FOOD AT PLACES: ADAPTATION THROUGH

PLACEMAKING

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis explored how certain Chinese international sojourners attempted to adapt through placemaking regarding food- and place-related everyday life strategies before and during the pandemic of COVID-19 in 2020. Using data retrieved from photovoice-induced semi-structured interviews with Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates living in Eugene, Oregon during 2020, this research explored their perceptions, experiences, and adopted strategies regarding everyday life in a foreign urban environment before and during the pandemic. Several factors related to the spatial-temporal context, one's identity, cultural background, and social relations were located for affecting one's everyday life in a foreign urban environment. Factors like mobility, car ownership, and cultural and social conflicts were found to specifically affect one's everyday life during the pandemic. In addition to connecting studies focused on identity-related food choices and relations between environment, food access, and food choice, this research may inspire future studies about life in a pandemic.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The 2020 travel restrictions imposed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the related political and social tensions in some geographical areas have significantly affected international sojourners, such as Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates', everyday lives. Thus, daily living requirements for food- and place-related strategies and adaptative practices could be different from what was observed and studied by scholars in the past. Obstacles have emerged for international and domestic transportation, import/export businesses and communications due to the pandemic. These obstacles may have forced international sojourners to take new strategies regarding food and placemaking to preserve their existing identities and adapt to newly imposed changes in their living environments. Moreover, students from China, where the virus was first openly detected and which initially had the largest number of active confirmed cases (this is now the United States with the current highest number of active confirmed cases (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, 2021)), who are in the United States have many considerations during their current sojourns in the United States, which have influenced their decision-making and resulted placemaking.

International sojourners, including students, must temporarily leave their home country and familiar living environment and move to a foreign living environment, which requires strategies and actions like food-related placemaking in everyday life to assist in adapting to this new living environment. These international sojourners might need to carefully balance the resources and attention they spend on adjusting and adapting to the foreign living environment, considering the temporary nature of their stay. As an

international student who periodically visited and lived in the United States for higher education since 2015, I have experienced and witnessed how Chinese international students work on adapting and adjusting to living in a foreign urban environment that is distinctly different from their homes in China. I noticed that Chinese international students and many young international sojourners create opportunities for eating together and gather their acquaintances at familiar places like restaurants, especially among friends who shared the same or similar cultural background. Moreover, Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates share or exchange information, knowledge, and other resources for daily living (e.g., furniture, cookware) through their social networks. These observations and experiences lead to questions about how people can adapt to new living environments through strategies and actions like placemaking concerning essentials of their everyday lives. In other words, how could the general local (food) environment influence individuals' strategies and experiences of adaptation through placemaking?

Many previous studies about food access and impacts of certain food environments focused on the physical distance and available food sources within the accessible region for certain populations. While such focus had been negated by many researchers, like Shannon (2015), significantly food sources, or more broadly food-related places, are inseparable parts of most urban landscapes. Chakraborty (2018), Shannon and Christian (2016), and Marte (2011) mentioned how food-related places in urban landscapes shaped the local living environment for people to travel through and negotiate with the surrounding environment regularly and thus their everyday lives. Furthermore, Valentine (1999) suggested that specific places, like home, where people conduct food-related everyday activities, including food preparation and consumption, are crucial for one's identity

formation. Thus, to live in an urban environment, foreign or familiar, one must constantly interact with different places within their everyday activity space, including food-related places.

Marte's work (2011) presented the relation between food and place. She studied how Dominican immigrants utilize food-related practices and experiences to conduct placemaking and sustain their social networks while preserving part of their cultural roots back at their origins. It is important to note that Marte (2011) conducted this research in New York City, a metropolitan area with an agglomeration of population and businesses and a relatively highly diverse food environment that allowed domestic and international communication and transportation to proceed and intersect. Thus, in big cities or metropolitan areas like New York City, diverse food sources and kinds of food/ingredients are more available for international sojourners or new immigrants to find preferred/needed ones to assist their placemaking through food-related everyday activities. How can we relate both the existence and absence of food as a means for placemaking in the general conceptualization? Furthermore, how would one's strategy of action or inaction regarding food access affect their placemaking or broader adaptation process?

In addition, food and place, especially geographical locations, are closely related in shaping one's everyday life. Many previous studies about food access and impacts of certain food environments focused on the physical distance and available food sources within the accessible region for certain populations. While such focus had been negated by many researchers, like Shannon (2015), it is significant that food sources, or more broadly food-related places, are inseparable parts of most urban landscapes. Scholars like Chakraborty (2018), Shannon and Christian (2016), and Marte (2011) mention how food-

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In other words, as essential parts of one's everyday life, food and place are closely related within the web of life. While the connection between food and place and their roles in people's everyday lives could be observed universally, based on my observations and reviewed pieces of literature, they are especially vital for international sojourners who live in a foreign urban environment. As scholars like Amos and Lordly (2014), Marte (2011), and Mustafa (2019) noted, food-related activities could be both important for personal adaptation and being means of socialization with others while adapting to life in a foreign environment. To conduct food-related social activities, the location and environment of the chosen place for such group activities are also vital, as suggested by Chakraborty (2018) and Valentine (1999). To reach those places, one's mobility and activity space are also important (Shannon & Christian, 2016). Most of the existing studies focused on people's everyday food- and place-related everyday lives in an existing, relatively stable living environment or switch from one stable environment to another. However, the sudden changes brought by the pandemic of COVID-19 since the beginning of the year 2020 in the local food environment suggested a new direction for research about international sojourners, like Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates, of their

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attempts to adapt to foreign urban environment through food- and place-related activities like placemaking.

The relations between food and place and their roles in assisting an international sojourner in conducting placemaking for adaptation, in my opinion, can be elaborated upon and studied in perspectives of urban and cultural geography. As a geographer, I am interested in how the mutual influence between humans and the environment can affect one's ability to adapt to a new political, socioeconomic, and cultural urban environment. At the same time, the periodic movement of international sojourners like Chinese international students from one country to another for higher educations and future careers directly relates to international relationships and immigrant studies in general. The concepts of cultural conflicts, culture shock, and acculturation are also found influential over people's sojourns in foreign environments as temporary migrants and after their return to the home countries. As Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) pointed out, the process of identity transformation did not just occur during the temporary stays of those international students in the host countries/foreign living environment. However, it will continue after that, while one's identity is always in transformation under the influence of their experiences and communications with the surrounding environments and other people in the community. Furthermore, it is essential to pay attention to the spatial-temporal contexts about how one's relationship with the local (food) environment could affect their food- and place-related strategies and enaction of placemaking for adaptation.

Thus, I wanted to study the strategies taken by Chinese international students concerning food and placemaking in American cities, especially Eugene, Oregon, to continue their everyday lives and adapt to the new changes in the foreign urban living

environment, with a focus on urban and cultural geography. This research might have implications for future migrant studies and discussion on maintaining social relations in various scales and the situations and surviving strategies taken by international sojourners in the United States in general. With this interpretivist theoretical basis and empirical knowledge in mind, I came up with the main research question with two supplementing sub-questions that further defines what I want to learn about this issue:

- What is/are the role(s) of food in relation to placemaking, especially homemaking, for a Chinese international student to feel adapted to live in a foreign urban environment within the United States?

  - What role does food play in Chinese international students', and sometimes newly graduated Chinese expatriates', experiences of placemaking and adapting to the new environment(s)/changes in the living environment(s) when they live in the United States, especially during the pandemic of COVID-19?

  - To what extent did the pandemic (COVID-19) affect the target population's everyday lives in relation to food and place? What strategies and compromises about food have they made during the pandemic for adaption while living in the foreign living environment of the United States?

    - What kinds of hindrances and assistances did they receive during this process? From whom/where?

In the rest of this thesis, I will explore the possible answers for these questions based on the retrieved data. The following section is a literature review of studies from different disciplines where I found two major foci that potentially overlap with each other. One major focus is the sociocultural identity-related food-related strategies and practices

one could make as a situational minority, while the other is related to food access and food security regarding people's mobility. Chapter two focused on the methodology I established for data collection and interpretation. Using the nominal data retrieved from photovoice-induced semi-structured interviews with recruited participants, all current or newly graduated Chinese international students in 2020, I focused on two sets of topics, which are separately discussed in chapter three and four.

In chapter three, I studied the possibility that food- and place-related everyday life strategies could assist the target population in adapting to life in a foreign urban environment in general. It was found that, unlike what was claimed by many existing studies, cultural assimilation or acculturation was not a major option for the research participants, and various factors, including the need for identity negotiation, had shaped both their actions and inactions about food- and place-related everyday lives. In addition to the temporal factor, three other factors that could influence the research participants' attempts to adapt was also located: familiarity of an environment, social connections and life experiences, and access to resources. In chapter four, I studied how the pandemic of COVID-19 have influenced one's everyday life, especially hinderances and strategies concerning food and place. There was an overarching notion of the collision of invisible boundaries between places and confusion of meanings and senses of place caused by living in quarantine. Moreover, the advantage brought by car ownership and conflicts between different sociocultural groups became more significant during the pandemic, while the support network built based on research participants' identity and social connections were found vital. In the final chapter, I summarized the findings for the conclusion and discussed limitations and possible future research topics.

Literature Review

The amount of available and accessible academic literature about international students, or the broader population of temporal migrants, of their international sojourns in a foreign urban environment for purposes like higher education was limited. In other words, among the read pieces of literature, I seldomly found connections between geographical and sociocultural context, mobility, cultural identity, and food access, preferences, and choices. By December 2020, only a few academic pieces of literature related to people's everyday lives in the pandemic, especially the aspects of food and place and adaptation in a foreign urban environment. I thus turned to explore pieces of literature in various academic disciplines. These covered the concepts of cultural identity, urban food environment, social eating and its relationship with the social network, the decision-making related to acculturation, and everyday mobility seemingly related to this research project's focus on food (access) and place (placemaking). However, many of these pieces of literature were works of scholars from disciplines other than geography, including international student studies, food studies, and sociology. It became relatively difficult to make direct connections between these concepts and the collected data for this research project for a clear, abstract, conceptualized conclusion regarding what I have observed and interpreted during the data collection sessions. While reading these pieces of literature, I noticed that based on the disciplines and research focus, the found pieces of literature related to food and (international) students fell into two different groups: 1) sociocultural identity-related food choice strategies and practices, or a sociocultural group's everyday life strategies under certain context as the situational minority; and 2) food access and food

security, which is sometimes related to the relationship between mobility (activity space) and food-related everyday life.

Living in a Foreign Urban (Food) Environment

As an inseparable part of each culture, food and food-related habits/practices might vary while moving from one cultural environment to another. The anxiety caused by food-related culture shock, or food shock, as Brown, Edwards, and Hartwell (2010) called it, could be more severe when people move to a foreign environment with a distinct cultural environment compared to their original living environment(s). In the articles by researchers like Mustafa (2019) and Mustafa, Ideris, and Zainol (2020) about international students' food-related everyday strategies and practices regarding their everyday lives in foreign urban/campus food environments, it was assumed that international students studying and living in a foreign environment would automatically have full access to economically affordable and culturally appropriate food or the necessary materials to cook. Meanwhile, unlike studies about food access and food desert conducted by researchers like Shannon (2015) and Coveney and O'Dwyer (2009), studies conducted by Mustafa (2019), Mustafa et al. (2020), and Chakraborty (2018) seemed to consider their research subjects (i.e., international students) as static, with a fixed activity space. Although it is reasonable that scholars utilized existing data (Briefel, Crepinsek, Cabili, Wilson, and Gleason, 2009; Dunbar, 2017; Mensah, 2019), their analyses and conceptualization of research findings might be influenced by a dataset created by other researchers with different purposes. There was no apparent reason why most scholars focusing on international students would tend to ignore factors like mobility and sociocultural identities that could also affect both the available and preferred food choices for international sojourners in general.

Moreover, for many articles concerning (international) students' food choices and food environment, the authors had similar suggestions: to adjust the on-campus and near-campus food environment, the authorities and policymakers should consider adding more diverse options of foods from cultures other than the mainstream food culture/cuisines of the host country, especially dishes from the target international students' home countries (Amos a& Lordly, 2014; Brown et al., 2010; Mensah, 2019). While such a suggestion has the potential to benefit the target population through building a cultural (food) environment that is more welcoming to international students in relation to the (trans)formation of their cultural identity and related placemaking experiences, it is doubtful if the simple inclusion of familiar tastes in the menu would immediately attract international students to stay close to the campus and feel supported by the universities.

On the other hand, scholars like Corcoran (2018) assumed that health education would significantly affect international students in their food habits. Corcoran (2018) did mention the importance of providing affordable healthy food options as substitutions to cheap takeaway foods that found preferred by international students, or university students in general. Nevertheless, this focus on education as the major solution (Corcoran, 2018; Ciliotta-Rubery, 2016) might also be questionable considering the invisible barriers like cultural backgrounds, class, race/ethnicity, and gender (Schmauch & Nygren, 2014). International students mostly consider homemade food and food from their own countries and cultural origins as healthier and tastier (Corcoran, 2018). In other words, the provision of nutrition and more general health education courses or activities could not attract and thus influence all (international) students, and the same for the broader population of international sojourners living with a foreign urban environment and food system. Another

wonder related to this research project was the broad notion of the relationship between food and place. How could the identity of being an alien in a foreign cultural context influence one's food access, which influences their food-related everyday life? Placemaking was rarely mentioned in many of the referenced literatures. Only Chakraborty (2018), Duruz (2011), and Marte (2010) discussed some of the relation between food, identity, and placemaking in a relatively straightforward way.

It was not easy to find any articles defining adaptation, which was essential for the research questions set for this project. The process of (food) acculturation or self-assimilation to the mainstream culture at local can be influenced by the time international students (sojourners) spent in the host country, the cultural attitudes of both the students and the society of the host country, and the degree of cultural dissimilarities between the international students' home and host country (Amos & Lordly, 2014; Brown et al., 2010). While these statements might be similar to the term "adaptation" in this research project, or at least as one of the strategies for adaptation taken by international sojourners, including Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates, for adapting to live in a foreign (new or changing) urban environment with relatively dissimilar cultural environments and social networks. However, it is questionable if acculturation is a primary or common strategy taken by all international students aware of their temporality staying in the host country. Such a temporary stay could hinder the international sojourners from actively exploring new possible food options and local community food-related activities (Sofo & Sofo, 2020; Trauger & Passidono, 2012). The temporary sojourn in a foreign urban environment for education or work could influence the transformation of international students' identities with experiences of being exposed to a foreign

sociocultural environment and constant negotiation of identities when switching between different sociocultural environments (Liu, 2015; Valentine, 1999).

Moreover, those experiences would continue to influence the international students' identity formation after returning to their home country (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Thus, international students might perform acculturation in various degrees. Nevertheless, like Mustafa et al. (2020) suggested, food-related strategies adopted by international students include assimilation, integration, rejection, and compromise. Food is both a necessity for survival and an object that could direct them to sustain their social networks (Dunbar, 2017), reduce the stress or depression brought by culture shock (Amos & Lordly, 2014), and maintain physical health (Corcoran, 2018). It also allows the construction of spaces that contain a sense of familiarity and locality that could be not just for individuals but also create and attach a sense of empowerment to specific places for their community (Chakraborty, 2018; Marte, 2011). Then, is acculturation or self-assimilation directly connected to the act of placemaking? Could it be a motivation or an outcome, or both? For scholars like Amos and Lordly (2014) and Corcoran (2018), however, there was little explanation or proof about why and how international students would actively participate in acculturation for adapting to life in a foreign urban landscape with an unfamiliar cultural environment and different lifestyle comparing to the environment at home country. In other words, it is questionable only to consider the target population's strategies and practices of acculturation related to food and place in adapting to a foreign urban environment and sustaining their physical and mental health status.

In addition, the idea of sustaining invisible boundaries (Schmauch & Nygren, 2014) in everyday lives for (temporary) migrants as a sociocultural minority in the host country

related to what Beveridge and Koch (2018) worked on as urban everyday politics. The political aspect of strategies and experiences of Chinese international students' food-related strategies and practices for everyday placemaking and adaptation in a foreign urban environment, like Beveridge and Koch (2018) suggested, is thus political. Meanwhile, most assumptions or concepts from the readings were for before the pandemic. At the same time, the latter has led to significant disruption in the current urban systems on various scales. In other words, the target population's response towards the current pandemic and following political and social tensions on various geographical scales can be considered political. Thus, how they continue their everyday lives, including the food-related strategies and practices, in American cities like Eugene, Oregon, may reflect their political attitudes towards issues like the contemporary governmental and social responses to the pandemic as the other political and social tensions on various scales.

Mobility, Pandemic, and Food-related Everyday Life

Some scholars tend to overlook the influence of people's everyday mobility over their food-related strategies and practices, especially for international sojourners like Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates adapting to the foreign urban (food) environment (Briefel et al., 2009; Chakraborty, 2018; Dunbar, 2017; Mustafa, 2019; Mustafa et al., 2020; Mensah, 2019). However, as suggested in work by Schmauch and Nygren (2014), one's everyday mobility and activity space are closely related to their own identities, which would influence their perception over what and where is approachable and accessible. Thus, an individual's everyday perception of places, boundaries, and potential activity spaces could shape their understanding of the local food environment and thus influence their everyday food-related activities concerning the

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particular temporal, spatial, socioeconomic, and physical contexts (Chen & Kwan, 2015; Coveney & O'Dwyer, 2009; Shannon, 2015; Shannon & Christian, 2016). Scholars like Chen and Kwan (2015) and Shannon and Christian (2016) questioned the traditional research approach of food access and food choice that focuses on the physical distances and set boundaries. These studies focus on residential areas and administrative boundaries set for pre-demarcated areas like census tracts and highlighted individual everyday mobility and activity space flexibility. They suggested that like the influence of cultural background over one's food preferences (Brown et al., 2010), the socioeconomic and physical environmental context one lives in and one's sociocultural identity, in general, could influence their perception and access to desired/preferred food and tastes. Together these factors could impact one's perception and sense of place and local food environment, which could shape their food-related everyday lives with mutual influence with their mobility and related decision-making process. Moreover, the utilization of the local food environment for developing senses of place, including the sense of locality, familiarity, and community (Chakraborty, 2018), and the development of invisible, sometimes flexible boundaries related to one's identity (Çankaya, 2020) may also influence one's everyday mobility access to desired food.

In the meantime, Çankaya (2020) and Schmauch and Nygren (2014) suggest that the perception of invisible social boundaries and places they marked out would also influence the senses of place people attached to each location or area within the perceived and experienced local urban environment. This notion could form a part of the social-environmental factors that shape one's everyday mobility and affect their food-related everyday life (Chen & Kwan, 2015). While most of the reviewed pieces of literature were

not about life in a pandemic, their works suggested studying pandemic-induced changes in everyday food-related activities, including spatial and temporal food access issues (Chen & Kwan, 2015) like quarantine and remote study/work. The mobility of individuals and fluidity of systems became restricted in the current pandemic, which could cause changes in the target population's definitions, perceptions, and willingness to attach a sense of safety with places, considering their identities as international sojourners who are the sociocultural minority in the United States (Liu, 2015). The senses of community, familiarity, and locality attached to particular places in the local food environment related to one's identity (Chakraborty, 2018) and their perceived socioeconomic access to acceptable food/tastes could be closely related.

Meanwhile, the social networks and connections one (from the target population) built before and during the pandemic could also influence their perception of the local food environment and access to proper food/tastes (Shannon, 2015). As a minority in the host country, people of the target population would socialize within their social networks while negotiating their cultural identities (Liu, 2015) and food-related practices (Bosco, Joassart-Marcelli, & O'neal, 2017; Brown et al., 2010; Mustafa, 2019; Mustafa et al., 2020) within the surrounding social environment during the pandemic. In the meantime, restrictions on everyday mobility and activity space caused by the pandemic might also have a mutual influence on their identities, related decision-making processes, and changes in their everyday food-related activities. Coveney and O'Dwyer (2009) found that living in a food desert does not directly lead to food access difficulty. However, the accessibility and affordability of independent transportation for food shopping are crucial for individuals and households, which could be more significant during the pandemic. Access to public

transportation or private transportation services is more limited with the need for social distancing. In other words, car ownership during the pandemic could be a more significant advantage of food access.

On the other hand, Bissell, Straughan, and Gorman-Murray (2020) mentioned the concept of a sense of losing touch or losing connection and sensory transformation developed among and experienced by international sojourners concerning the feeling of losing touch with the place, purpose, self, and reality. The notion of losing touch caused by the absence of contact and emergence of disconnection with the more familiar sociocultural environment of the home country because of living in a foreign urban environment for purposes like seeking higher education or career needs may influence one's identity (trans)formation (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). In contrast, a new connection with the foreign sociocultural environment of the host country emerged, with processes of sensory and identity transformation, the sense of losing touch with factors like the familiar place, social networks, taste accompanied by the encounter of new places, people, and (food) environment (Bissell et al., 2020; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). The pandemic-imposed travel restrictions might have frustrated some of the international sojourners as they stay in a foreign environment attached with less sense of locality and familiarity than their home country, with less access to means of independent transportation (Chen & Kwan, 2015; Coveney & O'Dwyer, 2009). While the frustration might lead to a stronger sense of losing touch, people of the target population might find their perceptions of local food and living environment changed again after they started to live aboard. The whole process of sojourn or temporal migration may be full of both the presence and absence of senses of touch and connectivity with the surrounding environment and social networks.

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Furthermore, the sense of losing touch, in general, will persist and continue to influence the identity formation of the target population of their perceived senses of places, people, ideologies, and reality, including their food and place-related everyday lives during the pandemic.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

This research project drew on qualitative research methods to explore and interpret how certain international sojourners respond and adapt to changes in the living environments imposed by the pandemic of COVID-19 through food- and placemaking-related strategies and practices in everyday life. The target population was Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates, in the United States, especially on the West Coast. I wanted to provide research participants with flexibility and power over what they wanted to discuss related to their food- and place-related perceptions, strategies, and practices in response to the pandemic; specifically, about their preferences and priorities and factors affecting their decision-making processes. This flexibility and empowerment could enable collecting and interpreting data that could reflect more of the target population's perspectives and experiences. According to Wang and Burris (1997), all methods can only reflect a certain degree of reality, which suggested that a combination of various data collection methods may benefit the research with a more thorough understanding of the collected data.

The research participants for this research project were mainly recruited from my acquaintances or by sending recruit messages in WeChat group chats created and supervised by the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) under the Division of Global Engagement University of Oregon. WeChat is a social media platform for Chinese international students and scholars studying and living in the United States to contact both fellow Chinese international sojourners and their families and other acquaintances. A group chat was created on WeChat specifically for announcements and

communication (small-scale discussions) for this research project. The recruited participants were assured of their rights to confidentiality and freedom to leave the project before being added into the WeChat group chat created for this research project. Most of the research participants agreed to join even after learning that I might record their conversations in this group chat for research purposes.

For exploratory and interpretive purposes, this research adopted qualitative ethnographic methods that shifted most of the decision-making power to the research subjects. This shift allowed the research participants to express their perceptions and experiences about their everyday lives during the pandemic. Thus, they could present more specific, detailed pictures of their social lives as a part of the target population (Katz, 2004). I considered the necessity of reducing the potential risk of being exposed to COVID-19 with in-person contact and social gatherings. Following the social distancing policy of the state government of Oregon, this research project employed an ethnographic methodology that focused on remote qualitative research methods for data collection. Research methods centered around photovoice induced, semi-structured interviews were used instead of the participatory observation and focus group in the original plan (Herrera, 2018). Details of the exact qualitative research methods of data collection and data analysis will be discussed in the sections below.

Photovoice (Preparation of Formal Data Collection)

Participatory methods like participatory observation that require in-person contact have been discouraged during the pandemic. In order to acquire a direct view and collect data about the sample population's everyday lives about food and place during the

pandemic, a two-week photovoice session was conducted individually with each research participant that consented to take part. I chose photovoice as a data collection method because it allowed retrieving contextualized visual evidence recorded and edited by the research participants independently. Concerns about photovoice as a method mostly focus on the fact that the reality reflected by the visual evidence recorded with captions and notes added in the photovoice session can be potentially distorted. The recorder (i.e., research participants) could selectively present partial reality when taking the photos and adding captions/notes, reflecting their interests and judgments concerning the power relations between the research participants and researchers (Wang & Burris, 1997). In addition, photovoice is a time-consuming and labor-intensive activity that may be considered offensive and conflicting with the participants' priorities (Schumann, Binder, & Greer, 2018).

On the other hand, photovoice allowed access to popular/community-based knowledge produced outside the formal academic regime. It could provide records of contextualized visual evidence that directly reflect the contemporary reality observed and experienced by each research participant and the community they belong to. During this process, it empowers the research participants with the decision-making power and rights about what to include or exclude, as well as showing the diverse perspectives, perceptions, strategies, and experiences of each participant, which promoted future in-depth conversations (Schumann et al., 2018; Wang & Burris, 1997).

In this research project, the participants who consented to participate in the photovoice session recorded the food (including meals, drinks, and snacks if possible) they had each day for two weeks with the camera of their mobile phones. They also needed to

add in captions or notes of information about the food they consumed per day after saving the photographs in a documentation file (i.e., word or pdf document) before sending to me for data analysis and preparing follow-up interviews. The annotated photographs allowed me to view the research participants' eating habits and their food-related experiences as Chinese international students/newly graduated expatriates studying/working and living in the United States during the pandemic. The received documents of photovoice contained highly diverse contents reflecting each participant's food-related and place-related everyday lives, as the decision-making power of what to include for data analysis shifted from the researcher (me) to the research participants in this session. Follow-up sessions of semi-structured interviews were held for data collection and interpretation surrounding factors influencing the research participants' everyday lives relating to food and places during the pandemic. The interviews allowed me to clarify and further contextualize the similarities and differences among the visual evidence and annotations collected in the photovoice session, thus determining the relations between collected data and the research questions. I also held individual interviews with participants who felt uncomfortable participating in the photovoice session but still willing to share their experiences and thoughts about their everyday lives during the pandemic.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted twenty-one semi-structured interviews, and nineteen of the recruited research participants agreed to participate in both the photovoice and interview sessions. More data yielded from the conversations during the interviews comparing to the photovoice sessions (McDowell, 2010), as relatively more research participants showed more extensive interest in participating in the interview session. The majority of the one to

two-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted online, either through Zoom (with audio recorded) or WeChat (with the conversation documented). In contrast, only one was conducted in-person with audio recorded in an electronic device while maintaining social distancing due to health and safety considerations. Several informal conversations served as extra follow-up interviews were recorded by taking notes after receiving consent from the recruited participants.

All interviews followed a semi-structured, open-ended format that encouraged research participants to open up and share their perceptions, reactions, and experiences related to everyday food-related and place-related lives before and during the pandemic while studying abroad. For the convenience of expression and comprehension for both the researcher and the research participants, both English and Chinese (Mandarin) were used in the interviews when discussing certain concepts or ideas that were mutually agreed to be more comprehensive in a particular language and related cultural backgrounds. The interview includes questions about the research participants' perceptions and experiences about the food environment in Eugene, Oregon compared to those in their hometowns before the emergence of the pandemic, changes in their everyday lives regards to food and place, as well as the challenges and assistances/solutions they had during the pandemic. For participants who took part in and submitted their photovoice documents, I also interviewed them about the food and annotations recorded in the received documents, which reflected some of their food-related preferences and everyday activities. Meanwhile, for participants who did not participate in the photovoice session, specific questions related to their eating habits were added to the original script of interview questions. All records and notes obtained from the interviews were saved for further analysis and interpretation.

Collected Data and Data Analysis

I coded the collected nominal data retrieved from the interview transcripts for descriptive contents and discursive themes. I adopted a coding system based on both codes initially developed regarding the research questions, assumptions, background literature, and new codes discovered in the relevant texts and repeated ideas found in the collected data. To answer each of the sub-questions before concluding the main research question, I used the script of interview questions as a guide to sorting the collected answers/responses. I then conducted content and discourse analysis to find the repeated themes/agreements and locate disagreements/contrasts over certain ideologies or practices. For data analysis and interpretation, content analysis, narrative analysis, and discourse analysis were utilized to distinguish the related themes that could be used to answer each of the sub-questions about: 1) Chinese international students' perception of the possibility that food and place (placemaking) could assist them to adapt to foreign urban living environment; 2) the participants' reactions and perceptions towards the pandemic in their food- and place-related everyday lives, as well as hindrances and related strategies concerning food and place (e.g., everyday mobility) during the pandemic.

Limitations

During both the processes of data collection and interpretation, I noticed several limitations of the utilized methods. The most significant limitation of this research methodology was because of the power imbalance between me as the researcher and the recruited research participants because of the shift of the power on deciding what to include in their photovoice documents and how to take the interview producing highly flexible and

general instructions. Some participants reported significant confusion and even anxiety because they did not know what to do with the photovoice. More explanation and communication about constructing and establishing the instructions between the researcher and the research participants might be necessary in future studies. In addition, as all formal data collection sessions were conducted online, many of the participants chose to be interviewed through online text chatting instead of Zoom meeting because the former made them feel comfortable. However, such an interview method had resulted in a lack of visual confirmation of responses and low-efficiency communication. Thus, when conducting remote interviews in the future, available options for conducting the interviews may require more consideration, with online chatting not recommended.

I also noticed that, like Schumann, Binder, and Greer (2018) pointed out, the visual evidence generated from the photovoice session was highly diverse and challenging to code and analyze. The collected photographs and captions allowed modification of interview questions to fit each research participants' situation and contextualize their recorded everyday lives. However, the number of collected photographs and the diversity of contents made it difficult to codify the data collected through this session in a similar coding system compared to transcripts' coding. This difficulty affected the process of data analysis and interpretation as a whole, as I had to give up on analyzing the visual evidence.

Another limitation of this research method relates to the different understandings of related concepts between me as the researcher and my research participants. My experience of pilot photovoice and interview groups suggested that defining certain concepts or terms (e.g., placemaking) prior to photovoice sessions and interviews could influence the research participants' responses and thus bias the collected data. In the formal

data collection sessions, however, I found that due to research participants' different academic disciplinary backgrounds, a certain degree of explanation was necessary to reduce confusion. Nevertheless, the gap of comprehension towards the interview questions persisted for some of them. In other words, an adjustment in additional explanation and glossary for geographical terms or concepts requires consideration for future research projects.

Research Participants

A total of twenty-one Chinese international students agreed to participate in this research project, with nineteen of them consenting to participate in both the photovoice session and the semi-structured interview session. Meanwhile, two participants only consented to participate in the interview session for personal reasons. All of the recruited research participants were current students or newly graduated from the University of Oregon in the two most recent academic years. They had chosen to either stay in Eugene, Oregon or had stayed in the study area for some time before moving out, but remained in the United States after the pandemic began.

Among the sample population, seventeen research participants were female, and four were male, all in their twenties. Both current and former undergraduate students and graduate students from several colleges and departments of the University of Oregon were recruited. Four of them moved out of Eugene, Oregon, during the pandemic but stayed on the West Coast, while the other seventeen research participants chose to stay in Eugene. In general, by the time I held the interview sessions, most of the research participants had been living or used to live in Eugene, Oregon, for more than a year. They had shown certain

degrees of confidence about their familiarity with the local food environment, except one

participant who had recently moved into this city in May 2020. A more detailed table of

the demographic information of the sample population is presented below in Table.1.

Table 1

Demographical Composition of Sample Population

Research Participant[1]	Gender	Status when participating	Current Location	Time lived in Eugene (by the time of interview)	Car and driver license ownership
E1	Female	Recently graduated with undergraduate degree	Washington state	About 5 Years	Did not own or drive in Eugene
S1	Female	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	6 years	Yes
E2	Female	Recently graduated with undergraduate degree	Eugene, OR	4 Years	No
S2	Female	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	3 Years	Yes
S3	Male	Current undergraduate student	Eugene, OR	2 Years	No
S4	Female	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	1 Year	Yes
S5	Female	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	Less than a year (arrived in May 2020)	Yes
S6	Female	Current undergraduate student	Eugene, OR	4 Years	Yes
S7	Female	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	6 Years	Yes
S8	Male	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	8 Years	Yes
S9	Male	Recently graduated with undergraduate degree	Portland, OR	4 Years	No
S10	Male	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	1 Year	No

[1] E for newly graduated expatriates, S for current students when participating.

Table 1, Continued

Demographical Composition of Sample Population

S11	Female	Graduated with undergraduate degree	Portland, OR	4 Years	No
S12	Female	Current undergraduate student	Eugene, OR	3 Years	No
S13	Female	Recently graduated with undergraduate degree	Eugene, OR	2 Years	Has driver license, but does not own a car
S14	Female	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	7 Years	Household owns a car
S15	Female	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	8, close to 9 Years	Yes
S16	Female	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	1 Year	No
S17	Female	Current graduate student	Eugene, OR	1 Year	Yes
S18	Female	Recently graduated with undergraduate degree	Seattle, WA	4 Years	Household owns a car
S19	Female	Current undergraduate student	Eugene, OR	4 Years	No

CHAPTER III

EVERYDAY PLACEMAKING IN A FOREIGN URBAN (FOOD) ENVIRONMENT

Brown, Edwards, and Hartwell (2010) noted in their research report that food-related habits and everyday practices represent a central element of cultures. They also noted that international sojourners like international students would struggle to change the food-related habits and practices when they live in a foreign environment with different food culture comparing to their home culture(s). The researchers found that international students tend to consider the consumption of food from their home culture as both emotionally and physically beneficial and vital for the sustainment of their cultural identity while showing a negative response towards the food available in the local food environment. Activities like eating together, or social eating (Dunbar, 2017), were also mentioned as both important popular leisure activity and crucial factor of sustaining social networks with fellow students, especially other international students from the same cultural origin (Amos & Lordly, 2014; Brown et al., 2010). In other words, food and its related practices and values could either assist or hinder people in the construction and maintenance of social bonds and networks as a part of the culture system.

Meanwhile, adapting to a new food culture and living environment is primarily challenging but necessary for international students who seek higher education while living abroad due to the need of making educational, social, and cultural adjustments at the same time (Corcoran, 2018; Mustafa, Ideris, & Zainol, 2020). It could be argued that food can help international sojourners, including the target population, to reassure their sociocultural or ethnic identity and create or sustain a space of familiarity and comfort in a foreign environment (Marte, 2011). The capability of food to help strengthen certain identities and

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networks, and ease the stress and anxiety brought by sudden culture shock, could be a significant factor to influence how international sojourners create a sense of locality, familiarity, and even safety in the foreign urban environment (Çankaya, 2020; Chakraborty, 2018; Marte, 2011; Schmauch & Nygren, 2014).

This chapter will focus on Chinese international students and newly graduated Chinese expatriates of the University of Oregon in Eugene about their overall perceptions and experiences over the living environment, especially the food environment, in Eugene, Oregon. The following questions guide this chapter: What role does food play in Chinese international students', and sometimes newly graduated Chinese expatriates', experiences of placemaking and adapting to the new environment(s)/changes in the living environment(s) when they live in the United States, especially during the pandemic of COVID-19? As discussed above, those who had been Chinese international students and studied abroad might have experienced a considerable amount of pressure from various aspects of their everyday lives in the attempt to adapt to the new sociocultural living (food) environment in the United States. Due to the pandemic of COVID-19, travel restrictions (CDC, 2020), required closure and transition to remote study/work, quarantine, and social distancing (Oregon.gov, 2020), the local food environment in Eugene, as well as other areas of the United States, changed dramatically during the year 2020 and thus could influence the target population's everyday life related to food and place. In the following subsections, I will first focus on factors that could influence Chinese international students, including newly graduated expatriates, of their perceptions and senses of place, everyday food- and place-related practices, and placemaking while studying and living in a foreign urban environment before and during the pandemic. I will then analyze the importance of

sustaining certain food-related and place-related everyday activities for the target population before proceeding to the next chapter to discuss the significant importance of mobility for food-related everyday life and placemaking during the pandemic.

General Perceptions About Life and Placemaking in Eugene, Oregon

Eugene, Oregon, is a city located in Lane County, Oregon, United States, in the Pacific Northwest. Before the pandemic, this city was one of the metropolitan centers in Oregon. It is famous for "outdoor recreation, bicycle and hiking trails, organic farming, a politically engaged citizenry, and a commitment to the arts" (McQuiddy, 2021, para. 1). Several institutions of higher education, including the main campus of the University of Oregon, are located in this city. The University of Oregon is open and welcoming to international students, with about 11.8% of its enrolled students identified as international students (University of Oregon, n.d.), and is aware of the importance of equity and inclusion for students from different social groups. All participants of this research projects are currently or were studying at the Eugene campus as Chinese international students before graduation and had lived in the city of Eugene during the time of seeking higher education at the University of Oregon.

The interviews with the participants matched these general images. They all agreed that Eugene is a small, quiet city with a relatively less urbanized environment than their hometowns in China and other larger American cities or more urbanized places they had visited or inhabited. Factors include relatively lower population diversity, fewer constructions, lower buildings, and more vegetation cover. The Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates were aware of their identities as international sojourners and the temporary of their stay (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015). They may consider

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either their current residences or the broader local urban living environment to be a home to them under certain conditions. One of the participants (S16), who is currently an international graduate student at the University of Oregon, commented that:

> [It] depends on how you define "home". [If] the definition is like "this residence that you go to in the end of the day", then yes this [is] a home. But if you define it as… "where you live with your family", then it's not. But… to some extent, yes, [the current residence in Eugene] is a home to me.

S16 later also added that access to familiar foods and tastes was important for her experience of adapting to life in a new environment after moving to Eugene from a larger American city. It shaped her perception of the local environment in Eugene. The importance of access to particular foods and tastes will be further discussed in later subsections when discussing how food-related everyday life and food environment could influence international sojourners like Chinese international students in adapting to living in a foreign urban environment.

Similarly, although they mostly did not enjoy foods available at local places, many participants claimed that they considered their residences in Eugene or the city in general as a kind of home to them. They made such a claim because they had and might need to continue to live in this city for a considerable length of time. It could be argued that when living in a foreign urban environment, international sojourners, like those who participated in this research project, would selectively attach a sense of locality, familiarity, and leisure with their current residences/residential area as a conditional home. Such strategy was taken because of the exposure to a foreign sociocultural environment (Bissell et al., 2020), with a need to spend a relatively long time living in the local urban environment and constantly interact with it for purposes like study, work, commute, and socialization.

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During this process, some might strive to find reasons and factors to attach these senses of place with their current residences and the local environment, including searching for environmental and sociocultural elements that reminded them of their home in China, retrieving, adding, and modifying objects in their residences, as well as maintaining social connections, especially socializing through food-related activities (Bosco et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2010; Mustafa, 2019; Mustafa et al., 2020).

Many research participants admitted that they would adjust their residences' arrangements to stay in touch with senses of leisure, comfort, familiarity, locality, and even security attached to their residences in Eugene or the whole city. During these processes, they conducted placemaking, or more specifically homemaking, to adapt to life in the foreign urban environment of Eugene. Sofo and Sofo (2020) assumed that people would have more time during the pandemic to create and maintain gardens or small plantations in their domestic environments because of the increased flexibility in their daily schedules, which would assist in homemaking and protecting one's mental health. However, given that all the participants and probably most Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates in the United States do not own the buildings they reside in and are aware of their identity as outsiders, their options for placemaking were relatively limited. They could not make considerable changes in arranging their residences, such as maintaining a home garden that is big enough to provide enough food to sustain the household's needs (Sofo & Sofo, 2020). Several participants also noted the challenge of purchasing furniture or other large-size items like garden pots while living in Eugene because they plan to move out of this city in the foreseeable future. In other words, due to the limitation of available resources and worry about violating rules and facing monetary

penalty since they lived in rented apartment/house, homemaking strategies like home gardening are impractical for the target population. As a result, those who tried to maintain residential garden might keep their attempts in small-scale for leisure and decorative purposes rather than self-sustaining.

Factors Influencing Placemaking Actions at the Local Level

The participants who lived for a considerable length of time (four years and above) in Eugene typically have more knowledge and stronger social networks to obtain necessary factors/resources vital for adapting to life in a foreign urban environment. The more they adapted, the more likely they would attach stronger senses of locality and familiarity to their residences or the whole city of Eugene. As a result, the longer time one live in Eugene, the more likely they would consider it, or at least their residence in Eugene, home to them (Brown et al., 2010). However, unlike suggested by scholars like Brown et al. (2010), a determined and robust relationship between the length of time someone from the target population had spent living in a foreign urban environment and the attachment of senses of locality and familiarity with places was not found in collected data. Time could be a significant factor that influences international sojourners like Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates of their development of senses of place and strategies of placemaking. However, it was not the only determining factor. In addition to the temporal aspect of placemaking and adaptation, three overarching and overlapping factors were located regard to strategies and actions of placemaking taken by the target population: 1) the familiarity and knowledge about the local sociocultural and physical environment; 2) social connections and life experiences one had in both host country and home country; 3) access to resources that are necessary for one to conduct placemaking

and attach certain senses of place during that process. For the third factor, a specific focus on the utilization of online platforms related to food and placemaking was noticed, which was not discussed by most of the reviewed pieces of literature.

Factor One: Familiarity and Knowledge about the Local Urban Environment.
The first factor was the familiarity and knowledge about the local living environment about its sociocultural and physical landscapes developed by a person during the time they live in a foreign urban environment, which is closely related to the temporal aspect of placemaking. The sense of familiarity can be developed based on the accumulation of knowledge about the local landscape and urban systems, such as the geographical distribution of accessible food sources and relative locations of buildings. In this research project, the collected data suggested that both one's exploration of the environment (Mustafa, 2019) and social networks developed at local during the time one lived in and interacted with the local environment (Schmauch & Nygren, 2014) can generate necessary knowledge about the living environment. Also, the process of retrieving resources and objects might be vital for the target population because shopping for necessities like cookware could be a reason for them to get familiar with the local urban environment. Thus, the shopping processes enabled them to explore the potential activity space, which could impact their perceptions of Eugene and attachment of a sense of familiarity and locality with certain sites like supermarkets and restaurants. Unlike the case studied by Schmauch and Nygren (2014), however, the exploration and interaction with the local sociocultural environment did not create invisible boundaries for Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates before the pandemic. Their identity as international sojourners, the political and socioeconomic powers they held, as well as the awareness of the

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temporary of their stay in Eugene, or more broadly in the United States, had differentiated them from the migrant women studied by Schmauch and Nygren (2014).

Several participants mentioned that they had both purchased and received cookware and furniture from people in their social networks after moving to Eugene, which assisted the creation of a comfortable and relaxing domestic environment that was vital for their adaptation. Participant S16 specifically mentioned that while she found it challenging to adapt to life in Eugene at first, as there are more local-based small-scale businesses like local restaurants than chain restaurants in Eugene compared to the urban areas she had inhabited before. However, after living in Eugene for about a year, she gradually gained sufficient knowledge about the geographical distribution of sources of needed goods and services, which made her feel more adapted and confident to live in Eugene. Participant S9 also mentioned in his interview that he used to explore the whole city when he stayed in Eugene, which made it easy for him to gain knowledge about the local living (food) environment. However, the pandemic had significantly hindered his attempt to initiate similar exploration after moving to another city during the pandemic for higher education:

> I feel not that safe so I did not explore the city that much… (being asked if he could compare his current residence with where he lived in Eugene) Well [I] cannot talk this topic right now because I did not explore enough [though].

He then acknowledged that he prefers to explore and discover the urban food environment by himself for both leisure and learning about the local environment. In addition, it was essential for him to find foods and tastes similar to those available to him in his hometown in China through such exploration, which allowed him to develop a sense of familiarity and locality attached to where he resides. Nevertheless, as he mentioned in his interview, as his perception of place is related to a sense of insecurity caused mainly by the pandemic,

he hesitated to conduct placemaking through exploration and getting familiar with local landscapes. Thus, S9 admitted that he was most familiar with his residence and a few places like food sources that he could travel to with mobility enhanced by shared rides from his social networks.

This example suggested that, like Chen and Kwan (2015) discussed, without the proper knowledge to build certainty and familiarity with local urban (food) environment, it could be more challenging for one to conduct placemaking and attach a sense of familiarity. This difficulty would impact one's perceptions of place and thus their everyday life. For international sojourners like Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates, such uncertainty could influence their perceptions of place and strategies of placemaking and affect their adaptations of living in a foreign urban environment. Meanwhile, unlike the population studied by Chen and Kwan (2015), Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates have relatively strong socioeconomic power and social bonds, or support networks among fellow students and friends. These advantages allowed them to exchange information and assistance to get familiar with the local food environment and placemaking. More about what scholars like Chen and Kwan (2015) emphasized as the importance of mobility (and activity space) to people's food-related everyday lives will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Factor Two: Social Networks and Past Life Experiences. During the interview sessions, many participants mentioned the importance of their connections with their families (for some, it included the extended family) and friends back in China. The reason for mentioning those social connections or networks was mainly about emphasizing the importance of their "real home(s)" in China, as they consider those social connections as

crucial for the completeness of a place called "home." Such notion is specifically significant among the participants who considered their residences in Eugene as either a temporary living space or a secondary home for them as international sojourners. Nevertheless, they conducted placemaking or homemaking activities while living in Eugene for higher education. For instance, participant S6 constantly mentioned the importance of staying close to her family and tastes that could remind her of her "home" back in China, even though she had actively worked on arranging her residence in Eugene for a more familiar, comfortable, and relaxed domestic environment:

> [No, I] won't call it home [I] think… this a good apartment, large personal space, but no parents here… and no books… no gas stove, no kimchi jar… yes [I] think so. [The] family member... is important for a home. [Otherwise] it is just a single apartment… yes [I didn't] look for roommate, and got more craft tools, stamp, inkpads, watercolors, etc. [and] maybe less furniture… [Before] pandemic [I] did not care much on the food at Eugene, because I was looking forward for the vacation that I can go home for my favorite restaurant… (listed several foods/cuisines unavailable in the local food environment of Eugene) this is a torment that [I] have to stay with lack of taste restaurant… [At] beginning [I] had purchase more [Grubhub] and take-go foods because I want to check if there are more options to reduce my homesick about food but failed, not many foods can satisfy my stomach, so I cook more in home with the recipes from my mom.

Another participant, S12, also mentioned that, even though she likes Eugene and had actively worked on adapting to living in this foreign urban environment, she would not want to consider it as a home to her:

> I would not call it home, because my family is waiting for me to come home…I love the cultural [environment] and atmosphere in Eugene, but I still do not feel like this is my home. Maybe my mind will change after that…Home [is] where my family live in…Every term I will change my room in different ways, such as move all of my [furniture] to different directions. It always let me feel a new life when I register in next term.

As suggested in the quotes listed above, the individual definition of home is unique and depending on each person's interpretation. However, it is crucial to notice that, like S6

and S12 suggested, their social and cultural connections and life experiences in their hometown may have shaped their expectations or standards about what to perceive as a desirable element in the living and food environment. Moreover, the social and cultural connections of a Chinese international sojourner back in China could hinder their willingness of attaching senses like familiarity and locality with their residence in Eugene, while also assist them in reducing the feeling of losing touch with familiar cultural factors (Bissell et al., 2020; Mustafa et al., 2020). Participant S6 appreciated her mother for sharing knowledge about cooking dishes with her mother's recipes, which can bring her a sense of familiarity attached to the home to ease her homesickness and a sense of rejection to the local food environment in Eugene. More about the importance of socialization through food-related activities will be discussed in later subsections.

While discussing the general food-related service quality participants had received in Eugene, several participants also specifically compared the food delivery services available in Eugene with what they had in China and found them incompatible. They all believed that China has a more advanced system and service standards with longer operation time, as well as more diverse and better food options, which led to a sense of estrangement and refusal towards the local living environment (Bissell et al, 2020; Brown et al, 2010; Corcoran, 2018). Similar to cases studied by scholars like Amos and Lordly (2014), Brown et al. (2010), Corcoran (2018), and Mustafa (2019), these participants reported actively trying to adapt to local food environment in Eugene despite the lack of desired foods and tastes. However, instead of acculturation, their capability to travel back to China that allowed access to more familiar food (cultural) environment before the pandemic seemed to be a more powerful reason for many participants to be willing to adapt

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to life in a foreign urban environment. S6 and S19 even emphasized the importance of traveling back to China and having access to familiar foods and tastes frequently before the pandemic, as contrasted to the frustration of inaccessibility due to the travel restrictions due to the pandemic (State of Oregon, 2020). More about the importance of mobility for food access, placemaking, and thus adaptation to life in a foreign urban environment will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Factor Three: Access to Resources for Placemaking. The last factor influencing the target population's perception and strategies for placemaking and adaptation would be their access to resources that could influence their food- and place-related adaptation strategies while living in a foreign urban environment. This factor partially overlaps with the last two factors. Participants like S6 noted that they gradually learned more about how and where to retrieve needed resources, such as desired tastes and food ingredients, when they live in Eugene. This knowledge gain is mostly an outcome of both assistance from their locally developed social networks and contact with their social connections back in China. Furthermore, participants like E1 and S16 admitted that they intentionally chose their current residences in Eugene before formally moving in because of their geographical locations. Their chosen residences are relatively close to places like the campus facilities of the University of Oregon, public transportation, food resources, and at least one of the major supermarkets in Eugene. Moreover, many participants, especially those who do not own a car, admitted to paying more attention to the physical distance between their residences and food resources, especially after the pandemic restricted their mobility, and they started to fear visiting public spaces, including public transportations (i.e., buses), as

they now attached a sense of unsafe with those places and intentionally restricted their own activity spaces (Çankaya, 2020; Schmauch and Nygren, 2014).

As mentioned previously, access to familiar tastes is vital for Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates for their mental and physical health. They would typically label dishes from their home culture as preferable to available local food options. This act of labeling influences their ability to adapt to the local living environment (Amos & Lordly, 2014; Brown et al., 2010; Corcoran, 2018; Mustafa et al., 2020). Nevertheless, they were also aware of the health effects of eating "correctly," as will be further discussed in a later subsection. Retrieving objects like tools and decorations were also crucial to the target population for conducting homemaking. However, this method is closely related to one's mobility and access to means of transportation. Participants who do not own a car, such as S12 and S19, focused more on arranging the existing furniture in their residences and visiting food sources within walking distance or reachable by bus and public bicycles.

Meanwhile, participants whose households own a car, such as S6 and S7, acknowledged that they constantly visited retail stores like IKEA or distant food sources for desired food or ingredients. Their car ownerships allowed them to drive by themselves on a flexible schedule, travel long distances (sometimes to neighboring cities), and carry more items per trip. Participant S7 especially mentioned in her interview that she continued to decorate her residence with decorations and plants during the pandemic because she maintained a relatively large activity space as she traveled long distances through driving. Thus, their experiences suggested that more access to needed resources, including knowledge, for conducting placemaking would influence their strategies and experiences

of adapting to a foreign environment. More about the relation between mobility, car ownership, and access to particular food/tastes will be further discussed in later subsections.

Online shopping was also frequently mentioned by interviewed participants when discussing how they retrieved needed tools like cookware and sometimes foods and other resources assisting the participants in placemaking. It is typically adopted as an alternative method to enhance issues like limited activity space and low mobility. Some participants admitted that they bought some or all their food-related tools and vessels from platforms like Amazon, YamiBuy, and other online shops for the convenience in delivery and relatively low prices. Many participants shopped online while living in Eugene. They focused on creating a familiar and comfortable domestic environment in their residences by adding and arranging elements like cookware, eating vessels, and non-food goods, including things physically unavailable in the markets in Eugene by their wills and preferences. Participants like S18 also added that even when living alone or only cooking for themselves, they would purchase tools and serving vessels more than meet their own everyday needs because they would invite their fellow Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates to cook and eat together at their residence. In other words, those tools became means of socialization for group cooking and social eating (Dunbar, 2017), and thus allowed people of the target population to develop a sense of familiarity and locality and relieve the stress from culture shock through food-related socialization (Brown et al., 2010; Mustafa et al., 2020). In addition, no-contact delivery provided by online shopping and delivery platform and related service became more crucial during the pandemic concerning people's perception and sense of safety attached to places like areas around their residences (Çankaya, 2020).

As online shopping and other online services can provide people of the target population with the convenience of extended cyber activity space and accessibility to resources (Mensah, 2019), the loss of a sense of touch could influence their online shopping preferences. Unlike the case of international students in China with relatively low language skills in Chinese (Mensah, 2019), people from the target population, like the research participants, are relatively fluent in understanding and using English websites for online shopping or ordering services. In the meantime, the lack of information about the commodities they were shopping for was considered a significant obstacle. Some participants specifically noted their distrust towards online shopping and preference of in-store shopping for certain types of goods, especially foods.

Participant S6 emphasized the importance of senses of touch and smell for her when purchasing food ingredients and snacks because "the photos [available] online looked not very appetizing" (translated from Chinese) comparing to goods available in stores. Several other participants shared a similar concern with participant S6 regarding the quality of goods, especially food, for they had to rely on the information provided by the online platforms for evaluation and decision-making (Mensah, 2019). They all agreed that senses like touch and smell are crucial in determining the quality of goods like desired food ingredients. On the other hand, to reduce the risk of experiencing inconvenience and dissatisfaction in online shopping, participant S9 only shopped online for goods he had bought before. He would shop in-store for goods that were unfamiliar to him: "[sometimes] you need to see the actual products." According to Bissell et al. (2020), the physical presence(embodiment) of a person in a foreign sociocultural environment is vital for their perception and reception of stimulation from the surrounding environment.

As suggested above, online shopping could provide people with conveniences like no-contact delivery, which is especially important during the pandemic. However, the loss of touch related to activities like shopping is in line with people's everyday mobility. Activity space could be crucial to not just one's food access and food choice, but their perception of (food) environment in general (Chen & Kwan, 2015; Shannon & Christian, 2016). In other words, participants' emphasis on the necessity of staying in touch with the surrounding living and food environment through in-store shopping reflects the importance of embodiment for adapting to a foreign environment (Bissell et al., 2020). On the other hand, many participants focused on creating a familiar and comfortable environment at their residences in Eugene despite being aware of the temporary of their stay. Unlike what was emphasized by scholars like Bissell et al. (2020), the feeling of losing touch caused by estrangement in a foreign urban environment might be treated as a necessary challenge that required compromises for people from the target population (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015), though the awareness of the temporary of their international sojourns had kept their attempts in a limited manner.

Homemaking While Not at "Home"

It is important to note that most of the target population might not want to consider Eugene as their primary "home". International sojourners like Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates are aware of their temporary stay and the fact that most of them will return to China to seek higher education or future careers (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Thus, they may have little interest in actively conducting acculturation or cultural assimilation with the mainstream American culture unless they have specific career needs. In other words, those who plan to return to the home country

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(China) after receiving their desired educational or career achievements may conduct placemaking in a way different from those who want to stay in the host country (the United States) for future educational or career development. Moreover, the contrast between the home and host country about the physical, sociocultural, and food environments (Amos & Lordly, 2014; Brown et al., 2010), including access to and unavailability of certain resources, might influence and even hinder how Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates adapt to lives in a foreign urban environment through placemaking, as they have to constantly negotiate their identities while socializing with different cultural groups (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Liu, 2015; Valentine, 1999).

Among the research participants, only S9 admitted that he had actively reached out to the mainstream cultural group on campus (e.g., the fraternities, American student-athletes). He also mostly socialized with students who belonged to the mainstream cultural group of the United States: "I did not touch too many [Chinese] students when I was there even I came from [China]." Considering the strategic differences between S9 and other participants over sociocultural placemaking, the case of S9 might represent a group of Chinese international sojourners who actively socialize and assimilate with the mainstream cultural group of the host country because of their selected majors and future career path. In the meantime, they would also purposefully reduce the frequency of socializing with other international sojourners from the same cultural-geographical origin (i.e., China) for reasons like preventing the sense of losing touch with certain physical and mental places (Bissell et al., 2020). In other words, like the rest of the target population, this group of Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates may consider switching between American and Chinese modes of behaviors and mental states while interacting

with different cultural groups as burdensome and unnecessary (Liu, 2015). Thus, their choice of intentionally reducing the time they spent with particular cultural groups prevents constant negotiation over their cultural identities based on their actual situations and needs, which may thus influence their strategies of placemaking, as will be discussed in later subsections. However, unlike the cases of second-generation migrants studied by Liu (2015) and Marte (2011), as international sojourners, people like S9 are still aware of their identity as foreigners (in this case, Chinese) with stronger connections with the home country comparing to the host country, and thus would not choose to interact with people from the mainstream cultural group solely. For this group of people, acculturation with the mainstream culture could not substitute the importance of having access to elements like familiar foods and tastes. S9 had mentioned that, while he is open to cuisines from different culture and socializing with people from the mainstream cultural group, he would also enjoy foods that remind him of the food environment in his hometown, and he still socialize with fellow Chinese international students including me.

On the other hand, more participants suggested that they prefer to socialize with their fellow Chinese international students and other Chinese-origin populations, potentially due to their shared cultural origin. This extended population includes owners and operators of local food businesses. Some participant even participates in those related businesses. Their interactions could produce or sustain a sense of familiarity and community in the foreign urban environment (Chakraborty, 2018). Moreover, several participants mentioned the difficulty of "blending in" or adopting the mainstream cultural group's sociocultural expectations in everyday life. The feeling of rejection and disconnection with the mainstream sociocultural group and related activities, as part of

cultural conflict (Brown et al., 2010), is a significant obstacle for the Chinese international students' and newly graduated expatriates' attempts of food-related everyday lives and related placemaking. For example, participant S7 mentioned in her interview (translated from Chinese):

> [I] am very used to the life here [in Eugene], including aspects like food, home life, and school life. The only thing that bothers me is that there are not much cultural activities in Eugene, and I personally seldom participate in [the cultural life of] the city of Eugene on, for example, art exhibition, and other cultural activities… There are not many art galleries in Eugene, except in the art museum of [the University of Oregon], but even those are from relatively minor (unpopular) categories that I am not interested in.

As shown in this quote, S7 showed specific frustration in seeking preferred cultural activities in the local environment, which she considered as necessary for a sense of staying in touch with the cultural environment of Eugene, and thus might help her to develop and attach a sense of locality and familiarity with this city. Like the case of S7, the inaccessibility of specific resources like preferred cultural activities or foods and tastes is a significant source of a hindrance towards the construction of a sense of familiarity attached to a place. Such frustration hindered the formation of a sense of staying in touch or engaged while living in a foreign urban environment with a cultural environment that is mainly different from the more familiar one at home (Bissell et al., 2020).

Based on the collected data, the existence of certain sociocultural behaviors conducted by people around the participants may also make them feel a sense of detachment and loss of touch related to their residences or the city of Eugene from a broader perspective. Participant S6 had especially expressed the major reason for her having a sense of refusal towards Eugene caused by the consumption of cannabis, or marijuana, by people near her:

> …many cannabis [users everywhere]…[I] think the problem is not friendly… [I am] allergic with cannabis, not for [CBD] but THC, it [makes] me hard to breath. [My] respiratory tract will be [swollen] if there is high concentration in the cannabis smoke.

Although this is a relatively specific situation, the experience of S6 reflected how cultural conflict and the sense of losing touch and thus control of objects or elements that can represent or stabilize a sense of familiarity and locality could serve as a significant hindrance for the development of a sense of home and belonging (Brown et al., 2010). This hindrance could affect Chinese international sojourners like the participants in their perceptions of place and strategies involved in adapting to life in a foreign urban environment. Moreover, during the pandemic, the participants noted a stronger sense of worry about personal physical health and security issues due to the observation of people conducting social gatherings in holding parties in a relatively close distance, e.g., neighbors in the same apartment building. The participants reported that they found most of the people who attended those parties were American college students. In addition, participant S19 also noticed that some American residents and students around them seemingly paid less attention to following instructions on preventing COVID-19 regards to social distancing and wearing facial covering comparing to themselves and other Chinese international students/expatriates in their social networks (translated from Chinese):

> During the time when the situation [related to the pandemic] in China was the worst, when the whole city was in quarantine, I kept paying attention to the situation in China, but the local Americans [around me] had little knowledge about the issue. [These people] including an American family I knew, of which the head of the household was a US representative… and his wife is a doctor. I usually believe that doctors know more about this kind of things (i.e. the pandemic), but even they had no idea about the situation in China. Then, when confirmed cases emerged in the United States… At that time, I went to work with a mask, but my boss told me that I shouldn't wear a mask during the work time. [The boss's] reason was that if you wear a mask, people will interpret it as a sign that you are sick, which is a misunderstanding that should be prevented. Later [the boss] even sent out an

announcement banning mask wearing at work…I started wearing a mask [at the early stage], but the CDC… made a suggestion that people should not wear masks, and then you know, it changed to required mask wearing… I think wearing a mask is more like a meaningless furnishing behavior for the American young… they wore cloth masks that are useless [for protecting them from the virus], secondly, they frequently took their masks off… and they constantly attend social gatherings like parties and sororities, so they did not always have their masks on…some might have the mask on but not over their noses… [proceed to share her wonder about the alternative options of medical masks]

Such observations and the resulting reactions, like feeling isolated, suggested that living in the pandemic may have exacerbated specific cultural conflicts between different cultural groups based on the contrast between their attitudes and reactions to the pandemic. In this case, the segregation was between the Chinese international sojourners and American residents. S19, as quoted above, was not the only participant who reported attaching a sense of distrust and unsafe with places. Several other participants also mentioned the worry and stress they felt when they observed how Americans continued to participate in the social gatherings during the pandemic. One of them was participant S15, who admitted that she felt confused when she passed a haunted house on Halloween in 2020 and saw a long queue of people, mainly Americans, waiting for the chance to enter with masks worn. She was surprised that the haunted house opened during the pandemic, as she considered it and other Halloween activities as dangerous and nonessential during the pandemic, though she was aware of its importance in the American culture.

Social gathering without proper protections like mask-wearing is risky or even dangerous in the contemporary situation. With this prerequisite, the observation of "Americans" having such activities might lead to a stronger sense of refusal attached to the places where such social gatherings are located, and the mainstream cultural identity of the United States represented by those who participated. Furthermore, the contrast between the

attitudes of the Chinese and American cultural groups towards the pandemic might discourage many people of the target population from conducting acculturation or cultural assimilation for adaptation. Like quoted above, many participants specifically linked American identity with self-centered and sometimes unreasonable actions, and they refused to receive labels like these. Thus, the Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates developed invisible social boundaries between different cultural groups at certain places (Schmauch & Nygren, 2014), which influenced their perceptions of places and the attachment of a sense of safety (Çankaya, 2020), especially during the pandemic. Meanwhile, other than the general perceptions of the living environment, the target population's awareness of identity as international sojourners and resulted adoption of specific strategies of placemaking could be specifically strengthened by their impressions and experiences related to the local food environment, as will be discussed in the following subsections.

Views about the Local Food Environment that Could Influence Placemaking

For the research participants, and thus potentially the majority of the target population, cooking by oneself and ordering food-related delivery services are both common food access options, though each person might enact on various degrees of frequency and willingness (Amos & Lordly, 2014; Brown et al., 2010; Mustafa, 2019; Mustafa et al., 2020). The perception of and access to the local food environment, as many scholars like Amos and Lordly (2014) had suggested, are crucial for international sojourners like international students to adapt to life in a foreign urban environment. Like studies conducted by scholars like Brown et al. (2010) and Corcoran (2018), my research participants directly complained about the lack of diversity, reliability, and sometimes

authenticity of food and food sources available in the local food environment Eugene. This common critique could be a significant factor that influences the target population on developing a sense of familiarity and locality attached with the contemporary foreign living environment, though such embodiment might also influence their identity formations and related preferences at the same time (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Bissell et al., 2020). For example, participant S17 complained in her interview about the inconveniences caused by the relatively low diversity of food in Eugene comparing to the other larger American cities, such as Los Angeles, she resided before. Such lack of desired tastes/ingredients directly influenced her actions of placemaking while living in Eugene, as she found it necessary to drive to nearby larger cities like Portland with more diverse food environment on a constant frequency, for her to tolerate her life in Eugene.

The cancellation (later switched to restriction) of indoor dine-in options and closure of restaurants and other eateries due to the pandemic significantly constrained many people of the target population of their access to desired tastes. However, food delivery and pickup services might provide a certain degree of relief. On the other hand, the research participants showed no significant concern about the specific sociocultural environment provided by food resources they dine or shop. Such notion conflicted with the concept of placemaking related to a sense of community and hyper-locality attached to certain ethnic restaurants (Chakraborty, 2018). While the dining environment was not found to be influential, factors like food/taste preference, authenticity issue, health consideration, food sources, and need for socialization were found influential to international sojourners, including the target population, of their perceptions about the local food environment and their strategies of placemaking for adaptation.

Taste and Authenticity

Most participants agreed that food taste is vital for them unless there were other more critical factors, such as health impacts and work/study schedule limitations. Having the "right" taste and dish from the familiar food culture of the home country seems to be vital for international sojourners like Chinese international students, both current and newly graduated ones. It is important to them since it could ease their feelings of homesick and anxiety caused by moving internationally and living in a foreign urban environment in relation to estrangement and the sense of losing touch (Amos & Lordly, 2014; Bissell et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2010; Mustafa et al., 2020). Such was reflected in the case of participant S6, as mentioned in previous subsections, whose periodic travel between home country (China) and their host country (the United States) were frustrated by the travel restrictions caused by the spread of the pandemic. S6 reported an intensification of homesick feeling after she realized that she could not return to China and thus no access to the familiar and preferred food environment in her hometown, where more authentic Chinese cuisines with the "right" tastes are available. In order to ease the negative feelings like stress and anxiety caused by her homesickness, S6 started to cook more to try to duplicate the familiar tastes of home with recipes provided by her mother and found it effective in positively influencing her mental health status.

On the one hand, like Duruz (2010) and Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) had suggested, the transnationality aspect of international sojourners' identity allowed them to remain open to new things and changes in the living environment. On the other hand, scholars like Mustafa (2019) noted that people of this specific social group are aware that they live in a

foreign urban environment with a food culture different from their home culture in China.

Participant S2 provided an example:

> I prefer Chinese food. I have different expectations based on the type of the restaurant. If I go to Panda Express, I will never expect authenticity, but if I go to a [highly ranked] Chinese restaurant, I will definitely expect authenticity. Authenticity is not a big problem to me because I'm open to innovation and all styles… [been asked about what would influence the participant's standards or expectation about restaurants] It's more like the population a restaurant targets [i.e. target consumer population].

Like S2, to negotiate with the foreign food environment, many participants mentioned making compromises and having lower expectations toward the authenticity of foods, especially the Chinese cuisines in Eugene. This overall reaction matched what Mustafa (2019) described as the modification of one's own cultural identity and compromising related values for adaptation to the new context through food.

Health Considerations and Food Choices

In both the reviewed literature and the collected data, there is an overarching awareness among the international students (including newly graduated expatriates) about health issues related to food and eating habits. One's cultural and educational backgrounds significantly influenced the formation of this awareness with a significant preference and consideration of cuisines and tastes from the home food culture as healthier than what is available in the local food environment (Amos & Lordly, 2014; Bosco et al., 2017; Brown, 2010; Corcoran, 2018). Moreover, the education and potentially social norms received by Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates about the relationship between food and health (Bosco et al., 2017; Briefel et al., 2009) might have influenced their food choices both before and during the time of staying abroad and living in pandemic

(Mustafa, 2019; Corcoran, 2018). It is thus worth noticing that keeping in shape or controlling weight through dieting and complaints about weight gaining due to a lack of exercise and disrupted eating habits since living in quarantine were frequently mentioned by many participants, though most of them also reported a lack of willingness to enact healthy eating. The relationship between life in quarantine caused by the pandemic, changes in food- and place-related everyday life, and resulted impacts on Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Scholars like Mustafa et al. (2020) suggested that acquiring culinary skills and having access to resources like tools and materials for cooking are vital for international students to adjust to the independent life of study abroad by expanding their food choice systems on food provisioning. The collected data reflected a similar trend, as all participants had either directly noted or suggested that they cook at their residences in Eugene with access to proper resources like cookware and food ingredients. Previous subsections stated the importance of knowledge of and access to the local (food) environment and access to resources like cookware for placemaking (Schmauch & Nygren, 2014). In other words, as an activity closely related to everyday life, cooking helped international students creating and sustaining senses of locality, familiarity, and comfortability attached to their residences. It also allowed the formation of a sense of in touch and control of their new independent life while studying and living abroad. But it was not always adopted by all Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates, as some of them considered it to be time-consuming and challenging to conduct frequently.

Meanwhile, ordering food delivery or pickup services is common for Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates before and during the pandemic. Some participants found their frequency of using such service dramatically increased due to the closedown of dine-in options of the restaurants during the pandemic. Like participant S6 who tried to explore local food sources through ordering deliveries to ease her homesickness, suggested, knowing the available food sources and their distribution in the local food environment is essential for international students to adapt to life in a foreign urban environment. Many participants were willing to share their knowledge about the local food environment during the interview. Participants like S11 and S15 even noted that as they gradually become more familiar with certain restaurants throughout the time they stayed in Eugene, they felt comfortable visiting those restaurants frequently and were willing to share their recommendations. Some participants also admitted that knowing the locations of affordable and acceptable, or even preferable food sources was vital for them to adapt to life in Eugene with different living and food environments from their hometowns in China (Brown et al., 2010). For instance, participant S1 mentioned that she felt frustrated about the closedown of a restaurant serving the cuisine from her hometown.

Furthermore, S18 emphasized that she was only confident to visit food sources she was familiar with in Eugene when she went out for dining or food shopping. Thus, the Chinese international students' and newly graduated expatriates' knowledge and familiarity about the local environment could develop through interactions with the local landscapes with activities like food shopping and travel for food (Shannon and Christian, 2016). Similar to the case described by Marte (2011), interacting with the local food environment in everyday life provided international students and expatriates with an

opportunity to negotiate between their identity as international sojourners and local sociocultural environment while creating comfort zones attached with senses of familiarity and locality. But the size and diversity of food options in local food environment comparing to one's more familiar home environment also play a crucial role in influencing their perception of the local environment and thus willingness to conduct placemaking in relation to food, as stated in earlier subsections.

Food-related Socialization as a Necessity

Food-related socialization plays a crucial role in assisting people of the target population in adapting to life in a foreign urban environment. It is directly related to their development of local knowledge and access to resources, providing mental support, and reducing the feeling of losing touch with familiar elements (Brown et al., 2010; Bissell et al., 2020; Mustafa et al., 2020). For instance, participant S6 highlighted the importance of familiar tastes or foods from their home food cultures were vital for mental relief: "I want to check if there are more options to reduce my homesick [through] food … usually [consume food made with] my mom's recipes [to reduce negative feelings] …"

Food-related activities like social eating (Dunbar, 2017) are also vital for providing mental support (Brown et al., 2010), sustaining social networks and cultural identities (Duruz, 2010), and exchanging information and assisting in retrieving resources for further understanding and negotiating with the local environment through placemaking. When discussing topics like food preferences and standards, i.e., the expectation of authenticity issues, participants like S11 admitted that they would lower their standards when eating with their friends (translated from Chinese): "[I] usually don't order food takeout and

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mostly cook by myself. I [feel worried] that the delivered takeout might be contaminated by virus… [I] only order takeout when eating with my friends." S11 then discussed that because she did not own a car, she primarily relied on her friends to travel, and thus she believed that maintaining social networks with her friends was extremely important. Another example was from participant S18, who mentioned in her interview that a large part of her knowledge about the distribution and composition of food sources in Eugene came from her friends' recommendations. Dunbar (2017) suggested that group eating, or social eating, is an important social activity that helps people, especially international sojourners like the target population, negotiate their sociocultural identities and mutually provide mental support constantly.

Moreover, this close interaction allows the international sojourners to stay in touch with culturally familiar food and people with the same cultural identity. This access would assist them in generating a sense of locality (Marte, 2011), relieving from culture shock and conflict (Brown et al., 2010; Corcoran, 2018), and constructing their support networks (Amos & Lordly, 2014). The importance of conducting social eating and maintaining a support network with fellow Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates is crucial for those who have relatively low mobility during the pandemic, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed some general patterns concerning Chinese international students, including recently graduated expatriates, represented by the research participants about their perceptions and strategies of adapting to life in Eugene regarding their food- and place-related everyday lives and placemaking. The participants actively took actions

to achieve the senses of locality and familiarity for a feeling of adaption in a foreign urban environment while being aware of their identity as international sojourners. Many research participants admitted that they would consider Eugene, or at least their residences in this city, as a kind of home to them. Factors that can influence their attempts to conduct placemaking and homemaking in Eugene were located. These factors include their past life experiences, the identity of being an international sojourner and the temporary of their stay in Eugene, their social networks, senses of stay in touch, locality, familiarity, and comfort attached to both the home country (China) and the host country (the United States), their knowledge about the local environment, as well as the access to resources in the local urban environment.

In general, this chapter found three overarching and overlapping factors regarding strategies and actions of placemaking taken by the target population: 1) the familiarity and knowledge about the local sociocultural and physical environment; 2) social connections and life experiences one had in both host country and home country; 3) access to resources that are necessary for one to conduct placemaking and attach certain senses of place during that process. Although most of the target population would choose to socialize with people of the same sociocultural origin for a sense of familiarity and staying in touch with home culture, culture shock caused by being exposed to a new cultural environment that resulted in estrangement seemed unavoidable. In the meantime, the food- and place-related everyday activities for placemaking offered Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates with ways to sustain social networks and a sense of locality and familiarity attached to places like their own residences of staying in touch with familiar cultural elements.

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None of the participants worried about being able to afford to purchase food that meets their basic needs. The research participants, and potentially the majority of the target population, have enough socioeconomic power to access necessary resources that shielded them from food shortages both before and during the pandemic. Such privilege and their awareness of the transnationalism aspect of their contemporary identity also granted them relatively high flexibility when attempting to adapt to a foreign food environment. However, access to authentic or preferred foods, ingredients, tastes, and food choices played a vital role in assisting the target population in conducting placemaking and adapting to life in a foreign urban environment in food- and place-related everyday life. Food-related social activities at specific places are also vital for Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates in generating a sense of locality, relieving from culture shock and conflicts, exchanging information, and constructing their support networks.

According to the collected data, access to means of transportation, like car ownership, significantly influences people's everyday mobility and thus their access to resources like desired food and tastes, which would influence their experiences and strategies of placemaking, especially during the pandemic. Moreover, physical interaction in close distance with people and surrounding environment seemed vital for developing a sense of staying in touch during placemaking, which cannot be fulfilled by online shopping, remote study/working, and even ordering food delivery services. It was also noted that living in the pandemic had influenced the participants over where and how they conduct placemaking while working/studying remotely. The next chapter will thoroughly focus on these latter issues.

CHAPTER IV

FOOD AND MOBILITY: PERCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND
STRATEGIES ABOUT LIFE IN PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic first started to significantly impact people's everyday life in the United States in January 2020 (CDC, 2020). In response to the quick spread of the pandemic indicated by the dramatically increasing number of confirmed cases located in the United States, the state government of Oregon had taken actions including required quarantine, prevention of social gathering, and restricted access or closure of public areas like schools (State of Oregon, 2020), and governments on a national scale took similar responses. According to the collected data, most Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates seemed to be relatively willing to accept the disruption of their senses of place and related hindrances in everyday lives during the pandemic. They considered such changes in their everyday lives as necessary compromises and inevitably caused by the collision of different types of activities previously assigned to various places/locations in one place with limited space. Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates were aware of the flexibility and socioeconomic power related to their identity (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Thus, they actively adapted to life in quarantine by introducing new senses of place into their residences in the foreign urban environment during the pandemic.

However, the pandemic brought significant influence over people's everyday mobility and activity space with required quarantine and social distancing (State of Oregon, 2020) that significantly restricted activity spaces and even mobility for some who do not own cars themselves. With a more limited everyday mobility and activity space, people's perception of and access to available food sources may be influenced (Chen & Kwan, 2015;

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Coveney & O'Dwyer, 2009; Shannon & Christian, 2016). While people from the target population typically have relatively stable economic power and social relations to help them to adapt to life in a foreign environment, such restriction over mobility and activity space seems unavoidable. Thus, the new restrictions over their access to specific resources like desired foods and tastes during the pandemic may influence their constant negotiation with the foreign living environment for adaptation, especially their food- and place-related everyday lives.

Based on this assumption, the set of research questions guiding this chapter are: First, to what extent did the pandemic (COVID-19) affect the target population's everyday lives in relation to food and place? Second, what strategies and compromises about food have they made during the pandemic for adaption while living in the foreign living environment of the United States? In order to answer these research questions, I designed a set of interview questions regarding research participants' food- and place-related everyday lives and their social relations. This chapter will focus on the specific role of everyday mobility and activity space and factors that could influence them based on the research participants' perceptions and strategies applied to life in a foreign urban environment like Eugene, Oregon.

This chapter will start with participants' general reactions to living in quarantine and studying/working remotely (i.e., place-related everyday lives) during the pandemic for answering the first question. The following subsections will be devoted to answering the second question about changes in the research participants' food-related everyday lives, including their eating and food shopping habits. Among these subsections, there will also be references to the subset questions about the importance of social networks for Chinese

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international students and newly graduated expatriates in adapting to life in a foreign urban environment with sudden changes in living environment, such as the pandemic of COVID-19.

General Reactions to Life in Quarantine

All participants acknowledged that the pandemic and following quarantine did impose minor and even disruptions in their everyday lives, especially concerning their mobility and activity spaces. However, they claimed it to be a minor inconvenience or opportunity to improve themselves rather than a significant problem. A few participants even claimed that they did not find their everyday lives in the pandemic changed much, though they later negated this statement. As the semi-structural interviews proceeded, many participants pointed out several changes in their everyday lives they considered inconvenient and troublesome, which contrasted with their earlier statements. Furthermore, some participants even noted that it is difficult to point out any specific influence imposed by the pandemic because they could feel the effects of the pandemic in every part of their everyday lives and thus could not pinpoint the exact influences.

In reaction to the pandemic, all participants acknowledged that they and their Chinese acquaintances in Eugene or other American cities had taken action. They mentioned following instructions for self-protection against COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic (late February to early March 2020). They persisted in doing so when they participated in the data collection sessions (late August to October 2020). The participants also mentioned that they followed orders and instructions from the state government of Oregon on quarantine and maintaining social distancing, with a significant reduction over the frequency of leaving their residences. However, their attention and

concern about self-protection might have been reduced to a less strict level, as they had spent a relatively long time living in quarantine caused by the pandemic of COVID-19. Participant S11 noted that (translated from Chinese):

> … And then I realized that I am fine with staying alone [at my residence] for so long time. But later I started to find it intolerable. So I started to go out strolling after living in quarantine for about three months.

In the follow-up interview, S11 noted that she had also started to participate in activities like dining with her friends again, with protections like social distancing and choosing outdoor dining when participating in this research project. Similarly, many other participants noted that they gradually reduced the amount of sanitizing works taken for protection against the pandemic of COVID-19 but kept wearing masks and maintaining social distancing while leaving their residences, as the latter two practices were considered more critical. It is thus interesting to note what participant S13 suggested in her interview. She pointed out that for those like her in the target population, including the research participants, who had experienced the pandemic of SARS in China in 2003-2004 as school-age children, their experiences during that time might have influenced their attitudes towards wearing masks and maintaining sanitization (e.g., frequently washing hands). In other words, this experience might have provided Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates with a unique perspective about what actions and places can be considered safe. Thus, they would be more experienced with changes in the surrounding environment and everyday lives related to the pandemic and actively adopt strategies for adaptation regarding the required quarantine and social distancing.

Nevertheless, living in a foreign country would bring in additional challenges and identity negotiations (Brown et al., 2010; Liu, 2015; Mustafa, 2019). The major problem

for the target population at present about adaptation lies in the spatial-temporal contexts different from those studied by scholars mentioned above. They are in the host country (i.e., the United States) that lacks experience of epidemic and pandemic and have a sociocultural environment that is mainly different from the one in the home country (i.e., China). As shown in previous subsections, the social tensions and observed phenomena within the United States regarding how to respond to the pandemic of COVID-19 contrasted with what the participants had learned about the governmental and social responses to the pandemic from news and their social connections in China. This contrast thus affected their perceptions of the potential risks related to places in Eugene.

During the interview sessions, the participants noted that the quarantine caused several negative impacts on people's everyday needs, especially about the inconvenience imposed by the pandemic over socialization and academic discussions within their social networks. The need to prevent social gatherings (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; State of Oregon, 2020) led to the cancellation of many in-person activities, including in-person classes and working on campus and social events like group dining or social eating. Some participants had reported the feeling of isolation developed during the quarantine and had lost touch with familiar people and the environment on campus/workplace (Bissell et al.,2020). Furthermore, this change could be a threat to maintaining one's social identity regarding the sustenance of their social networks formed based on the related social interactions and negotiations (Liu, 2015). For instance, S19 felt anxious in summer 2020 because of the sense of losing touch with her identity as a student at the University of Oregon caused by decreasing frequency of socialization through on-campus activities such as taking in-person classes with others. Although she reported worry

about close physical contact with other people during the pandemic, S19 still compromised her social needs by applying and taking the job and returned to work on campus in a dining hall to improve her physical and mental conditions. Like S19, the feeling of loss of touch and embodiment to familiar environment, place, people, or objects due to the quarantine had led to mixed outcomes for Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates, especially for those who had to study/work remotely.

Perceived Positive Influences and Self-Initiated Changes

The direct positive impacts reported by the participants concentrated on the more flexible everyday schedule with more manageable time with reduced need to commute when studying/working remotely from their residences. Several participants considered the changes in the living environment and everyday schedules as windows of new opportunities. They reported less time spent on the commute for activities like having classes on campus frequently and the flexibility provided by having (sometimes asynchronous) online courses. The extra manageable time allowed them to adjust their lifestyles and enhance their studying/working efficiencies and conduct homemaking to maintain a sense of locality, familiarity, and comfort at their residences. For instance, participant S5 was grateful about the switch to remote studying and working at her residence at the early stage of the pandemic. She could focus on writing her doctoral dissertation without being distracted by other duties like work in laboratories on campus. In the meantime, some participants also reported trying to enhance their lifestyles through things like taking a new diet, doing more indoor exercises, and even cooking more meals for themselves at their residences. In addition to these changes, participant S10 especially expressed his positive attitude towards life in quarantine (translated from Chinese):

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I think in long term, there should be some positive impacts from the pandemic, such as pushing the development of online study and work. There were attempts on this before, but this is the first time [so many people study/work online] for such a long period in large scale, and [I believe] the informationization of human society will be further improved after this pandemic [is over].

Like many other participants, S10 considered studying and working online as a time-saving alternative option for people during the pandemic because of the increase in manageable time for self-improvement and better performance at study/work. However, these changes in everyday lives had mixed impacts for participants during their lives in quarantine, especially after the early stage of the pandemic. Many participants mentioned frustration and struggles when communicating with people like their academic advisors, coworkers, and classmates through online methods like emails. The temporal mismatch on their schedules during the pandemic had reduced the efficiency of communication compared to in-person conversations before the pandemic, which increased the difficulty of remote studying/working for them. Moreover, declining activity space related to the required quarantine and restrictions of entry to public spaces like campus building, along with the flexible schedule, had gradually influenced their senses of places. Many participants reported confusion and frustrations due to the loss of touch with their lifestyles before the pandemic (Bissell et al., 2020). This change later reversed their experiences and related perceptions of the changes in their food- and place-related everyday.

Negative Changes in Food- and Place-related Everyday Life

Participants' perceptions and reactions to the shift to remote working/studying and life in quarantine are also related to their lifestyles before the pandemic. Participants S13, S15, and S18 all claimed that living in quarantine and remotely studying alone did not significantly influence their everyday lives because they preferred to and were used to

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staying indoors, especially at their residences in Eugene, before the pandemic. Thus, these participants claimed that they adapted to changes in their everyday lives regarding limited activity spaces and decreased mobility smoothly. However, they still encountered issues caused by restricted everyday activity space like other participants.

On the other hand, many participants admitted that their residences were mainly domestic places for leisure and relaxation before the pandemic. They found it easier to focus on study and work on campus in domestic environments like a library, office, or laboratory before the pandemic. Although all participants claimed to adjust to these changes in general, feelings of confusion and frustration brought by introducing activities previously assigned to other places into residences during the quarantine life were frequently mentioned during the interviews. Their experiences are similar to what scholars like Brown et al. (2010) would refer to as culture shock for international students who just arrived in the host country and faced a foreign cultural environment. Nevertheless, instead of moving to a new sociocultural environment, the research participants experienced dramatic changes in the foreign living environment they had adapted to before the pandemic. It is possible that the flexibility brought by the identity as an international sojourner (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015), along with assistances exchanged through their social networks and familiarity built on past interactions with the local environment, allowed people of the target population to adapt to the pandemic-induced changes in a way similar to how they adapted to life in a foreign urban environment as international students.

Among all changes, the impact of the restriction on mobility and activity space in consideration of social distancing and personal health security caused by the pandemic (State of Oregon, 2020) is most directly related to the participants' perceptions, experiences,

and reactions to the pandemic's impact on their food- and place-related everyday lives. According to Oregon's orders (2020), most non-essential activities were moved online as people, including students, had to stay at home for the quarantine. In response to the state order, educational institutions like the University of Oregon had moved most courses and other activities online since the Spring term (March) of 2020. The switch from in-person, on-campus courses to remote studying/working started in the Spring term of 2020, along with the required quarantine, had significantly influenced many research participants of their everyday lives as university students. During the interview sessions, participants reported mixed feelings about the various kinds of changes in their everyday lives during the pandemic. It was found that living in quarantine with limited mobility and everyday activity space had brought in feelings of confusion and frustration due to the need to introduce activities previously assigned to other places into one's residences during the life in quarantine. Participants S5 shared an example (translated from Chinese):

> The major problem is that my everyday life (schedule) became highly irregular. The time for sleep, wake up, exercise, work [...] everything is done at home, and I feel like aspects of my [leisure] life and work all blend in [at my home]. There's no sense of boundary, my work efficiency at home is low, and I tried to improve it but found it very difficult. It feels like I am lacking a daily routine, or a guiding structure.

S5 was not the only one who reported difficulty over maintaining studying/working conditions during the quarantine. Among the participants, only the newly graduated expatriates, participant E1 and E2, could travel between their residences and their workplaces on a regular frequency with justifiable reasons when participating in the research project. The rest of the participants, like S5, followed instructions on remote studying and working at their residences as university students during the pandemic. Thus, they had to conduct the majority of everyday activities in their residences.

Furthermore, the limitations over accessing on-campus studying and working environment and resulted decreasing communication efficiency with social networks that formed based on the university/workplace had led to a sense of losing touch with the sense of locality and familiarity attached to those places/environments (Bissell et al., 2020). The invasion of the sense of workplace into the residence, a place that some mostly attached with a sense of locality, familiarity, leisure, and comfort before the pandemic, caused by needs of remote studying and working had significantly disrupted people's senses of place, mostly if they had not assigned such meanings to their residences before the pandemic. Some participants noted that they felt lazy and unwilling to work or study in their residences, which was only for relaxing and leisure purposes before the pandemic. The close distance between the site for work/study and means of leisure in residence had made several participants feel challenging to concentrate on their work/study assignments while living in quarantine because of the multiple meanings attached to the same place compared to before the pandemic. For instance, participant S11 found it challenging to concentrate when studying online because it was easy for her to be distracted with increased access to other means of activities, including items for leisure purposes closer to her.

With an increased concentration of everyday activities for both work and leisure purposes, distances between spatial-temporal invisible boundaries were set between places with different meanings for individuals before the pandemic was compressed or even disappeared. Retrieved initially from the work of Schmauch and Nygren (2014), the term "invisible boundary" here is more closely related to mental boundaries in the spatial-temporal contexts in which people like the research participants conducted placemaking and attached certain senses and meanings to places. It covers boundaries set by a person to

different places assigned with different meanings and tasks at a specific time in their everyday life. Because of the identity of international sojourner from China, people like the research participants would have constructed boundaries in cities like Eugene based on their everyday schedules and activity spaces, which significantly changed due to the pandemic.

Moreover, the increased flexibility in the everyday schedule may have further weakened invisible boundaries on the temporal aspect. People like the research participants used to have daily travel routines that attached certain meanings to places at specific times (Shannon & Christian, 2016). Participant S14 specifically noted that:

> I don't obtain regular sleep because I was so busy even before the pandemic. And then… after we went into quarantine, my schedule is even worse. I remember I did not got bed… before, like even 6 or 7 am… straightly for a month or so... I don't feel good [both physically and mentally]. My schedule is still messy [because of the ongoing pandemic], but I kind of get used to those [abnormalities], but they are still not good for your health… I deeply know how sleep is important for us and how important a regular sleep schedule is, but I just don't do it because it's hard, difficult [when you] stay at home all day long…especially for my job… for research, it's mostly you just work on your own time, there's no [assigned working hours] … to maintain a schedule that is good for your health… Now I can do [my research works] at midnight [at home]. I definitely feel that working at home exhaust you more, even though the workload is relatively the same. [When] you [work] at home, it's like working… everyday, every minute, every second.

According to S14, the decline in the size of activity space that influenced the previously set boundaries, both physical and mental, might have led to a feeling of confusion and frustration due to the loss of touch with senses of certainty and safety (Bissell et al., 2020; Çankaya, 2020; Schmauch & Nygren, 2014). In other words, living in quarantine and remote studying/working increased the difficulty for people in the target population, like the research participants, to maintain their studying/working efficiency.

Meanwhile, it is also essential to notice how entry restrictions to specific buildings and facilities and limitations on one's activity space had explicitly affected those in need of specific environments and facilities for study/work purposes. When discussing the restriction on access to facilities on campus caused by social distancing and remote working/studying, participant S1 immediately started to talk about the inconvenience of unable to progress their studies/projects:

> Impact? Wow. Can't graduate ON TIME!! We turned into online for spring term, and we took 6 weeks to let our hardware working. Left me 3 weeks to do everything else. Don't do remote classes if your major need special hardware. [By the time of interview in early October, 2020] I don't even start my class yet.

Several other participants also struggled on developing and processing their degree-related research projects because of the restriction of social gatherings and the inaccessibility of on-campus facilities like studios and laboratories (State of Oregon. 2020). Meanwhile, it is worth noticing that the reopening of some campus facilities and places like restaurants in Eugene since the Fall term 2020 had helped some participants slightly extend their activity spaces while living in quarantine. However, their general activity spaces remained more reduced than before the pandemic. Some interview sessions and informal conversations between participants and me between September 2020 and January 2021 also reflected this change. While some of the campus buildings reopened with restrictions over using necessary facilities allowed students with needs like these participants to proceed their studies with reservations that required compromises with their coworkers/fellow students' needs and schedules, which was still relatively inconvenient. According to participants S1, S4 and S15, due to the restrictions over access time, sometimes they might have to visit the campus at night or during the weekend, which is usually not their preferred working hours

on campus before the pandemic, and thus could have further negatively impacted their working efficiencies.

In general, like most of the research participants, people of the target population might have suffered from changes in their everyday lives caused by the concentration of different senses of places and activities in one place during the pandemic. In order to adapt to changes in their living environment and everyday lives caused by the pandemic in consideration of their well-being, they would look for ways to reduce such negative feelings (Amos and Lordly, 2014; Brown et al., 2010; Corcoran, 2018; Mustafa, 2019). Based on the collected data, some participants actively searched for justifiable reasons and ways to leave their residences and go outdoors safely during the pandemic, including social eating with friends, food shopping, or traveling for food. During this process, it was noticed that one's everyday mobility and access to different methods of transportation played a crucial role in influencing their perceptions and strategies related to traveling during the pandemic for food.

Food-Related Changes and Adaptations During the Pandemic

According to the research participants, minor changes in food sources like supermarkets were noticed after the early stage of the pandemic. However, the closedown and cancellation or restrictions of the dine-in option of restaurants and other kinds of food sources seemed to have more significantly affected people of the target population of their perception of the local food environment and access to desired foods/tastes thus their food-related everyday lives. Although participants mentioned that delivery and pickup options provided some relief, the closedown of eateries like restaurants and the restriction of entry to other food resources like supermarkets due to the pandemic affected each person's food-

related everyday life differently. This difference is mainly about their dining habits and mobility formed before the pandemic. Those participants who preferred cooking and eating at their residences to dining out reported less negative or overall changes in their eating habits compared to the others who preferred dining out frequently or at most of the time compared to before the pandemic.

In addition, many of the participants had noticed that due to their concerns about sanitation and safety, they choose to cook at their residences and order food delivery services instead of indoor dining at eateries more frequently during the pandemic. Based on the collected data, the transition in senses of place due to the pandemic had not just influenced people of the target population of their perceptions of accessible food sources in the local food environment (Chen & Kwan, 2015). It also influenced their food choices and eating habits, considering their daily routines are changed mainly while living in quarantine (Mustafa et al., 2020; Shannon & Christian. 2016). However, while having relatively stable food access, the research participants reported that living in quarantine increased difficulty of doing physical exercises resulted in a significant drop in appetite due to the decreased need for energy and thus influenced their food choices during the pandemic. To address and solve the potential problems of this change in their eating habits, like mentioned in the previous subsection, some participants tried to adopt new diets for self-improvement regards to their physical health conditions during the early stage of living in quarantine.

Many participants mentioned the importance of keeping in shape/controlling weight through dieting and complaints about weight gaining after starting quarantine due to a lack of exercise (access to gyms) and disrupted eating habits during the quarantine.

However, the confusion and frustration brought by the decline in activity space and concentration of different senses of place (i.e., the place for work, leisure, social, and rest purposes) into their residences had affected many research participants of their food-related habits and willingness to maintain "healthy" eating habits by imposing changes in the original, relatively familiar food environment in Eugene before the pandemic. A frequently reported feeling of always studying/working or resting/having leisure time in the residence during the quarantine is directly related to this confusion. Two participants, S14 and S15, noted that they were aware of the importance of healthy eating habits, including a stable everyday eating schedule and balanced nutrition intake. Nevertheless, they both struggled to maintain relatively stable and healthy eating habits because of the general instability of their everyday schedules during the pandemic. Participant S14 specifically noted that:

> [The pandemic just made] my habits, eating behaviors worse… Now I even skip lunches… I only eat dinner [in most of the days]. And if I do have lunch, it's usually really late around like 3 to 4p.m. in the afternoon… almost around the time of dinner. And then we will have dinner maybe around 10 or 11p.m. at night. This is kind of like a behavior chain… I have to fix my [work] schedule in order to have a better eating habit, and if I want a better sleep schedule, I also have to fix my eating habit… they are kind of bi-directional things. [Now] because I am [stuck] at home, I don't think I am capable of changing anything right now… Now we are having more takeout [foods]… it depends on [how busy I am].

Her notion of incapable of changing anything, including her work schedule caused by the feeling of working all the time since starting to work online in quarantine during the pandemic, was not unique.

Several participants also reported a significant change in their eating schedules and food choices during the pandemic. Participant S19 reported finding herself starting to consume more instant foods and snacks as she lived in quarantine longer due to a decrease in cooking willingness. At the same time, she did not want to order food deliveries because

it was too expensive. As suggested in both cases, dietary changes since starting to live in quarantine could be connected to the influence of highly flexible everyday schedules caused by the weakening of temporal-spatial invisible boundaries and senses attached to different places. In other words, the temporal-spatial confusions and frustrations caused by the blending in of different senses and meanings of places attached to one's residence may disrupt their everyday life in a way similar to culture shock and thus impact their food-related everyday lives (Brown et al., 2010; Mustafa, 2019). Although some participants claimed that their everyday schedules mainly differed between academic terms and vacation terms, those changes were minor compared to the overall changes they noticed in their eating habits since living in quarantine. In the meantime, two more significant decisive factors: mobility and assistances from social networks, were located and highlighted in participants' responses, especially for those who were still university students during the time of participation.

The Importance of Mobility and Social Networks

All participants mentioned that they had purposely reduced the frequency and changed their food shopping strategies during the pandemic. As discussed in previous subsections, the changes in Chinese international students' and newly graduated expatriates' everyday activity spaces and daily travel routines due to the required quarantine had significantly influenced their eating habits about available food options in quarantine. The exchange of information and assistance through social networks was thus critical in assisting the research participants, and potentially others from the target population, in adapting to changes in living and food environment during the pandemic. While discussing strategies adopted for adapting to life in the pandemic, some participants

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admitted preparing for the pandemic by storing food. They started this after learning about the food shortages experienced by their families and acquaintances in China and news about the food shortage caused by the pandemic on different geographical scales from their social networks and online. For instance, participant S2 admitted that:

> At the beginning of the pandemic, I was worried about the food outage because [I learned about] it happened in some other states, but I did store enough to feel secure… I prepared for all kinds of possibilities, so I didn't feel challenged in getting food.

There was also an overarching discussion and appreciation of how assistance or support from social networks with fellow Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates and family members and other social networks in China, about not just food but also hygiene items like masks. Participant S13 mentioned receiving a large number of surgery masks from her mother in China during the early stage of living in quarantine with a shortage of hygiene items on the markets of Eugene.

In addition, when discussing any significant obstacle to food access during the pandemic, some participants mentioned minor problems they faced, such as shortage of desired foods or tastes due to the limited mobility and narrowed activity spaces. One participant, S11, noted that, at the early stage of living in quarantine, due to her low mobility caused by no car ownership and fear of outdoor, including public transportations, she faced significant problems about food access and storage (translated from Chinese):

> [Discussing storing food for the pandemic] … but vegetables and fruits cannot be stored up for a long time, so [I] had quite a headache about how and what to buy when purchasing fresh produce… [I] became anxious because I could not have fruits every day [as I am used to] … Then one of my friends risked [their] life to deliver vegetable and fruit for me from time to time by bags [by car] …

In this case, the restriction of activity space and everyday food-related travel routine for participant S11 caused by her decreased mobility had shaped her access to desired foods. This change is directly related to her changing perception of accessible food and thus determined her food-related everyday practices (Chen & Kwan, 2015; Coveney & O'Dwyer, 2009; Shannon & Christian, 2016). Although people like S11 might maintain a relatively stable economic power for purchasing desired foods during the pandemic, the fear of being infected by the virus during the pandemic had discouraged them from living their residences for food shopping, which might be the only safe area for them in quarantine.

The sense of uncertainty attached to public spaces like supermarkets where social gatherings typically appear might have also contributed to the shift in their food-related strategies (Çankaya, 2020). It was reflected in the collected data that the majority of the target population faced little to no challenge in going food shopping or dining with proper access to transportations methods, including public transportations. However, when public transportation methods like buses are unavailable or not desired in situations like during the pandemic of COVID-19, people and their households without private car ownership are disadvantaged as their mobility and activity spaces were more restricted than those who own cars (Coveney & O'Dwyer, 2009). As reflected in the collected data, Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates who do not own a car during the pandemic would have to rely more on their social networks, especially their friends that own and drive cars, for supports or assistance with activities like food shopping that requires vehicles for long travel distance and carry a large number of items at once.

Alternative options related to food delivery or takeout services, such as private delivery services provided by some restaurants and in-restaurant pickup services, were

considered acceptable by several research participants. However, the access to and utilization of these services is closely related to each participant's mobility and geographical location. In this case, food delivery services rely on the working efficiency and mobility on the side of providers (e.g., restaurants, delivers) that have relatively broad activity spaces. Meanwhile, food pickup services require customers to visit the food sources by themselves. Thus, customers' mobility and activity space are more critical in determining their access to specific food sources. Participant S12 mentioned that she and her roommate would only order takeout for pickup at restaurants within walkable distance from their apartment, as none of them own a car.

On the other hand, car owners like participant S15 and participant S14's household had more freedom and options to buy food and what to dine on, as their car ownerships enhanced their activity spaces and allowed them to travel further safely during the pandemic. Furthermore, participant S18 admitted that her food options significantly increased as her household now owns a car that allowed them to travel further to explore and access different food sources. Her example had shown that mobility played a crucial role in Chinese international students' and newly graduated expatriates' perceptions of the local food environment for available and accessible food options. Thus, the difference in mobility and activity space caused by car ownership and inaccessibility of public transportations during the pandemic had significantly affected Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates of their food-related travels and food options. This difference in food access and resulted food options then affected their strategies and experiences of trying to adapt to changes in their everyday lives in quarantine with various outcomes.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on the Chinese international students' and newly expatriates' perceptions, reactions, and strategies about adapting to changes in the local living and food environment during the pandemic by focusing on research participants' food place-related everyday lives centering Eugene, Oregon. The observation of cultural differences in relation to different cultural groups' reactions to the pandemic, as well as the avoidance of social gatherings, had strengthened particular meanings and invisible boundaries assigned by the target population to certain places regard to the perception of safety during the pandemic (Schmauch & Nygren, 2014). On the other hand, life in quarantine and remote studying/working had also influenced the establishment of invisible boundaries and placemaking within one's residence. While all participants suggested that they had actively worked to adapt to the new everyday life in quarantine, it seems like one's lifestyle and eating habits, as well as senses of place, developed before the pandemic would also influence their strategies and experiences of adaptation for life in quarantine.

People who used to attach multiple kinds of meanings and activities with their residences in Eugene reported less struggle to transfer to remote studying/working compared to those who had clearer distinctions, or spatial-temporal invisible boundaries, between places assigned with different meanings and tasks. However, many might have encountered the collision and confusion of senses of place in quarantine, and difficulties in maintaining efficient communication and socialization during the pandemic resulted in a decreased study/work efficiency and even senses of stress, anxiety, or isolation attached to the residences. Participants acknowledged that the pandemic had induced various kinds of changes in their everyday lives, such as the confusion and frustration caused by the

introduction of multiple meanings and senses of place into their residences for remote studying/working purposes. Furthermore, in general, the participants reported relatively negative experiences caused by having flexible everyday schedules combined with remote studying/working in the long run, including disrupted eating schedules, losing appetite, decreased efficiency, and more confusion of the colliding senses of place. A switch of the environment through either homemaking or temporarily leaving the residence with protections like masks was mentioned to be necessary by some participants to reduce anxiety and other negative feelings caused by living in quarantine. Some participants specifically reported the hindrance and inconvenience of studying/working remotely due to the restriction of access to public or on-campus facilities and the resulted adjustments in their progress of seeking academic outcomes and desired educational degrees.

The pandemic affected all aspects of everyday life, including food and place-related issues. Nevertheless, personal mobility and activity space were crucial for the research participants' resistance and strategies about adapting to life in quarantine. The pandemic-induced quarantine and related limitations on options of transportation methods had influenced the target population of their perceptions of the food environment and thus their food options. All research participants reported purposefully reducing the frequency of going out for food shopping and increasing the amount of purchase per time for self-protection and living in quarantine. The non-car-owners usually compromised more where and what to buy because of the declined access to transportation methods like public transportations and shared rides. Some participants who did not own a car had specifically reported their compromise over food choices because of the declining accessible food sources. Considering that the majority of Chinese international students and newly

graduated expatriates are studying abroad by themselves instead of with their families, the assistances and supports about mobility available within one's social networks is especially vital for non-car-owners during the pandemic for their food-related attempts to adapt to changes in their everyday lives.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I explored how food- and place-related activities could assist international sojourners like Chinese international students and newly graduated expatriates in adapting to a foreign urban environment. The pandemic of COVID-19 was also considered in this research because it dramatically changed how the society of the United States functions. What role does food play in Chinese international students', and sometimes newly graduated Chinese expatriates', experiences of placemaking and adapting to the new environment(s)/changes in the living environment(s) when they live in the United States, especially during the pandemic of COVID-19? To what extent did the pandemic (COVID-19) affect the target population's everyday lives in relation to food and place? What strategies and compromises about food have they made during the pandemic for adaption while living in the foreign living environment of the United States? In this final chapter, I will review the conclusions I made in the empirical sections in the last two chapters before discussing the possible implications and directions for future studies on food studies, international relationships, and urban and cultural geography.

Summary

In the third chapter, I discussed some general patterns shown by my research participants about their perceptions of and strategies for adapting to life in Eugene through food- and place-related everyday activities and placemaking. Based on the collected data, I noticed that both actions and inactions related to food- and place-related activities like placemaking are influenced by a diverse set of factors for purposes other than simply meeting one's basic needs before and during this pandemic. Reasons included the wish to

maintain a healthy body (sometimes with the desired body weight and shape), protecting oneself and one's close ones from the pandemic of COVID-19, retrieving preferred and familiar tastes, and relieving stress or depression caused by homesickness, remote study/work, and living in quarantine. All participants were aware of their shared identity as international sojourners while actively conducted placemaking for the senses of locality, familiarity, and comfort for a feeling of adaption in a foreign urban environment like Eugene. Some of them were willing to consider their residences in Eugene, or the city in a broader sense, as a kind of home to them.

Three overlapping factors in relation to the temporal-spatial contexts of the specific foreign urban environment that could influence the target population's perceptions, strategies, and experiences concerning placemaking were located: 1) the familiarity and knowledge about the local sociocultural and physical environment; 2) social connections and life experiences one had in both host country and home country; 3) access to resources that are necessary for one to conduct placemaking and attach certain senses of place during that process.

It is also vital to note that not every research participant would consider food essential for their everyday lives or only has special meanings for certain parts of their lives in a foreign urban environment, such as socialization. All participants acknowledged that access to preferred, authentic, or familiar foods and tastes was vital for them to develop a sense of locality and familiarity, feel relieved from culture shock and conflicts, and maintain social networks for information and support through food place-related activities. With relatively stable socioeconomic power and relatively lowered expectations, people of the target population seemed to be more flexible in adapting to the foreign food

environment in the United States and mainly had stable food access for their basic needs. Unlike suggested by researchers like Mustafa (2019), only one research participant showed a robust attempt in actively conducting acculturation in the time he spent in Eugene. Most participants reported choosing to socialize with people from the same cultural origin for the ease of less cultural identity negotiation needed and a sense of familiarity (Chakraborty, 2018; Liu, 2015). Moreover, even the participant who chose to conduct acculturation had shown rejection towards some parts of the local food environment and did not cut all his social networks with fellow Chinese international sojourners in the United States.

The fourth chapter focused on the changes in people's everyday lives of the target population caused by the pandemic of COVID-19 about their everyday mobility and activity spaces. Changes in their mobility and activity spaces affected their food- and place-related everyday lives, as well as the perceptions and strategies they had for adapting to those sudden changes in the foreign living environment. It was observed that the existing invisible boundaries related to cultural differences between the cultural groups of Chinese international sojourners and local American residents, in addition to changes in habits caused by the pandemic, had caused changes in meanings and invisible boundaries set by the participants in the living environment.

One's everyday living and eating habits developed while living in a foreign urban environment like Eugene before the pandemic could also affect their strategies and experiences regarding living in quarantine with sudden changes in the living environment. In contrast to those who had clear distinctions between places for work and leisure purposes, people who were already used to and preferred to assign multiple kinds of tasks to their residence had generally reported less difficulty adapting to live in quarantine. This contrast

was at least significant during the early stage of the pandemic. However, the collision and confusion of senses of place during the life in quarantine, along with difficulties in maintaining efficient communication and socialization during the pandemic, had caused all participants to feel frustrated and unwilling to continue remote studying/working and living in quarantine as time moved on. The restriction of mobility and decline of activity space related to required quarantine and access to places like restaurants had significantly affected their perceptions of available food options during the pandemic, especially for those who or whose households did not own a car. Car owners (or those whose households owned a car) had more enhanced mobility and larger activity space compared to those whose households did not own a car, which chiefly benefited their access to food located far from their residences for walkable distance during the time of required quarantine.

Researchers like Brown et al. (2010) and Amos and Lordly (2014) suggested that the transnational aspect of international sojourners', especially international students,' identity allowed them to be relatively flexible towards changes in their everyday lives caused by living abroad. Nonetheless, their case studies did not involve sudden changes brought by an issue like a pandemic. Changes in all aspects of one's everyday life caused by the pandemic, including food- and place-related activities, were experienced by many people, including the target population. However, their identity as international sojourners, or foreigners, and supports received from their social networks with fellow Chinese both in the United States and back at home in China that differed them from the rest of the population. The importance of having Chinese friends/neighbors with car ownership that were willing to share rides or help to transport items were especially emphasized by those whose households did not own a car.

Discussion and Implications

The recruited research participants might not fully represent the general population of international students and newly graduated expatriates from China who are studying and working in the United States during this pandemic. People of the target population are usually aware of their identity as international sojourners as transnationalism encouraged them to be relatively flexible and open to the new sociocultural environment in the host country (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). However, the findings of this research also brought up many doubts about the claim made by scholars like Amos and Lordly (2014) and Mustafa (2019) about acculturation as a fundamental strategy the international students will take for reducing culture shocks and adapt to a new lifestyle when living a foreign country. It might be case-specific, but many of the research participants, if not all, had expressed strong intention of leaving the city of Eugene and either move to a larger city or return to China for higher educations and future careers.

Living in required quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic might have reduced connections research participants had with places/areas outside their residence in Eugene. This quarantine might have even blurred the senses of place and invisible boundaries they might have related to the urban area of Eugene. Moreover, while conducting the interview, several participants who compared the city of Eugene with other larger American cities and their hometowns in China had complained about the "plainness" or "boringness" of the urban landscapes in Eugene comparing to the other more urbanized cities. Such experiences had shaped their expectations of the desired urban living environment, including the food environment, of the resided city. On the other hand, several other participants discussed their relatively low expectations for the living environment and

available food options regarding their understandings of what is necessary for a sense of home and how important food is to each of them. A few of my research participants even claimed that they did not need to conduct any placemaking to create a familiar domestic environment while living in Eugene. The diverse reasons they presented suggested that studies on acculturation and placemaking through food-related activities taken by international sojourners could focus on how different life experiences and sociocultural backgrounds may influence their perceptions, expectations, and strategies adopted for adaptation.

Although for students living in on-campus dorms, there might be less access to means of cooking, the research participants of this project are all Chinese international students or newly graduated expatriates who lived off-campus and have access to these resources in their residences. Although left undiscussed in this thesis, the locations of residences and access to means of cooking, and the perception of the United States as risky for living, could be reasons for most of the Chinese international students to choose to return to China during the pandemic or avoiding staying on campus since early 2020. Then, in addition to educational or career needs, one possible reason for the participants to stay is that they all have a relatively safe domestic environment to reside in during the pandemic. Their residences granted them the freedom to live in quarantine and minimize interactions with the outside world because their residences had enough necessary quarters for their everyday lives. In other words, the different reasons why some international sojourners chose to stay in the host country of the United States while others left during the pandemic might require further study and analysis.

In addition to the confusion and frustration of placemaking, some participants noted the increasing significance of privileges they owned as student (graduate) employees of the University of Oregon, which provided them with relatively stable income even during the pandemic, allowing them to purchase necessities like food. At the same time, there is an increasing unemployment rate in the United States in general. Many participants also mentioned the importance of aid provided by the Chinese government on different scales for the Chinese international students who remained in the United States during 2020. The sense of being supported by the home country seemed to bring some of them more confidence about living abroad during the pandemic. In contrast, some others noticed the contrast between the two countries and had changed their perceptions of the two countries regarding where is safer and better. The role of government in shaping international sojourners like the target population, thus, could be further explored.

Another topic that could be further explored would be how the pandemic of COVID-19 had strengthened the invisible boundaries and tensions between different social and racial/ethnic groups. News about social tension based on class and race/ethnicity was frequently found during the pandemic. Most of the participants are currently residing in cities like Eugene or larger cities with more urbanized areas. They reported that they did not experience uncomfortable experiences because of their race/ethnicity as Asian/Chinese in the cities they inhabited. Nonetheless, one participant had explicitly mentioned a feeling of being discriminated/distanced when she and her friends went to dine in a restaurant during a road trip because of their racial/ethnic identity. Eugene is a small city with a relatively small population. It is possible that because the University of Oregon, as a center of Eugene, focused on preventing related discriminations and conflicts, Chinese

international sojourners living in cities like Eugene are relatively safer than those who lived in urban areas where higher population density and more conflicts persist. More studies focused on how the pandemic of COVID-19 exacerbated existing or led to new social conflicts based on people's identities, especially for Chinese international sojourners, in the United States would help grow insights about the existing or potential social issues of the United States on both national and international scales.

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