migration, return migration, and the changes in immigration policy worldwide. These potential fields of research may offer more valuable advice to tourism management and immigration policy, potentially contributing to social welfare and economic development.

Fourth, more works will need to be done to further explore the role of family life cycle in shaping the social interactions within transnational families, in particular, VR visiting and hosting, in which various forms of social exchanges may be enabled, facilitated, or inhibited. Also, more studies may be conducted to examine its role as a theoretical lens, from which the dynamics behind the social interactions can be better uncovered and explained (Baldassar et al., 2014; Bryceson, 2019; Janta et al., 2015). Further, tourism studies may investigate if family life cycle also shapes VF visiting and hosting behaviours.

Fifth, my study explored the nature and meanings of transnational friendships, through identifying a series of hierarchical and interactive components that collectively constitute the over-stretched ties. A model was developed (see the section of An Enhanced Understanding of Transnational Friendship in Chapter Six) to illustrate the construction of the ties. Future research may further explore this field, so that more dynamics behind the maintenance, functioning, and dissolution of the ties may be revealed and explained.

Sixth, a hermeneutic approach guides my study’s research process. It was found that this approach is helpful for leading a process of co-producing knowledge. Given my social constructionist paradigm, I understand that realities are socially constructed, as people exchange their diverse interpretations of the world. I respect the voices of the prior studies

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and the participants, as I review the literature and actively interact with the participants to learn the multiple realities in their minds, through my own cultural lens. Also, I practice reflexivity by acknowledging the role of my positionality, in particular, my pre-understanding, in shaping the construction of the ever-evolving understanding of the social phenomenon. More works need to be done to further examine the potential of hermeneutics in enhancing understanding in tourism and migration studies, as some researchers have suggested (Botterill, 2012; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010).

Further, my work has confirmed the usefulness of the Bourdieusian conceptual framework (habitus, field, and capital) in explaining the dynamics behind social interactions between the ‘Othered Selves’ in the Chinese context. Also, my study confirms that migrant hosts’ houses can be considered heterotopias. They are hybrid fields that represent sites of illusion, which simultaneously reflect the key cultural elements of multiple/incompatible social spaces (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986), integrating ‘home’ with ‘away’, ‘the Selves’ and ‘the Others’. In this light, the concept of heterotopia can be used to explain the dynamics behind VFR visiting and hosting behaviours, expectations, and experiences in the Chinese context. Further studies may closely examine the roles of Bourdieu and Foucault’s concepts of socially constructed realities in explaining the dynamics behind the social interactions between transnational sojourners and their stay-behinds, especially in the VFR field.

Moreover, further research could be conducted to investigate the effectiveness and complementarity of integrating in-depth interviews and focus groups in producing a more comprehensive view of complex transnational social phenomenon, that is, to examine whether such an approach can simultaneously enlarge a study’s depth and scope, and facilitate participation, resulting in enhanced trustworthiness and data completeness.

Finally, this PhD study uses a qualitative approach to examine the role of social exchange theory in interrogating the dynamics behind the social interactions between

transnational sojourners and their stay-behinds, as well as the survival of their over-stretched ties. Given the extant tourism studies using social exchange theory tend to depend on quantitative methods (Capistrano & Weaver, 2017), it is important to further examine the role of the theory in uncovering deeper dynamics and more socio-cultural nuances in more qualitative studies in other contexts (Hateftabar & Chapuis, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Also, the complementarity of social exchange theory and other theories in exploring transnational social phenomenon should be further explored.

8.7 My New Positionality

My nine-years' transnational sojourning experience, across China, the UK, and New Zealand, created my positionality at the beginning of this PhD study, which, in turn shaped the research process. It not only evoked my research interest in this topic, but also located me centrally within the researcher-participant continuum, allowing me to iteratively shift my position between a researcher and a sojourner in data collection, analysis, and interpretation, contributing to strong cultural empathy and an insider view. Therefore, I would really like to finish this thesis also with my positionality by explaining what I have learnt about myself as a Chinese sojourner with stay-behind family and friends, and what new positionality I will take into the future.

This PhD journey, or more precisely, this five-year sojourning experience in New Zealand, makes me realise that exploring a new world not only brings once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and achievements, but also takes something away from me forever. It may be tricky, or perhaps impossible, to evaluate the benefits and costs of making such a journey.

On the one hand, sometimes, I feel regret for my decision to start this journey. Becoming a sojourner provided me with the freedom to travel around the world, the UK and New Zealand, but my parents have been badly missing their only child and lack of support

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during terrible sickness. This is not fair to them. I lost very precious time that I could have spent to cook for them, to walk with them, to quarrel with them, and to care for them. For now, it is still not clear when they will be allowed to visit us in New Zealand, given the impacts of the outbreak of delta variant on border control. Thinking about this fact always evokes a strong sense of guilt in my mind. When I was interviewing other sojourners, I was able to understand the deep feelings behind every story.

On the other hand, I am forever grateful to this sojourning experience. For now, I am about to complete my original mission for coming to New Zealand, that is, the PhD, but the five years sojourn also provides my life with so many new meanings. It brought me unforgettable experience of hard working, a few close friends, and a wife, a daughter who I love the most in this universe, and perhaps other universes. At the final stage of thesis writing, I suddenly realised that my original positionality has forever changed, as I have been playing some new and exciting roles that I can never image before starting this journey. For now, I am more than a PhD student. I am also a husband, a father, and perhaps a lifetime sojourner.

I am also a migrant son, missing his parents far away. Although I have been a transnational sojourner for many years and made New Zealand the new home for me and my small family, I will always be a child from a traditional Chinese family. It is clear that I will take this identity and the new identities I am growing along this onward journey into the future. After all these years living abroad, both Sheldon and Xi Wang (Chinese) are now my real names, one for a world that me, my wife, and my young child reside in, and one for another world that I have always been missing.

I would like to end this thesis with a Chinese poem made by a sojourner lived in Tang Dynasty (唐), because both this poem and the poet's life experience evokes strong empathy from my heart. His Chinese name is Heng Chao (晁衡), and his Japanese name is Abe no

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Nakamaro. He was a Japanese international student in a Japanese Mission to Tang China (遣唐使). His mission was to learn Chinese culture. I call him a sojourner, because he went to China with a clear expectation that he will eventually come back to Japan to reunite with his family, after fulfilling his mission. Unfortunately, he tried to return to Japan several times but failed, so he never went back to Japan. In his entire life, he was always missing his family far away and made a poem filled with intense longing for his home (I translated it myself, in a way better reflects my feeling at the very moment):

翘首望苍天，神驰奈良边。三笠山顶上，想又皎月圆。

Looking up at the vast sky creates an illusion that I am still in Nara, my hometown. I can imagine the bright and full moon rising on the top of Mount Mikasa, the scene that I have been longing for.

Finally, I hope my transnational sojourning can suspend for now, so that I can carry on my career and raise a family. However, I hope this PhD journey will never really end, because I will keep exploring the research opportunities identified in the past and discovering new puzzles in the future, to make some real contributions to the world in which we live and for the people we love.

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Appendices

10.1 Appendix A: Participants' Paired Roles

Sojourners in New Zealand	Talking about	Relatives in China	Talking about
Sojourner-A	Parents and relatives	Relative-1	Relatives in New Zealand
Sojourner-B	Parents and relatives	Relative-2	Siblings in New Zealand
Sojourner-C	Parents and relatives	Relative-3	Relatives in New Zealand
Sojourner-D	Relatives in China	Relative-4	Siblings in New Zealand
Sojourner-E	Parents and relatives	Relative-5	Parents in New Zealand
Sojourner-F	Parents and relatives	Relative-6	Spouse in New Zealand
Sojourner-G	Parents and relatives	Relative-7	Relatives in New Zealand
Sojourner-H	Parents and relatives	Relative-8	Siblings in New Zealand
Sojourner-J	Parents in China	Relative-9	Relatives in New Zealand
Sojourner-I	Relatives in China	Relative-10	Siblings in New Zealand
Sojourner-K	Parents in China	Relative-11	Relatives in New Zealand
Sojourner-M	Relatives in China	Relative-12	Relatives in New Zealand
Sojourner-N	Relatives in China	Relative-13	Siblings in New Zealand
Sojourner-L	Parents and relatives	Parent-1	Children in New Zealand
Sojourner-O	Relatives in China	Parent-2	Children in New Zealand
Sojourner-P	Parents and relatives	Parent-3	Children in New Zealand
Sojourner-Q	Parents and relatives	Parent-4	Children in New Zealand
Sojourner-R	Relatives in China	Parent-5	Children in New Zealand
Sojourner-S	Relatives in China	Parent-6	Children in New Zealand
Sojourner-T	Parents and relatives	Parent-7	Children in New Zealand
Sojourner-U	Relatives in China		
Sojourner-V	Parents in China		
Sojourner-W	Parents in China		
Sojourner-X	Relatives in China		
Sojourner-Y	Relatives in China		
Sojourner-Z	Relatives in China		
Sojourner-AA	Relatives in China		
Sojourner-AB	Relatives in China		
Sojourner-AC	Parents and relatives		
Sojourner-AD	Relatives in China		
Sojourner-AE	Parents in China		
Sojourner-AF	Parents in China		
Sojourner-AG	Relatives in China		
Sojourner-AH	Relatives in China		

Sojourners in New Zealand	Talking about	Relatives in China	Talking about
Sojourner-AI	Parents and relatives		
Sojourner-AJ	Parents in China		
Sojourner-AK	Parents in China		
Sojourner-AL	Relatives in China		
Sojourner-AM	Parents in China		
Sojourner-AN	Parents and relatives		
Sojourner-AO	Parents in China		
Sojourner-AP	Parents in China		
Sojourner-AQ	Parents and relatives		
Sojourner-AR	Parents and relatives		

10.2 Appendix B: Focus Group Consent Form – English

Focus Group Consent Form (English)

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa

Chinese inbound visiting friends and relatives (VFR) Tourism in NZ: Focusing on the influences of Chinese residents who act as hosts.

Consent Form for Participants (Focus Group)

I have read the **Information Sheet for Participants** for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been informed and agree that this focus group will be **videotaped**, which will be protected by the researcher as highly confidential.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the **Information Sheet**.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the **Information Sheet** form.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

The researcher may ask you to provide the contact details of your friends and relatives who also meet the criteria of the study.

Please do **Not** recorded and released any information from this focus group.

Researcher's Name and contact information:

Xi Wang: xw197@students.waikato.ac.nz

Mob (NZ): (64) 204 080 0879 / Mob (China): (86) 135 214 297 11

Supervisors' Name and contact information:

Jenny Cave: jenny.cave@waikato.ac.nz

Tom Baum: t.g.baum@strath.ac.uk

10.3 Appendix C: In-depth Interview Consent Form – English

In-depth Interview Consent Form (English)

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa

Chinese inbound visiting friends and relatives (VFR) Tourism in NZ: Focusing on the influences of Chinese residents who act as hosts.

Consent Form for Participants (In-depth interview)

I have read the **Information Sheet for Participants** for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been informed and agree that this interview will be audio recorded and the information will be protected by the researcher as highly confidential.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the **Information Sheet**.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the **Information Sheet** form.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

The researcher may ask you to provide the contact details of your friends and relatives who also meet the criteria of the study.

Researcher's Name and contact information:

Xi Wang: xw197@students.waikato.ac.nz

Mob (NZ): (64) 204 080 0879 / Mob (China): (86) 135 214 297 11

Supervisors' Name and contact information:

Jenny Cave: jenny.cave@waikato.ac.nz

Tom Baum: t.g.baum@strath.ac.uk

10.4 Appendix D: Focus Group Information Sheet – *English*

Focus Group Participant Information Sheet (English)

Waikato Management school – The University of Waikato

Project Title: Chinese inbound visiting friends and relatives (VFR) Tourism in NZ: Focusing on the influences of Chinese residents who act as hosts.

Dear _____ You are invited to participate in a doctoral research project, which explores the influence that travel to visit friends and relatives has on the wellbeing of Chinese residents in NZ and their friends and relatives in PRC China.

Why should I take part?

- **About this study:** This study aims to not only bridge the research gaps in literature, but also contribute to the mutual benefit between Chinese VFR travellers, their NZ hosts and local economy. Additionally, the linkage between the Chinese migrants and their friends and relatives in mainland China could be strengthened in terms of social, cultural and economic perspectives.
- **About this focus group:** Your participation in this focus group is very important to this study, which will provide the researcher with a better understanding about not only the behaviors of the VFR hosts and their visitors, but also the nature of their relationships. The data collected will only be used for academic purposes, such as production of doctoral thesis, conference presentation and publication in scholarly journals.

Why you have been approached?

- You have been approached because you belong to one of the communities: (1) Ethnically Chinese migrants who were born or lived in mainland China and have been living in New Zealand for at least three years, ideally as permanent residents or NZ citizenship holders. You may have hosted, or have the intention to host, your friends and/or relatives from mainland China. (2) Chinese people who are living in mainland China and have friends and/or relatives currently living in NZ for at least three years. You may have visited, or have the intention to visit them. (3) Additionally, you should be a Mandarin and/or English speaker.

If you agree to participate, what will you be required to do?

- You will meet the researcher and other participants for a face-to-face discussion. The meeting will be **videotaped**. This discussion will last for up to 2 hours at a public environment, which is comfortable and suitable for videotaped interview at a time that is

convenient for most of the participants. All the procedure will follow the requirements of the WMS ethics committee.

- You will be asked to (1) Identify and sort the items on a whiteboard, e.g. you may be asked to identify your motivations and values behind the activities you chose. (2) Discuss what factor could influence the strength of your relationship with your friends and relatives. (3) Provide your demographic profile, e.g. age and education level. (4) Provide the contact details of your friends and relatives who also meet the requirement of the study.

How your privacy will be protected?

- **Anonymity:** All information collected will be treated with the highest confidentiality. There will be no linkage between your responses and your personal information, which will only be seen by the researcher and his supervisors. No one can identify you as a consequence of participation.
- **Data protection:** Data will be stored in a university's computer and a personal laptop. The computers will be protected by passwords. The physical materials will be protected by a locked drawer in the researcher's office, for safety reasons. Please do not record any information by yourself, since that might violate others' privacy.
- **Opt out:** You can refuse to answer any question which is considered as inappropriate during the event. Besides, you can withdraw participation at any time. Data received will be removed if necessary. Informing the researcher 24 hours before the scheduled time would be highly encouraged. Researcher's contact details can be found in the consent form. Please feel free to email him if you have any further question.

Your sincerely



Xi Wang

10.5 Appendix E: In-depth Interview Information Sheet – *English*

In-depth Interview Participant Information Sheet (English)

Waikato Management school – The University of Waikato

Project Title: Chinese inbound visiting friends and relatives (VFR) Tourism in

NZ: Focusing on the influences of Chinese residents who act as hosts.

Dear _____ You are invited to participate in a doctoral research project, which explores the influence that travel to visit friends and relatives has on the wellbeing of Chinese residents in NZ and their friends and relatives in PRC China.

Why should I take part?

- **About this study:** This study aims to not only bridge the research gaps in literature, but also contribute to the mutual benefit between Chinese VFR travellers, their NZ hosts and local economy. Additionally, the linkage between the Chinese migrants and their friends and relatives in mainland China could be strengthened in terms of social, cultural and economic perspectives.
- **About this interview:** Your participation in this interview is very important to this study, which will provide the researcher with a better understanding about not only the behaviors of the VFR hosts and their visitors, but also the nature of their relationships. The data collected will only be used for academic purposes, such as production of doctoral thesis, conference presentation and publication in scholarly journals.

Why you have been approached?

- You have been approached because you belong to one of the communities: (1) Ethnically Chinese migrants who were born or lived in mainland China and have been living in New Zealand for at least three years, ideally as permanent residents or NZ citizenship holders. You may have hosted, or have the intention to host, your friends and/or relatives from mainland China. (2) Chinese people who are living in mainland China and have friends and/or relatives currently living in NZ for at least three years. You may have visited, or have the intention to visit them. (3) Additionally, you should be a Mandarin and/or English speaker.

If you agree to participate, what will you be required to do?

- You will meet the researcher for a face-to-face **audio recorded** interview. This discussion will last for up to 1 hour at a public environment, which is comfortable and suitable for audio recorded interview at a time that is convenient for you. All the procedure will follow the requirements of the WMS ethics committee.

- You will be asked to (1) Choose your preferred activities from a list of activities, which are related to VFR travel. (2) Provide your motives behind each of your activity preferences. (3) Provide your values behind each of your motives (3) Discuss what factor could influence the strength of your relationship with your friends and relatives. (4) Provide your demographic profile, e.g. age and education level. (5) Provide the contact details of your friends and relatives who also meet the requirement of the study. (6) Unplanned questions may be asked.

How your privacy will be protected?

- **Anonymity:** All information collected will be treated with the highest confidentiality. There will be no linkage between your responses and your personal information, which will only be seen by the researcher and his supervisors. No one can identify you as a consequence of participation.
- **Data protection:** Data will be stored in a university's computer and a personal laptop. The computers will be protected by passwords. The physical materials will be protected by a locked drawer in the researcher's office.
- **Opt out:** You can refuse to answer any question which is considered as inappropriate during the event. Besides, you can withdraw participation at any time. Data received will be removed if necessary. Informing the researcher 24 hours before the scheduled time would be highly encouraged. Researcher's contact details can be found in the consent form. Please feel free to email him if you have any further question.

Your sincerely



Xi Wang

10.6 Appendix F: Focus Group Guide – *English*

Focus Group Guide (English)

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa

Title of Project: Chinese inbound visiting friends and relatives (VFR) Tourism in NZ: Focusing on the influences of Chinese residents who act as hosts.

Discussion guide: This focus will be **videotaped** and last for up to 2 hours. On the whiteboard, there are three types of items, which contain the activities you may want to participate in when you are having or hosting a VFR travel, and the motivations and values behind the activities. Some activities may have more than one motivations and/or values behind them.

1. Introduction of the research **[5 mins]**
2. Introduce yourself, name and anything you would like us to know about you **[10 mins]**
3. Please try to identify the items (activities, motivations and values) on the whiteboard and ask the researcher if you have any confusion about their meanings. **[5 mins]**
4. Please think which activities you would like to participate in a VFR travel and discuss with each other. The items on the whiteboard could be used as references. For example, there might be some activities have not been listed on the whiteboard. Please then write down your choices of activities. **[20 mins]**
5. Based on the activities you have chosen, please think which motivations might be behind your activity preferences and discuss with each other. The items on the whiteboard could be used as references. Please then write down your choices of motivations behind each of the activities. **[20 mins]**
6. Based on the motivations you have chosen, please think which values might be behind your motivations and discuss with each other. The items on the whiteboard could be used as references. Please then write down your choices of values behind each of the motivations. **[20 mins]**
7. Do you think the strength of the interpersonal relationship could be reflected by the combination of the following dimensions, such as value, emotion, and different capitals? Please discuss the different dimensions with each other, in terms of their competence to be a part of the relationship. For example, which dimension should not be taken into account? Why? Is there any new dimension is also related to the relationship? Then please write down your opinion. **[20 mins]**

8. Could you provide the researcher with your socio-demographic profile and the contact details of your friends and relatives who may also meet the requirement of this study? If you can, could you please give your permission for your names to be provided to them? They will be contacted by the researcher, giving your name. [5 mins]

Notes:

1. Please feel free to express your opinion and participate actively. All information collected will be treated with the highest confidentiality. Your contact details will be acquired by the researcher. However, there will be no linkage between the contact details and your responses.
2. The video would be recorded by a recording device, e.g. smartphone, and stored in a university' computer and the researcher's personal laptop. As participant, please do **not** record any information during the event, since that might violate other people's privacy.
3. The events will be organised by the researcher. However, to avoid any potential bias, he will not be involved in the discussion. Please let other people's voice heard. It is the researcher's responsibility to make sure that there is **no** participant dominate the group.
4. It the researcher's responsibility to make the event as comfortable and convenient for you as possible. You do not need to answer any question which is considered as inappropriate.

10.7 Appendix G: In-depth Interview Schedule – *English*

In-depth Interview Schedule (English)

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa

Title of Project: Chinese inbound visiting friends and relatives (VFR) Tourism in NZ: Focusing on the influences of Chinese residents who act as hosts.

Interview guide: this interview will be **audio recorded** and last for up to 1 hour. You will be provided with three groups of items, which contain the activities you may want to participate when you are having or hosting a VFR travel, and the motivations and values behind the activities. Please notice that there could be more than one motivations and/or values behind some activities.

Activity preferences

1. Introduction of the research **[5 mins]**
2. Please read the list of activity preferences and tell the researcher which activities you would like to participate in. It would be better if you can provide some new activities that you would also like to participate in. **[10 mins]**
3. Based on your choices of activities, please give your motivations behind each of them. If there is no adequate number of motivations come to your mind, you may want to choose some from a list of motivations provided by researcher. **[10 mins]**
4. Based on your choices of motivations, please given your values behind each of them. If there is no adequate number of values come to your mind, you may want to choose some from a list of values provided by researcher. **[10 mins]**

Interactive relationships between friends and relatives

Imagine the strength of relationship between you and your friends and relatives consists of a series of dimensions, which in turn could be measured by some variables. You will be provided with several dimensions of the strength of relationships, e.g. value, emotion and action. Besides, there will be some variables are provided to measure each of the

dimensions. For example, the action dimension could be measured by the combination of the number of visits, frequency of contact and remittance.

1. Please review the different dimensions and tell the researcher whether you agree with this composition. If you do not agree, please tell the researcher which dimension (s) should not be taken into account, or if there is any dimension (s) should also be considered as a part of relationship between you and your friends and relatives. **[10 mins]**
2. With regard to each of the dimensions, please review the different variables, which are used to measure them. Please then tell the researcher whether you agree with each of these compositions. If you do not agree, please tell the researcher which variable (s) should not be taken into account, or if there is any variable (s) should also be considered as a part of the relevant dimension (s). **[10 mins]**

Other information

1. Could you please provide the researcher with your socio-demographic profile and the contact details of your friends and relatives who may also meet the requirement of this study? If you can, could you please give your permission for your names to be provided to them? They will be contacted by the researcher, giving your name. **[5 mins]**

Notes: Please feel free to express your opinion and participate actively. All

information collected (include audio data) will be treated with the highest confidentiality.

Your contact details will be acquired by the researcher. However, there will be no linkage between the contact details and your responses.

10.8 Appendix H: Focus Group Consent Form – Chinese

小组讨论参与同意书（新西兰-怀卡托大学-管理学院）

Waikato Management School
Te Raupapa



小组讨论参与者同意书

中国赴新西兰探亲访友旅游研究：作为接待方的新西兰中国移民的影响

我已阅读过“小组讨论信息表单”，并已了解此项研究的各项内容。我提出的关于此研究的问题得到了相应的解答，我明白我可以在任何时候向研究者提出其他问题。此外，我了解我有权在任何时候退出此项研究，或者拒绝回答其中的任何问题。

我已经被告知并同意此研究的实施者在小组讨论期间拍摄视频影像，该视频资料高度保密，只有研究者本人可以浏览并保存。

我同意参与此研究并向此研究的实施者提供有关信息，前提是所有信息都依据“小组讨论信息表单”中的有关条款严格保密。

签名：_____

日期：_____

研究者可能会向您索取您的亲属或好友的联系方式，目的是搜寻更多满足此研究要求的潜在受访者，以便扩大样本量，使研究结果更加可靠。
请勿记录或泄露任何与本次小组讨论相关的信息，以免危害他人隐私，谢谢！

研究者姓名及联系方式：

王熙

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电话：中国 +86 1352 1429 711；新西兰 +64 2040 8008 79

导师姓名及联系方式：

Jenny Cave（第一导师）：jenny.cave@waikato.ac.nz

Tom Baum（第二导师）：t.g.baum@strath.ac.uk

10.9 Appendix I: In-depth Interview Consent Form – Chinese

一对一访谈参与同意书（新西兰-怀卡托大学-管理学院）

Waikato Management School
Te Raupapa



一对一访谈参与同意书

中国赴新西兰探亲访友旅游研究：作为接待方的新西兰中国移民的影响

已阅读过“一对一访谈信息表单”，并已了解此项研究的各项内容。我提出的关于此研究的问题得到了相应的解答，我明白我可以在任何时候向研究者提出其他问题。此外，我了解我有权在任何时候退出此项研究，或者拒绝回答其中的任何问题。

我已经被告知并同意此研究的实施者在一对一访谈期间录制音频资料，该音频资料高度保密，只有研究者本人可以回放并保存。

我同意参与此研究并向此研究的实施者提供有关信息，前提是所有信息都依据“一对一访谈信息表单”中的有关条款严格保密。

签名: _____

日期: _____

研究者可能会向您索取您的亲属或好友的联系方式，目的是搜寻更多满足此研究要求的潜在受访者，以便扩大样本量，使研究结果更加可靠。

研究者姓名及联系方式：

王熙

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电话：中国 +86 1352 1429 711；新西兰 +64 2040 8008 79

导师姓名及联系方式：

Jenny Cave（第一导师）：jenny.cave@waikato.ac.nz

Tom Baum（第二导师）：t.g.baum@strath.ac.uk

10.10 Appendix J: Focus Group Information Sheet – Chinese

小组讨论信息表单-怀卡托大学管理学院

项目名称：中国赴新西兰探亲访友旅游研究：作为接待方的新西兰中国移民的影响

亲爱的_____，您被邀请参加此博士研究，此研究旨在探究“赴新西兰探亲访友旅游”对新西兰华裔移民和他们在中国大陆的亲属及朋友的福祉的影响。

研究价值

- 关于本研究：本研究成果不仅将填补学术界在这一领域的空白，更将有助于人们了解“来自中国大陆的探亲访友游客”、“他们在新西兰的亲属及朋友”、以及“双边旅游产业发展”这三者之间的互利互惠关系。此外，本研究将有助于加强“新西兰中国移民”与他们在大陆的“亲属及朋友”间的社会、文化及经济纽带。
- 关于本小组讨论：您的参与对本研究意义重大，不仅能够帮助研究者更好地了解“探亲访友旅游”中游客及接待方的行为，更能够帮助研究者探究旅游者与接待方之间的关系本质。本次研究所收集的数据将仅用于学术目的，例如博士论文的写作、学术期刊的发表、以及学术会议的开展。

您被选中参与本研究的原因

- 您被选中参与本研究是由于您具备良好的普通话（或者英文）交流能力，并符合以下条件之一：（1）出生或生活在中国大陆的中国人，已经在新西兰生活至少三年，已经获得新西兰永久居民身份或国籍者为佳。您可能已经（或有意向）参与到探亲访友旅游中，招待来自中国大陆的亲戚或好友。（2）生活在中国大陆的中国居民，有亲戚或好友已经居住在新西兰至少三年，您可能已经（或有意向）到新西兰探访过您的亲戚或好友。

如同意参加，您将会被要求参与到哪些活动中？

- 您将会被邀请与研究者和其它受邀参与本研究的人士进行面对面小组讨论。此小组讨论将被录制成视频资料，以便研究者在结束后详细分析参与者各自的观点。此外，小组讨论将持续最多 2 小时，地点将选在舒适、安静的公共场所，具体位置的选择会考虑大部分参与者的出行时间，折中拟定，研究者会提前到场并准备好小吃及软饮料。所有步骤将严格依照怀卡托大学管理学院科研道德委员会的有关要求执行。
- 您将被邀请参与：（1）讨论您在参与探亲访友旅游时（拜访或招待亲戚及好友）可能希望参与的活动，以及参与这些活动背后的动机或价值取向。（2）讨论哪些因素可能影响您与您的亲戚或好友间的关系。（3）提供您的个人基本信息，例如年龄及教育背景。（4）提供您认识的能满足本研究的参与条件的亲戚或好友的联系方式。

您的隐私将如何得到保护？

- **匿名原则：**本研究所收集到的所有信息都将被高度保密。您在参与过程中做出的的任何表述都不会与您的个人信息联系到一起，他们将在数据录入阶段分开存放。此外，只有研究者本人及其导师能够看到这些信息，没有人能够通过本研究追溯到您。
- **数据保护：**所有电子数据都将被存放在怀卡托大学的云端，以及研究者的个人电脑中加密保护。另外，所有纸质数据将被锁在研究者办公室的柜子中。请勿在参与小组讨论的过程中记录任何信息，以免危害他人隐私。
- **退出机制：**在小组讨论过程中，您有权拒绝回答任何您认为不妥的问题。您可以在任何情况下选择退出本研究，已经收集到的数据也可以在必要时销毁。如临时决定不参加小组讨论，烦请在开始前 24 小时告知，以防在没有足量参与者的情况下影响讨论成果的可靠性。如您有任何疑问，请随时联系研究者，联系方式可以在小组讨论参与同意书中找到，谢谢！

最后，衷心感谢您的参与！



王熙

10.11 Appendix K: In-depth Interview Information Sheet – Chinese

一对一访谈信息表单-怀卡托大学管理学院

项目名称：中国赴新西兰探亲访友旅游研究：作为接待方的新西兰中国移民的影响

亲爱的_____，您被邀请参加此博士研究，此研究旨在探究“赴新西兰探亲访友旅游”对新西兰华裔移民和他们在中国大陆的亲属及朋友的福祉的影响。

研究价值

- 关于本研究：本研究成果不仅将填补学术界在这一领域的空白，更将有助于人们了解“来自中国大陆的探亲访友游客”、“他们在新西兰的亲属及朋友”、以及“双边旅游产业发展”这三者之间的互利互惠关系。此外，本研究将有助于加强“新西兰中国移民”与他们在大陆的“亲属及朋友”间的社会、文化及经济纽带。
- 关于本访谈：您的参与对本研究意义重大，不仅能够帮助研究者更好地了解“探亲访友旅游”中游客及接待方的行为，更能够帮助研究者探究旅游者与接待方之间的关系本质。本次研究所收集的数据将仅用于学术目的，例如博士论文的写作、学术期刊的发表、以及学术会议的开展。

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如同意参加，您将会被要求参与到哪些活动中？

- 您将被邀请与研究进行一对一的访谈，访谈过程将被录音，大约持续一小时左右的时间。访谈地点会以安静舒适为前提，选择在离您最近的公共场所，研究者会提前到场并准备好小吃及软饮料。所有步骤将严格依照怀卡托大学管理学院科研道德委员会的有关要求执行。
- 您将被要求：（1）浏览一个与“探亲访友旅游”有关的活动列表，并在不同种类的活动选择您偏爱的活动，例如：与亲朋好友一道自驾游观光或到餐厅就餐。（2）依据您选择的活动的活动，给出背后的动机。（3）与研究讨论哪些因素可能影响您与您的亲戚或好友间的关系。（4）提供您的个人基本信息，例如：年龄及教育背景。（5）提供您认识的能满足本研究的参与条件的亲戚或好友的联系方式。（6）根据您的回答，一些额外的问题可能被提及。

您的隐私将如何得到保护？

- **匿名原则：**本研究所收集到的所有信息都将被高度保密。您在参与过程中做出的的任何表述都不会与您的个人信息联系到一起，他们将在数据录入阶段分开存放。此外，只有研究者本人及其导师能够看到这些信息，没有人能够通过本研究追溯到您。
- **数据保护：**所有电子数据都将被存放在怀卡托大学的云端，以及研究者的个人电脑中加密保护。另外，所有纸质数据将被锁在研究者办公室的柜子中。
- **退出机制：**在访谈过程中，您有权拒绝回答任何您认为不妥的问题。您可以在任何情况下选择退出本研究，已经收集到的数据也可以在必要时销毁。如临时决定不参加此访谈，烦请在访谈开始前 24 小时告知研究者。如您有任何疑问，请随时联系研究者，联系方式可以在一对一访谈参与同意书中找到，谢谢！

最后，衷心感谢您的参与！



王熙

10.12 Appendix L: Focus Group Guide – Chinese

小组讨论议程

项目名称：中国赴新西兰探亲访友旅游研究：作为接待方的新西兰中国移民的影响

本小组讨论大约持续一个半小时（不超过两小时），讨论过程将会被录像，以便在分析讨论结果时区分不同发言者，防止遗漏重要信息。研究者会向您展示三组选项，第一组包含您在参与探亲访友旅游时可能愿意参加的活动，第二组包含您参与相应活动背后可能存在的动机，第三组包含这些动机背后可能存在的价值取向（您参与到某些活动时可以有不止一个动机）。

讨论内容：

1. 研究者将首先简要介绍本次研究，并回答您的任何疑问。 [5 mins]
2. 请简单介绍一下您自己，包括您的姓名及其他您愿意我们了解您的地方。 [10 mins]
3. 请浏览一遍所有选项（活动/动机/价值取向），如果您对某些选项的含义存在疑问，请现在询问研究者。 [5 mins]
4. 请您现在思考 2 分钟，当参与到探亲访友旅游（中国-新西兰）时，您希望参与到哪些活动中，可以参考研究者给出的活动类型。思考过后，请在座的各位就您们各自选择的活动开始讨论（每次一个人发言，您可以介绍自己希望参与的活动，或者是否有其他活动还没有被提及，发言结束后其他人可以就发言内容作出评论），请在开展讨论的同时，思考您是否愿意参加其他人选择的的活动，请将您选择的的活动按照横向排列记录下来。 [20 mins]
5. 根据您选择的的活动，请思考并在您选择的的活动下方记录其背后的动机及价值取向（5 分钟），可以参考研究者给出的动机及价值取向类型（顺序：活动-动机-价值取向）。思考过后，请在座的各位就您们各自选择的的活动及其背后的动机、价值取向开始讨论（每次一个人发言，您可以介绍自己选择的的活动，着重介绍活动背后的动机及价值取向，发言结束后其他人可以就发言内容作出评论）。请在开展讨论的同时，思考您的选择背后是否还有其他动机或价值取向，如果您发现了其他可能的动机或价值取向，请在您的纸上作出补充。 [30 mins]

6. 在您看来，您与您的亲人及好友间的“人际关系纽带”可能包含哪些成分？本研究假设这一纽带可以由七部分组成，它们包括经济资本¹、社会资本²、文化资本³、对待家庭及友情的价值观⁴、彼此间的情感联系⁵、对待彼此的态度⁶、以及行为因素⁷。请大家首先思考 2 分钟，而后就“人际关系纽带”的构成分别发言，请在发言时逐一表达您对这七个潜在组成部分的评价，例如：您认为哪几部分可以构成您的“人际关系纽带”，哪几部分不属于这一纽带，就这一纽带的构成，您是否有所补充？请在讨论的同时记录下您认为合理的“人际关系纽带”的构成。[20 mins]
7. 请在受访者基本信息表单上填写您的基本信息，例如年龄及教育背景。请提供您认识的，可能满足本研究的参与条件的亲戚或好友的联系方式。请允许研究者在联系您的亲戚或好友时提到您的名字，以获取他们的信任。[5 mins]

注意事项：

1. 本研究所收集到的所有信息都将被高度保密。研究者可能询问并获取您和您的亲人及好友的联系方式，尽管如此，只有研究者本人及其导师能够看到这些信息，没有人能够通过本研究追溯到您。
2. 为充分分析小组讨论的过程及结果，研究者将使用智能手机或其他设备对小组讨论过程进行录像，所有电子数据都将被存放在怀卡托大学的云端，以及研究者的个人电脑中加密保护。请您放心表达您的观点，积极参与讨论。（请勿在参与小组讨论的过程中记录任何信息，以免危害他人隐私）。
3. 研究者负责安排并组织本次小组讨论，研究者有责任保证小组与讨论在安静、舒适的氛围中有序进行（为防止潜在的研究者个人偏见，其本人不会参与讨论任何实质内容，只对有关名词做出解释）。
4. 请在讨论中按顺序分别发言，以便让每个人的看法都得到表达。在其他成员结束发言后，请积极表达您的观点。你不必参与任何您认为不方便参与的讨论，或回答任何您认为不妥的问题，研究者将充分尊重您的自愿原则。

¹ 经济资本指您对待家人或朋友关系中的**金钱关系的重视程度**，这也与家庭收入等客观因素有关。

² 社会（关系）资本是指您在另一个国家（新西兰/中国）的**所有关系网的相加**，受到亲人及朋友间的关系强弱影响。

³ 文化资本是指您**对文化知识的重视程度**，例如：学历、举止修养、口音、种族、穿着、其他内在及外在的文化储备。

⁴ 您对待家人关系及朋友关系的价值观，例如：您可能更**重视家人间的和谐相处**、或朋友间在需要时的互相支持。

⁵ 家人及朋友间的情感联系包含：**情感上的彼此依赖**、彼此相连的感觉、以及彼此间的融入感和亲近感。

⁶ 家人及朋友间对待彼此的态度，例如：**彼此间的忠诚**、责任感、相处时的氛围。

⁷ 用来维系家人或朋友间关系的行为，例如：**相互拜访**、交换礼物、共同参与休闲活动及庆祝节日。

10.13 Appendix M: In-depth Interview Schedule – Chinese

一对一访谈议程

项目名称：中国赴新西兰探亲访友旅游研究：作为接待方的新西兰中国移民的影响

本访谈大约持续一个小时，整个过程将会被录音，以便于研究者分析访谈结果，防止遗漏重要信息。研究者会向您展示三组选项，第一组包含您在参与探亲访友旅游时可能愿意参加的活动，第二组包含您参与相应活动背后可能存在的动机，第三组包含这些动机背后可能存在的价值取向（您参与到某些活动时可以有不止一个动机）。

第一部分-活动偏好

1. 研究者将首先简要介绍本次研究，并回答您的任何疑问。 [5 mins]
2. 请浏览研究者给出的活动清单，并告知研究者您在参与探亲访友旅游时愿意参与那些活动。如果可能，请尽量给出一些该清单未包含的活动。 [10 mins]
3. 根据您的选择参与的活动，请逐一给出参与这些活动的动机，动机的选择可以参考研究者提供的清单 [10 mins]
4. 根据您的选择参与的动机，请给出其背后的价值取向，价值取向的选择可以参考研究者提供的清单 [10 mins]

第二部分-人际关系

想象您与您的亲人或好友间的纽带可以由不同的方面构成，这些不同的方面又分别可以由一些变量进行量化计算。在本研究中，研究者假设这一纽带可以由七个方面构成，它们包

括经济资本¹、社会资本²、文化资本³、对待家庭及友情的价值观⁴、彼此间的情感联系⁵、对待彼此的态度⁶、以及行为因素⁷。此外，针对每一个方面，研究者给出若干变量，对其进行量化。例如：行为因素可以通过整合评估双方的拜访次数、联系及汇款频率进行量化。

1. 请您浏览并思考构成人际关系纽带的这七个方面，如果您对他们的含义有任何疑问，烦请询问研究者。在了解了他们的含义后，请告知研究者您是否认同这一构成，如果不完全认同，请告诉研究者您认为那一方面不应该被包含在内，或者您认为人际关系纽带还应该包含哪些方面（请尽量尝试挑战研究者展示的猜想，这将帮助其更好地了解人际关系的本质）？ [10 mins]
2. 对于每一个方面，请浏览并思考研究者给出的用于量化该方面的变量，如果您对他们的含义有任何疑问，烦请询问研究者。在了解了他们的含义后，请告知研究者您是否认同这一构成，如果不完全认同，请告诉研究者您认为那一个变量不应该被包含在内，或者您认为还有那些变量可以用于量化该方面（请尽量尝试挑战研究者展示的猜想，这将帮助其更好地了解人际关系的本质）？ [10 mins]

第三部分-其他信息

1. 请在受访者基本信息表单上填写您的基本信息，例如年龄及教育背景。请提供您认识的，可能满足本研究的参与条件的亲戚或好友的联系方式。请允许研究者在联系您的亲戚或好友时提到您的名字，以获取他们的信任。[5 mins]

请注意：本研究所收集到的所有信息都将被严格保密，请您放心、积极地表达您的观点。

研究者可能会询问您和您的亲人及好友的联系方式，只有研究者本人及其导师能够看到这些信息，没有人能够通过本研究追溯到您。

¹ 经济资本指您对待家人或朋友关系中的**金钱关系的重视程度**，这也与家庭收入等客观因素有关。

² 社会（关系）资本是指您在另一个国家（新西兰/中国）的**所有关系网的相加**，受到亲人及朋友间的关系强弱影响。

³ 文化资本是指您**对文化知识的重视程度**，例如：学历、举止修养、口音、种族、穿着、其他内在及外在的文化储备。

⁴ 您对待家人关系及朋友关系的价值观，例如：您可能更**重视家人间的和谐相处**、或朋友间在需要时的互相支持。

⁵ 家人及朋友间的情感联系包含：**情感上的彼此依赖**、彼此相连的感觉、以及彼此间的融入感和亲近感。

⁶ 家人及朋友间对待彼此的态度，例如：**彼此间的忠诚**、责任感、相处时的氛围。

⁷ 用来维系家人或朋友间关系的行为，例如：**相互拜访**、交换礼物、共同参与休闲活动及庆祝节日。

10.14 Appendix N: The participants' profile details – New Zealand

基本信息-在新西兰华人 Basic Info-For VFR hosts in NZ

请圈出您认为最接近的选项 Please choice the one which can best match the reality

您参与相关活动的的能力 Capability in participate in VFR travel

1. 您的个人年收入 Your individual annual income (in CNY)?
 - A. 500000+ (100000+ NZD)
 - B. 300000-500000 (60000-100000 NZD)
 - C. 200000-300000 (40000-60000 NZD)
 - D. 100000-200000 (20000-40000 NZD)
 - E. 0-100000 (0-20000 NZD)
2. 您可能招待来访亲友（探亲访友游）的预算（人民币） Your budget on hosting VFR travel in NZ (in CNY)?
 - A. 50000+ (10000+ NZD)
 - B. 20000-50000 (4000-10000 NZD)
 - C. 10000-20000 (2000-4000 NZD)
 - D. 5000-10000 (1000-2000 NZD)
 - E. 0-5000 (0-1000 NZD)
3. 您认为获取来访签证的难易度 Access to visiting Visa (In your perception)?
 - A. 非常容易 Very easy
 - B. 比较容易 Easy
 - C. 一般 normal
 - D. 比较难 difficult
 - E. 非常难 Very difficult
4. 您持有何种签证？ Your legal status in NZ?
 - A. 新西兰国籍 New Zealand Citizenship
 - B. 中国国籍-新西兰永久居民签证 PRC passport with a permanent residency in NZ
 - C. 中国国籍-新西兰工作签证 PRC passport with a working Visa in NZ
 - D. 中国国籍-新西兰学生签证 PRC passport with a student Visa in NZ
 - E. 其他 Others
5. 您的英语水平？ Your English language skill?
 - A. 非常好 Very good
 - B. 比较好 Good
 - C. 正常交流 Daily communication
 - D. 比较差 Difficult to communicate
 - E. 无基础 Cannot speak English
6. 人民币对新西兰元的汇率会影响您招待来访亲友的行为吗？ The influence of currency exchange rate on your hosting behaviour?

- A. 完全不影响 No influence
- B. 基本不影响 Little influence
- C. 影响一般 Some influence
- D. 影响比较大 Relatively strong influence
- E. 影响很大 Strong influence

7. 您希望招待来访亲友的愿望 Your desire to host your friends and relatives from PRC?

- A. 非常强烈 Strong
- B. 比较强烈 Relatively strong
- C. 一般 Normal
- D. 兴趣不大 Only a little
- E. 没有兴趣 No interest

您的自我认知 Identities

8. 请问您是否曾经来到新西兰留学? Did you receive education in New Zealand?

- A. 是 Yes
- B. 否 No

9. 您的价值观? Your value orientation?

- A. 中国 Chinese
- B. 西方 Western countries
- C. 二至之间 In-between
- D. 其他 Others

10. 您认为您的身份是中国人、新西兰人、还是介于二者之间? Please indicate your perceived identity

- A. 中国人 Chinese
- B. 新西兰人 New Zealander
- C. 二者之间 In-between
- D. 两者都不是 None of them
- E. 其他 Others

11. 您眼中的家是中国、新西兰、还是两都是? Which country you call it "home"?

- A. 中国 China
- B. 新西兰 New Zealand
- C. 两者都是 Both of them
- D. 两者都不是 None of them
- E. 其他 Others

您的基本信息 Basic info

12. 您的姓名 Your name?

13. 您的性别 Your gender?

- A. 男 Male
- B. 女 Female

14. 您的年龄 Your age?

- A. 46+
- B. 36-45
- C. 26-35
- D. 19-25
- E. 0-18

15. 您的婚姻状况 Your marital status (Family lifecycle)?

- A. 已婚且孩子均已成年 Married and all the children have grown up
- B. 已婚且孩子未成年 Married and have child (children) have not grown up
- C. 已婚无子女 Married without child
- D. 恋爱 In a relationship
- E. 单身 Single
- F. 其他 Others

16. 您的教育水平 Your educational level?

- A. 博士 PhD
- B. 研究生 Master degree
- C. 本科 Bachelor degree
- D. 高中 High school
- E. 其他 Others

17. 您每年的休假时间是（天）？ Your annual disposable time (In days)?

- A. 40+
- B. 31-40
- C. 21-30
- D. 11-20
- E. 0-10

18. 您在中国大陆长期居住的是亲戚、好友还是两者都有？ VF/VR/VFR?

- A. 两者都有 Visiting both friends and relatives
- B. 亲戚 Visiting relative
- C. 好友 Visiting friends

19. 请问您已经生活在新西兰多久了（年）？ Length of the settlement period (In years)?

- A. 16+
- B. 11-15
- C. 6-10
- D. 3-5

20. 如果超过一代，请问是第几代中国移民？ The number of generation (s) (If applicable)?

- A. 5+
- B. 4
- C. 3
- D. 2
- E. 不清楚 Not sure

21. 请问您大概是什么年代移民到新西兰的? The year of migration?
- A. 2003-至今 (2003 till now)
 - B. 1991-2002
 - C. 1979-1990
 - D. 1945-1978
 - E. 1944 年以前 (Before 1944)
 - F. 不清楚 Not sure
22. 请问您 (家人) 移民到新西兰的目的是 (可多选)? Purpose of migration (Maybe more than one choice)?
- A. 舒适的生活方式 Different lifestyle
 - B. 无压力的教育 Better education
 - C. 更好的自然环境 Better environment
 - D. 更好的社会福利 Better social welfare
 - E. 工作机会 Working opportunity
 - F. 躲避战争 War in China
 - G. 政治原因 Political issue
 - H. 不清楚 Not sure
23. 您在中国大陆的亲戚/好友的大致数量 (个) The number of friends and relatives in PRC?
- A. 50+
 - B. 30-50
 - C. 10-30
 - D. 0-10
24. 您是否已经招待过您来自中国大陆的亲友? Have you ever hosted your friends and relatives from PRC?
- A. 是 Yes
 - B. 否 No
25. 如果您已经招待过您的亲友, 请问是您主动邀请还是对方主动拜访? Initiation of visit (If applicable)?
- A. 我们主动邀请 They were invited by us
 - B. 对方主动拜访 The VFR travel was initiated by them
26. 能否介绍您在中国大陆的亲友参与本调查? Can I invite your friends and relatives in PRC to participate in this study?
- A. 可以 Yes
 - B. 不方便 No

27. 如果可以，请问他们的姓名及联系方式是？ Can I have their contacts?

姓名 Name

姓名 Name

姓名 Name

姓名 Name

电话（新西兰）

Phone

电话（新西兰）

Phone

电话（新西兰）

Phone

电话（新西兰）

Phone

邮箱 Email

邮箱 Email

邮箱 Email

邮箱 Email

28. 如果可以，请问研究者在联系他们时是否可以提供您的姓名？ Can I mention your name when I approach them?

A. 可以 Yes

B. 不方便 No

感谢您的参与！ Thank you for participating in this study!

王熙

新西兰怀卡托大学 管理学院

XI WANG

Waikato University Management School

10.15 Appendix O: The participants' profile details – China

基本信息-来自中国大陆的亲友 Basic Info-For VFR visitors from PRC

请圈出您认为最接近的选项 Please choice the one which can best match the reality

您参与相关活动的的能力 Capability in participate in VFR travel

1. 您的个人年收入 Individual annual income (in CNY)?
 - A. 250000+
 - B. 200000-250000
 - C. 100000-200000
 - D. 50000-100000
 - E. 0-50000
2. 您可能的“探亲访友游”旅行预算（人民币） Your budget on VFR travel to NZ (in CNY)?
 - A. 50000+
 - B. 20000-50000
 - C. 10000-20000
 - D. 5000-10000
 - E. 0-5000
3. 您认为获取访问签证的难易度 Access to visiting Visa (In your perception)?
 - A. 非常容易 Very easy
 - B. 比较容易 Easy
 - C. 一般 normal
 - D. 比较难 difficult
 - E. 非常难 Very difficult
4. 您在（计划）赴新西兰拜访亲友时持有何种签证？ Your legal status in VFR travel?
 - A. 新西兰国籍 New Zealand Citizenship
 - B. 中国国籍-新西兰永久居民签证 PRC passport with a permanent residency in NZ
 - C. 中国国籍-新西兰工作签证 PRC passport with a working Visa in NZ
 - D. 中国国籍-新西兰学生签证 PRC passport with a student Visa in NZ
 - E. 中国国籍-新西兰旅游签证 PRC passport with a travel Visa in NZ
 - F. 其他 Others
5. 您的英语水平？ Your English language skill?
 - A. 非常好 Very good
 - B. 比较好 Good
 - C. 正常交流 Daily communication
 - D. 比较差 Difficult to communicate
 - E. 无基础 Cannot speak English
6. 您可能在新西兰旅行的时间长度（天）？ (Expected) Length of stay (in days)?
 - A. 31+

- B. 22-30
- C. 14-21
- D. 6-14
- E. 0-5

7. 人民币对新西兰元的汇率会影响您赴新西兰旅游的行为吗? The influence of currency exchange rate on your travel behaviour?

- A. 完全不影响 No influence
- B. 基本不影响 Little influence
- C. 影响一般 Some influence
- D. 影响比较大 Relatively strong influence
- E. 影响很大 Strong influence

8. 参与“赴新西兰探亲访友旅行”的愿望 Desire to visit friends and relatives in NZ?

- A. 非常强烈 Strong
- B. 比较强烈 Relatively strong
- C. 一般 Normal
- D. 兴趣不大 Only a little
- E. 没有兴趣 No interest

您的自我认知 Identities

9. 请问您是否曾经来到新西兰留学? Did you receive education in New Zealand?

- A. 是 Yes
- B. 否 No

10. 您的价值观? Your value orientation?

- A. 中国 Chinese
- B. 西方 Western countries
- C. 二至之间 In-between
- D. 其他 Others

您的基本信息 Basic info

11. 您的姓名 Your name?

12. 您的性别 Your gender?

- A. 男 Male
- B. 女 Female

13. 您的年龄 Your age?

- A. 46+
- B. 36-45
- C. 26-35
- D. 19-25
- E. 0-18

14. 您的婚姻状况 Your marital status (Family lifecycle)?
- A. 已婚且孩子均已成年 Married and all the children have grown up
 - B. 已婚且孩子未成年 Married and have child (children) have not grown up
 - C. 已婚无子女 Married without child
 - D. 恋爱 In a relationship
 - E. 单身 Single
 - F. 其他 Others
15. 您的教育水平 Your educational level?
- A. 博士 PhD
 - B. 研究生 Master degree
 - C. 本科 Bachelor degree
 - D. 高中 High school
 - E. 其他 Others
16. 您每年的休闲时间是（天）？ Your annual disposable time (In days)?
- A. 40+
 - B. 31-40
 - C. 21-30
 - D. 11-20
 - E. 0-10
17. 您在新西兰长期居住的是亲戚、好友还是两者都有？ VF/VR/VFR?
- A. 两者都有 Visiting both friends and relatives
 - B. 亲戚 Visiting relative
 - C. 好友 Visiting friends
18. 请问您的亲戚或好友已经生活在新西兰多久了（年）？ length of the settlement period (In years)?
- A. 16+
 - B. 11-15
 - C. 6-10
 - D. 3-5
 - E. 不清楚 Not sure
19. 如果超过一代，请问是第几代中国移民？ The number of generation (s) (If applicable)?
- A. 5+
 - B. 4
 - C. 3
 - D. 2
 - E. 不清楚 Not sure
20. 请问他们大概是什么年代移民到新西兰的？ The year of migration?
- A. 2003-至今 (2003 till now)
 - B. 1991-2002
 - C. 1979-1990
 - D. 1945-1978
 - E. 1944 年以前 (Before 1944)
 - F. 不清楚 Not sure

21. 请问您的亲戚或好友移民到新西兰的目的是（可多选）？ Purpose of migration of your friends and relatives in NZ (Maybe more than one choice)?

- A. 舒适的生活方式 Different lifestyle
- B. 无压力的教育 Better education
- C. 更好的自然环境 Better environment
- D. 更好的社会福利 Better social welfare
- E. 工作机会 Working opportunity
- F. 不清楚 Not sure

22. 您在新西兰亲戚/好友的大致数量（个） The number of friends and relatives in NZ?

- A. 10+
- B. 7-9
- C. 4-6
- D. 1-3

23. 您是否已经赴新西兰拜访过您的亲友？ Have you ever visited your friends and relatives in NZ?

- A. 是 Yes
- B. 否 No

24. 如果您已经拜访过您的亲友，请问您是受邀还是主动拜访？ Initiation of visit (If applicable)?

- A. 受邀 We were invited by them
- B. 主动拜访 The VFR travel was initiated by us

25. 能否介绍您在新西兰的亲友参与本调查？ Can I invite your friends and relatives in NZ to participate in this study?

- A. 可以 Yes
- B. 不方便 No

26. 如果可以，请问他们的姓名及联系方式是？ Can I have their contacts?

姓名 Name

姓名 Name

姓名 Name

姓名 Name

电话（新西兰）

Phone

电话（新西兰）

Phone

电话（新西兰）

Phone

电话（新西兰）

Phone

邮箱 Email

邮箱 Email

邮箱 Email

邮箱 Email

27. 如果可以，请问研究者在联系他们时是否可以提供您的姓名？ Can I mention your name when I approach them?

- A. 可以 Yes
- B. 不方便 No

感谢您的参与！ Thank you for participating in this study!

王熙
新西兰怀卡托大学 管理学院

XI WANG
Waikato University Management School

10.16 Appendix P: Examples used to stimulate participants' thinking and discussion – New Zealand

“探亲访友游”活动偏好、动机、及价值取向示例

Example for activity preferences, motivations, and values in VFR tourism

居住在新西兰的“探亲访友游”参与者

For VFR hosts in New Zealand

您对于不同类别旅行活动的偏好？ *Your activity preference during VFR travel?*

社会活动 *Social activities*

1. 与家人/好友在家休息 *Stay at home with family members or friends*
2. 野餐、采摘、或在沙滩休憩 *Picnic, gardening, or spend several hours on beach*
3. 在咖啡厅、餐厅、或酒庄享受一段时光 *Spend several hours in cafe, restaurant, or vineyard*
4. 前往当地酒吧、夜店、舞厅 *Bars, night clubs, dance party*
5. 游泳、冲浪、划船、徒步、骑行或慢跑 *Swim, surf, kayak, boat, walk, cycle, jogging*
6. 钓鱼、打猎或攀岩 *Fishing, hunting, rock climbing*
7. 驾车观光 *Sightseeing drive*
8. 邮轮观光 *harbour cruise*
9. 非正式的团队游戏 *Informal team games*
10. 正式的团队运动 *Organised sports*
11. 将旅行照片展示在社交媒体上 *Post your pictures on SNSs during VFR travel, e.g. Facebook*
12. 与到访的家人或好友一同庆祝农历新年 *Celebrate Chinese New Year with your VFR visitors*

文化活动 *Cultural activities*

1. 到新西兰参与音乐节或艺术节等活动 *Musical, artistic and literary events*
2. 到博物馆、艺术馆、剧院探索新西兰文化 *Explore NZ culture in museum, galleries, or theatre concert*
3. 拜访古迹 *Visit heritage*
4. 与来访的中国大陆亲友使用普通话交流保持中文水平 *Maintain Chinese language skill by communicate with the visitors from PRC*
5. 参与美容与健康项目 *Health and beauty activities*

经济活动 *Economic activities*

1. 在新西兰购物 *Shopping in NZ*
2. 与到访的的亲人或好友互赠礼物 *Exchange gift with your VFR visitors*
3. 陪同来访亲友旅行期间工作 *Work when accompanying with your visitors in a VFR travel*
4. 陪同来访亲友旅行时参加会议 *Participate in a conference when accompanying with visitors in a VFR travel*

政治活动 *Political activities*

1. 谈论政治话题 *Discuss political issues*

您参与不同类别活动的动机? *Your motivations when participating in a variety of activities?*

社会动机 *Social motivations*

1. 与家人/好友分享一段时光 *Enjoy a period of time with family members or friends without disturb*
2. 改善家人/好友之间的关系 *Improve our relationships*
3. 认识更多的朋友 *To know more friends from PRC*

文化动机 *Cultural motivations*

1. 通过与来访亲友交流扩展我的知识面 *Acquire new knowledge from visitors*
2. 了解大陆亲友目前的生活 *To know the current lifestyle in PRC*

经济动机 *Economic motivations*

1. 旅行期间考察商业机会 *Find the business opportunity while travelling in NZ*
2. 了解中国大陆的商业机会 *Find the business opportunity in PRC*

政治动机 *Political motivations*

1. 表达自己对政治事件的看法 *To express one's own opinion about some political issue*

不同动机背后的价值取向? *Your value orientations behind the motivations?*

社会价值 *Social value orientations*

1. 家人/好友间关系的促进 *Strengthen our relationships*
2. 社交面的拓展 *Extend and strengthen me social network*

文化价值 *Cultural value orientations*

1. 提高自身文化修养 *Improve my knowledge and personality*
2. 提高与不同文化交流沟通的能力 *Improve my capacity to communicate with the people from different culture*

经济价值 *Economic value orientations*

1. 提高我的未来收入 *Improve my future income*
政治价值 *Political value orientations*
1. 我的政治观点得到充分表达 *My political opinion get fully heard*

您眼中的家人/好友间的“人际关系”构成？ *Your perceived nature and composition of interpersonal relationship*

居住在新西兰的“探亲访友游”参与者 *For VFR hosts in New Zealand*

社会资本¹ *Social capital*

1. 您在中国大陆的亲友的数量及关系强度 *The size and strength of the network of connections in PRC*
2. 与在中国大陆的亲友在一起时感受到的安全感 *Feelings of safety when stay with family and friends from PRC*
3. 与在中国大陆的亲友在一起时感受到的融入感 *Feelings of social inclusion rather than isolation when stay with your family members and friends from PRC*
4. 您有足够的手段与在中国大陆的亲友保持联系 *You have access to the means of contact with your family members and friends from PRC*

文化资本² *Cultural capital*

您及您在中国大陆的亲友: *You and your family members and friends from PRC*

1. 具备多元化的教育背景（本土及海外） *Have diverse educational backgrounds in both China and overseas*
2. 掌握多种语言 *Speak more than one language, include but not limited to Chinese and English*

¹ 社会（关系）资本是指您在另一个国家（新西兰/中国）的所有关系网的相加，受到亲人及朋友间的关系强弱影响。Social capital is the stock of a person's linkages with other actors along with information flows and exchanges are made.

² 文化资本是指您对文化知识的重视程度，例如：学历、举止修养、口音、种族、穿着、其他内在及外在的文化储备。Cultural capital refers to the symbolic assets that a person possesses.

经济资本³ *Economic capital*

您及您在中国大陆的亲友: *You and your family members and friends from PRC*

1. 具备不错的家庭收入 *Have good household income*
2. 双方之间有一定程度上的汇款 *Sending remittances to each other crossing the border*

对待家庭及友情的价值观⁴ *Value dimension*

作为家人/好友, 我们应当: *Act as family members or friends, we should:*

1. 被视为一个整体 *Act as an organic whole*
2. 把彼此放在第一位 *Treat each other as the first priority*
3. 对彼此负有义务 *Be responsible for each other.*
4. 为彼此着想 *Think for each other*
5. 学会彼此分享 *Learn to share with each other*

彼此间的情感联系⁵ *Emotional dimension*

作为家人/好友, 我们应当: *Act as family members or friends, we should:*

1. 保持密切的关系 *Have intimate relationships*
2. 敢于提出自己的要求 *Be able to ask help from each other*
3. 在有难处的时候, 尽最大的努力相互支持 *Support each other when there is a problem occurs*
4. 听取彼此的意见 *Have all the members' voice heard*
5. 主动向彼此倾诉自己的心里话 *Have deep communications with each other*
6. 分享彼此的兴趣爱好 *Share our hobbies with each other*

对待彼此的态度⁶ *Attitudinal dimension*

³ 经济资本指您对待家人或朋友关系中的**金钱关系的重视程度**, 这也与家庭收入等客观因素有关。Economic capital refers to the assets and financial worth of an individual which are immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights.

⁴ 您对待家人关系及朋友关系的价值观, 例如: 您可能更**重视家人间的和谐相处**、或朋友间在需要时的互相支持。Families tend to organize themselves by attaining consistency in a set of beliefs that regulate interpersonal relations and contribute to cohesive family functioning.

⁵ 家人及朋友间的情感联系包含: **情感上的彼此依赖**、彼此相连的感觉、以及彼此间的融入感和亲近感。The emotions the family members holding toward each other could be used as one of the indicators of the strength of the tie, such as the emotional bond, the feeling of connectedness and the sense of involvement and closeness between family members.

⁶ 家人及朋友间对待彼此的态度, 例如: **彼此间的忠诚**、责任感、相处时的氛围。The attitudes the family members have with each other could be used to measure the strength of the tie, such as loyalty to family, perceptions of the degree of commitment, support, affect and helpfulness.

作为家人/好友，我们应当： *Act as family members or friends, we should:*

1. 当出现矛盾时，大家互相谦让取得妥协 *Discuss and compromise with each other when there is a dispute*
2. 热情的对待彼此 *Treat each other warmly*
3. 在重要节庆时应当互相问候 *Send our greetings to each other when there is an important festival*
4. 对彼此付出大于索取 *Give more than receive from each other*
5. 避免在背后议论彼此 *Avoid any gossip between each other*
6. 在彼此间创造良好的气氛 *Keep a good atmosphere when we are together*

行为因素⁷ **Action dimension**

作为家人/好友，我们应当： *Act as family members or friends, we should:*

1. 偶尔与新西兰的家人及好友通过微信等手段沟通 *Contact with each other crossing borders once a while*
2. 偶尔拜访彼此 *Visit each other once a while*
3. 见面时，一起参与各种各样的活动 *Conduct a variety of activities together during the visits*
4. 在节庆活动时互赠礼物 *Exchange gifts between each other when there is an important festival*
5. 执行我们共同作出的决定 *Solve the problems following the collective decisions made by us*

⁷ 用来维系家人或朋友间关系的行为，例如：**相互拜访**、交换礼物、共同参与休闲活动及庆祝节日。The actions the family members normally take to maintain their family cohesion could be an indicator to measure the strength of the tie, e.g. shared activities, frequency of family visiting, gift exchange.

10.17 Appendix Q: Examples used to stimulate participants' thinking and discussion – China

“探亲访友游”活动偏好、动机、及价值取向示例

Example for activity preferences, motivations, and values in VFR tourism

来自大陆的“探亲访友游”参与者

For VFR visitors from PRC

您对于不同类别旅行活动的偏好？ *Your activity preference during VFR travel?*

社会活动 Social activities

1. 与家人/好友在家休息 *Stay at home with family members or friends*
2. 野餐、采摘、或在沙滩休憩 *Picnic, gardening, or spend several hours on beach*
3. 在咖啡厅、餐厅、或酒庄享受一段时光 *Spend several hours in cafe, restaurant, or vineyard*
4. 前往当地酒吧、夜店、舞厅 *Bars, night clubs, dance party*
5. 游泳、冲浪、划船、徒步、骑行或慢跑 *Swim, surf, kayak, boat, walk, cycle, jogging*
6. 钓鱼、打猎或攀岩 *Fishing, hunting, rock climbing*
7. 驾车观光 *Sightseeing drive*
8. 邮轮观光 *harbour cruise*
9. 非正式的团队游戏 *Informal team games*
10. 正式的团队运动 *Organised sports*
11. 将旅行照片展示在社交媒体上 *Post your pictures on SNSs during VFR travel, e.g. WeChat*
12. 与家人或好友一同庆祝农历新年 *Celebrate Chinese New Year with your hosts*

文化活动 Cultural activities

1. 到新西兰参与音乐节或艺术节等活动 *Musical, artistic and literary events*
2. 到博物馆、艺术馆、剧院探索新西兰文化 *Explore NZ culture in museum, galleries, or theatre concert*
3. 拜访古迹 *Visit heritage*
4. 与当地人使用英语交流，提高英文水平 *Improve English language by communicate with locals in English*
5. 到新西兰的大学了解当地教育情况 *Visit NZ universities*

6. 参与美容与健康项目 *Health and beauty activities*

经济活动 *Economic activities*

1. 在新西兰购物 *Shopping in NZ*
2. 与身在异国他乡的亲人或好友互赠礼物 *Exchange gifts with your NZ hosts*
3. 旅行期间工作 *Work during VFR travel*
4. 旅行期间参加会议 *Participate in a conference during VFR travel*

政治活动 *Political activities*

1. 谈论政治话题 *Discuss political issues*

您参与不同类别活动的动机？ *Your motivations when participating in a variety of activities?*

社会动机 *Social motivations*

1. 与家人/好友分享一段时光 *Enjoy a period of time with family members or friends without disturb*
2. 改善家人/好友之间的关系 *Improve our relationships*
3. 认识更多的朋友 *To know more friends in NZ*
4. 发现潜在的移民机会 *Potential opportunity for migration*

文化动机 *Cultural motivations*

1. 扩展我的知识面 *Acquire new knowledge*
2. 了解新西兰的当地生活 *To know the local life in NZ*
3. 发现潜在的留学机会 *Potential opportunity for future study*

经济动机 *Economic motivations*

1. 某些比中国大陆价格更低的商品 *To buy the stuffs which have lower price than PRC*
2. 旅行期间考察商业机会 *Find the business opportunity while travelling in NZ*

政治动机 *Political motivations*

1. 更为自由地表达自己对政治事件的看法 *To express one's own opinion about some political issue freely*

不同动机背后的价值取向？ *Your value orientations behind the motivations?*

社会价值 *Social value orientations*

1. 家人/好友间关系的促进 *Strengthen our relationships*
2. 社交面的拓展 *Extend and strengthen me social network*

文化价值 *Cultural value orientations*

1. 提高自身文化修养 *Improve my knowledge and personality*

2. 提高与不同文化交流沟通的能力 *Improve my capacity to communicate with the people from different culture*

经济价值 *Economic value orientations*

1. 通过海外购买一些商品获得价格优惠 *Get the best value for the money I pay*
2. 提高我的未来收入 *Improve my future income*

政治价值 *Political value orientations*

1. 我的政治观点得到充分表达 *My political opinion get fully heard*

您眼中的家人/好友间的“人际关系”构成？

Your perceived nature and composition of interpersonal relationship

来自大陆的“探亲访友游”参与者

For VFR visitors from PRC

社会资本¹ *Social capital*

1. 您在新西兰的亲友的数量及关系强度 *The size and strength of the network of connections in New Zealand*
2. 与新西兰的亲友在一起时感受到的安全感 *Feelings of safety when stay with family and friends in NZ*
3. 与新西兰的亲友在一起时感受到的融入感 *Feelings of social inclusion rather than isolation when stay with your family members and friends in NZ*
4. 您有足够的手段与新西兰的亲友保持联系 *You have access to the means of contact with your family members and friends in NZ*

文化资本² *Cultural capital*

您及您在新西兰的亲友: *You and your family members and friends in NZ*

1. 具备多元化的教育背景（本土及海外） *Have diverse educational backgrounds in both China and overseas*
2. 掌握多种语言 *Speak more than one language, include but not limited to Chinese and English*

¹ 社会（关系）资本是指您在另一个国家（新西兰/中国）的**所有关系网的相加**，受到亲人及朋友间的关系强弱影响。Social capital is the stock of a person's linkages with other actors along with information flows and exchanges are made.

² 文化资本是指您对**文化知识的重视程度**，例如：学历、举止修养、口音、种族、穿着、其他内在及外在的文化储备。Cultural capital refers to the symbolic assets that a person possesses.

经济资本³ *Economic capital*

您及您在新西兰的亲友: *You and your family members and friends in NZ*

1. 具备不错的家庭收入 *Have good household income*
2. 双方之间有一定程度上的汇款 *Sending remittances to each other crossing the border*

对待家庭及友情的价值观⁴ *Value dimension*

作为家人/好友, 我们应当: *Act as family members or friends, we should:*

1. 被视为一个整体 *Act as an organic whole*
2. 把彼此放在第一位 *Treat each other as the first priority*
3. 对彼此负有义务 *Be responsible for each other.*
4. 为彼此着想 *Think for each other*
5. 学会彼此分享 *Learn to share with each other*

彼此间的情感联系⁵ *Emotional dimension*

作为家人/好友, 我们应当: *Act as family members or friends, we should:*

1. 保持密切的关系 *Have intimate relationships*
2. 敢于提出自己的要求 *Be able to ask for help from each other*
3. 在有难处的时候, 尽最大的努力相互支持 *Support each other when there is a problem occurs*
4. 听取彼此的意见 *Have all the members' voices heard*
5. 主动向彼此倾诉自己的心里话 *Have deep communications with each other*
6. 分享彼此的兴趣爱好 *Share our hobbies with each other*

³ 经济资本指您对待家人或朋友关系中的**金钱关系的重视程度**, 这也与家庭收入等客观因素有关。Economic capital refers to the assets and financial worth of an individual which are immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights.

⁴ 您对待家人关系及朋友关系的价值观, 例如: 您可能更**重视家人间的和谐相处**、或朋友间在需要时的互相支持。Families tend to organize themselves by attaining consistency in a set of beliefs that regulate interpersonal relations and contribute to cohesive family functioning.

⁵ 家人及朋友间的情感联系包含: **情感上的彼此依赖**、彼此相连的感觉、以及彼此间的融入感和亲近感。The emotions the family members holding toward each other could be used as one of the indicators of the strength of the tie, such as the emotional bond, the feeling of connectedness and the sense of involvement and closeness between family members.

对待彼此的态度⁶ Attitudinal dimension

作为家人/好友，我们应当： *Act as family members or friends, we should:*

1. 当出现矛盾时，大家互相谦让取得妥协 Discuss and compromise with each other when there is a dispute
2. 热情的对待彼此 Treat each other warmly
3. 在重要节庆时应当互相问候 Send our greetings to each other when there is an important festival
4. 对彼此付出大于索取 Give more than receive from each other
5. 避免在背后议论彼此 Avoid any gossip between each other
6. 在彼此间创造良好的气氛 Keep a good atmosphere when we are together

行为因素⁷ Action dimension

作为家人/好友，我们应当： *Act as family members or friends, we should:*

1. 偶尔与新西兰的家人及好友通过微信等手段沟通 Contact with each other crossing borders once a while
2. 偶尔拜访彼此 Visit each other once in a while
3. 见面时，一起参与各种各样的活动 Conduct a variety of activities together during the visits
4. 在节庆活动时互赠礼物 Exchange gifts between each other when there is an important festival
5. 执行我们共同作出的决定 Solve the problems following the collective decisions made by us

⁶ 家人及朋友间对待彼此的态度，例如：**彼此间的忠诚**、责任感、相处时的氛围。The attitudes the family members have with each other could be used to measure the strength of the tie, such as loyalty to family, perceptions of the degree of commitment, support, affect and helpfulness.

⁷ 用来维系家人或朋友间关系的行为，例如：**相互拜访**、交换礼物、共同参与休闲活动及庆祝节日。The actions the family members normally take to maintain their family cohesion could be an indicator to measure the strength of the tie, e.g. shared activities, frequency of family visiting, gift exchange.