How do Chinese migrant nurses construct their identities while living in Australia?

Yaping Zhong, PhD Student

Supervisors:
A/Prof Cheryle Moss
Prof Lisa McKenna
A/Prof Beverley Copnell
1 Introduction
2 Theoretical framework
3 Methodology
4 Results
5 Conclusion
1 Introduction

- International nurses: a significant proportion of RNs in the USA, Canada, UK and Australia

- China: Increasingly significant in nurse exports

- Unique cultural and professional needs

- Identity matters as humans are conscious beings

- Identity is intrinsically attached to space and time
2 Theoretical framework

- Giddens’ theory of modernity and self-identity
  - Identity: a reflexive project of self
  - A developmental process: past ↔ future

- Giddens’ theory of structuration
  - The activities of situated actors are produced and reproduced in interaction across time and space

The theoretical framework is used to investigate the research problem...

How do Chinese migrant nurses construct their identities while living in Australia?
Narrative inquiry is used as a methodology

- Self-identity is embedded in personal stories
- People form narratives as a procedure for constructing and reconstructing their identity
- Stories can be the means through which people make sense of, understand, and live their lives

Fit with Giddens: The self is a reflexive project, an ongoing narrative
3 Design: Data Collection

Recruitment:

- Snowball - 17 Chinese nurses living and working in Australia

In-depth-Interviews:

- 16 in English, 1 in Chinese
- Face-to-face, telephone
- Interviews: 50 - 90 minutes
- Transcribed verbatim
3 Theoretical Guidance to Data Analysis

- Normalcy
- Lifestyle
- Sector

- Risk & Opportunity
- Passage
- Emotional tension

- Transition

- Routine

- Reflexivity

- Circumstances
- Mediated experience

- Time / Lifespan

- Normal appearance
- Lifestyle

- Fateful moment
- Authenticity
- Self-actualisation

- Not taking risk/opportunity
- Protective cocoon

- Self:
  - Internal referential
  - Trust
  - Growth
  - Disembedding

- Choice
3 Questions Guiding Analysis

1) What have been the significant transitions in life (identity)?
2) How does the person manage interactions between opportunities and risks?
3) How is the person achieving coherence in everyday life?
4) How did things change with time?
3 Analysis: Identity Passage Derived from Giddens’ Theory

Personal growth / Internal referential / Authenticity

- Passage
- Normal appearance
- Passage
- Self-actualisation
- Risk or opportunity
- Fateful moment
- Personal growth
- Protective cocoon
- Normal appearance

Risk or opportunity

Time / Lifestyle
1 chose nursing
2 decided to go to Australia
3 studying in Australia
3 found a part-time job
4 clinical placement
5 started working
6 finding love in Australia
7 difficult time in working
8 changing job
9 living in Australia
10 planning

In Australia 10 years including 9 years working

Personal growth / Internal referential / Authenticity
1) Significant transitions in life (identity)

Example

- The early stage ‘studying in Australia’ - Being with self

Ysabel:

Homesick … the beginning was quite hard …
I was here by myself,
I didn’t have many friends,
I didn’t have family …
I used to drink at home, just by myself and crying, and I was hugging myself … normally I was crying and drinking.
2) Management of risks / opportunities

Example

- Seeking risks and opportunities – extending boundaries

Ysabel: I’m quite open-minded. I’m not like some Chinese people who just make friends with Chinese. They feel more comfortable when staying with Chinese, and they don’t want to change. But for me, I really don’t mind ... I started to hang out with ... my colleagues, Australian ones. And ... I started doing internet dating.
3) Achievement of coherence in everyday life

Example

- Personal belief and attitudes – Being positive and active
- Resources and support

Ysabel:
I gave up (drinking), because it didn’t go anywhere …
And after I met my partner in Australia … you know I felt myself again, and life was much happier … I’m always a positive person. Yes. Drinking didn’t last for too long. No.
4) Changes with time. Example Self-awareness

Ysabel:
I'm not like a typical, traditional Chinese girl anymore.
(Chinese lifestyle)
It’s not like I have to get married, I have to have kids.
I don’t want to live in a life other people think it’s a normal life, like you know, having kids or ...

(Australian lifestyle)
I just enjoy the life now ...
Not to have kids is my decision, is my life. ...So, basically I think it’s my life, my choice, that’s it. I don’t care about how other people think about me.
5 Conclusion

- Significant transitions in life (identity) took place
- The migrant nurses were responsive to new demands and new possibilities
- The life choices and their management of risks / opportunities were related to their fundamental identities, and concerned their future plans
- They changed with time
Thank you