

EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, AND SUPPORTS DURING STUDYING AND
SOJOURNING IN CANADA: THE CASE OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

by

Zhengying Qian

BA, Tianjin Foreign Studies University, 1998

MA, Tianjin Foreign Studies University, 2005

A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2017

© Zhengying Qian 2017

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF A MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER (MRP)

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this Major Research Paper. This is a true copy of the MRP, including any required final revisions.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this MRP to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this MRP by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my MRP may be made electronically available to the public.

Zhengying Qian

Experiences, Challenges, and Supports during Studying and Sojourning in Canada:
The Case of Chinese International Students

Zhengying Qian
Master of Arts 2017
Immigration and Settlement Studies
Ryerson University

ABSTRACT

With the internationalization of education, Chinese students have constituted the largest international student group in the world as well as in Canada. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, challenges, and supports specific to the Chinese student population at Canadian universities. In order to triangulate the data from different sources, individual interviews with eight Chinese international students and three International Student Advisors were conducted in this qualitative research. Hofstede's theory on cultural dimensions and the bilinear model of acculturation and enculturation are applied to explain the findings about Chinese international students' experiences and challenges with regard to second language learning, academic studies, social interaction, post-graduation plans, and personal development and identity reshaping. Moreover, based on Chinese international students' awareness and use of supports available to them, this study has implications for practice as to how to improve their support system.

Key words:

Chinese international students; cultural dimensions; acculturation and enculturation; international student support; second language learning; academic studies; social interaction; post-graduation plans; personal development; identity reshaping

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my MRP supervisor, Dr. Kenise Murphy Kilbride, for her conscientious work and generous support. It has been a pleasure working with her and learning from her insightful scholarship. My appreciation also goes to Dr. Sedef Arat-Koç who has provided valuable suggestions for my MRP as the second reader. In addition, I am greatly indebted to all the other professors and staff at the ISS Program for sharing their knowledge, perspectives and hard work with me.

I am also grateful to all the student participants and International Student Advisors who unselfishly contributed their experiences and opinions to this study.

Lastly, I thank my family and friends who have accompanied me as a recent immigrant in Canada and supported me to complete this academic degree.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Globalization and Internationalized Education.....	1
International Students and Immigrants.....	2
Chinese International Students in Canada.....	4
Problem Statement.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Purpose and Significance of the Study.....	6
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Theoretical Framework.....	8
Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions.....	8
The Bilinear Model of Acculturation and Enculturation.....	12
International Students' Experiences, Challenges, and Supports.....	13
Experiences and Challenges.....	14
Second Language Learning.....	14
Academic Studies.....	15
Social Interaction.....	16
Post-graduation Plans.....	18
Personal Development and Identity Reshaping.....	18
The Support System.....	20
Interpersonal Support.....	21
Organizational Support.....	22
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....	24
Research Design.....	24
Sampling.....	25
Participants.....	25
Data Collection.....	29
Tools.....	29
Procedure.....	30
Data Analysis.....	30
Researcher's Positioning.....	31
Validity and Reliability.....	32
Limitations of this Study.....	33
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS.....	34
Interviews with Chinese International Students.....	34
Experiences and Challenges.....	34

Second Language Learning.....	35
Academic Studies.....	38
Social Interaction.....	40
Post-graduation Plans.....	43
Personal Development and Identity Reshaping.....	45
Supports.....	47
Interviews with International Student Advisors.....	51
Challenges.....	51
International Students in General.....	51
Chinese International Students.....	52
Supports.....	53
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION..	57
Summary of Findings.....	57
Chinese International Students' Experiences and Challenges.....	57
Chinese International Students' Supports.....	58
Discussion.....	58
Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions.....	59
The Bilinear Model of Acculturation and Enculturation.....	61
Individual Characteristics of Student Participants.....	62
Recommendations.....	63
For Students.....	63
For Educational Institutions.....	63
For Local Communities and Governments.....	64
Suggestions for Future Research.....	66
Conclusion.....	66
APPENDIX A: Consent Form 1 (Students).....	68
APPENDIX B: Consent Form 2 (International Student Advisors).....	72
APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol 1 (Students).....	76
APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol 2 (International Student Advisors).....	78
APPENDIX E: An Example of Prospective Outreach to the Toronto Chinese Business Association (TCBA) on behalf of Chinese International Students.....	79
REFERENCES.....	80

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Student Participants.....	26
Table 2: Rough Estimation of Student Participants' Friendships.....	41

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: Comparing Canada and China.....	10
---	----

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background

Globalization and Internationalized Education

Prompted by advances in transportation and information technology, globalization has generated further interdependence of economic and cultural activities (Wolf, 2014). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2000) identified four basic aspects of globalization: trade and transaction, capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people, and the dissemination of knowledge. Under globalization, the facilitated movement of goods, investment, and people is accelerating the internationalization of education.

In 2015 five million students studied outside of their home countries, which figure represents more than a tripling of global international student enrolment since 1990 (ICEF Monitor, 2015). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Global Affairs Canada, 2016), the top eight host countries for inbound international students (in formal tertiary education only) are: the United States (19% of total mobile students), the United Kingdom (10%), Australia (6%), France (6%), Germany (5%), Canada (3%), the Russian Federation (3%), and Japan (3%). The four major English-speaking destination countries take in more than one third (38%) of all international students. While enrolments have been declining in the U.K. since 2012 due mainly to the introduction of stringent visa policies, international student enrolment in the U.S. increased by 42% between 2008 and 2014; Australian enrolments have started to rebound after a significant decline beginning in 2010; and Canadian enrolments are continuing a steady decade-long upward trend (Global Affairs Canada, 2016).

As a thriving industry, international education is also a major revenue generator (Ward, Masgoret, & Gezentsvey, 2009). According to Global Affairs Canada (2016), export education earned USD\$27 billion in the U.S. (in 2014), £10.71 billion in the U.K. (in 2012), AUD\$15.4 billion in Australia (in 2013), and CAD\$11.4 billion in Canada (in 2014).

In terms of internationalisation, simply attracting large numbers of international students is an important element, but it is "more a valuable prerequisite than an end in itself" (Spencer-Oatey, Dauber, Jing, & Wang, 2016). Just as a recent British Council (2014) report explains, "simply having a diverse student body does not mean the education or even the campus is global in nature. What comes as an essential part of a global education is the inclusion of international students in communities and classes " (p.4).

International Students and Immigrants

International students are those who have physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in the country of destination, where the country of destination of a given student is different from their country of origin (UNESCO, cited in Global Affairs Canada, 2016). In the case of international students, the traditional distinctions between sojourners, who relocate temporarily for specific purposes such as education or employment, and long-term immigrants are now blurred (Ward et al., 2009).

The worldwide competition to attract skilled immigrants has meant that the recruitment of overseas students is often part of a broader strategy to secure highly skilled immigrants, and many international students now remain in the countries where they were educated (Ward et al., 2009). In the Canadian context, international students are increasingly viewed as "ideal immigrants" or "designer immigrants" because of their Canadian education, work experience, and integration. Immigration policies and programs have been specifically created to make it

easier for international students to study, work, and become permanent residents in Canada (Gopal, 2014). In 2008, the Canada Experience Class stream was introduced, which allows foreign graduates of Canadian higher education institutions who have been working in Canada on a temporary basis to apply for permanent residency without having to leave the country (CIC, 2013, cited in Gopal, 2016). Furthermore, as of June 1, 2014, full-time international students who are pursuing their studies at a designated educational institution can work off campus for up to 20 hours per week during regular academic sessions and full time during regularly scheduled breaks and holidays without a work permit (CIC, 2015, cited in Gopal, 2016). Also, authorized by Post-Graduation Work Permits that may be valid up to three years, international graduates can gain Canadian work experience and thus enhance their qualifications for permanent residency. International graduates can also apply to the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) for immigration, which is designed to attract immigrants that meet a province's particular labour market needs. Since February 2015, the Canada Experience Class and a portion of the PNPs have been aligned with the federal Express Entry System, a complete electronic selection system that is designed to select skilled workers for immigration to Canada (CIC, 2015, cited in Gopal, 2016).

In the major immigrant-receiving countries, the rapid expansion in the number of international students coincides with increases in the immigrant population. According to Statistics Canada (2011), one out of five people in Canada's population is foreign-born. In 2011, China was the second leading country of birth among people who immigrated to Canada, with 10.5% of the newcomers coming from China. It was estimated that ethnic Chinese accounted for 1.6 million in Canada (Tung, 2008). International students, together with recent immigrants, add more diversity and vibrancy to educational institutions in Canada.

Chinese International Students in Canada

It is far too simplistic to talk just about "THE international students" because they all lead variant and divergent lives (Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013; Kashyap, 2010). According to the UNESCO (2016, cited in Spencer-Oatey et al., 2016), China sends far more students to study overseas than any other country in the world, with the current figure reaching around 680,000 and with the top receiving country being the USA (ca. 225,000). In Canada Chinese students are the largest international student group. In 2014 there were 336,497 international students in Canada, and students from China made up fully one-third (33%) of Canada's international student population, followed by students from India (12%) and South Korea (5.8%) (CBIE, 2016). Effective March 9, 2015, the reciprocal agreement between China and Canada on issuing long-term and multiple-entry visas for Chinese and Canadians further facilitates the entry of Chinese to study and live in Canada (Luo, 2015).

As China is one of the emerging economies with an immense population base, the explosive growth of the middle class has brought sweeping social transformations, which includes newly increasing numbers of Chinese families who can afford quality education for their children in other countries. Besides the financial propellant, students tend to be discontented with the Chinese educational system that is too focused on their test performance (Austin & Shen, 2016). Contemporary Chinese students would like to try new ways of learning as the Chinese traditional culture clashes with their desire for self-actualization (Austin & Shen, 2016). The overwhelming majority of Chinese students going abroad are self-funded students, which indicates that they come from higher economic and possibly higher social classes in China. This is the reason Chinese international students are regarded as representing two groups of elites in the society: the socio-economic elite (e.g., mostly self-funded students) and the educated elite

(e.g., students funded by scholarships) (Wang & Miao, 2013, cited in Gua, & Schweisfurth, 2015).

Problem Statement

In addition to economic benefit, international students also provide considerable social and cultural value to Canada. They enrich the learning experience of Canadian students at Canadian educational institutions through the diversification of ideas and worldviews, and help enhance Canada's international prestige by acting as "cultural ambassadors" even after they complete their studies and leave Canada. Considering the large number of international students studying in Canada, it is worthwhile to study this significant temporary resident population, possibly to enhance their own wellbeing as well as Canada's benefit from their education. By doing so, it may be possible for Canada to overtake the leaders in the international education market, as reported student satisfaction rating is an important component in international student retention as well as international student recruitment and enrolment growth (McFaul, 2016). Moreover, it is rewarding in the long run to facilitate the retention of as many eligible permanent skilled workers as possible from today's international students and to show more concern for their value as future "Canadians".

Every year large numbers of young people leave their families and friends behind and have to transition from youth, or even adolescence, to full adulthood in a new academic and social environment. In terms of maturation or personal development, both international and host-national students share similar experiences. On the other hand, international students face challenges and difficulties unique to them. Taking Chinese international students as an example, we see that, profoundly influenced by Confucianism and conservative philosophies, China seems to have linguistic, cultural and ideological distance from Western nations. It would be more

challenging for Chinese students to adapt to and integrate into the Canadian academic and social environment than for many others.

Selecting Chinese students as the focus of this study is based less on the assumption that they are different from other groups of international students than on the fact that they now form such a large proportion of the international student population around the world as well as in Canada. It is therefore justifiable to research the experiences, challenges, and supports specific to the Chinese student population at Canadian universities. What's more, it is interesting to examine Chinese students studying at Western universities through a cultural perspective.

Research Questions

1. What do Chinese international students experience at Canadian post-secondary institutions with regard to second language learning, academic studies, social life, post-graduation plans, personal development and identity reshaping?
2. What challenges confront Chinese international students?
3. How do Chinese international students make use of the supports available to them, especially those from their host university?
4. How can Chinese international students' support system be improved?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Through exploring the experiences of Chinese international students at Canadian post-secondary institutions, this study aims to find out what challenges they have, what supports they can resort to, and how to improve their support system. If Chinese international students' wellbeing is improved, it is not only beneficial to those young people themselves, but also rewarding to the Canadian society, both financially and socio-culturally, especially if the students stay in Canada permanently.

It is expected that the findings of the study can be utilized by international student service providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders, and can be extended to the general international student population in Canada, or even in other destination countries.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of relevant literature falls into two sections: first, for their theoretical frameworks, and second, for their empirical content on international students' experiences, challenges, and supports. And the latter section has two sub-sections -- experiences and challenges (second language learning, academic studies, social interaction, post-graduation plans, and personal development and identity reshaping), and the support system (interpersonal and organizational support).

Although not all the literature discussed below is about Chinese international students in the Canadian context, it does provide valid perspectives through which to look into the students' experiences, challenges, and supports while studying abroad. Besides, given the lack of a comprehensive study on Chinese international students at Canadian post-secondary institutions, this broad approach is justified.

Theoretical Framework

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

It is interesting to explore the experiences of Chinese students studying in western countries from a cultural perspective. Culture is a large set of values, norms, or practices that present the way the environment is being utilized and understood by a specific group (Triandis, 2001, cited in Wu, 2015). In a series of studies of the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) research program, House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta (2004) created ten clusters of world cultures transcending national boundaries, namely, Germanic Europe, Nordic Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin Europe, Anglo, Middle East, Southern Asia, Confucian Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

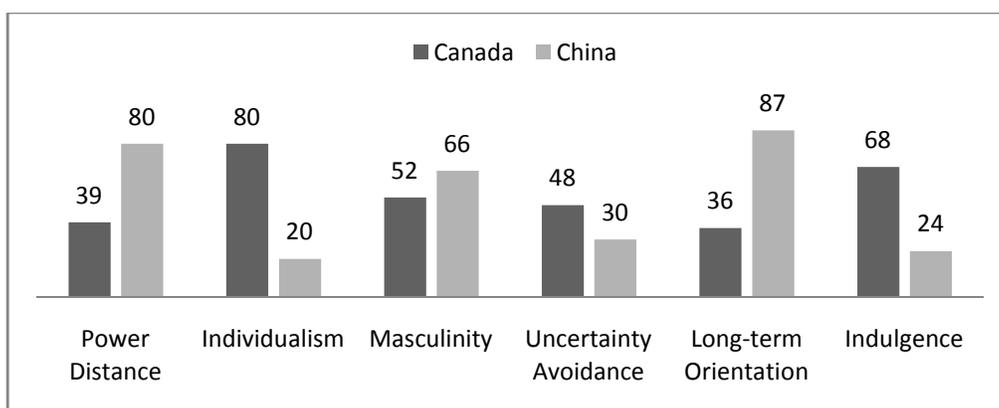
After grouping the international students in the Netherlands into nine GLOBE cultural clusters, Rienties and Tempelaar (2013) found significant and substantial differences in academic and social integration processes among the groups. Students from Confucian Asia in particular scored significantly lower on academic and social adjustment, indicating that Confucian students had to overcome substantial transitional barriers in this context (Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013). Similarly, Ward and Kennedy (1993) asserted that psychological and socio-cultural adjustment for international students was easier when they made a relatively small cross-cultural transition (e.g., from the U.S. to Canada) rather than a large cross-cultural transition (e.g., from China to Canada). Babiker, Cox, and Miller (1980, cited in Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013) referred to this notion as cultural distance, whereby international students with similar values would experience less stress when studying in a foreign country than students with different values.

The GLOBE cultural clusters are, in fact, based on Hofstede's (1986, 2001) research on the cultural dimensions. Hofstede (2011) identified six major dimensions on which cultures differ: Power Distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long/Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence/Restraint. According to Hofstede (2011), Power Distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of organisations and institutions accept and expect unequal distribution of power. Individualism versus Collectivism signals the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups -- on the individualist side we find cultures in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family; on the collectivist side we find cultures in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families that continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty, and oppose other in-groups. Masculinity/Femininity refers to the distribution of values between the genders in a society: the

assertive pole has been called "masculine" and the modest, caring pole "feminine". Uncertainty Avoidance deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, indicating the extent to which members of a culture feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Long-Term/Short-Term Orientation distinguishes societies in being directed towards future rewards, or the fulfilment of present needs and desires. On the sixth and the most recent dimension, indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun, while restraint stands for a society that controls gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.

In comparison with Canada, China has significantly higher power distance, stronger collectivism, more long-term orientation, and more restraint; as well as moderately stronger masculinity and weaker uncertainty avoidance (see Figure 1). Immensely influenced by Confucian values, Chinese people are traditionally expected to respect parents at home, teachers at schools, leaders at work, as well as be anxious about preserving harmony, saving face, and avoiding bringing shame to one's self and one's family (Wang & Greenwood, 2015).

Figure 1. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: Comparing Canada and China



Source: <https://geert-hofstede.com/canada.html>

The cultural dimensions theorized by Hofstede has been expanded to research on cross-cultural education: see, e. g., Hofstede (1986), Joy and Kolb (2009), and Rienties and Tempelaar (2013). Students from high power distance countries, such as China, prefer teacher-centered education, with teachers in the role of experts. In contrast, student-centred learning may be more appropriate for societies that are characterised by low power distance, such as Canada, where the teacher may say "I do not know", and learning situations tend to be open-ended, with assignments and objectives more broadly defined (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, cited in Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013). As Chinese culture is predominantly collectivistic, Chinese students can undergo more adjustment issues while studying in a Western-based individualistic culture: their culture-based behaviours, such as respect for authority figures and preserving harmony, can present a challenge when these ideals conflict with the host educational institution's expectations (Wang & Greenwood, 2015). Thus, Chinese students are often perceived by Western lecturers and peers as passive, quiet in class, non-confrontational, not asking questions, and lacking in critical thinking, independent learning, and assertiveness (Wang & Greenwood, 2015). The long-term orientation and more restraint in Chinese culture explains why Chinese people are willing to invest time, energy, and finances in their education, which they believe can bring them long-term human, social, and economic capital. The Chinese education-first culture has driven not only the rapid expansion of the domestic higher education sector but also the increasing number of Chinese students studying overseas (Liu, 2016).

However, it is worth noting that China has been undergoing rapid and tremendous social changes since the implementation of the policy of "reform and opening up" in the late 1970s, which has inevitably reshaped people's ideas and values. Although the traditional features still persist with the Chinese educational system, it is important not to employ Hofstede's cultural

dimensions in stereotyping contemporary Chinese students. For example, in a study of 400 Chinese middle-school students who were learning English, Shi (2006) concluded that they showed little difference from their Western counterparts by being active learners and preferring a more interactive relationship with their teachers.

The Bilinear Model of Acculturation and Enculturation

Berry (1980) first proposed a bilinear model of acculturation and enculturation whereby it is plausible for an individual to adhere to both her or his culture of origin and a second culture. Acculturation is broadly defined as cultural socialization to the mainstream society, and enculturation is broadly defined as cultural socialization or retention of the ethnic culture (Berry, 1997). Berry and his colleagues (e.g., Berry, 1980; Berry & Kim, 1988) theorized that these experiences can be categorized into four statuses that expressed the combined levels of acculturation and enculturation: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization.

Conceptually, Yoon and Lee (2010) argue that acculturation and enculturation contain multiple components, including behavioural, affective, and cognitive ones. Interestingly, in the past conceptualizations of acculturation (and enculturation), it was assumed that an increase in one's engagement in the dominant cultural norms would necessarily result in a decrease in one's retention of the original norms (Kim & Abreu, 2001, cited in Kim & Omizo, 2006). However, Kim and Omizo (2006) found positive relations for both behavioural acculturation and enculturation, and what's more, there was no significant correlation between the acculturation and enculturation. That is to say, acculturation and enculturation are two independent processes that may happen simultaneously within a person (Kang, 2006).

Smith and Khawaja (2011) identified the acculturative stressors encountered frequently by international students as language barriers, educational stressors, socio-cultural stressors (e.g.,

loneliness, discrimination), and practical problems associated with changing environments (e.g., financial problems, transportation and accommodation). These acculturative stressors to a large degree overlapped with the major challenges faced by international students, which implies that acculturative adaptation is the paramount concern for them. In the American context, Yeh and Inose (2003) maintained that international students from Europe experienced less acculturative stress than their counterparts from Asia, which echoes the former study on cultural distance.

While acculturating into the host society and culture, many Chinese international students may still wish to maintain a strong connection with their home culture through long-distance social networks (i.e., family and friends from China) and through making social connections with other conational friends in their host country (Ye, 2006, cited in Du & Wei, 2015). The desire to maintain ethnic connections may be especially strong for Chinese international students because of their cultural distance from Western society. In recent years, Chinese student enrolment has significantly increased at the U.S. and Canadian universities, and becoming involved in Chinese ethnic communities has become an alternative to participating in mainstream host society (Du & Wei, 2015). Depending on their needs, building social connections in either the mainstream society or the ethnic community may be beneficial for Chinese international students' adjustment in the host country (Du & Wei, 2015).

International Students' Experiences, Challenges, and Supports

With regard to transition to higher education and personal development, international and host-national students share similar experiences. For instance, Perry (2016) found that in the process of adjusting to new surroundings, both international and American students reported similar mental and emotional issues, such as anxiety and depression, and similar struggles with

their academic pursuits. However, international students have particular experiences and challenges and therefore need supports unique to them.

Experiences and Challenges

Second Language Learning

For those students from countries where English is not the primary language, English proficiency is one significant challenge (Windle, Hamilton, Zeng, & Yang, 2008; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). East Asian students, including those from China, might encounter bigger challenges in learning English because of the "linguistic distance" between English and their native languages. It has been found that when other determinants of English language proficiency are the same, the greater the measure of linguistic distance, the poorer is the respondent's English language proficiency (Chiswick & Miller, 2005). Among 43 languages studied by Chiswick and Miller (2005), Japanese and Korean are the most distant to English, followed by Cantonese and Mandarin.

Limited English language proficiency impacts many aspects of international students' life (Zhang & Zhou, 2010), including the highly important one, their academic performance. For example, Chinese students' language skills and cultural differences from the mainstream host society were initially singled out as two primary barriers to participation in classroom discussion (Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005). A range of negative feelings associated with students' low levels of participation in classroom discussion was reported, including anxiety, frustration, depression, isolation, inferiority, and loss of confidence (Zhou et al., 2005).

In addition, language differences contribute to socialization and friendship issues. For instance, Chinese students perceived the cultural distance and their language competence as barriers to social integration with people from other countries (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2016). A

study of Chinese and Taiwanese international students in the US found that social self-efficacy in the English setting was significantly and positively related to English proficiency (Lin & Betz, 2009).

The difficulty of understanding and speaking English has been identified as one of the frequent sources of acculturative stress problems for Chinese international students (Bertram, Poulakis, Elsasser, & Kumar, 2014). For example, students who reported lower levels of English skills also reported higher levels of discrimination and homesickness (Perry, 2016). Even those students who were completing their studies and embarking on the career journey toward employment expressed fears about cultural and linguistic barriers to their successful integration into the host society as well as into workplaces (Arthur & Flynn, 2011).

Academic Studies

As Perry (2016) asserts, in the new educational system international students need to deal with issues that may be taken for granted by domestic students. For Chinese students, their learning styles have been profoundly shaped by Chinese cultural values. Influenced by the Confucian pedagogies and "maxims of modesty", Chinese students are accustomed to teacher-centred style of teaching and prefer less frequent participation and brief responses in class so as to avoid dominating the discussion or "showing off"; thus they are more likely to perceive active listening as an appropriate way of participating (Zhou et al., 2005). What's more, the different cultural values between China and the U.S. lead some Chinese students to view U.S. classrooms as lacking structure and proper behaviour on the part of both teachers and students rather than being interactive, flexible, and creative (Wan, 2001).

On the other hand, Chinese students were found to have strong desires to participate in classroom activities and revealed a preference for a student-centred style of teaching in a number

of studies (e.g., Liu & Littlewood, 1997; Cheng, 2000; Wong, 2004, cited in Zhou et al., 2005). Nonetheless, Chinese international students' lack of knowledge about their host culture contributes to their language deficiencies (Yan & Berliner, 2013, cited in Zhou & Zhang, 2014), which altogether impedes their active participation in classroom discussion. Therefore, it is important to understand how Chinese students' differences in socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds interact with aspects of the Western/ English educational contexts to shape their learning experiences (Zhou et al., 2005).

Social Interaction

According to Tinto (1975), students not only need to persist in their study in order to graduate (i.e., academic integration), but they also need to participate in the student culture, both within and outside the immediate context of the learning environment (i.e. social integration). Bochner, McLeod, & Lin (1977) developed a functional model to describe the friendship formation of international students. They classified international students' friendships into three separate categories according to their functions: (a) a network with host nationals, whose function is the instrumental facilitation of academic and professional aspirations; (b) a multi-national network whose main function is recreational; (c) a co-national network whose function is to affirm and express the culture of origin.

Problems appear here. First of all, a lot of literature indicates that international students' socialization with host students is quite limited (e.g., Schartner, 2015; Holmes, 2005). For instance, in a study of first-year international students at a Canadian university (Zhou & Zhang, 2014), when asked about their relationship with domestic students, many participants said that they had Canadian friends but in most cases, they only worked with them on class projects; when hanging out for leisure, they went with friends from their home country or other international

students. In some situations where host-national friendships with domestic students, professors and advisors are being made, although the breadth of social support systems may have grown, the depth might not (Bertram et al., 2014). What's worse, as one participant in Montgomery and McDowell's (2009) study put it, generally international and domestic students had different "stories", and they had little in common and were not part of each other's social groups.

Other studies confirm that international students tend, in extending social networks, to socialize with other international students from various countries and cultures who share the similar studying experience in a foreign country (e.g., Kusek, 2015; McFaul, 2016). As Glass and Westmont (2013, cited in McFaul, 2016) explained, the support of a strong co-national or multi-national network can actually be a catalyst for students to engage with host students by providing the confidence to explore an unfamiliar culture. According to Montgomery and McDowell (2009), international students, instead of being isolated and therefore disadvantaged by their lack of contact with host students, form a strong social network with other international students from various cultures and nationalities, which supports their learning and provides them with a positive and active learning environment.

However, international students who desire to make more social connections may be hampered by the demographics of the groups available to them (Perry, 2016), as they, feeling left out, prefer to make friends with people of their own nationality or from a similar background (Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005, cited in Perry, 2016). Given the increasing number of Chinese international students enrolled at western universities, they tend to develop social network more with Chinese co-nationals than with people of other nationalities (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006). Spencer-Oatey et al. (2016) found not only that Chinese students were less satisfied with their opportunities for friendships with British students and other international students than were

students of other nationalities, but also that they found it more difficult to socialise with people from other countries than students of other nationalities do. Spencer-Oatey et al. (2016) also pointed out a number of barriers to Chinese students' social integration, including language barriers, cultural distance (e.g., different habits/preferences, different background knowledge, different ways of interacting, etc.), and the attitudes of host people. As Smith and Khawaja (2011) discussed it in terms of cultural differences, Asian international students, coming from typically collectivistic cultures, may experience difficulties when interacting and attempting to make friends in a Western culture that emphasises individualism, assertiveness, and self-sufficiency over interdependence and relatedness.

Post-graduation Plans

By means of applying for Post-Graduation Work Permits, international students can expand their career plans through working in Canada on a temporary basis after graduation and thus enhance their eligibility for permanent residency. However, for international students who are transitioning from studying to working and permanent immigration, the number one fear was not getting a job or losing one's job (Arthur & Flynn, 2011). In Arthur and Flynn's (2011) research, the participants had generally negative experiences in their job search, stating that they had encountered cultural barriers and found the application process varied between countries and their lack of contacts was a major problem. And most of the participants in Kelly's (2012) study described their job search upon graduation as "intense", "difficult" and "frustrating", because of a lack of contacts to turn to in their job search, and a lack of previous work experience.

Personal Development and Identity Reshaping

International students at post-secondary institutions have to transition from adolescence or early adulthood to full adulthood in a foreign country. Studying and living abroad facilitate

their personal development. The greatest personal achievements reported by international students include maturation and independence, experiencing growth, accepting personal responsibility, broadened life experiences and interests, changes in ways of thinking, and improved interpersonal and communication skills (Gu et al., 2010; Windle, Hamilton, Zeng, & Yang, 2008).

As international students study abroad and try to adapt to the new academic and social environment, certain aspects of cultural beliefs and values may be beyond modification or "integration" and will never be completely abandoned for others (Gu et al., 2010). Thus, they may continue to experience a sense of boundary or "otherness" when confronted with conflicting values and beliefs. This tension between the locus of self (belonging) and simultaneous sense of otherness (alienation) (Gu et al., 2010) literally facilitates the students' identity reconfiguration during acculturation. International students' identity negotiations are actually concurrent with their language learning, academic studies, social interaction, and even post-graduation plans.

Thus, first, for second language learners, every time they communicate in the target language, they are organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world (Norton, 2013).

Second, Valdez (2015) found that in adapting to the Western educational system, Chinese international students in U.S. classrooms experienced a "double consciousness", which illustrated the internal identity conflict of being Chinese and being "Americanized." Interestingly, one student identified himself as "Americanized" because he asked too many questions during class (Valdez, 2015).

Third, while socializing with co-national, host-national and multi-national students, international students' multifaceted identity is constructed on a global one (Jackson, 2008). As

Arnett (2002, cited in Jackson, 2008) argued, young people today may develop both local and global identities that afford them "a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture". For example, 93% of the second survey respondents in Gu et al.'s (2010) study reported that they had become more appreciative of their home cultural values, and 70% confirmed that they had become more accepting of people with different attitudes and values.

Finally, international students' post-graduation plans might keep changing according to the different stages of their studies. Their personal development and identity recognition definitely have an impact on their plans to go back to their home countries immediately after graduation, to work in host countries temporarily or even permanently.

The Support System

When young people leave their families and friends behind and study in a foreign country, the biggest challenge is supposed to be the lack of social support, which will negatively affect their mental health and academic achievement. For instance, in a study on 200 Australian international students, two thirds of participants in their study reported that they had experienced loneliness and/or isolation in their host country particularly in the beginning months of their stay (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008, cited in Smith, & Khawaja, 2011). In Bertram et al.'s (2014) study to investigate the effects of social support on acculturation, Chinese students identified the challenge of feeling disconnected from others and one's surroundings as a general, frequent, acculturative-stress problem.

As Perry (2016) claimed, international students may not have a support system similar to that of many domestic students, and the social supports they can turn to are limited and inadequate compared to the various challenges they face. Social support has been considered one of the most critical components of determining international students' psychological well-being

(Cho & Yu, 2015). As international students live apart from their family members and friends, social support plays a very important role in reducing psychological stress and improving their life within the host society. Previous studies have empirically confirmed this crucial function of social support in relation to the various dimensions of international students' life (Cho & Yu, 2015).

In most cases, former research has concentrated on the question of how international students access support from interpersonal sources, such as family, friends, instructors (Cho & Yu, 2015). However, an additional key source for social support has been ignored, that is, the organization with which a person is affiliated. As numerous studies in organizational science have strongly argued, organizational support is a key factor that greatly influences various aspects of members' cognitive and emotional outcomes (Cho & Yu, 2015). It is understandable that as members feel more support from their organization, they are likely to be more satisfied and less stressed (Cho & Yu, 2015). Therefore, I will analyze international students' support system through two aspects: interpersonal support and organizational support.

Interpersonal Support

Considerable research indicates that international students rely on interpersonal sources for social support, particularly family and friends. For instance, in an Australian study it was found that 88% of international students who felt lonely relied on social networks to cope, and sources of social support most frequently cited were friends in Australia (54%) and family and relatives back home (34%) (Sawir et al., 2008, cited in Smith, & Khawaja, 2011). As another example, a majority of the participants in the research conducted by Bertram et al. (2014) first cited their parents and friends in China or their Chinese friends in the United States as the main sources of social support they would use when experiencing difficulties or challenges.

Organizational Support

Organizational support is supposed to come from a variety of sources, such as educational institutions, student clubs and associations on campus, local communities, and government-funded settlement agencies and employment service centers.

Yet, international students are heavily dependent on the host university in various ways. First, for international students, the right of residence in the host country is determined by the university's academic admission (Cho & Yu, 2015). Moreover, because of the structural differences in educational systems between the home and host countries, international students rely on universities for special orientations (Cho & Yu, 2015). Third, it should be considered that the university is the place where international students begin to build new relationships with diverse groups of people from the host society (Cho & Yu, 2015).

Such heavy dependence implies that university support is extremely crucial for international students' life in the host society. For this reason, host universities design and provide various programs to support these students. As the international enrolment has always been increasing, currently on-campus international student offices are experiencing great pressures on service delivery (Fernlund, Bristow, Abbas, Sloan, & Madden, 2014).

According to the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) (Fernlund et al., 2014), at a minimum, students believe that the following services should be considered essential to international students: academic counselling; career counselling; cultural adjustment assistance and cultural programming; financial advice; immigration and visa advising; mental health services; English (or French) language supports; and student support services that specifically target the unique needs of refugees and protected persons (Fernlund et al., 2014).

Moreover, as international students face unique challenges when transitioning into, through, and out of post-secondary education, institutions should provide comprehensive international student orientation programming, as well as transitional academic supports and English language supports throughout a student's program (Fernlund et al., 2014). Institutions must also provide access to culturally appropriate and sensitive mental health supports for international students as well as cultural awareness training to all students, staff, and faculty members to ensure the appropriate acceptance of the full diversity of student population (Fernlund et al., 2014).

In a study conducted by Hanassab and Tidwell (2002), international students reported knowledge of immigration regulations and visa requirements as their most important need and, next, career and academic-related needs, while viewing interpersonal happiness as merely a social accessory. Moreover, since some scholars found that international students were reluctant to seek formal assistance (Zhou et al., 2005; Smith & Khawaja, 2011), further research is needed on how and to what degree international students can actually take advantage of the diverse programs.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, qualitative case study design was used to explore the experiences, challenges, and supports of Chinese international students at Canadian universities. As the goal of the study is to explore a real-world situation, group, culture, or program to investigate what goes on there, and how participants perceive things (Creswell, 2013, cited in An, 2014), a qualitative case study design is deemed the most suitable research approach and strategy for this study.

A case study is an in-depth and down-to-earth study of subjects under consideration (Hamel, Dufourn, & Fortin, 1993). It is noteworthy that the case need not be a person or enterprise; it can be whatever "bounded system" of interest, such as an institution, a programme, a responsibility, a collection or a population (Stake, 2009). The case in this study is the Chinese international students studying at a university in Toronto, Canada. The generalizability will realistically be limited to Chinese international students studying in large multicultural cities where there are a significant number of Chinese Canadians as well as international students from China. Nevertheless, it is presumed that if even these international students find challenges, international students studying in universities in smaller and/or more homogenous communities may find even more, so those universities may also find valuable information from this study.

In order to answer the research questions, I conducted in-depth semi-structured individual interviews with eight Mandarin-speaking Chinese international students studying at a Canadian university and three International Student Advisors (ISAs) from the same university after the research project was granted approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) of Ryerson University.

Sampling

In recruiting student participants, the sampling strategies used in this research are random sampling and snowball sampling (Bernard, 2000). I put up and distributed recruitment posters on campus and three participants showed their interest in being involved in the research through responding to me by email. As the recruitment began in the summer of 2017 when many Chinese students were no longer around campus, I also used snowball sampling to recruit more student participants by asking "participant who (had) already been selected for the study to recruit other participants" who met the same inclusion criteria (An, 2014). I limited the number of student participants to eight based on the findings of Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006). They conducted 60 in-depth interviews with women in two West African countries, and found that saturation occurred in the first 12 interviews, and meta-themes were notable after the first six interviews.

While recruiting three International Student Advisors (ISAs) in this study as Key Informants, I contacted the Office of International Student Support and received full support from them. The sampling strategy here is purposive sampling, whereby I selected what I thought is a "typical" sample of advisors based on their specialist knowledge (Bernard, 2000).

All the participants were required to read and sign consent forms (see Appendix A and B) ahead of the time of the interviews. The consent forms ensure that all information provided would be held in the strictest confidentiality and that each participant would be assigned a pseudonym to protect his or her identity.

Participants

The participants in this study include eight Chinese international students and three International Student Advisors.

Student Participants

All the student participants are from Mainland China. Among the eight student participants (see Table 1), four are undergraduates and four are in graduate programs.

Table 1: Student Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Major	Level of Program	Years of Studying in Canada
Ada	F	Accounting	Graduate#	2
Bella	F	Business Management	Undergraduate	5*
Carol	F	MBA	Graduate#	2
Dan	M	Management	Graduate	1
Emily	F	Fashion	Graduate	2
Flora	F	Finance	Undergraduate	4
Gina	F	Biomedical Sciences	Undergraduate	4*
Helen	F	Accounting	Undergraduate	3

Having former work experience in China.

* Including years at Canadian high schools

Ada worked for several years in China after having received a bachelor's degree in Financial Management. Hoping to acquire new skills and get a higher academic degree, she compared the possibilities of studying in the US and Canada, and finally got admission into the graduate program in Accounting in Canada. Her aunt had immigrated to Canada years ago.

Bella dreamed of studying overseas all the time. Her experience of being an exchange high school student in Singapore for a couple of months reinforced her idea of going abroad. Her parents felt confident in sending her to study at a Canadian high school because it was operated

through a cooperative program run by her high school in China. After one year's highly intensive studies, she went to university to study Business Management.

After Carol worked in the area of marketing and public relations for more than seven years in Beijing, China, she believed her career hit a stalemate and she did not know how to develop professionally. She had always been dreaming of studying abroad and having a look at the outside world, but her parents were not able to financially support her upon her graduation from university. Having discussed with her husband about what she really wanted, she quit her job decisively and then spent six months preparing for the IELTS test and the application materials. In Canada, she studied at the GMAT preparatory course for one year before being enrolled into the MBA program.

Immediately after earning a bachelor's degree from a well-known university in Shanghai, China, Dan came to Canada to study further in Management. He chose the graduate program because of its one-year duration and its location in Toronto where there are more employment opportunities.

Emily came to study at the graduate program in Fashion after studying at the Graduate Studies Preparation Program at another Canadian university for one year to enhance her English level. Her main purpose of studying abroad was to experience life when she was still young. Having thought about Australia, the U.S., and Canada as destination countries, she eventually chose Canada because of the higher public safety and the possibility of getting permanent residency after her studies.

Flora entered the undergraduate co-op program in Finance as a top graduate from a girls' high school in Shanghai, China.

Gina, coming from Guangdong Province, China, can speak Cantonese, Mandarin, as well as English. As her aunt and grandparents immigrated to Canada, her parents asked her whether she wanted to study abroad when she was in junior middle school, but she declined. Later in senior high school, since she had already been in the stream of liberal arts but she had interest in studying biology, she made up her mind to study in Canada. After studying at an international school in China for more than two years, she first came to study at a language course for one year in Canada and then entered the undergraduate program in Biomedical Sciences.

Helen, like Flora, came to study accounting at university as soon as she graduated from a Chinese high school specializing in training students in foreign languages.

Among the student participants, there are two interesting demographic characteristics: one is the gender distribution, the other is the fields of study.

First, the data demonstrate that more females than males took part in this study even though statistics show that only 44.78% of international student studying in Canada in 2015 are women (IRCC, 2015). One reason for this incongruence could be that gender distribution varies depending on which country the students come from. According to the study done by the Center for China and Globalization (CCG) (2016), a recent trend in China is that the number of female students going abroad to study has been increasing so that there are literally more female Chinese students in some major destinations; for example, 63% of Chinese students studying in the U.K. are females. In Canada in particular, females account for 55% of all the Chinese international students. The reasons for this situation are complicated. It is generally accepted that female students are more capable of taking care of themselves and more psychologically developed than males of the same age, so that they are more adaptable to the study life abroad;

moreover, Chinese female students tend to academically outdo their male peers in China, too (CCG, 2016).

Second, a majority of the student participants majored in the fields of business, management, finance, and accounting, which is, to some degree, consistent with the concentration of majors for the general international student population in Canada. Between 2004-2005 and 2013-2014, the subject "Business, Management and Public Administration" remained the most popular among the international students in Canada (from 25% to 27%), and the subject "Architecture, Engineering and Related Technologies" had increased the most (from 15% to 19%) (Statistics Canada, 2016).

International Student Advisor Participants

The relevant work experience of the three International Student Advisors (ISAs) involved in this study ranges from one to three years. One ISA, coming from China after her undergraduate studies, can speak Mandarin.

Data Collection

For the purpose of the study, I conducted in-depth individual interviews with the student participants and ISA participants.

Tools

In designing the interview protocols for both the students and the ISAs, my goal was to maintain a certain level of openness and flexibility. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were adopted because I hoped the participants would be allowed abundant time and space to elaborate on their personal experiences (or opinions), and constant communication between the participants and the researcher could be made during the interviews in order to clarify the information and get in-depth data. The protocol for the student interviews was pilot-tested with a

former Chinese international student and then improved based on the feedback, while that for the ISA interviews was not pilot-tested.

Procedure

There are two steps in the procedure of data collection. I first interviewed the student participants in their native language, Mandarin Chinese. During the interviews with the student participants, I had to take into consideration the fact that some students might be undergoing emotional problems, such as loneliness, homesickness, depression, etc., while adapting to the new cultural and academic environment. In the second step, three International Student Advisors were interviewed individually. The interview with the Mandarin-speaking ISA was done in Mandarin, and the other two in English.

All the interviews were audio-recorded, and transcribed (and translated if applicable) later as the interviews went on. What's more, after each interview, I immediately wrote down my reflection upon that particular interview, which included the nonverbal interaction between the participant and me during the interview, the adjustment I needed to make in the next interview, the questions I thought about to explore in my analysis, and so on.

Data Analysis

Data organization and data analysis were simultaneous procedures (Merriam, 1988, cited in An, 2014). After all interviews were transcribed and reflection notes were sorted out, I began coding the data. The qualitative data in this study include the transcripts of interviews, while my reflection notes were used as additional information. Coding involves two activities: mechanical data reduction and analytic categorization of data into themes (Neuman, 2004). First of all, after carefully and repeatedly reading the data, I started to discover patterns in order to generate categories. Second, I wrote analytic memos based on the analysis of all the data, and crystallized

and triangulated the emerging patterns and themes. I constantly compared all the data to look for congruence and correspondence between them, so that I could integrate them into themes and concepts. Finally, after linking between the concrete data and more abstract, theoretical thinking, I returned to the literature with a focus on the new issues.

Researcher's Positioning

According to Berger (2013), the researcher's positioning includes personal characteristics, such as gender, race, age, immigration status, personal experiences, linguistic tradition, preferences, theoretical, political and ideological stances, and emotional responses to participants. In this study, I, as a qualitative researcher, took a variety of roles for data collection and analysis as the interviewer, the transcriber, the translator, the analyzer, and so on. I positioned myself as both an insider and an outsider to understanding Chinese international students' experiences, challenges, and supports.

I am an insider because I share the same ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background as well as the same study experience in Canada with the student participants in this study. In China I earned a master's degree in English Education and taught at a university for more than one decade before I immigrated to Canada four years ago. As I am now studying as a graduate student in Canada, I myself have experienced a painful transition to the new cultural and academic environment. In this way, I could empathize with the experiences of the student participants, which helped me build rapport with them to elicit more details of their lives to enrich the data for the project.

At the same time, I am also an outsider in terms of my researcher role. In qualitative research, reflexivity is commonly viewed as the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and

explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome (Berger, 2013). Through using reflexivity as a major strategy for quality control, I constantly reminded myself to keep my distance from the participants and the data collected so that I could objectively analyze the data and reflect on the findings of the research.

Certainly my background and worldview will affect the way in which I construct the world, use languages, pose questions, and choose the lens for filtering the information gathered from participants and making meaning of it, which may shape the findings and conclusions of the study (Berger, 2013). In this way, the roles of an insider and an outsider are inevitably intermingled.

Validity and Reliability

Triangulation has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity and reliability through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). There are four types of triangulation: method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999, cited in Carter et al., 2014). In this study, the research validity and reliability are based on data source triangulation, which involves different times for data collection, different types of places from which to collect the data, and different people who could be involved in the research study (Wilson, 2014). The triangulation of data from different sources, such as the relevant literature, the interviews with eight Chinese international students, and the interviews with three Key Informants, enables me to utilize the findings from one part of the study to solidify and validate the results from the other two. The cross-checking of the data obtained ensures validity and reliability in this study.

Limitations of this Study

The study was carried out at only one university in Toronto, Canada, with a limited number of interviewees. Therefore, caution should be exercised when applying the findings of this study to other contexts. There are likely to be noticeable contextual differences, such as the location of a particular university as well as the proportion of Chinese students in a certain program. In addition, as most of the student participants were female and enrolled in business related programs, their perspectives may not represent experiences of other Chinese international students. However, the findings are likely to be indicative of Chinese students' experiences at many universities, in Canada and beyond, in terms of the large numbers of Chinese students studying worldwide.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

The objective of this chapter is to present the findings that emerged from this qualitative study related to Chinese international students' experiences, challenges, and supports. In order to corroborate and contribute to the triangulation of the findings, this study interviewed not only individual Chinese international students but also International Student Advisors (ISAs) as Key Informants. Therefore, this chapter falls into two sections: student perspectives and ISA perspectives.

Interviews with Chinese International Students

This section analyzes the qualitative data obtained from the individual interviews with eight Chinese international students. First of all, it examines the students' experiences and challenges in five aspects: second language learning, academic studies, social interaction, post-graduation plans, and personal development and identity reshaping. Also, it presents the students' awareness and use of supports.

Experiences and Challenges

With regard to the general impression of their study experience in Canada, all four undergraduates regarded their personal development as the biggest benefit they gained after overcoming personal problems. For example, one student said she had broadened her world outlook, and three students reported they became more independent as they had learned to deal with everything by themselves. Flora reported: "In China I was over-protected by my parents, but the experience here taught me how to grow up and be independent after undergoing all those pains". On the contrary, the graduate students did not report such personal problems. While two graduate students singled out having a fruitful interpersonal relationship, such as having made helpful friends, as the best thing they had in Canada, two others, in comparing with their

undergraduate studies in China, considered having a more active academic experience the most beneficial to them. Carol, a MBA student, said: "Students get more involved in Canadian classrooms, and I have acquired various perspectives through discussing with my classmates". Dan stated: "In my undergraduate years I was laid-back about my studies and not so hardworking, but here the academic atmosphere makes me more dedicated and conscientious".

When requested to identify the biggest challenge facing them, the eight student participants gave very diversified responses, including: English usage, especially in real life; heavy schoolwork and how to get involved in classroom interaction; making friends in general and interacting with domestic students in particular; finding a job or a co-op job; and the pains in learning to be independent. Additionally, two students mentioned practical problems, such as financial pressure, how to make use of the medical system and health insurance, public transit and accommodation, etc. Except for the practical problems, their experiences and challenges will be analyzed in the following five aspects.

Second Language Learning

For most of the student participants, culture shock was experienced more in the form of "language shock", that is, the language with which they have to deal is far from what they had been expecting, and may even be disagreeable and disappointing to them, thus clouding their perceptions of the speakers concerned and instilling anxiety, demotivation and confusion at a very early stage of their stay (Marr, 2005). In weighing the differences between the English learned in Chinese classrooms and the real-life English in Canada, Carol said:

In China, we are like "dumb" English learners. Having studied English for more than ten years, our reading and writing are much better than listening and speaking. When I first

came to Canada, the main problem was I couldn't understand what other people said, especially when I had no relevant background information.

Even Helen, who had graduated from a foreign language high school in China and was therefore trained better in English than other high school graduates, found what she had learned at home was not at the same level she had to use here. She, together with Emily and Flora, stated that they could not even understand lectures in their initial days. What's more, Flora and Gina tried to avoid using English outside classrooms as much as possible, as they did not know how to communicate in everyday English. Interestingly, Flora talked about her preference for different ways of communication with limited English proficiency: "If I really needed to communicate with someone in English, I preferred using emails and even talking face-to-face to using phone calls, as I was afraid I could not catch everything on the phone".

Having been in Canada for one year or more and gone through the transition period, all the student participants considered their English proficiency adequate for dealing with academics. However, an overwhelming majority of the students specified that their English level negatively influenced their socialization with native speakers of English, and more importantly, they came to realize the role of cultural factors in this difficulty. For example, as Helen explained, the reasons why she sometimes couldn't comprehend what domestic students said were not only they spoke fast but also they used buzzwords. Dan found it hard to understand jokes told by local people because he was not so familiar with the Canadian culture. Moreover, Gina discerned the cultural barrier and found it easier to communicate with Chinese students or students of Chinese descent, while Carol believed she was happier when chatting with her Chinese fellow students as the topics were broader and deeper.

In making efforts to enhance English proficiency, five students identified English writing as a challenging part, which might be supposed to be the same level of difficulty for native English-speaking students in pursuing academic programs. Nevertheless, more students, six out of the eight, considered English listening and speaking demanding, as these skills affected their interaction with others. Take Bella's words as an example:

At the beginning, restricted by my English level, I didn't know how to express myself and found it hard to get closer to native speakers of English. Even now I still think English speaking is the most important, as the more you speak, the more friends you can make, particularly with local people. In this way you can reap more benefits of studying in Canada.

When asked about the effective ways of improving their English, five students reported that being immersed in the English learning environment, such as having classes and reading textbooks, was rewarding; and two students maintained that chatting with native speakers of English was the most helpful. Three students added that their work experience, either from a part-time or co-op job, helped them enhance their English a lot.

Furthermore, most students felt at ease with using English in daily life at the time of taking the interviews. Interestingly, one student, Dan, said he was not so comfortable speaking English with other Chinese students. Studying in a program where approximately three quarters of the students were Chinese (including Chinese immigrants), he basically used Mandarin Chinese to communicate with his fellow students, even though their instructors required all of them speak English in classrooms.

Academic Studies

In comparing their study experiences in Canada with those in China, five out of the eight students clearly expressed their preference for the Canadian student-centered teaching style. For instance, Bella stated: "In China I studied passively and had the feeling that I was forced by teachers and parents to study. But here I basically study by myself to expand my own knowledge base." Flora said, " In Canadian classrooms instructors and students work together and probe into the topic. No one really has control over you. You study for yourself, or for your future job."

Dan added:

In my undergraduate years, I often crammed for several days before the final exams, which accounted for 50%-60% of the final grades. However, the assignments in my graduate program here make up a higher percentage of the final grades so that I have to be more actively involved in the studies during the terms.

However, three students considered the student-centered and teacher-centered teaching equally beneficial to them, possibly because of the disciplines they majored in (two in accounting, one in sciences). Ada explained: "Although personally I like the student-centered learning activities, objectively speaking, the teacher-led lectures might be more suitable for studying accounting." Gina, enrolled in the program of biomedical sciences, said she had to learn through rote memorization. Plus, Helen deemed the high school education and the good study habits formed in China helpful to her later studies at university.

Concerning the academic progress they have made in Canada, while four students claimed they improved their ability to study independently, two other students believed that they gained deeper insights and broader vision into their specialized areas. Dan stated: "A lot of seminars and workshops are being held on campus, which helps me know more about the area.

And the placement I took familiarized myself with the work environment in Canada." Carol said she acquired different perspectives and the ability of logical thinking from the MBA program.

Contrary to the findings in other related studies (e.g. Zhou et al., 2005), the student interviewees in this study reported that their participation in classrooms was active in general. In classroom discussions, four students described their own engagement as active, three not active, and one neither active nor inactive. The trajectory of Bella's involvement in classroom discussion is typical:

Initially I never raised my hand in classroom discussion, and even tried to avoid eye contact with instructors. There are two reasons for my reluctance to speak up: one is my limited English proficiency; the other is I didn't know how to respond to open-ended questions, as we Chinese students are used to definite questions and answers. Later I gradually adjusted myself to speaking out whenever I have an idea, thanks to my improved English level and the stimulation of extra credit our instructors promised if we contributed to class discussions.

Carol demonstrated a more positive attitude to classroom engagement. Although she couldn't speak as fluently as domestic students, she believed she shared an international perspective in class: "In this MBA program, if you are only familiar with the economic situation in North America or just in Canada, your vision is too narrow in today's global economy. When it comes to China, we have our say". On the other hand, Flora revealed the rationale behind her silence in classroom discussions:

First, I am shy and introverted; second, I am not confident in my English level; third, I always expect my contribution to be meaningful and significant in the whole discussion; finally, I am afraid of losing "face" if I can't do it well.

The student participants reported better performance in class presentations for which, unlike more spontaneous discussions, they could prepare and practise beforehand. For example, Gina often got high grades for her presentations because she practised a lot of times until she learned the content by heart and therefore had confidence with her delivery.

Finally, with respect to the factors that had a negative impact on their academic performance, while two graduate students singled out their English proficiency, undergraduates gave more divergent answers. Two undergraduate students said dating or having a romantic relationship occupied too much time; and two others, Flora and Helen, mentioned their states of mind. Flora was graduating at the time of the interview and would take a graduate program in the following year. She reflected: "Looking back, I come to realize that I was immature and didn't have a strong motivation for studies so that I spent too much time hanging out or travelling, not knowing what I wanted". What is even worse, although Helen was eventually recovered from depression, those tough days in her second year in Canada negatively affected her studies.

Social Interaction

The most salient finding about the student participants' social interaction is that they made friends or socialized mainly with Chinese students, including not only Chinese international students but also first- or second-generation immigrants from China. Table 2 is a description of the Chinese international students' friendships roughly estimated by themselves during the interviews.

Table 2: Rough Estimation of Student Participants' Friendships

Pseudonym	Chinese International Students (%)	Domestic Students of Chinese Descent (%)	Other International Students (%)	Other Domestic Students (%)
Ada	50	25	-	25
Bella	10	80	10	-
Carol	70	2	20	8
Dan	50	50	-	-
Emily	80-90	-	-	10-20
Flora	70	20	-	10
Gina	40	60	-	-
Helen	80	10	-	10

There are various reasons for this phenomenon. First of all, there tend to be more Chinese students in certain academic programs, such as business and management, than in other programs, like social sciences and humanities. For instance, a majority of the students enrolled in Dan's program were Chinese. New to Canada, he wanted to "make more friends, no matter where they come from". So for him, making Chinese friends is just for "convenience". Second, to some students, building up friendship, considered an auxiliary to their stressful academic life, does not deserve special efforts. Flora and Carol, seeking pleasure and relaxation, preferred to make friends with anyone they could have agreeable chats with. Sharing the same cultural and linguistic background, Chinese students are, therefore, on the top of their options. Third, having experienced unsuccessful social interaction and hence realized the cultural distance, Emily,

Helen, and Gina expressed reluctance to make friends with fellow students other than Chinese.

Helen described her own previous attempt:

At first I felt like making more friends from other groups, so I joined the photography club on campus. But after one year I became aware of my superficial interaction with other students, which reminded me of the cultural barrier.

Finally, the attitude of host people might have an impact on international students' socialization.

Carol reported:

It actually depends. If the local people are more tolerant and open and willing to know more about Asian countries, we can have a really good talk. However, there are always people who would like to socialize within their familiar circles and don't want the trouble to communicate with foreigners. It is understandable to a degree, as we Chinese will take the similar trouble to chat with non-native speakers of Chinese and guess what they really mean.

Certainly there are exceptions. When required to describe the friend circle of other Chinese international students around them, Flora commented: "70% of my classmates from China make friends mostly with other Chinese international students, 20% mainly with Chinese immigrants, and 10% with various groups of students from all over the world". Helen mentioned that one Chinese international student, majoring in Biology, only made English-speaking friends, and another made friends almost exclusively with those from Korea as she appreciated the Korean culture.

Among the student participants, Bella is the only one that intentionally kept herself away from the circle of Chinese international students. She recalled her experience:

In order to practise my English and make more friends, I joined several student clubs that Chinese international students were unlikely to join, such as the glee club. At first, although most of the club members, outgoing and sociable, would greet me and take care of me, they tended to ignore me because I couldn't get engaged in their conversation. Gradually as we became acquainted with each other, they were OK even when I spoke slowly. In all, we should try to experience the host culture and integrate into the local environment. Do not just change a school geographically to study and be surrounded by the same group of Chinese students. I think we should know why we come here to study. Interestingly, hard as she tried, she still ended up making close friends with those of Chinese descent possibly because her boyfriend was a second-generation immigrant from China. By any measure, her endeavours to adapt to the host environment are really impressive.

In addition, five student participants asserted that joining student clubs and participating in networking events were good ways of building up new friendships, while three said they made friends only with those who could have amicable chats with them. Moreover, although the other students did not identify any barrier to establishing new friendships, two students reported that they did not have much time socializing because of the heavy schoolwork and one raised the question of how to keep connected with new acquaintances.

Post-graduation Plans

For Chinese international students, besides the Canadian study experience, the Canadian or international work experience is equally valuable in their long-term career planning. All the student participants mentioned their intention of working in Canada after graduation, either temporarily or permanently. As Dan said, "After I have acquired several years' work experience in Canada, it's likely I will have a higher starting point for my career in China." Four out of the

eight student participants stated that they intended to work and live in Canada in the long run, but at the same time all of them hoped they could work for several years in other countries, such as the U.S., and China. The other four students were still not definite about where they would stay permanently - Canada or China. Carol, the only married student participant, stated: "I will stay wherever I can land a suitable job and stay with my family".

Undoubtedly where they could find jobs plays a critical part in their decision as to whether they would stay in Canada or not. When asked about the barriers for them to find jobs in Canada, the student participants identified the lack of Canadian work experience, the lack of social networks, English communication at workplaces, and so on.

First, four students pinpointed their lack of Canadian work experience. Gina was regretful that that her program did not incorporate a co-op or internship component, which she believed would be helpful for her future employment. Yet even for those who were required to have a co-op or internship experience, such as Flora, searching for such a position is a painful process. Once an over-confident top student at her high school in China, Flora "did not get even one job offer after sending out more than 100 resumes and taking 20 job interviews," which made her burst into tears. Plus, even for those who previously worked in China, their work experiences are under-valued or even not counted in Canada. As Carol said, "It seems no employer cares about the work experience gained outside Canada".

The second factor mentioned as a barrier to finding a job was lack of social networks. Although the domestic university graduates also tend to lack work experience, as four students revealed, international students lack the same social networks as they have. Bella reported:

The domestic students grew up here and have developed a kind of network through, for instance, volunteering, which is what international students do not have. So after I realized the importance of networking, I went to volunteer for several times.

Finally, Chinese international students' English proficiency is a barrier for them to compete in the labour market, too. Gina said:

Even though my English level is OK among international students, I can still be easily distinguished as a non-native speaker of English. I need to improve my English further and learn how to speak in the Canadian way, as I will compete with Canadians in the labour market after graduation.

Ada expressed similar feelings. In the process of job hunting, Helen stated:

I need to spend a long time preparing for all the interview questions I can find online, as I am afraid that if I come across a new question, I am not so quick to answer it due to my limited English level.

All of the eight student participants planned to apply for permanent residency after graduation. For undergraduate students, the number one concern was whether they could get job offers, whereas the four graduate students did not feel any significant barrier to applying for immigration, as under the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP), international students with Master's degrees obtained in Ontario can apply without job offers. In spite of this, Emily was worried about how to successfully submit her application due to the high volume of applications compared with the limited immigration quota for the Masters Graduate Stream.

Personal Development and Identity Reshaping

Similar to the finding of Gu et al. (2010), the biggest personal development pinpointed by the student participants in this study is personal independence, while the other personal

achievements reported vary, including more understanding of people from various backgrounds, broadened vision, enhanced interpersonal skills, working harder, being able to learn from failures, and so on. Seven students believed that they were more independent than if they had remained in China. Helen, who came to Canada immediately after graduation from high school, described:

Besides academics, I have to handle everything in my daily life, such as looking for a place to rent, moving, purchasing and assembling furniture, grocery shopping, cooking, etc. Initially I felt so painfully anxious as to cry out sometimes when I didn't know how to cope with all the problems. Having undergone so much, now I have learned to be independent. If I stayed with my parents in China, I would not have the opportunity to practise these skills.

Bella added: " I have learned to take the initiative to approach everything, instead of waiting for somebody else to help me".

When requested to describe their own identity, four students identified themselves as Chinese without hesitation, one as Cantonese (from Guangdong Province), and three as both Chinese and Canadian. Self-identified as Chinese, Carol said: "When I was in China, I was dissatisfied with many aspects of life there, such as traffic jams, littering, etc. But after leaving China, I become proud of being a Chinese and can't tolerate it if others criticize China". Bella claimed she was more interested in the Chinese culture:

This year when I went back to China and had a visit to the Palace Museum in the Forbidden City, Beijing, I carefully observed all the courtyards with great interest, while I did not have so much patience earlier on . Having spent several years in Canada, even though I don't have the same strong sense of belonging to China as my parents, I do want to inherit the essence of the Chinese culture with a history of several thousand years.

What's more, all the four students who identified themselves exclusively as Chinese agreed that China's current economic development greatly enhanced their self-identification as Chinese. Carol expressed her appreciation for the economic reform in China, through which common Chinese people, like herself, could afford studying abroad. Bella paid more attention to the recent development in China, which had become a topic of conversation with her friends here. Emily, leaving China two years ago, was even afraid of not being able to keep pace with China's rapid development.

For those identified as both Chinese and Canadian, it seems they had various approaches to understanding the interview question. Ada said she was just one of "the Chinese people in Canada". Flora talked about her "identity switch": "In Canada, I identify myself as a Chinese, whereas if I go back to China, I will say I come from Canada. When travelling in the US, I told others that I was from Toronto." Helen was the only participant that portrayed herself as "westernized" to some extent, but in a presumably superficial way:

When I was back in China, I realized that I had already been westernized. For example, I am used to standing on the right side on escalators, which no one cares in China. Also, I don't like prying into other peoples' life, while many people in China really love inquiring about others' jobs, salaries, etc.

At the same time, beyond being Chinese or Canadian, the student participants seem to acquire a global identity, which can be inferred from their post-graduation hopes and plans to obtain international work experience.

Supports

Corroborating the previous research that demonstrates international students rely on interpersonal sources for social support (e.g., Bertram et al., 2014), all the student participants

reported that they first turned to their friends in Canada for help when they encountered any difficulty or problem, and then, if the problems couldn't be settled, to relatives in Canada, parents in China, and instructors in case of academic matters. In addition to interpersonal supports, there are two other important sources of social support reported by the students. One is online search engines or online forums among Chinese students. Dan said he would "seek help first from Google and then from friends". Carol found online forums useful (e.g. www.yorkbbs.ca), where Chinese students could share information about every aspect of daily life, such as exchanging textbooks, sharing apartments, etc. The other source of support is churches, from which the students can also gain a kind of organizational support. While Helen and Carol felt relief from pressure by going to church from time to time, Bella claimed that the church, as a significant source of support, helped her find her direction in life: "They have a special program for students, in which the priest offers advice on how to deal with studies, the relationship with fellow students, job searching, and so on."

What's more, while the four graduate students stated they did not have any big psychological and emotional problem, two undergraduates, Helen and Gina, reported that they experienced mental health problems. When it comes to psychological and emotional support, four students said they would rely on themselves to adjust their feelings. As Flora said, "I prefer not to share my negative feelings with others". Only when they could not iron out the problems by themselves, would they look for help from friends and parents, or even formal psychological counselling. Helen fought against depression mainly with the help of her parents and friends:

Although I don't like math, my parents chose the Accounting program for me. In the second year when we began to take specialized courses, I felt insurmountable pressure of studies. My parents and friends talked with me regularly to finally help me out. Also, I

frequently went to church with one friend of mine during that time, which made me feel better.

Gina resorted to psychological counselling on campus:

As my parents' business was negatively influenced by the whole economic situation in China, they could barely afford my tuition fees and living expenses from a couple years ago. Due to the pressures from funding, plus those from academics and relationships, I was so stressed out that I became physically ill. Actually it is my physician who referred me to the mental health counsellors. It's helpful as I could talk about everything with the counsellors who showed empathy and offered professional advising.

With regard to organizational support, one finding is that almost all the student participants were not aware of international student supports existing outside their host university except for churches. They did not know they could find support in local communities, government-funded settlement agencies and employment service centers, etc. Another finding is that they did not fully utilize the services provided by their university, even though they were heavily reliant on their host university for support. For example, Emily said: "I know the Office of International Student Support offers all kinds of services, so I will just go to ask for help if I have a problem". But at the same time, she acknowledged that, living far away from campus, she didn't have much time to attend the events or activities on campus. While Helen considered some services too general to be useful, she obtained a lot of help to solve problems involving legal issues:

When I was here for only one month, my computer was stolen from my dormitory. I had to call the police but didn't know how to. At another time, I had a dispute with my former landlord. The staff at my university helped me out of those situations.

The student participants identified the most useful international student services provided by the university as immigration and visa advising, academic counselling (especially writing support), and career counselling. Specifically, as one of the four students who regarded immigration and visa advising as helpful, Bella said: "The international student advisor told me how to prepare the documents for the study permit extension, about which I really had no idea". Concerning academic counselling, Dan stated: "I went to the writing center several times, which was helpful to me. They also hold language programs, which are, however, often in conflict with my schedule". Ada considered career counselling beneficial because she could gain confidence through preparing resumes and taking mock job interviews.

When asked about how to improve the international student service at their university in general, the student participants' suggestions included enhancing international students' awareness of the services available to them, providing more financial support, more mental health support, career counselling targeted at international students, and so on. When it comes to Chinese international students in particular, Bella advocated for more activities to help Chinese international students mingle with other student groups, especially with domestic students. And Flora proposed more international student service in the Chinese language:

When Chinese students initially come to Canada, they are actually scared to speak with a native speaker of English. So it makes them more comfortable having someone who speaks Chinese at the Office of International Student Support. Also, if some Chinese students can be recruited as volunteers to promote the services, the Chinese students might be able to make better use of the services.

Interviews with International Student Advisors

This section is the analysis of the data from the individual interviews of three International Student Advisors (ISAs), covering Chinese international students' challenges in the ISAs' eyes as well as their use of supports provided by their host university.

Challenges

International Students in General

Through different verbal expressions, all the three ISAs regarded the biggest challenge facing international students as the transition to the new cultural, linguistic, and academic environment. One ISA claimed that international students' understanding of the Canadian culture would influence their interaction with local people: "As they are not familiar with the Canadian culture, they don't dare to, even if they want to, initiate the social interaction with others (e.g., domestic students) and don't know whether they can practise their own culture in Canada." Another ISA talked about the academic transition: "International students, even for those who have attended high school here, need to adapt to the post-secondary education, such as the style of lectures, the connections with instructors, assignments, etc."

As the ISAs, though they provide various kinds of advising and supports to international students, are chiefly involved in immigration and visa advising, the second biggest challenge in their eyes is the complexity of immigration policies. Just as one ISA said:

They [the students] don't know much about the regulations and how to abide by them.

For instance, some students, showing excessive concern about the immigration thing, came to ask me: "My study permit is going to expire in SIX months, what should I do?"

The other challenges named by one ISA include the lack of social support and maintaining mental wellbeing. She explained:

Leaving their family and friends in their home countries, the students need to learn how to meet new people, make friends, and how to build up trust to maintain deep friendship despite cultural differences. Also, in some cultures, mental health is not a topic they can talk about. They think they might be fine the following day. Even if we refer them to a counsellor, they might not go or find it not helpful due to the language barrier.

Chinese International Students

With respect to Chinese international students, all the three ISAs regarded the language barrier as their biggest challenge. One ISA reported:

Chinese students constitute an overwhelming majority of the students at the ESL Foundation Program at our university, which is designed for students who are academically qualified to apply for admission to an undergraduate program, but do not meet the minimum English proficiency requirements.

Another ISA experienced the situation in which some Chinese students came to her office but could not express themselves clearly in English and she had to refer them to the Mandarin-speaking ISA. She also noticed Chinese students' distinct way of communication: "They are indirect in communication, while in the Canadian context we are direct. I have to ask them many open-ended questions in order to get the answers."

The Mandarin-speaking ISA, who had more interaction with Chinese students, pointed out that they tended to flock together, especially among the younger ESL students:

I always encourage them to socialize with other students. While some of them don't want to, as they might not feel so comfortable, others don't know how to approach others and maintain the friendship. It's understandable as it's hard to break through the barriers rooted in our cultural traditions.

She also mentioned a few exceptions: "I have seen several Chinese students, claiming that they came here just to experience differences, deliberately shun other Chinese students and the Chinese culture. But I think that's problematic, too."

The same ISA also talked about the mental health problems among Chinese students and how they are not active in seeking help:

Since last year I have encountered a few Chinese students with mental health problems.

Although we are not specialists, we can listen to whatever they want to say. Some students initiated the contact with me. However, others confided in me only after I noticed their poor academic performance while preparing their status letters and asked them why, for example, they skipped so many classes. Some of them just kept everything to themselves: they are not willing to tell their parents and they don't have roommates.

Additionally, all the three ISAs touched on the Chinese students' pressure from their parents, who hold high expectations of their children. One of them said:

Parents plan the future path for their kids, hoping them to study Business or Engineering, find decent jobs and immigrate after studies. But they have no idea about what their kids want and whether they can endure the pressure of realizing those goals.

Supports

Most importantly, the ISAs found that Chinese students had more interest in practical supports, such as academic supports (in English, writing, math, etc.), immigration and visa advising, career counselling, health insurance, than in cultural adaptation programs and social networking. One ISA stated: "We know that for immigration workshops, students will come in large numbers anyway, whereas we have to promote other programs that are not so practical through email notifications and by offering free food, prizes, etc." According to the observation

of two ISAs, not many Chinese-looking students appeared at the intercultural programs provided by them, like Glocal Links and Love Without Borders. Nevertheless, one ISA believed that the Personal Development Advising was the most useful service to students, with which international students hadn't realized that they could get support or help. She explained:

We have mandatory student Personal Development Advising appointments. At the first appointment, the students can talk about their goals and interests. We provide information and resources that they can use to work towards their goals. We meet the students three times a year, one at the beginning, the second after the winter break, the third at the very end with a reflection about their journey towards their goals.

Concerning how to improve international student service, the ISAs, through a survey conducted by their office in April, 2017, found that international students preferred more one-on-one appointments and social events. In addition, one ISA said that the financial aid for international students was limited. While they made special efforts to facilitate part-time, on-campus employment for international students through the Career Boost International program, the number of positions was inadequate. The Mandarin-speaking ISA recommended Mandarin on-campus mental health counselling based on the interviews with a focus group of Chinese students:

Some students said they were resistant to the idea of getting mental health counselling, as they believed they were not mentally ill. Others went to see the counsellors, but they stated the counsellors couldn't understand what they meant either because of the language barrier or because of the cultural barrier.

All the three ISAs, although not in managerial positions, believed funding was not a barrier to improving their services at the time of the interviews, but student engagement was. Just as one ISA said:

We have so many programs and events going on, which we think are interesting and beneficial to students. But how many students have interest and actually show up? Every year we evaluate our programs to add or wrap up programs. So the barrier is how we can get feedback and know what the students want. Of course they will come when their study permit is going to expire. But what about an excursion to see a piece of culture in Toronto? And how to get them see the importance of those experiences?

Another ISA described their efforts to improve student involvement:

Last year we began to meet all the first-year students on one-on-one basis about what services we provide, and how they can get involved on campus. That allows us to know about them, and build up the relationship at the very beginning.

With regard to the international student supports off campus, the ISAs, admitting that the university was the biggest source of supports, had limited information and barely cooperated with other organizations. However, they did encourage students to get involved in their neighbourhood communities and churches, and get help from settlement agencies. The only program they provided in partnership with off-campus organizations was the tax clinics. As the international students were not familiar and felt stressed with filing their taxes, they worked together with Canada Revenue Agency and WoodGreen Community Services to offer help.

At the end of the interviews, the ISAs made several suggestions to Chinese international students. First, Chinese international student need to know that there are various student services on campus for free. The educational institutions provide a lot of different advising and supports,

which can support international students basically for anything. Second, Chinese students are advised to remember that they are not alone here. If they identify any problem with themselves, especially about mental health, they should seek help actively and proactively. Third, there are more on campus than academics to enrich a student as a person. Chinese international students are encouraged to get connected on or off campus to meet new people, especially those from other cultures, and experience new things. Finally, they also need to take care of their personal development in order to have their own future plan and know what they want.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Chinese International Students' Experiences and Challenges

Overall, the student participants' experiences and challenges are summarized with regard to the following five areas: second language learning, academic studies, social interaction, post-graduation plans, personal development and identity reshaping.

First of all, despite having undergone the transition period of "language shock" during which they learned how to deal with academics, all the student participants considered their English proficiency, combined with the cultural barrier, not sufficient for their socialization with native speakers of English.

Second, five out of the eight student participants clearly expressed their preference for the Canadian student-centered teaching style over the Chinese teacher-centered teaching style, whereas three believed both were equally beneficial to them due to the different disciplines they majored in. Moreover, contrary to the findings in previous studies, they reported that their participation in classrooms was active in general, and they performed better in class presentations than in discussions.

Third, the most impressive finding about the student participants' social interaction is that they made friends or socialized mainly with not only Chinese international students but also domestic students of Chinese descent.

Fourth, all the student participants expressed their intention of working in Canada after graduation, either temporarily or permanently. Four students stated that they planned to live in Canada in the long run, whereas four others had not decided yet at the time of the interviews.

Finally, the biggest personal achievement reported by the student participants is personal independence. When requested to describe their own identity, four students identified themselves as Chinese without hesitation, one as Cantonese, and three as both Chinese and Canadian.

Chinese International Students' Supports

All the student participants reported they first turned to their friends in Canada for help when they encountered any difficulty or problem, and then to relatives in Canada, parents in China, and instructors in case of academic matters. Yet, when it comes to psychological and emotional support, they would rely first on themselves to adjust their feelings, and then on their friends, parents, and even formal psychological counselling.

Even though the student participants were heavily dependent on their host university for support, they did not fully utilize the services provided by their university. Both the student participants and the ISAs reported Chinese students had more interest in practical supports, such as immigration and visa advising, academic supports, and career counselling, than in cultural adaptation programs and social networking.

Interestingly, there are two other important sources of social support reported by the students: one is online search engines or online forums among Chinese students; the other is churches. What's more, almost all the students and the ISAs were not aware of international student supports outside their host university except for churches, such as those from local communities, governments, etc.

Discussion

This section explains the findings in this study primarily from a cultural perspective through the theoretical framework of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the bilinear model of acculturation and enculturation.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

It is noteworthy that in this study Hofstede's theory on cultural dimensions is applied not to dichotomize the East versus the West and therefore to imply that it is implausible for Chinese students, for example, to adapt to Western educational institutions cross-culturally. Rather, Hofstede's theory on cultural dimensions is an effective tool for recognizing cultural differences and understanding Chinese students' experiences and challenges while studying in Canada. Under this cultural framework, it was found that Chinese students had to make a relatively large cross-cultural transition (Ward & Kennedy, 1993) compared with students from some other countries, such as the U.S. and those in Europe. Therefore, it is advisable for Chinese international students to take greater initiative to acclimatize to their host environment. At the same time, it is important for instructors, International Student Advisors, and other stakeholders in their destination countries to acknowledge Chinese students' special efforts in transition and provide more supports to them.

Through the immersion into the host academic environment and their own endeavours, the student participants had adapted relatively well to meet academic requirements, such as acquiring academic English, being engaged in student-centered classroom activities, and so on. For one thing, academic studies are what they have to do as students and their purpose for being in Canada. For another, it is more straightforward to deal with academics than with people from different cultural backgrounds. By the same token, it is more challenging for Chinese international students to pick up everyday English, have interesting conversations with local people, socialize with domestic students, and interact with their future colleagues at workplaces.

The most remarkable finding in this study is that the student participants socialize mainly with Chinese students, including Chinese international students and domestic students of Chinese

descent. There are three layers of barriers to Chinese students' social integration: contextual, cultural, and personal factors. The "contextual barrier" (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2016) involves, for instance, the large number of Chinese immigrants in Canada as a major immigrant-receiving country as well as the concentration of Chinese students on campus in certain programs, which brings about Chinese students' limited opportunities to meet people out of their ethnic community. It is interesting to explore, from a cultural perspective, why Chinese students tend to choose academic specialities like business and management, engineering, and science, including discussing why their parental expectations lie in these fields. In Chinese culture, academic achievement is seen as a social endeavour. Individual academic achievement is not only a person's own quest for knowledge, but also a means to bring wealth, power, fame, and honour to the family, and hence an individual's achievement goals may be subsidiary to those of others (Tao & Hong, 2014). Also, the greater acceptance of higher power distance, or power differences within and among groups, in Chinese culture is embodied in a traditional sense of family obligation called *filial piety*, which encompasses a broad range of behaviours, including children's respect for, obedience and loyalty to, and physical care of, their parents (Zhan & Montgomery, 2003, cited in Wang, 2016). Therefore, Chinese students' choice of academic specialities as well as their career expectations are affected more by their parents' opinions or consideration of the employment market than by their own personal preferences (Wang, 2016).

Furthermore, Chinese students need to cover a comparatively long cultural distance to function comfortably in the host culture, which takes more time and effort. Before they integrate more into the host environment, it is reasonable and natural for Chinese students to stick with their co-nationals, as in the collective Chinese society, individuals must conform to others'

expectations, consider others' desires, and adjust themselves to the whole community (Wang, 2016).

On the personal level, factors such as personality, preference for an “easy option”, emotional satisfaction from mixing with people from a similar background, and limited language levels (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2016) all interact to restrict Chinese students to their own ethnic community.

The Bilinear Model of Acculturation and Enculturation

Undoubtedly, international students benefit from their enculturated socialization as they can provide support for each other within their ethnic community, so that they have less visible problems with transitions and fewer negative feelings in their daily lives (e.g. Du & Wei, 2015; Trice, 2004). On the other hand, some scholars found that those who socialized with host-nationals were more comfortable in the host culture, more socially connected, more involved in campus cultural events, and therefore more satisfied and content (Zhou & Zhang, 2014; Trice, 2004).

In reality, it is unlikely for Chinese international students to uproot themselves from their home culture and it is also problematic, as one ISA said, for them to shun their identity of being Chinese. Although some researchers have argued that staying together mostly with students from their home country may limit their communication with local and other international students (e.g. Jiao, 2006, cited in Zhou, & Zhang, 2014), I make use of the bilinear model of acculturation and enculturation in this study to argue that acculturation and enculturation are equally significant for Chinese international students, especially in such a multicultural metropolis like Toronto. Under this model, even though one finding in this study is that Chinese students have a

high level of enculturation, it is still possible for them to enhance acculturation through their own efforts as well as interpersonal and organizational supports.

Individual Characteristics of Student Participants

One finding relating to the students' age, an individual characteristic, is evident: the undergraduates reported having overcome more personal problems than graduate students, which implies that the younger students had more problems with their personal development, and what's more, two undergraduates even had mental health problems. Thus, students' age plays a vital role in maintaining their wellbeing while studying abroad, even though not necessarily in academic and social integration.

No single theory can fully account for the complex and dynamic journey of Chinese international students. While the aforementioned theoretical framework provides interesting insights to help explain the most salient findings in this study, I could not ignore the internal factors, such as the students' individual characteristics, that influenced what they experienced and how they responded to challenges. Some were active in classroom activities, others were not. Some made some efforts to socialize with other student groups, others did not even want to. Some were persistent in their endeavours to integrate into the local environment, others easily gave up. While some were more interested in the Chinese culture, others tried to be "westernized". Some planned to live in Canada permanently, others wanted to go back to China. Thanks to the student participants' individual characteristics, this qualitative study generates findings beyond what a couple of theories can cover.

Recommendations

For Students

Based on the findings from this study, the following are the recommendations to Chinese students so that they could have a successful experience in Canada.

Before making the decision to study abroad, students and their parents need to think about their own values and whether the students have reached the level of maturity necessary to pursue them. These considerations might include knowing what is right or wrong and what their life goals are, as well as whether the students are independent, self-disciplined, and mentally ready to resist pressure and deal with difficulties.

While preparing for leaving their home country, students need to keep improving their English proficiency and familiarize themselves with the host academic and social environment through, for example, utilizing the online resources and learning lessons from those who have previous experience of studying abroad. With regard to choosing academic programs, students should work together with their parents to balance between their own interests and career prospects.

In addition to their academic work, students are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone to meet other new people and experience new things during their sojourn in Canada. It is advisable to keep connected both on and off campus, both with the Chinese community and with other student groups. If there is any problem or difficulty, students should actively and proactively seek help from, for instance, the support staff at their educational institutions.

For Educational Institutions

This study reveals that educational institutions act as a major source of organizational support for Chinese international students; thus there is a clear need for faculty and staff

members to learn about Chinese students and their culture and assume an open, tolerant, empathetic attitude toward different approaches of doing things (Shi, 2006). Intercultural sensitivity, which refers to the perceived understanding of and comfort with complex cultural difference (Bennett, 2004), is even more applicable to host-nationals than to international students who have already had hands-on experience of cultural differences.

Instructors are encouraged to develop a "culturally sensitive pedagogy", through which, for example, they limit the usage of colloquialisms, slang or their own culture-based metaphors (Shi, 2006). As another example, a few student participants mentioned their instructors required them to speak English with their fellow Chinese students and gave them extra credit if they participated in classroom discussion, which shows the teachers were mindful of developing Chinese students' social orientation. In addition, if instructors intentionally help Chinese international students mingle with other students through group work, it is beneficial for Chinese students to widen their circle of friends, at least in classrooms.

International Student Advisors need to make efforts not only to provide services to international students but also to encourage domestic students to get involved in events and activities organized for international students so that international students can get more opportunities to socialize with domestic students (Zhou, & Zhang, 2014). Peer-pairing programs that match international students with local peers have been found to enhance intercultural interactions for international students, and residential programs have also proven effective (Ward et al., 2009).

For Local Communities and Governments

Researchers across disciplines came to the consensus that community interactions are essential for cultural adaptation (Kusek, 2015). International students are not only important for

universities, but even more so to the host communities, towns and regions where higher educational institutions are located. According to Ward et al. (2009), outreach activities, such as international days, student-sponsored workshops, and food festivals, are unlikely to have significant consequences as the contact is brief and relatively superficial. In contrast, programs that have been specifically designed to encourage international friendship and understanding are more likely to have long-term effects, like Operation Friendship International (Ward et al., 2009), a volunteer organisation to promote friendships and understandings around the world. Certainly, religious institutions in the local communities can also act as a source of social support for students (Li et al.,2017).

One finding in this study is that the student participants are generally unaware of the off-campus international student supports, such as government-funded settlement programs and services. In practice, although very few settlement agencies offer services specifically oriented towards international students, some settlement and employment service providers do include students as their clientele. For example, the City of Toronto Employment Centers and Ontario Employment Resource Centers serve any resident living in their administrative area (Roach, 2011). There are some employment programs for recent university and college graduates with work permits, like the Ontario Internship Program and Career Edge (Roach, 2011). Besides, COSTI Immigrant Services in Toronto provide ESL training for visitors and work permit holders. In my view, the International Student Connect Project can be held up as a model program in the settlement field for international students. This project, coordinated and administered by COSTI Immigrant Services and partnered with various educational institutions and settlement agencies in Ontario, is a province-wide bilingual pilot project designed to identify and develop an

appropriate service response to the settlement needs of international students pursuing post-secondary education in Ontario.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are some possible directions for future research. First, in the Canadian context where thousands of immigrants are admitted every year and a large number of new Canadians and their children need to get educated or re-educated, it is worthwhile to explore how Chinese international students interact with Chinese immigrants at educational institutions and how this interaction influences their academic and social integration. Second, in today's world, interpersonal interaction has been extended to online forums or social media platforms. Therefore, it's interesting to examine Chinese international students' socialization and support in online communities. Finally, as identity reconfiguration is concurrent with international students' English learning, academic studies, social interaction, post-graduation plans, and personal development, more research on how their identity is reshaped along with their experiences in those five areas is needed.

Conclusion

In closing, the intent of this study was to explore the experiences, challenges, and supports specific to the Chinese student population at Canadian universities. In order to triangulate the data from different sources, individual interviews with eight Chinese international students and three International Student Advisors were conducted in this qualitative research. Within the theoretical framework of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the bilinear model of acculturation and enculturation, this paper examines Chinese international students' experiences and challenges with regard to the following five areas: second language learning, academic studies, social interaction, post-graduation plans, and personal development and

identity reshaping. Moreover, based on Chinese international students' awareness and use of supports available to them, this study has implications for practice as to how to improve their support system.

APPENDIX A: Consent Form 1 (Students)

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

The research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at Ryerson University.

Experiences, Challenges and Supports during Studying and Sojourning in Canada: The Case of Chinese International Students

INVESTIGATORS:

This research study is being conducted by Zhengying Qian, supervised by Prof. Kenise Murphy Kilbride, from the Graduate Program in Immigration and Settlement Studies at Ryerson University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Zhengying Qian (Email: zqian@ryerson.ca).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

Through exploring the experiences, challenges and supports of Chinese international students at Canadian post-secondary institutions, this proposed study aims to find out how to improve their support system, to enhance their well-being in Canada, and therefore to benefit both such students and the Canadian society itself, both financially and socio-culturally. The Major Research Paper based on this study is intended to fulfill the partial requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Graduate Program of Immigration and Settlement Studies at Ryerson University.

The whole study incorporates a literature review, individual interviews with 6-8 Chinese international students from Ryerson University, as well as a focus-group interview with three International Student Advisors working at Ryerson University, all of which will be jointly analyzed and synthesized.

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO (WHAT PARTICIPATION MEANS):

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Read this consent form thoroughly, email the investigator if you have any question, sign and date it if you agree to participate in this study and email it back to zqian@ryerson.ca.
- Set the time and place for the interview with the investigator through emails.
- Participate in the interview, mainly through answering questions (e.g., “What is the biggest challenge you have found during your studies in Canada?”). The expected

duration of the interview is approximately 1.5 hours. The interview will be conducted in the private study rooms of Ryerson University's Student Learning Center.

Only the investigator has access to your personal information (name and email address), which will be used only to set the time and location for the interview. No other personal demographic data will be collected during the interview.

All the participants in the study will have access to the final research paper through the website of Ryerson University Library and Archives after September, 2017.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO YOU:

The findings of the study may be utilized by international student service providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to enhance the well-being of Chinese international students in Canada, and can be extended to the general international student population in Canada, or even in other destination countries. I cannot guarantee, however, that you personally will receive any direct benefit from participating in this study.

POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AS A PARTICIPANT:

Generally the potential risks involved in this study are very low, but you might encounter psychological distress or discomfort during the interview. Because of the personal nature of the questions asked, you may reflect on unpleasant memories while responding to a question in the interview, particularly if your answers relate to having experienced homesickness, loneliness, or even depression. If you begin to feel uncomfortable, you may skip answering a question or stop participation, either temporarily or permanently. Therefore, at the start of the interview, the investigator will provide you with a list of sources for professional counseling should you feel such counseling will be helpful. Here at Ryerson University such counselors include:

- 1) Centre for Student Development & Counselling
Phone: 416-979-5195 Location: JOR 07C Website: ryerson.ca/counselling
- 2) Ryerson Medical Centre
Phone: 416-979-5070 Location: KHW 181 Website: ryerson.ca/medicalcentre
- 3) Ryerson Health Promotion
Phone: 416-979-5000 ext. 4295 Location: KHW 279 Website: ryerson.ca/heathpromotion

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Only the investigator will have access to your contact information (name and email address), which will be stored separately from the research data. Pseudonyms will be assigned in the dissemination of the results or published material.

Your contact information will be stored on the principal investigator's password-protected desktop for at most one year. After one year, the identifying information will be deleted from the investigator's desktop and email inbox, and the paper files will be shredded.

If you agree to be audio-recorded during the interview, you have the right to review the recordings right after the interview and review/edit the transcripts two weeks after the interview. The audio recordings will only be listened to and transcribed directly by the principal investigator. Only the investigator will have access to the raw and transcribed recordings. The digital data will also be stored in the principal investigator's password-protected desktop, and the paper data will also be stored in a locked cabinet at the investigator's home for at most one year. After one year, these data will be deleted and the paper files will be shredded. No one else has access to the investigator' desktop and the locked cabinet.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY:

By agreeing to participate in this research, you are not giving up or waiving any legal right in the event that you are harmed during the research.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip that question. You may tell the investigator that you would like to withdraw from participating at any time during the interview, and you may choose not to have your data included in the study. Even if you complete the interview, you may also inform the investigator not to include your data in the study within two weeks after the interview. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with the investigators, Zhengying Qian and Dr. Kenise Murphy Kilbride, involved in the research.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY:

If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact:

Primary Investigator: Zhengying Qian

Email: zqian@ryerson.ca

Research Supervisor: Dr. Kenise Murphy Kilbride

Email: kilbride@ryerson.ca

Phone: 416-979-5000, ext. 3412

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

Research Ethics Board

c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation

Ryerson University

350 Victoria Street

Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

416-979-5042

rebchair@ryerson.ca

Experiences, Challenges and Supports during Studying and Sojourning in Canada: The Case of Chinese International Students

CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be audio-recorded for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX B: Consent Form 2 (International Student Advisers)

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

The research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at Ryerson University.

Experiences, Challenges and Supports during Studying and Sojourning in Canada: The Case of Chinese International Students

INVESTIGATORS:

This research study is being conducted by Zhengying Qian, supervised by Prof. Kenise Murphy Kilbride, from the graduate program in Immigration and Settlement Studies at Ryerson University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Zhengying Qian (Email: zqian@ryerson.ca).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

Through exploring the experiences, challenges and supports of Chinese international students at Ryerson, this proposed study aims to find out how to improve their support systems, to enhance their well-being in Canada, and therefore to benefit the students and the Canadian society itself, both financially and socio-culturally. The Major Research Paper based on this study is intended to fulfil the partial requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Program of Immigration and Settlement Studies at Ryerson University.

The whole study incorporates a literature review, individual interviews with 6-8 Chinese international students from Ryerson University, as well as a focus-group interview with three International Student Advisors working at Ryerson University, all of which will be jointly analyzed and synthesized.

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO OR WHAT PARTICIPATION MEANS:

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Read this consent form thoroughly, email the investigator if you have any question, sign and date it if you agree to participate in this study, sign your consent to confidentiality, sign your consent to have the group audio-recorded, if you are willing, and email it back to zqian@ryerson.ca.
- Set the time and place for the interview with the investigator through emails or phone calls. The interview will be conducted in a separate meeting room in your area or a private study room of Ryerson University's Student Learning Center.

- Participate in the interview, mainly through answering questions and participating in discussion (e.g., “What is the biggest challenge for Chinese international students studying in Canada?”). The expected duration of the interview is approximately one hour. The interview will be conducted in a separate meeting room in your office area or a private study room of Ryerson University's Student Learning Center.
- Agree to keep confidential the content of the discussion during the interview.

Although your contact information (name, email address, and office phone number) is available online, the investigator will use it only to set the time and location for the interview. No other personal demographic data will be collected during the interview.

All the participants in the study will have access to the final research paper through the website of Ryerson University Library and Archives after September, 2017.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

The findings of the study may be utilized by international student service providers, policymakers, and other stakeholder to enhance the well-being of Chinese international students in Canada, and can be extended to the general international student population in Canada, or even in other destination countries. I cannot guarantee, however, that you personally will receive any direct benefit from participating in this study.

POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AS A PARTICIPANT:

Generally the potential risks involved in this study are minimal, as you, as Key Informants, are being asked to share your professional opinions, not reflect on personal experience which may be distressing.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Only the investigator has access to your contact information (name, email address, and office phone number), which will be stored separately from the research data. Pseudonyms will be assigned in the dissemination of the results or published material.

Your contact information will be stored on the principal investigator's password-protected desktop for at most one year. After one year, the identifying information will be deleted from the investigator's desktop and email inbox, and the paper files will be shredded.

If you agree to be audio-recorded during the interview, you have the right to review the recordings right after the interview and review/edit the transcripts two weeks after the interview. The audio recordings will be listened to and transcribed directly by the principal investigator. Only the investigator will have access to the raw and transcribed recordings. The digital data will also be stored in the principal investigator's password-protected desktop, and the paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the investigator's home for at most one year. After one year, the

digital data will be deleted and the paper files will be shredded. No one else has access to the investigator' desktop and the locked cabinet.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY:

By agreeing to participate in this research, you are not giving up or waiving any legal right in the event that you are harmed during the research.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip that question. You may tell the investigator that you would like to withdraw from participating at any time during the interview, and you may choose not to have your data included in the study. Even if you complete the interview, you may also inform the investigator not to include your data in the study within two weeks after the interview. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with the investigators, Zhengying Qian and Dr. Kenise Murphy Kilbride, who are involved in the research.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY:

If you have any question about the research, you may contact:

Primary Investigator: Zhengying Qian

Email: zqian@ryerson.ca

Research Supervisor: Dr. Kenise Murphy Kilbride

Email: kilbride@ryerson.ca

Phone: 416-979-5000, ext. 3412

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

Research Ethics Board

c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation

Ryerson University

350 Victoria Street

Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

416-979-5042

rebchair@ryerson.ca

Experiences, Challenges and Supports during Studying and Sojourning in Canada: The Case of Chinese International Students

CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be audio-recorded for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed.

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to keep confidential the content of the focus group discussions.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol 1 (Students)

1. Tell me about your experience in studying here in Canada.
 - a. How many years have you been in Canada?
 - b. In your opinion, what is the single best thing about studying in Canada?
 - c. What is the biggest difficulty studying in Canada?
2. How have you found the experience of studying in a foreign language?
 - a. How would you describe your own level of English proficiency?
 - b. Have there been any negative effects of speaking English at that level, and if so, what have they been? (in your social life, academic life, etc.)
3. Have you found it easy or difficult to improve your English proficiency?
 - a. What is the hardest part about trying to improve your English proficiency?
 - b. What is most helpful for you in learning to improve your English?
 - c. How comfortable do you feel with using English in daily life?
4. Tell me a bit about how you're doing academically here in Ryerson.
 - a. How much progress in academics do you think you have made since you came to Canada?
 - b. What factors do you think have an impact on your academic performance?
 - c. How do you describe your participation in classroom discussion? Is there anything that prevents you from participating in classroom discussion?
5. What do you think of the student-centered teaching style at Canadian educational institutions?
 - a. How do you describe your participation in classroom discussion? Is there anything that prevents you from participating in classroom discussion?
 - b. How comfortable or uncomfortable do you feel when getting involved in the learning activities in Canada? (e.g., classroom discussions, workshop presentations, independent studies)
6. How would you describe the pattern of your social life?
 - a. Do you principally make friends only with Chinese Students? Or with Chinese Students and other International Students? Or with a combination of Chinese students, other international students, and Canadian students? Or with Canadian students, for the most part, and a few Chinese students?
 - b. How satisfied are you with your social life?
 - c. What are the ways you find it easy to make new friends here, and what are the barriers to establishing new friendships? How are they the same or different for different types of people?
7. Tell me about your plans for after you graduate.

- a. Would you like to work here in Canada? Why or why not? If yes, for how long?
 - b. What do you see as the barriers for you to find a job in Canada?
 - c. Would you like to become a permanent resident or a citizen here in Canada? Why or why not?
 - d. What do you see as the barriers for you to receive permanent residence here in Canada?
8. Studying abroad can have significant impacts on people's development. What have you experienced in terms of your own development? (Such as personal independence; broadened life experiences and interests; improved interpersonal and communication skills; more understanding and acceptance of people with different attitudes and values; more appreciation of Chinese cultural values)
9. How does your experience of studying abroad affect your sense of being Chinese?
- a. How do you identify yourself after having studied in Canada for this period of time?
 - b. Do you think you are more like a global citizen? Why or why not?
 - c. Do you think of yourself differently when speaking English?
 - d. How do you think the experience of studying abroad has changed you as a person?
10. If you encounter any difficulty or problem in Canada, to whom or where do you turn for help?
- a. If you ever turn for help to fellow students, from which group do you get the most help (Chinese students, other international students, or Canadian Students)? And under what circumstances?
 - b. What kind of international student service at your university is the most useful for you? (e.g., Academic Counseling; Career Counseling; Cultural Adaptation Programming; Immigration and Visa Advising; Mental health services; English language supports; Social Networking)
 - c. Why do you think this is so? What is particularly helpful about them, and is this true for your friends who are Chinese international students, or for others too?
 - d. How do you think the international student service at your university could be improved? For all international students? In particular, for Chinese international students?
11. Tell me please about other non-university services you have used. For example:
- a. Have you ever made use of services from these institutions and organizations: Government-Funded Settlement Agencies? Employment Service Centers? Local Communities? Religious Institutions? Local Libraries?
 - b. How helpful have they been?
12. What would be the most helpful thing you could recommend to prospective Chinese international students before they came here, to ensure they would have a successful experience in Canada?

APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol 2 (International Student Advisers)

1. You have many students from a variety of countries and personal backgrounds whose needs you serve. Here, though, we want to focus on those who come from China. What do you think is the biggest challenge for Chinese international students studying in Canada?
 - a. Why do you think this is?
 - b. How does this usually manifest itself?
 - c. What are other significant challenges?
 - d. How do you see these challenges as similar to or different from those of other international students, and why?

2. What kind of international student service at Ryerson do you think is the most useful to Chinese students?
 - a. How have you experienced this, or why have you selected this as the most helpful?
 - b. How does this kind of service address the challenges that Chinese international students experience?

3. How do you think the international student service at your university can be improved?
 - a. What do you think would be most likely to bring about this improvement?
 - b. Is there anything else you think would be helpful, specifically for Chinese students?

4. What are the barriers to improving international student service at your university?
 - a. How do you see the result of these barriers to service affecting Chinese international students?
 - b. How would you recommend such barriers be overcome?
 - c. What would be the effects for Chinese international students?

5. Is there anything else you can think of that would be helpful in assisting Chinese international students to have a successful, productive experience at Ryerson or other Canadian universities?

APPENDIX E: An Example of Prospective Outreach to the Toronto Chinese Business Association (TCBA) on behalf of Chinese International Students

The Toronto Chinese Business Association (TCBA) (<http://www.tcbacanada.com/>), a non-profit and the first Chinese business association, was established in 1972 in Greater Toronto. It looks after the economic well-being of Chinese businesses and acts as representative in liaison with all levels of Government. Affiliated to the TCBA, the Toronto Chinese Business Association Junior Chapter (TCBA jr.) is committed to enhancing the personal and professional development of their members who are young Canadians between the ages of 18 to 36 from various professional, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

TCBA Jr. hosts business seminars and workshops on current issues and topics in the corporate environment, organizes social gatherings at popular venues in Toronto, promotes health and fitness through various sporting events including the annual Toronto International Dragon Boat Race Festival and a volleyball tournament, and encourages members to participate and actively support fund-raising initiatives or donate their time and efforts with charitable organizations. Thus TCBA Jr. offers their members access to a large network of other young professionals and business partners in professional and social settings.

Chinese international students should be actively engaged in connection with possible supports outside their host universities. Therefore, it is advisable that Chinese international students and Chinese Students' Associations reach out to non-profit organizations like TCBA to build up their social and professional networks through participating in their various networking events. Also, educational institutions should establish a liaison with organizations such as TCBA and TCBA Jr. to encourage them to sponsor various events for the networking of their members with these young international students, and to invite the students to their activities and events. The bonds among international students, educational institutions, and TCBA or TCBA Jr. recommended here can be an example for establishing programs aimed at making international students feel more involved in the local community, and address what they identified as their serious concerns about job-hunting.

REFERENCES

- An, J. (2014). *American Teachers' Perspectives on Chinese American Students' Culture*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Ohio University, Athens, OH.
- Arthur, N., & Flynn, S. (2011). Career development influences of international students who pursue permanent immigration to Canada. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 11(3), 221-237.
- Austin, L., & Shen, L. (2016). Factors Influencing Chinese Students' Decisions to Study in the United States. *Journal of International Students*, 6 (3), 722-739.
- Bennett, M. J. (2004). Becoming interculturally competent. In J. S. Wurzel (Ed.), *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education*. MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234.
- Bernard, H. R. (2000). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, Inc.
- Berry, J. W. (1980). Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, models, and some new findings* (pp. 9-25). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46, 5-34. doi:10.1080/026999497378467.
- Berry, J. W., & Kim, U. (1988). Acculturation and mental health. In P. R. Dasen, J. W. Berry, & N. Sartorius (Eds.), *Health and cross-cultural psychology: Toward applications* (pp. 207–236). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishers.

- Bertram, D. M., Poulakis, M., Elsasser, B. S., & Kumar, E. (2014). Social Support and Acculturation in Chinese International Students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling*, 42(2), 107-124.
- Bochner, S., McLeod, B. M., & Lin, A. (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. *International Journal of Psychology*, 12(4), 277–294.
- British Council. (2014). Integration of international students—a UK perspective. Retrieved from <https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/knowledge-centre/student-mobility/report-integration-international-students>.
- Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE). (2016). Facts and figures. Retrieved from <http://cbie.ca/media/facts-and-figures/>.
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), 545-547.
- Chiswick, B.R., & Miller, P. W. (2005). Linguistic distance: A quantitative measure of the distance between English and other language. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 26(1), 1-11.
- Cho, J., & Yu, H. (2015). Roles of university support for international students in the United States: Analysis of a systematic model of university identification, university support, and psychological well-Being. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 19 (1), 11-27.
- Du, Y., & Wei, M. (2015). Acculturation, enculturation, social connectedness, and subjective well-being among Chinese international students. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 43(2), 299-325.
- Fernlund, C., Bristow, A., Abbas, A., Sloan, B., & Madden, S. (2014). Policy paper: international students. Toronto, Ontario : Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance.

- Global Affairs Canada, & Roslyn Kunin & Associates, Inc. (2016). Economic impact of international education in Canada - 2016 update. Retrieved from <http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/impact-2016/index.aspx?lang=eng>
- Gopal, A. (2014). Canada's immigration policies to attract international students. *International Higher Education*, 75, 19-21.
- Gopal, A. (2016). Visa and immigration trends: A comparative examination of international student mobility in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, 4 (3), 130-141.
- Gu, Q., Schweisfurth, M., & Day, C. (2010). Learning and growing in a "foreign" context: intercultural experiences of international students. *Compare*, 40(1), 7–23.
- Gua, Q., & Schweisfurth, M. (2015). Transnational connections, competences and identities: experiences of Chinese international students after their return "home". *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(6), 947–970.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough?: An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Hamel, F., Dufourm S., & Fortin, D. (1993). *Case Study Methods*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Hanassab, S., & Tidwell, R. (2002). International students in higher education: Identification of needs and implications for policy and practice. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 6, 305-322.
- Hofstede, G. (1986). Cultural differences in teaching and learning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(3), 301–320.

- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc..
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
- Holmes, P. (2005). Ethnic Chinese Students' Communication with Cultural Others in a New Zealand University. *Communication Education*, 54(4), 289-311.
- House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2004). *Culture, leadership and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- ICEF Monitor. (2015, Nov. 2). *The state of international student mobility in 2015*. Retrieved from <http://monitor.icef.com/2015/11/the-state-of-international-student-mobility-in-2015/>
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). (2015). *Facts & figures 2015*. Retrieved from <http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/052642bb-3fd9-4828-b608-c81dff7e539c>
- International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2000, April 12). *Globalization: threats or opportunity*. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2000/041200to.htm>
- Jackson, J. (2008). *Language, identity, and study abroad: sociocultural perspectives*. London, UK: Equinox Publishing Ltd.
- Joy, S., & Kolb, D. A. (2009). Are there cultural differences in learning style? *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33(1), 69–85.

- Kang, S. M. (2006). Measurement of acculturation, scale formats, and language competence: Their implications for adjustment. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 37, 669-693.
doi:10.1177/0022022106292077
- Kashyap, N. (2010). *Graduate international students' social experiences examined through their transient lives: A phenomenological study at a private research university in the United States*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Boston College, Boston, US.
- Kelly, N. T. (2012). *International students as immigrants: Transition challenges and strengths of current and former students*. (Unpublished major research paper). Ryerson University, Toronto, ON.
- Kim, B. S. K., & Omizo, M. M. (2006). Behavioral acculturation and enculturation and psychological functioning among Asian American college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 12(2), 245-258.
- Kusek, W. A. (2015). Evaluating the struggles with international students and local community participation. *Journal of International Students*, 5(2), 121-131.
- Li, Z., Heath, M. A., Jackson, A. P., Allen, G. E. K. Fischer, L., & Chan, P. (2017). Acculturation experiences of Chinese international students who attend American universities. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 48(1), 11-21.
- Lin, S. P., Betz, N. E. (2009). Factors related to the social self-efficacy of Chinese international students. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 37(3), 451-471.
- Liu, W. (2016). The international mobility of Chinese students: A cultural perspective. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 46(4), 41-59.

- Luo, Z. (2015, Mar. 9). New visa rules will take China-Canada relations to a new level. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/new-visa-rules-will-take-china-canada-relations-to-a-new-level/article23354909/>
- Marr, T. (2005). Language and the capital: A case study of English "language shock" among Chinese students in London. *Language Awareness*, 14(4), 239-253.
- McFaul, S. (2016). International students' social network: Network mapping to gage friendship formation and student engagement on campus. *Journal of International Students*, 6(1), 1-13.
- Montgomery, C., & McDowell, L. (2009). Social networks and the international student experience: An international community of practice? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(4), 455-466.
- Neuman, W. L. (2004). *Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: extending the conversation* (2nd edition). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Perry, C. J. (2016). Comparing international and American students' challenges: A literature review. *Journal of International Students*, 6(3), 712-721.
- Rienties, B. C., & Tempelaar, D. T. (2013). The role of cultural dimensions of international and Dutch students on academic and social integration and academic performance in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 37(2), 188-201.
- Roach, E. (2011). *Service needs and gaps for international students transitioning to permanent residency in a "two-step" immigration process: A Toronto-based study*. (Unpublished major research paper). Ryerson University, Toronto, ON.

- Schartner, A. (2015). "You cannot talk with all of the strangers in a pub": A longitudinal case study of international postgraduate students' social ties at a British university. *Higher Education*, 02/2015, 69(2), 225-241.
- Shi, L. (2006). The successors to Confucianism or a new generation? A questionnaire study on Chinese students' culture of learning English. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 19(1), 122-147.
- Smith, R. A., & Khawaja, N. G. (2011). A review of the acculturation experiences of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35, 699– 713.
- Spencer-Oatey, H., Dauber, D., Jing, J., & Wang, L. (2016). Chinese students' social integration into the university community: hearing the students' voices. *Higher Education*. doi: 10.1007/s10734-016-0074-0
- Spencer-Oatey, H., & Xiong, Z. (2006). Chinese students' psychological and sociocultural adjustments to Britain: An empirical study. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 19(1), 37-53.
- Stake, R., E. (2009). The Case Study Method in Social Inquiry. In Gomm, R., Hammersley, M., & Foster, P. (Eds.), *Case Study Method*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi:10.4135/9780857024367.d5
- Statistics Canada (2011). *National Household Survey (NHS): Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm>
- Statistics Canada. (2016). *International students in Canadian universities 2004-2005 to 2013-2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-599-x/81-599-x2016011-eng.htm>

- Tao, V. Y. K., Hong, Y. (2014). When academic achievement is an obligation: Perspectives from social-oriented achievement motivation. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 45(1), 110-136.
- The Center for China & Globalization (CCG). (2016). 低龄留学热潮下的近观察. Retrieved from <http://www.ccg.org.cn/Research/view.aspx?Id=3496>
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1), 89–125.
- Trice, A. G. (2004). Mixing it up: International graduate students' social interactions with American students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(6), 671-687.
- Tung, R. L. (2008). Brain circulation, diaspora, and international competitiveness. *European Management Journal*, 26(5), 298-304.
- Valdez, G. (2015). U.S. higher education classroom experiences of undergraduate Chinese international students. *Journal of International Students*, 5(2), 188-200.
- Wan, G. (2001). The learning experience of Chinese students in American universities: A cross-cultural perspective. *College Student Journal*, 35 (1), 28-44.
- Wang, F. (2016). The lived experiences of Canadian-born and foreign-born Chinese Canadian post-secondary students in Northern Ontario. *Journal of International Students*, 6(2), 451-477.
- Wang, M. (2016). The impact of cultural values on Chinese students in American higher education. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(4), 611-628.
- Wang, C. C., Greenwood, K. M. (2015). Chinese nursing students' culture-related learning styles and behaviours: A discussion paper. *International Journal of Nursing Sciences*, 2(3), 253-258.

- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1993). Where's the "culture" in cross-cultural transition? *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 24(2), 221–249.
- Ward, C., Masgoret, A. M., & Gezentsvey, M. (2009). Investigating attitudes toward international students: Program and policy implications for social integration and international education. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 3(1), 79-102.
- Wilson, V. (2014). Research Methods: Triangulation. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 9(1), 74-75.
- Windle, S., Hamilton, B., Zeng, M., Yang, X. (2008). Negotiating the culture of the academy: Chinese graduate students in Canada. *Canadian and International Education*, 37(1), 71-90.
- Wolf, M. (2014). Shaping Globalization. *Finance & Development*. 51 (3): 22–25.
- Wu, Y. C. (2015). *Exploring the relationships among self-regulation, acculturation, and academic and social integration for Asian international doctoral students*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.
- Yeh, C. J., & Inose, M. (2003). International students' reported English fluency, social support satisfaction, and social connectedness as predictors of acculturative stress. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 16(1), 15-28.
- Yoon, E., & Lee, R. M. (2010). Importance of social connectedness as a moderator in Korean immigrants' subjective well-being. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 1, 93-105. doi:10.1037/a0019964.
- Zhang, Z., & Zhou, G. (2010). Understanding Chinese international students at a Canadian university: Perspectives, expectations, and experiences. *Canadian and International Education*, 39(3), 43-58.

Zhou, Y. R., Knoke, D., & Sakamoto, I. (2005). Rethinking silence in the classroom: Chinese students' experiences of sharing indigenous knowledge. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 9(3), 287–311.

Zhou, G., & Zhang, Z. (2014). A study of the first year international students at a Canadian university: Challenges and experiences with social integration. *Canadian and International Education*, 43(2), 1-17.