Engagement Paper for the Documentary
“The Nation of Women”

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Jingyi Zhang, candidate for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media Production, has presented an Exhibition titled, *The Nation of Women* and a Support Paper titled *Engagement Paper for the Documentary “The Nation of Women”*, in an oral examination held on April 8, 2019. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

In traditional Chinese culture, the only legitimate heirs to a family are the male family members. Since I am the only daughter of my father, and he is the only son of my grandparents, our family symbolically ends with me. This reflects thousands of years of patriarchal Confucian gender prejudice and oppression of women. By a fortuitous opportunity, in the summer of 2007, Dr. Wang Lin asked me to help with her research on a Chinese matriarchal society – the Mosuo community. I was impressed by their unique culture, tradition and social structure, and decided one day to make a documentary about them. The chance to make such a film came up when I began my studies in the MFA program at the Department of Film, University of Regina. At the centre of my film, *The Nation of Women* - and of the critical engagement paper – is this unique matriarchal culture, its historical resilience, its ongoing gradual erosion prompted by globalization, and its attempts to adapt and survive its consequences.

This critical engagement paper first reviews the culture and history of the Mosuo community and its major differences with the Chinese mainstream society then goes on to examine some of the issues I faced as a documentary filmmaker during the shooting of *The Nation of Women* and the solutions and answers I came up with and concludes with a discussion of major theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of globalization and its impact on the Mosuo community.
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Introduction

“The baby is not a boy”! This phrase stroke great fear in my family when I was born. In traditional Chinese culture, only the male child could be the legitimate heir of the family. My father was the only son of my grandparents, which meant that despite his two sisters, he was the only legitimate heir of his family. In 1980, China implemented a very controversial birth control policy – the “One Child Policy”, which allowed each couple to have only one child. According to this policy, since I was the only child my parents were allowed to have, there was no longer any hope for a traditionally legitimate heir of my family. This fact stirred the pot in my extended family, and my senior relatives took turns phoning and trying to persuade my parents to adopt me out to my aunts in order to gain another chance for a son. After a few years, they finally gave up. Now, when we look at the family genealogy, a line is drawn underneath my father’s name instead of mine, marking the symbolic end of the family.

In fact, in all Chinese families, the inheritance is passed through and organized around the male lineage. Thus, even though I was very much offended by the fact that my extended family had never recognized me as its legitimate member because of my gender, I did understand that was something neither they nor I could change. It was what it was.

In the third year of my undergraduate studies, Dr. Wang Lin, a research fellow in Sichuan Social Sciences Academy, who had published a book in 20041 on the Mosuo, a still thriving matriarchal community in China, offered me a position helping her with her ongoing research.

The Mosuo people live around the Lugu Lake, which is located at the junction of

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1 The title can be translated as The Matriarchal Family - A Collection of Interviews from Lugu Lake, https://baike.baidu.com/item/母系家族/10181919
Sichuan and Yunnan Province in Southwestern China. This community is famous for its unique matriarchal social conventions and practices, which endow women equal rights in all social aspects such as family issues, social affairs, and even in relationships. Also, their lineages are inherited through their female rather than male family members. The Mosuo are referred to as “女儿国” in Chinese mass media, which literally means “Nation of Women”.

During my first visit to the Mosuo community in 2007, I realized how different the Mosuo women were from women in other societies. Confident and proactive participants in social production, they were hotel managers and ran tourist centers as well as stores and restaurants along the main streets. Upon entering a Mosuo family’s home, the host would always be the female elder. It became clear to me that Mosuo women enjoyed more rights and social space in their community than their counterparts in the rest of China.

I still remember the excitement I felt at the discovery that Mosuo families are organized through their female lineage, and at the realization that if I were born in this community, my name would have appeared in the genealogy tree instead of that line underneath my father’s name, marking the end of my family tree. However, what I knew about this community was very limited at that time, and I needed a chance to explore it more in order to see whether this society was a better option for females instead of the current patriarchal one. Thus, when I was asked to present an idea for my MFA final thesis, I immediately jumped at the chance to make a documentary of the Mosuo community.

However, when I returned to that community in 2015, I was surprised by the drastic changes that had taken place during the eight years that had elapsed. This situation made me

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2 A famous Mosuo singer wrote an autobiography, titled “走出女儿国”, which means “Leaving the Nation of Women”, thus popularizing the Mosuo community under this name.
3 Throughout this paper, the mainstream society, or mass media are being referred to as Chinese society and Chinese media.
wonder whether the current Mosuo community was still a haven of gender equality, and if not, what factors had contributed to its swift change. Thus, I started to rethink the main subject of my documentary and decided to immerse it in the discussion on how modernity and the mainstream affect the life of a minority community and its culture.

As a main anthropological source for my research I have used “A Society without Fathers or Husbands: The Na of China” by Cai Hua, a Chinese professor in anthropology. This is the very first ethnographic study of the Mosuo community to be published in the West – first in French in 1998 under the title Une société sans père ni mari. Les Na de Chine, and then in English, in 2001. According to renowned anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, “thanks [to the author], the Na now have their place in the anthropological literature” (Walsh 1043). The book details the social, historic, cultural, anthropological and political aspects of the Mosuo community, and has remained the most influential study on the subject to this day, although the accuracy of some of its data has been questioned since (Dr. Wang, Lin. Interview. March 10th, 2015).

To better engage and support the discussion in my thesis film, this paper is divided into five parts: introduction, three chapters, conclusion and coda. Chapter One introduces the background information about the Mosuo community, their culture and history, and also explains why it is so different from the Chinese mainstream society. Chapter Two discusses my attempts – as a beginner filmmaker – to blend within the community, the issues I faced and the solutions I found while filming the documentary, as well as the kind of clash of wills I have had with my subjects. Chapter Three unfolds the analysis of the phenomenon of

4 Na is the alternative way of calling Mosuo.
globalization and its relevant theories as well as its impacts on the Mosuo community.

Finally, while the conclusion wraps up my argument, the coda leads back to my emotional personal engagement with the material at hand.

Chapter 1: Patriarchal versus Matriarchal

The reason why the Mosuo community is the focus of so much attention from the Chinese mainstream society is because the Mosuo life is based on an opposite value system. Ancient Chinese society was based on Confucianism for a long period since “Confucianism, including classical and Han Confucianism, provided a view of cosmos and social order that legitimated the Chinese patrilineal, patrilocal, and patriarchal family system [where] men and older generations had considerable power over women” (Ebrey 11-12).

1.1 From Old China to New

In the kinship of traditional China, the main focus of a woman’s life was her husband as well as her reproductive duty to extend her husband’s family. For example, there is a Chinese idiom postulating that the ideal woman should only focus on “相夫教子”, which means taking care of her husband and educating the children, without however having the right to make decisions affecting the lives of her family, because another requirement – “在家从父, 出嫁从夫, 夫死从子” - states that females have to be obedient and know their places. The three obedience cover the different stages in woman’s life: spinsterhood, marriage, and widowhood, during which a Chinese woman must follow, respectively, the will of her father, her husband and her son.

5 Could be translated as: “a woman should be obedient to her father when she is unmarried, obey to her husband after she gets married, and submit to her son after her husband’s death.”
In addition, traditional Chinese values not only encourage and recommend women to stay at home, they also discourage them from joining any sort of social or commercial activity. This point was advocated by several famous ideologues. In the classical Confucianist book *Record of Rituals*, for example, the chapter “Domestic Regulation” stipulates that “men should not discuss the affairs of the inner sphere nor women discuss the affairs of outer sphere” (Ebrey 24).

After the Chinese Communist Party came into power in 1949, Chinese women were highly encouraged to join all fields of social activities. In his seminal book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Friedrich Engels, one of the founding fathers of scientific communism, writes that “the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry” (232). Namely, only if women participate in social production, create social or commercial values, would their liberation be achieved. In order to encourage women to join the job market, Chairman Mao is credited with formulating the famous slogan that “women hold up half the sky”, which inspired millions of Chinese women to leave the family sphere and join social and commercial activities.

According to the white paper of 2015, “*Gender Equality and Women's Development in China*”, up to 45% of the jobs in Chinese labor market go to women (Chinese State Council Information Office). However, Chinese women are still excluded from decision making. For example, in the report of McKinsey & Company - “*Women Matter: an Asian Perspective*”, in

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6 *Record of Rituals*: in Chinese is 《礼记》, is a collection of texts describing the social forms, administration, and ceremonial rites of the Zhou dynasty as they were understood in the Warring States and the early Han periods. (Wikipedia)

7 This white paper was published by The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China in September, 2015. The statistics in this paper reflect the most recent situation of the female labor in China.
China only 6% members of boards of directors are female, while this ratio reaches 35% in Norway, 20% in France, and 15% in America (2). This report also points out that the major reason Asian women resist taking higher positions, is because work pressure conflicts with family responsibilities, and around 30% of the female executives eventually resign their positions because it is the female that is expected to take care of the family (5). This proves that even after decades of encouraging female participation in social production, traditional values remain deeply rooted in Chinese society and ideologies, and women still remain far from the center of power.

On this generally outlined background, it is therefore very intriguing to examine how the social image of the Mosuo community is being shaped by the media.

1.2 The Women’s Nation

Unlike patriarchal societies, Mosuo women share equal rights with men in both family and social matters. Their family structure is also quite distinctive from that of the patriarchal family; the Mosuo matriarchal families are organized around the female family member, such as grandmother, mother, maternal aunt, uncle and daughter, with the elder female family members holding unchallenged power in the family. There is not a concept of husband, nor are there expectations of rights or duties for/by fathers; this is a community without paternal authority or relatives. On the backdrop of the ubiquitous Chinese patriarchy, the Mosuo community stands out as an ideological and social “heresy”.

The primary difference between the Mosuo and the mainstream patriarchal Chinese

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8 Compared to the women in India, Japan, and Korea, Chinese women are under relatively less stress to abide by these patriarchal expectations.
9 Heresy literally refers to beliefs and thoughts that are unorthodox, or even opposite to the mainstream values. Thus the Mosuo’s gender equality and matriarchal family structure are at variance not only with the established Confucius patriarchy values, but also with those endorsed by communist gender equality.
society rests in how women enjoy equal or even greater rights, both within their families and in society at large. Heide Göttner-Abendroth, a pioneer researcher of modern matriarchal studies, claims that “matriarchies are true gender-egalitarian societies,” and that this “applies to the social contribution of both sexes.” She goes on to say that “even though women are at the center, this principle governs the social functioning and freedom of both sexes” (2009 xv). Moreover, the Mosuo matriarchal structure does not subordinate the male gender to the female one. While it does give women more power than other mainstream societies, this is not at the expense of the status and rights of men.

The heads of a Mosuo family are called “Dabu” and normally there is a female Dabu and a male Dabu. The female Dabu makes decisions about all family affairs, such as income distribution, labor allocation, hosting sacrificial rituals, as well as sustaining the relationships with other families. Also, the female Dabu represents the whole family in social or economic affairs in local communities. According to Cai, prior to 1956, the female Dabu offered gifts to the Zhifu on behalf of the whole family on New Year’s Day (123).

On the other hand, the male Dabu is “in charge of dealing with the outside world: the land, the livestock, and helping other villagers on a temporary or annual basis when they are in need” (Cai 123). The Mosuo community is surrounded by mountains, and as recently as just a decade ago, there were no roads leading to it, so its trade depended on horse caravans. Thus, most of its male members travelled with the caravan to trade their local produce, bringing back money and vital products such as salts and tea (Ms. La, Interview, April 15th, 2015). Since this was the major cash income for the Mosuo families, the contribution of the

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10 Zhifu is the local governor, appointed by the Chinese central government.
male members used to be indispensable for the survival of the family, and therefore they were respected.

The whole social environment of the Mosuo community has been, and remains, very tolerant to women who would like to work and there isn’t a fixed boundary between the duties of male and female Dabu compared to women of Han ethnicity\textsuperscript{11}. For example, if a family lacks a male member, the female Dabu could join the caravan to do business with other communities and bring back cash income to the family (Dr. Wang, Lin. Interview, March 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2015).

Mosuo women enjoy real freedom in choosing their partners and are not expected to remain virgins until married. The most popular marriage tradition is called Zouhun (走婚)\textsuperscript{12}, which can be translated as “Walking marriage”. Here is how Dr. Cai describes the Zouhun:

\begin{quote}
Usually, the romantic rendezvous is carried out with the man visiting the bedroom of the woman around midnight. He comes and goes in such a way that the female members of his linge (family), and the male members of the women’s linge (family) perceive nothing. He leaves the woman’s house at the first crow of the rooster and returns home (Cai 186).
\end{quote}

Normally, Mosuo couples do not live together, and do not share any family responsibilities, or any economic bond. The children born to this union belong to the matrilineal family, and it is the mothers, maternal uncles, aunts and granduncles and grandmothers\textsuperscript{13} who raise those children, while the father is expected to support his own sisters and their children. One of my subjects, Ms. La, explains in the film that Mosuo women choose their partners based on pure

\textsuperscript{11} China has 56 ethnic groups, with Han is the largest one, constituting more than 90% of Chinese population.

\textsuperscript{12} There are other types of Mosuo marriage traditions. If, for instance, a family consists only of menfolk, then one of them has to get married so that his wife would become the female Dabu.

\textsuperscript{13} The Mosuo children call ‘mothers’ their biological mother and her sisters.
love, with the absence of responsibilities or financial interest involved in their relationships. Since considerations of material, social and class standing do not play an important role, the families on both sides show little interest in the choice of partners and rarely get involved in match-making.

Zouhun is only one of the several marital traditions practiced by this community, and it comes with specific procedures, required for its legalization. According to the Mosuo’s moral code, loyalty between partners is an essential provision and Zouhun relationships could last as long as any monogamous ones. Regardless of this fact, the matriarchal community has invariably been depicted in mass media as a “remote paradise” of sexual freedom, where women are open to casual sexual encounters.

Thus, modernity has posed an unprecedented challenge to the extraordinary rights traditionally enjoyed by Mosuo women (in comparison to the minimal rights of women in mainstream Chinese society), which are distorted and sensationalized by the voice of mainstream media. As a result, the younger Mosuo generation tends to dismiss and devalue their own culture and turn to other ideologies to follow.

Furthermore, with the rapid development of contemporary society, technologies, and infrastructure, both the living and social conditions of the Mosuo people have changed dramatically. The development of the infrastructure, for example, has facilitated the evolution of the tourist industry, and has also made redundant the caravan traveling of Mosuo males, forcing them to look for paid jobs elsewhere. Many of them go to big metropolises to find work. Moreover, the continuous contact with modern social ideologies has additionally shaken the Mosuo traditions, influencing their self-awareness and identity. Therefore a
number of Mosuo men now tend to choose monogamy instead of their traditional Zouhun relationships thus making it very difficult for their sisters to settle for traditional relationships, since they would be unable to get the much needed help from their married brothers, which their mothers got from their uncles. This situation makes life very hard for the Mosuo women which, no matter how disheartening, seems to be occurring more frequently.

Chapter 2: Manipulation? Performance? Collaboration!

Before shooting my documentary, I had to consider several questions about my approach to the Mosuo people - how to select my subjects, what language I should use to communicate with them, and how I would persuade them to become my subjects. To be honest, before I went there I doubted whether I would be able to find even one subject!

2.1 Blend Within the Mosuo

As mentioned above, my first trip to the Mosuo was in 2007, in the capacity of an assistant for Dr. Wang Lin, who planned to write her second book about this community. Based on my experiences from that time, I knew that the Mosuo people, especially the elder generation, spoke their own language rather than Mandarin Chinese, which made it very hard for us to communicate with them. We had to hire an interpreter to help us talk to the elders – that is, to local religious leaders and heads of families.

In any case, the language problem was the easier one to solve, as the real problem was communication – that is, authentic thought exchange and real interaction between me as a filmmaker and them as subjects. The actual barrier was the differences between my culture and their culture, as well as the traditional distrust that goes along with it. As mentioned above, most Chinese media depicts this community as a remote paradise, populated by
beautiful women who are open to casual sexual encounters. It is a small wonder that this continuous exotic stereotyping and superficial depictions of the Mosuo people has fueled the local people’s distrust of media and outsiders.

My observations and discussions had to start with the marital traditions since they represent an intrinsic part of the matriarchal social system and therefore – in order to represent that system comprehensively – the marital relationships have to be taken into consideration. The local people are very sensitive to talking about their culture and traditions with people from the outside of their community, because they know that their culture and tradition are likely to be judged according to the mainstream patriarchal standards, which has traditionally led to a lack of cultural or ideological trust between the Mosuo and representatives of that mainstream patriarchal society.

At the very beginning of my visit to their community, I was treated, as all other tourists, with caution and as a respected guest, but an outsider nonetheless, who was entitled to separate meals in their “Zumu Room” 14 – while other family members ate their meals at a small table in the kitchen. This made my task of recording the daily lives of the Mosuo community even more difficult, and threatened to defeat the purpose of my request to be placed in an extended Mosuo family. I felt that even if I kept following them with my camera all the time, but remained excluded from their lives, the result would be merely videotaping a performance they would stage for my camera. Furthermore, the presence of the camera itself was a big issue, impacting my documentary process.

My subjects were several Mosuo people from Gesa Village, all local residents. Their occupations covered such various fields as housewives, Lamas, a local religious master, a

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14 In Mosuo culture, this is the room where grandmothers and young children live, and where their ancestors and gods are worshiped. Nowadays, this room are usually used to gather and host important guests!
tour guide, and farmers; with no one having experience in facing the camera. Luckily, neither were they intimidated by the camera, nor was I rejected or stonewalled by the subjects during the shooting. The Mosuo people were very cooperative, but, at the same time, they were also trying hard to “perform well” in front of the camera. For example, during the filming, all of my female participants asked me how they looked on camera, and once the interview was over, people anxiously asked me to play the material for them.

Therefore, the first challenge I was faced with was to make people relax and act normally. Since, as mentioned above, my subjects were ordinary locals, their awareness of the camera made it hard for them to behave naturally, as if my camera was like an instrument of panoptical surveillance for them, and even when I was shooting elsewhere or not shooting at all, they were still having misgivings about whether they were being filmed or not, and could not help turning back to check where I – and the camera – were.

My Mosuo community subjects were not one hundred percent comfortable being filmed at the beginning, yet I do think this was not caused by their unwillingness to face the camera but rather by their insecurity. Thus, in the first few days, I did not really film anything valuable, I just had the camera running to reduce the strangeness of its presence, and help my subjects get used to being filmed. This strategy, used notably by the Canadian direct cinema filmmaker Allan King for his film *A Married Couple* (1969), worked very well. After I carried the camera with me everywhere for several days, the villagers stopped paying much attention to it.

However, once people stopped being self-conscious, there was another challenge in store: getting them to share their true thoughts and ideas. When I worked as a newspaper
journalist, I came to realize that in order to make your subjects talk to you honestly, it is vital to establish a mutual trust, which was far from easy. As a “forced” family guest, I received more than enough respect, but not enough trust, therefore I gradually became an active participant in their daily lives, helping them cook meals, doing field work along with them, and even visiting their friends with them. During this process, I succeeded in eliminating their discomfort with me, and we got to know each other better. More importantly, in our casual daily conversations, I intentionally included topics related to my research questions so that before I taped the actual interview, I still had the chance to modify my questions accordingly, and could avoid overly sensitive issues.

2.2 Cultural Authenticity

During the entire filming process, my attitude was always that of an observer rather than a participant, a recorder rather than a director. Documentary as a film genre has always been plagued by the controversy about whether the filmmaker should be guiding his or her subjects or not, and to what extent the filmmaker could intervene in the reality he or she is filming. For example, Robert Flaherty, the director of the legendary ethnographic film Nanook of the North (1922), shows how Nanook, an Inuit hunter and his family, struggle to survive in the hostile environment of the Canadian North. This film has been greatly successful commercially as well as with critics and academics, but has also been criticized for using performers to re-enact Inuit life. Thus, for example, the clothing style and hunting equipment, shown in the film, had been allegedly abandoned for decades by Inuit people at the time of the shooting of the film. Therefore, the film was accused in constructing “a way of life already erased by the onset of industrialized society and technologies” (Rabiger 21). Because
of the director’s manipulation and intervention, the cultural authenticity of *Nanook* has been questioned ever since it was made.

What is cultural authenticity, then? According to American anthropologist Clifford Geertz: “culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns – customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters – as has, by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call ‘programs’) – for the governing of behavior” (Outhwaite, Turner 60). That is to say, culture is like a web woven by different systems of making meaning, all of which play important roles in influencing people’s perceptions of the world\(^\text{15}\).

In addition to leading people to act in certain ways, a documentary filmmaker may ask for reenactment or manipulate scenes to better accommodate the film making process. Does this reenactment affect the authenticity of the event? I filmed many daily life activities of the Mosuo people for my documentary. However, some of these activities would only have happened in winter (and my visit was in spring) when I would have not been able to film them. Therefore, I had to arrange some of these activities to happen while I was there rather than waiting for the appropriate season. This trend of manipulating events has largely originated from famous French ethnographer Jean Rouch, who believed a director should be authorized to “initiate characteristic events and to probe for [what Rouch calls] privileged moments rather than passively await them” (Rabiger 29). That is to say, as some events have been happening in the subject community on a regular basis, rather than waiting for them to happen again in their right time and place, the ethnographic filmmaker could arrange for

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\(^{15}\) The authentic culture of the Inuit people circa 1920 could not be condensed into a clear, one-line statement. Yet since Flaherty’s film portrays the struggle of Inuit people against the rigors of natural environment as their main struggle for survival at the time, the core of the plot, which reflects this struggle, remains real, regardless of whether the film was manipulated, for its actors and actresses “identified completely with the roles they were asked to play” (Russell 109).
them to happen. From my point of view, this manipulation does not affect the authenticity of the culture represented, and therefore I do not see reenactment as manipulation; I think of it rather as a collaboration between subjects and filmmaker, an authentic restoration of reality.16

For example, I asked my host family to make the traditional drink - Buttered Tea - for me, so that I could film how they prepare the tea with their unique equipment. While I was in the community, it was almost summer and the Buttered Tea is a regular drink for the winter, because the butter could help people to resist the cold in the winter. Regardless, I asked my host family to reenact the following scene out of season in which a female tourist – who was to be performed by my production assistant - came to their home, and they prepared Buttered Tea for her as a welcoming act, by which I also meant to show the hospitality of the local Mosuo people. When I shared my idea with the family members, they refused politely, and their argument was simple: this tea is a drink for winter. I tried to persuade them; but they still insisted that making Buttered Tea was something they would only do in winter. In order to maintain the harmonious relationship between me and my host family, I did not push them any further. There were several other “conflicts” beside this reenactment. Sometimes I could persuade them, or we could find a mutual ground for compromise, but most of the times, I would respect their will. Thus, during the filming, my subjects had the decisive say in deciding if or how they would do things. I was the director and producer, but I had no power to compel my subjects to do anything they did not want to.

In my view, my subjects and I could be considered as partners in filming. In other words, I know how to operate the camera and how to record the sound, and how to plan my

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16 There is a tradition of reenactments in the history of documentary film, including WWII newsreels, where it became standard practice to reenact the liberation of one French town after another, after the fact.
shooting according to my research. It is however up to my subjects to provide me with suggestions according to their knowledge and experiences, to introduce me to the community, as well as correct my misunderstandings. My subjects and myself had almost equal rights in the decision making process during the shooting\textsuperscript{17}, and their contribution to the film was indispensable.

On the other hand, there is no way to be absolutely objective in filming any subject; manipulation and point of view is impossible to avoid. Documentary film is not just a record of its subjects, it is, as Canadian documentary filmmaker John Grierson states, a “creative treatment of actuality” as well as “an organized story” (Rabiger 5). Indeed, the ethnographer in the field witnesses what is happening in three dimensions, but the events could only be presented in two dimensions on screen. Thus, rather than the original events, audiences see details, organized by an inherent logic, dynamic and emphases (Rabiger 9). When Geertz talks about “thick” description, he defines the ethnographer both as descriptor and interpreter at same time, while writing the ethnography (Outhwaite, Turner 60). Since writing, filming and film editing are all results of decision making, the description and interpretation of the subjects’ culture and social system is filtered through the ethnographers’ background.

One example of documentary filmmaking that challenges the idea of objectivity was \textit{I TRYPPS#6 (MALOBI)} (2009) where director Ben Russell uses 16 mm film to track his subjects for 11 minutes and 33 seconds (the length of the film reel). There is no editing, and the film ends up with the end of the film reel. Could this way of filming be considered objective as the director had no influence over the time-based aspect of the film? Yet on the

\textsuperscript{17} However, after filming, I edited it independently, this is the stage I can have 100% percent control of the film. I will show my subjects the final version in a DVD, but I will not ask their opinion in editing.
other hand, he did have a decisive control over operations such as when to turn the camera on and off, what angle to shoot from, or how to frame the scene, which were all the result of decision making processes. Thus, since ethnographers could not avoid manipulating the interpretation, the way they present the subjects is influenced by their own understanding of the subjects, and this understanding could vary widely in details.

I would argue that rather than insist on non-manipulated authenticity of what documentary theorist Bill Nichols calls “historical reality, since it encompasses what can be proved and defended in court” (Rabiger 14), documentaries should be judged by whether they reflect the main struggles or issues of the subject groups. The way a filmmaker chooses to narrate or film by using reenactment and slight manipulation, should be met with more tolerance rather than with criticism on the grounds of authenticity and objectivity.

Chapter 3: Modernity versus Tradition

The gender equality in Mosuo community has been shaken by its assimilation into modern society, where old traditions are being replaced by the so-called “universal values”, such as monogamy, or father-son bonds. However, what is happening to the Mosuo community is not unique; it represents a common challenge that all indigenous groups worldwide face: transformation of their original ideologies, nurtured by the processes of modernization, prompted by advanced western technologies and skills, exported to developing and underdeveloped countries and regions.

Globally speaking, this process has been drastically accelerated after World War Two; and is continuously enhanced by the rapid development of modern science and technology,
and the increasingly free and rapid movement of people, finances, goods and services, as well as of ideas and ideologies amongst countries all over the world. This process, which has quickly shortened the distance between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’, has become known as globalization.

3.1 What is Globalization?

Manfred B. Steger defines globalization as “the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world space” (15). David Held and Anthony McGrew believe globalization makes the world become “fast a shared social and economic space” (2). Moreover, Marshall McLuhan’s prediction that the world would “become a ‘global village’ is now coming to pass as a result of globalization” (Schaeffer 11).

In these quotes, globalization comes through as a progressive form of integration of societies in both physical and ideological aspects, regardless of their significant distances from one another geographically, historically, and culturally. The physical aspects could be defined as markers of visible integration, such as fashion and entertainment styles, architecture, eating habits, forms of transportation; in other words, changes that could actually be witnessed and felt by us. For example, the Mosuo community has its own traditional cuisine and costumes, which have evolved through the thousand years of Chinese history independently. However, the small Mosuo town where I was filming has changed radically during the years between my two visits. There are now clothing shops selling popular brands, and western style restaurants selling pizza and hamburgers. Seemingly overnight, the Mosuo people have begun to dress no differently than people in other cities and towns in China or the rest of the world. What is more, these clothing and eating outlets
are not open to attract tourists, but rather to cater to the young generation of locals, with whom they are very popular. Thus, not only the Chinese people in metropolises, but also those in the rural regions now dress and eat in a way similar to their peers in any other place of the world. Traditional costumes and foods are gradually being abandoned due to outside influences.

The level of westernization, while familiar, was nonetheless surprising due to the level reached by such a small community, which I compare with the swift modernization I experienced firsthand while growing up in a big city. When I was in elementary school, it was fashionable for us to hold our birthday parties at a KFC, while for young people 10 years or so older than me, it was fashionable to go on dates to a KFC. Later on, this trend got even more obvious and while I was in High school, the Nike shoes and Levi’s jeans were the “basic equipment” of a popular kid, and Pizza Hut and Starbucks became the new popular hubs for the young generation, replacing the fast food chain restaurants. My parents were very unhappy about these changes, and tried their best to prevent me from following the fashion as they believed this kind of westernization was bound to have a very negative impact on our own culture and identities.

Thus, in my documentary, I specifically asked Ms. La when she started to dress and eat like the people from the outside world. She told me this trend started around two decades ago, and that the new clothing styles were more comfortable and convenient for daily life, while the food resources seemed not to be as limited as before.

Along with Ms. La, I also added a few other young Mosuo to my social networking accounts. On the basis of their posts from the past years, I can safely conclude that their
interests are no different than those of any other young Chinese. There is for example a very impressive post from Ms. La’s elder son, who posted a video of himself playing guitar and singing a so-called Mosuo Folk Song\textsuperscript{18} in a bar. The lyrics praise the beautiful Mosuo girls and its melody contains some local music characteristics, but otherwise it is a typical Chinese pop song. The boy obviously enjoyed singing and playing guitar in a bar, which seemed to be very cool for him and his friends.

Unlike my parents’ reaction in my youth, Ms. La seemed to have no issues about the “new trends” at all. On the contrary, she enjoyed these changes and fully encouraged her sons to learn more about the “new” things. To help her children’s communication with the outside world, she installed cable TV and WIFI in her house and purchased cell phones for them.

On the other hand, Mosuo people, even those from the young generation, still take strong pride in their cultural roots. As discussed above, the ideology of the Mosuo is, of course, socially, culturally and historically constructed; and has changed with time to reflect social development. However, the ideology of young Mosuo is also family constructed. As their senior family members still follow their traditions, the younger generations are shaped by their families. The influence of their elder family members is impossible to ignore. In the film, I have included a scene of the annual ancestor worship, held by my host’s neighbors, with all of their young children participating in the ceremony. Also, I interviewed the local Daba\textsuperscript{19}, who was one of the million migrant workers who had gone to the big metropolis. When I first met with him, I would never have guessed he was a local religious elder. He spoke a very good mandarin, dressed like a suburban young man, and even had a smart phone.

\textsuperscript{18} A pop Mosuo Song which is written by Modern Mosuo Musician.
\textsuperscript{19} Wizard of local religion.
connected to the internet. He had a high school diploma, and had worked in factories in Beijing, Shanghai and other big cities. Eventually, he decided to return to the Mosuo community and continue his family “tradition” of becoming the new elder, because he felt more culturally comfortable in his hometown instead of living in big cities. This is not, however, a rare example of a young Mosuo who, after having experienced the prosperous urbanity, decided to return to his hometown and to a more traditional way of life. The self-identification of “Mosuo” has changed over time, and obviously continues to change for the young Mosuo, who albeit different from their elder generation, nonetheless remain Mosuo.

I could identify with him, especially as a Chinese person living in the West. As I mentioned above, I grew up exposed to western cultural elements such as Disney cartoons, fast food chain restaurants, Backstreet Boys music, etc. At that time, I was actually very proud that I was so “westernized” because I listened to English pop music rather than Chinese pop music. However, after I left China to study and work in Canada, I gradually realized that regardless of what music I listened to, or what TV series I watched, I was still socially, culturally, and historically constructed as Chinese. What I was so proud of was actually not so much my ‘westernization’, but rather the fact that I was ‘different’ from my peers. While I do understand the values and social practices of Canadian society, I do not have the sense of belonging and cannot identify with the local culture.

Thus, even though some scholars perceive globalism as “an imperial project supported by Western capitalists (W. Mansbach, Rhodes 5)”; such a conclusion in my view is one-sided and prejudiced. Globalization is an uneven process: the western countries, especially America, enjoy advanced positions in the competition with less developed countries. Yet
while on one hand the rest of the world – like the younger Mosuo – strives to adopt a different life style than that of their seniors, on the other hand they also identify with their cultural traditions and national identity. The evolution of the new hybrid ideology of the Mosuo exemplifies the resilience of countries and communities affected by globalization, and is best demonstrated with regard to their exposure to outside values and influences, which are absorbed after careful processing and negotiation.

Globalization is not a new phenomenon, as it goes back hundreds of years. As Hopper writes,

[I]f we conceive of culture in a very basic sense as involving people, ideas, goods and artifacts, then cultural globalization could be said to have a very long history because such entities have been circulating the globe for several millennia (14 Hopper).”

The premodern globalizing impetus was generated by human activities such as wars, religious missionary work, or trade. At that stage, there was no involvement of technology; the human body was the only carrier of information and goods. Both physical and ideological influences were spread around by people. Therefore, the scope of globalization during the premodern period was narrow, limited by how far and how rapid humans could travel.

When I recorded the Daba’s religious ceremony, there were two types of monks participating: the local religion elder – Daba – and a Tibetan Buddhist Monk. The fact that the Mosuo community has two religions is the result of an ancient globalizing process. During the Yuan dynasty, the Mongolian army conquered the Mosuo. Since then, the ruling class of Mosuo is Mongolian, and of course the Mosuo community has embraced their

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20 All social and historical changes, considered to work best, are “backwards compatible”, which means that the changes a society faces, are easier to be accepted if they are compatible with the existing culture, value and social structure.
religion. However, the Mosuo have not denied their own local religion, and continued to believe in their local gods and spirits while at the same time following the Tibetan Buddhism. Thus, a unique religious ceremony has emerged. During the ceremony, both the Lama and the Daba recite the scripture together. The Daba pays respects to local gods and ghosts, while the Lama prays to the Buddha (Dr. Wang, Lin. Interview. March 10th, 2015).

3.2 Globalization and Its Dimensions

Globalization affects all aspects of modern societies, summarized into five major aspects by the theoretician of globalization, social thinker: Arjun Appadurai - ethnoscape, technoscape, financescape, ideoscape and mediascape (Appadurai 33). A “scape” – which actually means a stem in botany and base in architecture – is used as an addition to each term because it “allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles.” (Appadurai 33) In the case of the Mosuo, these dimensions manifest themselves in the ongoing modernization of this indigenous community as the discussion below demonstrates.

The very first scape I would like to discuss is the technoscape. Thanks to the development of technologies in all areas, such as transportation, information and communication, globalization expanded dramatically after World War II. According to Appadurai, the technoscape is the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology and that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously imperious boundaries (34). The development of technologies helps information travel across boundaries easier and faster than ever before. Furthermore, the price of some revolutionary products, which emerge with the development
of technologies such as internet, TV, and computers, has decreased dramatically during the last decades.

The development of technology has revolutionized the function and performances of “machines”; however, machines are just the carrier of information and content, and it is the information which has really changed people’s imagination. The development of technologies enlarges and speeds the transmutation of media, therefore “globalization could not occur without media, globalization and media act in concert and cohort, and the two have partnered throughout the whole of human history” (Lule 5). As Appadurai points out, the mediascapes refer to “the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information, which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media (35).”

According to Appadurai, information travels freely across boundaries to all corners; and regardless of whether people accept or refuse it, they are exposed to the flows of vast quantities of information every second. Moreover, information with different, or even opposite and subversive contents could – provided governments do not try to stop it – move freely beyond traditional geographic or ideological boundaries and, at least theoretically, everyone can speak to anyone, anytime, and about anything. The major media organizations, such as newspapers, TV channels or magazines, once had the power of controlling and monopolizing the right of speaking. Individuals or smaller groups could barely speak for themselves; their interests were represented by the media. However, along with the evolution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the importance of personal media services, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, has reached an unprecedented degree.
Through these platforms, people all over the world could exchange ideas.

Another fact that helps to bring global influences to locals or amplify the local voices globally is that access to internet or mass media is no longer a scarce resource. The 2015 report on the government’s works of the Yanyuan County (where the Mosuo community is located) stated that the Yanyuan County has completed installing satellite signal receivers in every house of its villages (Waxiyafu). The recent acquisition of cable TV and Internet access by Mosuo people had provided them, especially their youth, with abundant outside information, much of which was about life that is totally different from theirs. This information has provided them with an alternative way of thinking, with new ways of looking at their way of life and their values, and most importantly – with possibilities for changing what has been passed down from generation to generation for hundreds or thousands of years. This is what Appadurai points out when he writes that “the difference lies in a new alertness to the fact that the ordinary lives today are more often powered not by the given-ness of things but by the possibilities that the media (whether directly or indirectly) suggest are available (55).”

This reminds me that one day while I was filming my main subject, Ms. La, she was trying to find her partner, and after making a phone call to ask him where he was, she commented that: “before, if we would like to find someone, we would have to go around the whole village; but now, if I want to find someone, I can just call”. Also, Ms. La is used to calling every few days her sons who attend school in other towns or watch news of those towns on her TV. Even though she had never been to these towns, she was well informed about their life there. Physically speaking, she knew nothing about these towns, but could still
picture them and the College campuses her sons attended thanks to the information she got from talking to her sons.

Canadian philosopher, communication theorist McLuhan believes that the world is becoming a ‘global village’ thanks to the rapid development of media and communications. If so, then how do villagers see the village they live in? American sociologist C. Wright Mills was the first scholar to introduce the concept of sociological imagination. Wright defines sociological imagination as “the vivid awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society” (3). According to this definition, the individual sociological imagination is a personal expression of one’s own experiences; thus it is privately controlled, and it may vary to reflect the differences in the personal backgrounds. However, sociological imagination is also socially, culturally, and historically constructed. Mills writes: “the sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relationship between the two within society (6)” That is to say, even though sociological imagination is a private perception of the relationship between individual and society, this imagination is not constructed by individuals independently of each other since local histories, society, as well as the personal experiences all influence the construction of this imagination. The sociological imagination within a community is a common value denominator. There are differences, but there are also common grounds for people to identify with others within the same community.

In the case of Mosuo community, which has been isolated for centuries, the unlimited and freely disseminated information and media proliferation now provide their younger generations with more knowledge and awareness of the outside world. They have more
choices than their ancestors in choosing which culture, value or kind of lifestyle they would like to follow. On the other hand, their native matriarchal culture and conventions still influence the process of forming their social imagination. As discussed above, during my visits to the community, I realized that the young generation had already adopted fashion trends from the outside world. There is one scene in the film when Guiyin - the wife of Ms. La’s brother - who works as a tour guide – needs to change in traditional Mosuo clothing in order to go to work. She is not from the Mosuo community, but from the Yi\textsuperscript{21} ethnicity. While I was there, she barely wore anything that I would consider traditional Yi or Mosuo apparel except when she was working. She followed the latest fashion trends, watched Korean films, used foreign cosmetics, as well as dined out in fast food restaurants, KFC or McDonald’s - and generally led an enjoyable westernized way of living. In our conversations, she often expressed her admiration for foreign countries and their cultures. For me, she did not seem to believe that following the traditional lifestyle was necessary.

This phenomenon seems to be very common around the younger generation of Mosuo, except when tradition and culture come in as a source of income. Besides providing the services of tourist guides, part of Guiyin’s job is to organize the evening dance party for the tourists. In old times, the Mosuo men and women used to get to know each other at parties where they danced with their peers from neighboring villages in their leisure time and thus found their desirable partners. Nowadays, these contemporary dance parties are frequently organized in communal places of the village with an entrance fee for tourists. While I was there, Guiyin took me to one of the parties. The parties imitate the traditional courting ritual

\textsuperscript{23} Another ethnic group who also live around the Lugu Lake, but they are not part of the matriarchal community.
in order to satisfy the fantasies of tourists. At these parties, the Mosuo host will openly joke about their marital conventions, such as asking tourists whether they would want to Zouhun, or if they would want to find someone to Zouhun with (Walsh 471). I have included a sequence of one of those parties at the beginning of my film so that one can see how happy the tourists, especially the males, are when they dance with Mosuo girls. I personally do not believe any of this would result in a lasting romance, it is just a way of satisfying the tourists’ expectations, giving them what they have paid for.

However, despite Guiyin’s rebellion towards Mosuo culture and tradition in her everyday life, in my interview with her, she also talked about how she supported her husband who provided financial help to his nephews - Ms. La’s two sons - which is something unusual for communities outside of Mosuo. She thus identified herself as a wife of a Mosuo man, therefore a member of the Mosuo community, even though her marriage was far from common for the Mosuo. Both Guiyin and her husband were certified university graduates from a nearby city – and both worked for a tourist company. Thus, they have had enough chance to see how the family kinship works, but still chose to follow – although partially – the traditional ways of Mosuo community.

That is to say, even though Mosuo did not necessarily have to wear their ethnic costumes, or follow some other specific social conventions, their perceived identity remained the same as that of their ancestors. Modernity has influenced their imagination to a large extent, but this was not the only decisive factor in constructing their social imagination; their own tradition, culture and history also played a major role in this process.

It is interesting to compare and contrast the attitude of Guiyin and her husband to that of
the outside world and the Mosuo traditions. Indeed, social imagination pertains not only to how individuals perceive their own society, it also refers to how individuals imagine other societies they have never physically been in touch with. For example, the information from different sources about the Mosuo community has contributed to constructing an image of its people, which is filtered and biased. In order to attract visitors, the Mosuo community is portrayed in the mass media as “Land of Women” and a “Living Fossil” (Xiong 43). In reality, these descriptions are not accurate. For example, when the Mosuo Community is portrayed as “Land of Women”, the matriarchal conventions are highlighted, and the existing patriarchal traditions of this community are ignored or obscured. According to Professor Cai Hua, as has been noted above, traditional labor division between the two genders does exist in the Mosuo community (122), and the inner and outer affairs of the household are shared by females and males. This social convention is exactly the same as in traditional Chinese patriarchal society, where women only have the rights to make decisions on family issues, while men are the ones to solve social problems, and problems related to the world outside. The only difference is that the men and women are not couples, instead, they are siblings.

Besides media and technology, migration also plays an important role in globalization. During my visits, I noticed that tourism was having an increasingly strong influence on the Mosuo communities. Globalization provides people not only with the chance to communicate with others in far off places timely and efficiently, but to also travel further, faster, and cheaper. Thanks to the greater mobility of people, the degree of interpersonal exchanges has also reached an unprecedented level. This phenomenon could be explained with Appadurai’s concept of ethnoscape, which he defines as: “the landscape of persons, who constitute the
shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals, constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree” (33).

Tourism is a “social force” (Higgins-Desbiolles 1193), which is very important for host communities, especially for their way of life and thinking. The tourists are not only carriers of information, but also an embodiment of lifestyles from the outside world; and their appearance in the community shows locals an alternative way of being. Admittedly, there are other ways for modernity to impose its influences, such as media as discussed above. However, tourists personify for locals how people enjoy their lives in modern cities, thus making these vivid experiences irreplaceable for locals.

Obviously, tourists are people who have better access to social resources, people who invariably have higher income than the locals, and enjoy better living conditions. Based on these situations, younger generations can easily imagine that the places the tourists come from are better than their own, and therefore would provide them with better opportunities. As a result, the locals have started to copy modern lifestyles which they think will improve their own quality of life. This way of imagining the outside world motivates them to leave their own community. Yet, people do not just move to the nearby towns, but to major cities or even abroad, since nowadays the “reality and fantasies function on larger scales” (Appadurai 34). During my visit there, many of my interviewees, such as the young Daba I have mentioned above, talked about how they either had gone to a big metropolis, such as Beijing or Shanghai, to work, or that their close relatives had or would move to big cities. Some of them came back to the village because they could not adapt to the life style in the big city, but
the majority chose to stay and blend in with the mainstream culture in big cities. Even though some young people have chosen to stay with the community, they still have had their choices, which has made it almost impossible for them to live and think as their ancestors.

In my documentary, Ms. La tells me that many young Mosuo have decided to follow monogamy instead of their traditional marital customs because of legal restrictions. Before the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, there were many people, especially from the upper class, who followed polygamy. In 1950, the People’s Republic of China issued its very first “Marriage Law” which provided a “legal basis for the elimination of the “feudal system of bigamy and concubinage”, which had for centuries perpetuated women’s subordination – in economics, social, political as well as in sexual terms – to patriarchal authority” (Rai, Pilington, and Phizacklea 147). Since then, the only marital form that is accepted and advocated by the Chinese government in the name of gender equality, emancipation of women, and even civilization, is monogamy. Therefore, since legally the Mosuo marital tradition is not sanctioned by legal documents, the actual cohabitation as a predominant form of Mosuo community relationships is outside the law of the land, so to speak, and not legally protected.

Appadurai defines ideoscape as: “the concatenation of images [which] are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements, explicitly oriented to capture state power or a piece of it. (36)” That is to say, the ideology of a certain region or country influences, changes or even replaces the local ideology. In the process of globalization, ‘ideology’ usually means “Western ideology’, which includes the ideas of democracy, freedom, gender equality, etc. However, as we have
seen, the mobility of Western ideology does not necessarily result in its wholesale implementation by local communities. In most cases, during the process of transmigration, the original internal coherence of the western ideology is loosened, filtered, and adapted by different countries and regions according to their own situation (Appadurai 36).

Yet, on the other hand, the people in Mosuo community have gradually begun to change their attitude towards marriages. While younger couples understandably are choosing monogamy more often, even the older generations express support and even prefer their descendants to get married. In the documentary, Ms. La expresses the hope that her sons receive higher education in cities and get married to someone instead of following her old path of the “Walking Marriage”. The migration of Mosuo people to big cities in pursuit of better living conditions has additionally reduced the possibilities of following traditional marital customs (Dr. Wang, Lin. Interview. March 10th, 2015).

Appadurai describes financescape, the fifth dimension of globalization, as “the disposition of global capital” to flow “in a more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape than ever before (34)”. That is to say, traditional boundaries of investment and money exchange are weakened by the process of globalization. Free capital is attracted to wherever it could generate more profit. As discussed above, the booming tourist industry in the community is a good example of the workings of a contemporary finance scape. In addition to encouraging outside investment, it has brought about the destruction of local architecture as most of the houses along the lakeshore have been turned into hostels. It has also led to replacing local cadre with migrants from all over China. Much of the tourist industry is now operated by people speaking mandarin rather than the local dialect, and who offer
management and service that is significantly more professional than that of the locals. This does not mean that the locals have lost their share of profit from tourism; they still remain engaged in other tourism-related endeavors by selling souvenirs, operating boats on the lake, or working as service personnel. Thus in 2014, the Yanyuan County received 2.29 million tourists, resulting in 1.023 billion Chinese Yuan profit for the local economy, and pushing the urban per capita disposable income by 8%, up to 21,587 Chinese Yuan, while the rural per capita disposable income increased 13.8% (Waxiyafu).

These developments enhanced the quality of life of the local people and increased investment in the local infrastructure: in 2014, 137 kilometers of asphalted inter-village roads were paved in the Yanyuan County, as well as 197 kilometers of highway and 50.2 kilometers of a concrete road (Waxiyafu). In my interview with Ms. La, she described how, when she was 9-years-old and went to the city of Yanyuan County to visit her aunt, it took her more than one week to ride a horse from her home to the city. In comparison, in 2015, it took me only two and a half hours drive from the Yanyuan city to the village where she lives.

Despite the undeniable benefits from the local tourist industry, the invariable result is the gradual erosion and abandonment of the Mosuo traditions, replaced by westernized uniformity and globalized standardization.

3.3 Globalization and Liquidity

An important change, brought on by globalization, is the shortening of distances. Compared to earlier years, it takes a far shorter time for people, goods, capital and information to travel around. Prior to the global era, society was solid and restricted by boundaries, both ideological and physical, which played important roles in people’s lives.
That is to say, boundaries “tended to be hard or to harden over time and therefore, among other things, to remain largely in place” (Ritzer, Dean 3).

However, nowadays, these hard boundaries have vanished; and, due to the development of technologies, the visible and invisible elements of societies are all set in motion at an unprecedented speed. In this situation, the fluidity transcends the solidity, and becomes the new feature of contemporary society in the epoch of globalization. Therefore, fluidity has been introduced as a term by Zygmunt Bauman to best describe globalization. As he explains, society is always in a state of “progress” and change - which accounts for the fluid and unsteady features of the contemporary world, so “instead of great expectations and sweet dreams, ‘progress’ evokes an insomnia full of nightmares of ‘being left behind’” (Bauman, 11).

Such a fluidity enhances people’s fears of being left out and behind, and compels them to assimilate within the majority, be part of it, flow with it, which in turn further enhances fluidity. Bauman’s quote explains why nowadays the identities of people from different societies, regions, or even countries are assimilating gradually to a westernized mainstream. Because of globalization, indigenous people are forcibly exposed to modernity; therefore modernity, which is the strongest influence, against which traditional values cannot compete, causes people from traditional communities to gradually abandon their identities and blend in within the mainstream.

For example, just as I had mentioned above, the communication technologies as well as modern infrastructure such as highways and airports, have all gradually become intrinsic parts of the community, improving its quality of life, and widely appreciated by the villagers.
We can see in the film that even during the religious ceremony, the young Lamas and Dabas are still checking their cellphones. When I asked them why, they told me that since it was a busy season for ceremonies, many clients were contacting them. They also mentioned that before the government built the roads to connect the villages, traffic was difficult and so the villagers tended to go to their local village Lama and Daba. Now that every family has their own means of transportation, a motorcycle or a car, the geographical distance matters way less, and if they go visit far-flung villages for religious ceremonies, they still would be able to return home the same day. Thus, in order to keep in touch with more clients, they have to use cellphones, otherwise they would lose their clients.

The granduncle of Ms. La, who is a Lama, told me during my first visit to the Mosuo that if they wanted to invite the Lama and Daba to do a religious ceremony, they would have to come with tea, alcohol and other gifts in order to ensure a good date for their ceremony. It seems however that now this first ritual step has been dropped due to the changes in society.

**By Way of Conclusion**

My discussion so far has focused on both the negative but also the positive impacts of globalization on the Mosuo community; as I believe that globalization cannot be evaluated in absolutely black or white terms.

In addition, we cannot ignore the fact that tradition is not a fixed idea and its content also changes with time. The tradition we practice today is the modernity of yesterday, and the modernity of today might also be taken as a tradition in the future. According to Raymond Williams, traditional culture is a “continual selection and re-selection of ancestors […] but
also an interpretation (9)”. Namely, in every generation, the creative arts, intellectual works, and social behaviors acquire their own meanings and values, which although initially are attributable to separate individuals, are ultimately accepted as a whole. This is how modernity has shaped society. The inheritance of traditions is a process of selection according to the collective will of people from various historical periods. As society is always evolving, the culture adapts itself to this development, changing or abandoning along the way some of its elements. For example, less than a hundred years ago, Chinese still believed women should bind their feet to 3-inch-long as an aesthetic standard of beauty. The smaller the feet, the more beautiful the woman was considered. While binding the feet was a long-standing tradition for Chinese woman, there is no reason it should still be followed and protected.

For me, the real harm of globalization is not that this process changes how people practice their traditions; its real harm is a single cultural hegemony. The mainstream culture with stronger power replaces the diverse traditions, and unifies different global ideologies into one universal standard. Even though people do benefit to a certain extent from this process, as the Mosuo people’s example demonstrates, the overall harm to small local cultures is of significant concern, and, as outsiders to such cultures, we are in no position to judge whether they are moving in the right direction, nor to decide whether they shouldn’t share the fruits of globalization and modernity in the name of protecting age-old traditions.

Coda: The baby is a GIRL

The memories from my childhood have been gradually fading away with time. The only thing left in my mind is the sharp ring-tone of the very first telephone my family acquired. As
for the rest – being a girl, that is, not a boy – I stopped caring about it long ago. My parents seem to have never had issues about my gender, and they have provided me with the best possible care to ensure that I could grow up as a happy and confident individual. The opinion of my extended family has long ceased to matter to either me or my parents. The situation however is bit different in my hometown. My father’s cousin for example has fathered five girls in order to have one son, and had to give up two of their daughters for adoption because of the huge financial burden to raise six children. It sounds like a tough life for my distant cousins, at least so I think. Yet my parents are telling me that these children have actually become professionals, and their careers range from nurses, to elementary school teachers to government officials. At this point I would like to give some credit to the process of globalization, because thanks to it my female cousins – and females in China in general – have acquired unprecedented power through education and chances in the professional world of Confucian China.

Does Globalization take away from traditional culture and values? The answer is, yes, of course. It is not that I am not proud of my culture and traditions. As a matter of fact, I am the program manager of the Confucius Institute at our university which, as a unit under UR International, promotes Chinese language and culture. On the other hand, this position provides me with confidence in the professional world and gives a strong financial basis for my life. Without my education and experience I would not have had the opportunity to work in this position. Thus, to certain extent, thanks to globalization, my parents received a westernized education, and I was not constrained by the traditional oppression of Chinese women. Now, I have my own house, my own career, the right to make my own decisions, as
well as my own voice in society. In this way, I do not feel any different than the Mosuo women. Among the many reasons why the Mosuo Community has been condemned and defined as ‘heresy’ by the Chinese mainstream society, one stands out – the unique power it gave to its women to stand by their men as equals. Regardless of the gradual undermining of the Mosuo culture, with the progressively globalizing Chinese society, its tradition would be reflected in the progressive empowerment of Chinese women.
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Ms La, Personal Interview, April 15\(^{th}\), 2015


Russell, Ben. "Re: Questions about Trypps #6 (Malobi)." Message to the author. 20 Jun. 2014. E-mail.


Appendix A: Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval
Research Ethics Board  
Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR  
Jingyi Zhang

DEPARTMENT  
Media Production

REB#  
2015055

6 – 2249 Cornwall Street  
Regina, SK  S4P 2L2

SUPERVISOR  
Dr. Gerald Saul - Film  
Dr. Christina Stojanova - Film

FUNDER(S)  
Unfunded

TITLE  
The La Family

APPROVAL OF  
Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review  
Consent Form  
Interview questions

APPROVED ON  
May 4, 2015

RENEWAL DATE  
May 4, 2016

☐ Full Board  
☒ Meeting

Delegated Review

CERTIFICATION

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents. Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.
ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions:  
http://www.uregina.ca/research/REB/main.shtml

Dr. Larena Hoeber, Chair
University of Regina
Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to: Office for Research, Innovation and Partnership
University of Regina
Research and Innovation Centre 109
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Telephone: (306) 585-4775  Fax: (306) 585-4893  research.ethics@uregina.ca

Appendix B: Consent Form (English Version)
**Project title:** The La Family

**Department:** Film, Fine Arts, University of Regina, Saskatchewan

Dear Documentary/Research Participant:

My name is Jingyi Zhang, and this project is for my Master of Fine Arts of University of Regina. This project is a documentary about how globalization and modernization influence the indigenous communities and its people. There is no intended financial benefit. Any questions can be directed to me at any time at 18982196894 (China) or (306) 216-0013(Canada).

There are no anticipated or known risks to participating in this project. Your participation is completely voluntary. The information you share, and the related video and audio files will all be at your own discretion. You may refuse to participate before the production begins. After each interview or daily shoot, a debriefing process will take place to clarify information and give you a chance to give off-camera information.

The shootings will happen in March and April of 2015, and these files will be edited into a documentary within the same year. This project will be shown to peers and instructors for advices; also it will be shown to defense committee for valuing my qualification of master’s degree. However, this film might be sent to different film festivals for competition, if this situation happens, I will inform my major participants who had signed the consent forms and ask for their consents again.

By participating, you will be giving permission for me to use your image and voice for this project. I will record your interviews, shoot your daily lives, and edit these audio and visual materials into a documentary. After editing, I will preserve and archive the footage, documents and photographs in a secure place. After submitting the final version of this digital video narratives as my thesis project for my graduate degree, I will keep the final versions in my portfolio and provide a copy for your records.

Questions about this project can be directed to my supervisors Dr. Christina Stojanova at Christina.stojanova@uregina.ca or (306) 585-5690 and/or Professor Gerald Saul at gerald.saul@uregina.ca or (306) 585-4619 at the University of Regina.

The Research Ethics Board at the University of Regina has approved the project. If research subjects have any questions or concerns about their rights or treatment as subjects, they may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (306) 585-4775 or by e-mail: research.ethics@uregina.ca.

You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records in both English and Chinese. Your signature below will indicate that you have decided to volunteer as a participant in this project; that your questions have been answered satisfactorily; and that you have read the information provided above.
Participant's signature: ________________________
Date: ________________________________

Appendix C: Consent Form (Chinese Version)

作品名：喇家
所属部门：加拿大，萨斯克彻温省，里贾纳大学艺术学院电影制作系

尊敬的参与者：

我的名字叫做张婧逸，这部您即将参与拍摄的作品将作为我艺术硕士学位的毕业作品。这部纪录片将讲述在全球化、现代化的趋势对传统文化和传统社区的居民们的冲击。这部作品不会以盈利作为目的。如果您有任何的问题，都可以拨打18982196894（中国）以及(306) 216-0013（加拿大）联系我。

参与这部作品没有任何的已知风险，而您的参与将是完全自愿。您所提供的信息，以及所有视频、音频资料都将按照您的意愿进行处理。您可以在开机前谁是拒绝参与本次拍摄行为。在每一次采访或者每天跟拍结束之后，您都将有机会决定您所提供的资料和与您相关的视频及音频资料是否将被最后用于该部纪录片。

这部纪录片将在2015年3月和4月期间进行拍摄和剪辑，之后将被展映给我的导师和同行搜集建议。在该片全部拍摄剪辑完成后，将被展示给我毕业答辩的委员会以衡量我是否具有获得艺术硕士学位的资格。这部纪录片将可能被送至不同的电影节展映，如果这样的情况发生，我将再次联系主要参与者以期获得您的允许。

参与拍摄这部电影，您将授权我使用您的图像与影像资料。您的名字以及家庭角色将在您第一次出现在银幕上时显示。在拍摄过程中，我将会对您进行采访，跟拍您的日常生活，并将这些资料编辑成一部纪录片。在剪辑结束以后，我负责将所有所拍摄的影像资料收藏在一个安全的地方，确保所有资料不会泄露而给所有参与者造成困扰。在这部纪录片最终定稿之后，这部纪录片将作为我的毕业设计被呈现给相关人员，而我将会给每一位主要参与者（这份协议的签字者）一份DVD拷贝。
关于这部纪录片，如果您有更多的疑问也可以直接联系我的教授 Dr. Christina Stojanova:

Christina.stojanova@uregina.ca 或者拨打电话 (306) 585-5690 以及 Pr. Gerald Saul:

gerald.saul@uregina.ca 或者拨打电话 (306) 585-4619.

里贾纳大学研究伦理学委员会已经批准了这个研究项目，如果您有关于自身权益的问题，也可以致电(306) 585-4775 或发电子邮件到 research.ethics@uregina.ca.

您将收到中英文两种版本的协议，两份协议书的内容一致。您的签字表明了您志愿参与这次拍摄，您的所有行为并没有受到胁迫，以及您已经清晰阅读并理解了这份协议。

Participant’s signature: ____________________________

Date: ________________________________