



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

YAN GAO

MEd (University of Buffalo, 2011)
BA (Beijing Normal University, 2008)

**“Why Did You Withdraw? Experiences of Chinese International
Doctoral Students in Canada”**

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Monday, August 20th, 2018
9:30 a.m.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Helen Raptis, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Graham McDonough, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Member)
Dr. Natalee Popadiuk, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Michelle McGinn, Faculty of Education, Brock University

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Colin Bennett, Department of Political Science, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Mobility and migration are features of this global era. Thus, most higher education institutions are increasingly recruiting international students. Host institutions and countries benefit in many different ways from this recruitment; however, the experiences of international students are still under-researched. Although studies examining the linguistic and cultural challenges that are encountered by international students have started to emerge, little attention has been given to those who did not complete their studies, particularly doctoral students. This study sheds light on four Chinese international doctoral students and explores the reasons for their withdrawal from their studies in a Canadian context. Using a narrative methodological approach, data were collected through semi-structured and in-depth interviews in the participants' native language: Mandarin. Four themes and two sub-themes emerged from the interview data. The themes included: academic interactions and integration; partnership and the perception of gender roles; family of origin and the importance of education; and educational differences between China and Canada. Participants' experiences during their doctoral studies did influence their decisions to withdraw. Specifically, the incompatibility with supervisors was one factor that directly led to the withdrawal of some research participants. However, other factors played key roles as well. The participants' intentions and willingness to fulfil their gender roles and family obligations impacted their decisions in various ways. In addition, their past experiences in China and certain aspects of Chinese culture seem to have shaped their expectations about education and the supervisory relationship.