

From University to Employment: Chinese International Students' Strategies for Integration and Settlement in Nova Scotia

by

Yuhui Zhang

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Education

Lifelong Learning
Mount Saint Vincent University

© Copyright by Yuhui Zhang (2017)

From University to Employment: Chinese International Students' Strategies for Integration and Settlement in Nova Scotia

Yuhui Zhang

Master of Arts in Education

Faculty of Education
Mount Saint Vincent University

2017

Abstract

In recent decades, Canada has attracted an increasing number of international students from all over the world. Among those international students studying in Canada, students from China make up the majority of the population. Even though Nova Scotia is a smaller province located in the East coast of Canada and had been ignored by Chinese international students and Chinese immigrants in the past, the number of Chinese international students enrolling the universities in Nova Scotia has increased in recent years. Meanwhile, Nova Scotia is in need of more skilled international students to promote the economic growth and prosperity of the province because of a declining birth rate and an aging population. Existing research tends to explore the current situation of international students studying and living in Canada and also tends to examine their difficulties and challenges staying in Canada; studies about the successful transition from international students to permanent residents in Canada are limited. This study focuses on Chinese immigrants in Nova Scotia to explore the successful transitional journeys from international student to permanent resident in Canada. Data were collected through in-depth interviewing of eight participants who had already graduated from universities in Nova Scotia, and were employed in jobs which met the criteria of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to get

permanent residency status in Canada. In this qualitative study, the researcher draws on transformative learning theory and self-directed learning theory to contribute to the analysis of the participants' lifelong learning experiences after arriving in Canada. The findings of this research not only uncovered the positive successful integration experiences of the participants but also have important implications for retaining more skilled international students to meet the demand of the Nova Scotian labour market.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who supported and helped me in any respect during the journey of my Masters' studies.

First and foremost, I offer my sincerest and deepest thanks to my honorable supervisor, Dr. Susan Brigham, who has not only encouraged me emotionally but also inspired me spiritually and academically during my study life at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am very grateful for the valuable research opportunities that she provided to me and also leading me to open the door of academia. She is a great professor, role model and also the most important mentor in my life. Additionally, I would like to thank my committee member Dr. Fernando Nunes for his insightful and constructive suggestions and comments on this thesis. Special thanks will be given to Dr. Jim Sharp and Scott MacPhail for their ongoing support and consistent encouragement during the past years.

I would also like to thank the eight participants in my study. This study could not have been done without their cooperation by sharing their successful transition experiences from international students to permanent residents in Canada.

Finally, I want to express my thanks to my parents for their support both financially and emotionally through out my life. Additionally, my gratitude would also go to Denise Hirtle and Ronald Hirtle for taking me as a member of their family and provide me their selfless love and support.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Inspiration for the Study	1
Background of the Study	2
Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	7
Literature Review	7
International student Mobility.....	8
International Students in Canada.....	11
Chinese International Students in Canada.....	14
International Students in Nova Scotia	18
Limitations of Current Research: Chinese International Students in Nova Scotia.....	21
Theoretical Framework	22
Transformative Learning	23
Self-directed Learning	25
Research Questions.....	26
Chapter 3 Methodology	28
Qualitative Research	28
Research Participant Selection	31
Ethical and Political Considerations: Access, Role,	34
Reciprocity, Trust, and Rapport	34
Data Collection Methods/Data Analysis Procedures/	35
/Procedures to Address Trustworthiness and Validity	
Summary	37
Chapter 4 Findings	39
Introduction	39
Life Experiences	41

Coming to Nova Scotia.....	41
Living in Nova Scotia.....	45
Staying in Nova Scotia	56
Learning Experiences.....	63
Transformative Learning	64
Self-directed Learning	70
Summary.....	74
Chapter 5 Summary and Discussions.....	75
Summary and Discussions	75
Life as An International Students in Nova Scotia.....	75
Transformative Learning and Self-directed Learning	79
Participants' Suggestions for Other Chinese International Students.....	84
Recommendations.....	87
Limitations of My Study	90
Considerations for possible Future Research.....	90
References.....	92
Appendix A.....	103
Appendix B.....	105
Appendix C.....	109
Appendix D.....	112

List of Tables

<i>Table 1: The background information of participants in this research.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Table 2: The geographic information of participants in this research.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Table 3: The exact number of years the participants have been living in Canada.....</i>	<i>34</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

Inspiration for the Study

“Why did you choose to study in Canada?

Why did you choose to come to Nova Scotia?

And what is your plan after you graduate?”

I have been asked these three questions again and again since I came to Halifax, Nova Scotia. I came to Canada after I finished my undergraduate education in China. Having a chance to study in Canada was always my dream before I finally made my decision to apply to a graduate school and spend several years in this country that is very far from my home in China. The reasons why I consider Canada to be an ideal place for me to study are, its multicultural society, its reputation for quality higher education, its picturesque natural environment, and its flexible immigration policies.

Due to its geographic location and small Chinese-Canadian community, Nova Scotia is not as familiar to Chinese people as compared to the other Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Ontario. For me, a smaller Chinese community and better English environment were the top two reasons why I chose to study in Nova Scotia, because I wanted to totally immerse myself into the Canadian culture and an English language environment. In addition, Halifax is considered the second warmest city in Canada, so it is not extremely cold even in winter. All these factors became my motivations to come to study in Nova Scotia. After I arrived here, I gradually fell in love with this province because of its friendly people and beautiful

scenery. What's more, having lived in a big crowded Chinese city (Xi'an) for more than twenty years, the small size of Halifax makes me feel comfortable. However, due to the differences between Western and Eastern cultures, it is still a challenge for me to overcome the difficulties of cultural shock and the language barrier. Additionally, I experienced a hard time in finding a part-time job both on-campus, as well as off-campus in the first year after I arrived. This is true even though I am keen to learn western culture and would like to integrate and settle down in Nova Scotia, and even though I speak English.

Background of the Study

With the development of China's capitalist economy, it is becoming more and more affordable for Chinese families to send their children to study overseas. Also, with regard to Nova Scotia, the province is being promoted as an attractive province for Chinese people by universities, the provincial government, and private companies. The three major universities in Halifax: Mount Saint Vincent University, Dalhousie University and Saint Mary's University all have formal cooperation agreements (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding) with Chinese universities and agencies. Data from the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2015) shows that the international students' enrollment in Canada increased by 84% in 2013 compared with 2003. Specifically, the population grew from 159,426 in 2003 to over 290,000 in 2013. A goal from Global Affairs Canada (2017) is "to double the number of quality international students within 10 years, from 239,00 today, with a focus on attracting top talent who will either decide to make Canada their home or return to their home countries as leaders of the future" (p. ix). It's worth mentioning that the data from the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2015) also demonstrates that in 2013 the population of Chinese students made up 34.42% of the

entire international student population in Canada and it's the highest percentage compared to students from other countries.

Nova Scotia is a province that is located on the East coast of Canada. Each year it attracts thousands of international students. Even though the number of international students in Nova Scotia makes up only 3.4% among the total international students in Canada, the population is increasing each year, especially Chinese international students in recent years (Number of foreign university students rising in N.S., 2012). Taking Mount Saint Vincent University as an example, the yearly number of Chinese international students increased from 94 in 2010 to 133 in 2015 (International Education Center, MSVU, 2016).

There are many reasons why students come to study in Nova Scotia. The most notable reasons are that the tuition fees are reasonable, the education is of a high quality, there is a good English language environment because of the small Chinese community, and the natural environment is beautiful (Williams, 2013). The increasing number of international students can not only sustain the high quality of Canadian education systems but also promote the economic growth and prosperity of the province. According to *One Nova Scotia* (2014), during the past years, many international students have been entering the creative sector and the leading-edge fields such as bio-tech after they graduate, some of those students even start their own small business and bring a great vitality into the local economy. Thus, keeping international students in Nova Scotia is perceived as a win-win situation for both international students and the province.

A World of Learning (2013) reported that over 70% of international students plan to stay in Canada after they graduate. However, different individuals have different reactions when they come to a completely new environment. Some students gradually become isolated and marginalized, and will choose to leave Nova Scotia after they graduate because they cannot find

jobs or do not feel they can make a home in Nova Scotia. Other students, however, easily integrate into the new environment and plan to stay after they graduate. These students are able to adapt to a new culture and are able to start building their own social networks in their fields soon after they arrive. Chinese international students in Nova Scotia are an important group to focus on due to their large numbers and the significant cultural differences they are facing. As an educational researcher and also a Chinese international student myself, I believe it is necessary and important to find out the learning strategies that could help Chinese international students to have a better life after they arrive in Canada. New Chinese international students want to know how to integrate within the university and society more quickly after they arrive. Students who are close to graduating from their Canadian university programs want to know how to find a decent job and settle down in Nova Scotia after they graduate.

Chinese international students belong to a group different from other groups of international students in Canada because of the previously mentioned issues of cultural differences and the larger number compare with students from other countries. Most Chinese international students in Canadian universities are facing the similar challenges and difficulties because they share the same culture and speak the same language. Without any doubt, the people who have already settled down in Nova Scotia and have the same background with Chinese international students could give the most effective guidance to help them better integrate into the Western world. Lindeman (1961) stated that “the resource of highest value in adult education is the learner’s experience”(p. 6), and also the past experience could be considered as “the adult learner’s living textbook”(p. 7). Additionally, the people who have already settled down in Nova Scotia also know better how to help the province to attract more Chinese students to come and how to retain the educated students.

In my research, I interviewed 8 people who have already graduated from universities in Nova Scotia and who are employed in jobs which meet the criteria of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to immigrate to Nova Scotia. In addition, all participants were required to have graduated from universities within the last 10 years and to be full time in the workplace. Not only is ten years long enough to secure full-time work, but also it is still recent enough to recall reasons for why they were being hired and for why they made their decision to stay. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007) emphasized that adult education enlarges people's knowledge to potentially assist them to resolve some important problems in their daily life. Past life experiences and suggestions from participants will be valuable for present and future Chinese international students who are studying in Nova Scotia and planning to settle down in the province.

For my thesis, I focus on the Chinese international students who have studied in Nova Scotia and have chosen to remain in Nova Scotia after completing their studies. The interviews begin with participants being asked to complete a questionnaire that records their background and basic information. This questionnaire is handwritten and takes about ten minutes for the participants to fill in before the interviews begin. During each interview, I encouraged participants to tell me their own stories and experiences about how they feel living in Canada and about their own life experiences during the past years in Halifax. In addition, I also refer to interview questions to dig deeper into the reasons why participants chose to live in Nova Scotia, their living and earning experiences and also their perspectives about their future lives in Nova Scotia. The results of my research uncovered the reasons why they have made the choice to come and stay in Nova Scotia and the learning experiences that have helped them to integrate and settle down in Nova Scotia after graduation. Specifically, the purpose of my thesis research is to understand the following: #1) *What are the reasons why Chinese international students*

chose to come to Nova Scotia for universities? #2) What are the reasons why Chinese international students decided to stay in the province after they complete their studies? #3) How much does the transformative and self-directed learning take effect in Chinese international students' lives at the time of their integration?

My hope is that findings from this study will be useful to new Chinese international students who want to know how to integrate within a university and Nova Scotia society more quickly after they arrive. It may also be useful to students who are close to graduating from their Canadian university programs and want to know how to settle in Nova Scotia after they graduate. In addition, the results of this research may inform the Nova Scotia provincial government and local universities about how to attract more Chinese international students to come to study in Nova Scotia and also how to assist them to have a more fruitful life in Nova Scotia.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Literature Review

Doing a literature review is to tell “the reader what our assessment of the discourse is, where we situate ourselves in that community, and, to some extent, who we are” (Montuori, 2005, p.375). A good literature review should “...concisely summarize the findings or claims that have emerged from prior research efforts on a subject” (Knopf, 2006, p. 127). With the development of internationalization and globalization, the number of international students in developed countries has largely increased during past decades. There are many reasons that may motivate young people to leave their motherland and become an international student in a foreign country, for example, to learn a new language, to obtain an overseas credential, or to immigrate to a developed country. In addition, many countries and universities are also welcoming international students not only for the huge economic benefits they bring to the host countries but also for the pluralism and cultural diversity they deliver to the societies and campuses. Even though international students are coming from different cultural, social, religious, and political backgrounds, they are still sharing some certain characteristics with each other (Thomas & Althen, 1989). For example, they all have the experience of studying in a new country and the experience of adapting to a new living environment. This chapter provides an overview of previous literature on international students in the following four categories international student mobility, international students in Canada, Chinese international students in Canada, and international students in Nova Scotia. In the last part of this chapter, I also discuss the limitations of current research on Chinese international students in Nova Scotia.

International student Mobility

The definition of ‘internationally mobile students’ provided by UNESCO (Global Education Digest, 2006) is “ those who study in foreign countries where they are not permanent residents” (p. 3). In addition, “international students” or “mobile students” are also defined by the OECD “as those who have moved from their country of origin with the purpose of studying”(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005, p. 343). With the development of globalization and internationalization, Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) emphasize that, “over the past 10-15 years international student mobility has become an increasingly important part of the global higher education landscape” (p. 3), and the number of international student migration is increasing faster than the overall number of international migration. In 2015, approximately five million international students left their motherland and studied in a foreign country, which is doubled (2.1 million) since 2000 and more than tripled (1.3 million) compared to 1990 (ICEF Monitor, 2015). “The U.S. and UK are the top destinations for degree mobility” and “China and India are the top origin countries” (King, Findlay, & Ahrens, 2010, p. 3). Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) claim that “ significant changes in the infrastructures and capacity of higher education systems partially explain why there has been such growth in such a short time” (p.3). In order to describe the various and different types of students’ international movement, King and Raghuram (2013) point out that international student mobility is distinguished into three facets which include: the length of the study overseas period (within-programme mobility and whole-programme mobility), the level of study (undergraduate and graduate) and the experience of mobility (country of study, major differences, work placement, etc.). This classification can better help to clearly understand and comprehend the diverse of types of international student movements.

Marginson and McBurnie (2004) emphasize that the population of international students in well-developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand has increased in the past two decades, and the majority of international students are from Asian countries, particularly from Mainland China. Due to the huge economic benefits, diverse cultures and foreign skilled labour that international students bring to the host country, many countries and local universities have started to highlight different policies to attract international students not only to study in the host country but also to retain them after graduation. “The current generation of ‘savvy student customers are more knowledgeable about the opportunities available in certain countries, prospective hosts arguably have little choice but to offer targeted advantages” (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007, p. 9). Douglass and Edelstein (2009) noted that Australia not only provides a highly efficient student visa processing system to international students but also launches hospitable immigration policies and gives permission to students and their spouses to work while in country. Peykov (2004) state that the governments of the United Kingdom allow international students to work up to 20 hours every week during the school years, and work unlimited hours during vacation time. What’s more, universities in the United Kingdom are even easing the restrictions and lowering the requirements on international student employment. Additionally, “Canadian immigration policy now permits international students to work in Canada while they are students and for 3 years after graduation” (Nunes & Arthur, 2013, p36). The provincial governments also launched several progressive immigration policies to make an effort to attract international students to their provinces and also encourage educated international graduates to remain after graduation. For instance, international students who graduate from Atlantic provinces are no longer require to had one year work experience to prepare for immigration as long as they have one year full time contract with a designated employer in an Atlantic provinces (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Government

of Canada, 2017), and the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program offers the chance for international students with a Master's degree obtained in Ontario to live and work permanently in Ontario even without a job offer (Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, 2017).

Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) emphasize that “visa schemes and immigration procedures will play an increasingly important role in the decision-making process, with students not only seeking employment upon graduation, but perhaps (at least temporary) residency in their country of choice” (p. 9). According to Douglass and Edelstein (2009) the benefits of immigration to the host countries after international students graduate have already become an attraction for universities to recruit international students because immigration to the host country is considered as the final goal for many international students before they even arrive.

The majority of international students who go to university overseas are over 18 years old and are considered young adults. Ye (2006) emphasizes that adult international students are facing more difficulties and challenges when they study abroad compared with their younger counterparts because their identities are already formed before they come to the host country. Due to the increasing number of international students showing up in colleges and universities, it is necessary and important to consider their adaptation experiences that are addressed in previous literature. Mori (2000) suggest that fluency in the language is the most difficult challenge for international students as it largely affects international students' academic performance and cultural adaptation. In addition, due to the cross-cultural differences in social interaction between international students and domestic students, it is very hard for international students to build close relationships with the local students. Furthermore, social support from the university and communities is necessary and important to the welfare of international students because they are thousands of miles away from families and friends (Mallinckrodt and Leong, 1992).

Yeh and Inose (2003) summarize from research involving 372 international students from 77 countries that “international students who felt socially connected and who were satisfied with their social networks were less likely to experience acculturative distress”(pp. 22-23). They also suggest that international educators “ should develop programmes that build community and connections for international students” (p. 26). Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies to study international students in four universities in the United Kingdom. They discovered that, even though international students are facing challenges both in academic and social conditions, “most of international students manage to change, adapt, develop and achieve” (p. 15). Yang, Noels and Saumure (2006) further discuss the process of international students’ cross-cultural adjustment, and they point out that the ability of international students to adapt is influenced by students’ personal characteristics, communication competence and fluency in the host language. For international students, moving to a new country means that they start to experience tremendous differences from their past experiences: from how to survive to how to do well at school. Students’ adaptation speed can directly influence students’ academic achievements and living standards after they arrive in a new country.

International Students in Canada

Based on the data reported by the *Association of universities and colleges of Canada* (2010), international students create more than 83,000 jobs for Canadians and contribute \$6.5 billion to the Canadian economy every year. Lee and Wesche (2000) point out that tuition from international students is “viewed as an important-even essential-source of revenue by post-secondary institutions” in Canada (p. 638). Because of the valuable educational and economic contributions that international students bring to the host country, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has “developed clear national priorities and comprehensive strategies to attract a larger

number of international students” (Schneider, 2000, pp. 2-3). Thus, attracting international students to study in Canada has become one of the most important targets for the Canadian federal government and local universities.

In addition, “ Canada’s fertility rate is below the replacement rate of 2. 1., which, if not addressed, could place a significant burden on Canada’s social welfare system and make it difficult for Canada to maintain its current economic growth rate. This demographic change is happening as the economy is demanding new talent with advanced education to drive economic growth” (Ortiz & Choudaha, 2014, p. 1). Therefore, it is not only significant for Canadian federal and provincial governments to attract international students to come to study but also essential for them to retain educated international students after graduation.

The advisory Panel on International Education Strategy (Chakma, Bisson, Côté, Dodds, Smith & Wright, 2012) launched a report which clearly indicates that international education is one of the key drivers for Canada’s future prosperity, and the Canadian federal government is aiming to attract over 200,000 incoming students per year within the next decade. In this report, they also confirm that “Canada has the opportunity and capacity for strong growth in attracting international students”, and “it is feasible to double the number of international students by 2022 while maintaining high-quality standards” (p. ii). In order to attract and retain international students in Canada, Ortiz and Choudaha (2014) emphasize that the Canadian government should be “encouraging skilled migration, particularly through the recruitment of international students, is [to] gaining[gain] momentum as a means of addressing Canada’s demographic challenges, especially as [it] relates to advancing the national economy” (p.1).

A report launched by the Canadian Bureau for International Education in 2013 suggests that Canada is an increasingly popular study destination for international students coming from

all over the world. According to this report: “since 2001 the number of international students in Canada has increased by 94% to over 265,000 students in 2012 at all levels. Of these students, about 145,000 or 55%, are studying at universities” (A World of Learning: Canada’s Performance and Potential in International Education, 2013). The report indicates that the majority of international students involved in the research plans to work in Canada after finishing their studies and almost half express intention to acquire permanent residency and remain in Canada. Arthur and Flynn (2011) discuss that the reasons why international students want to remain in Canada after they graduate is because of the enhanced employment opportunities and better living standards compared to their home country. In addition, Arthur and Flynn (2011) also emphasize that the decision to remain in Canada for international students can also be influenced by their parents and partner. “All participants expressed the positive support they receive from their parents to study abroad. That support extended to pursuing employment and permanent immigration to Canada” (p. 8). For the purpose of retaining more educated and skilled international students in Canada, the federal government revised the rules of the Post-Graduation Work Permit Visa in 2008, which “allows students to work for up to three years after completing their studies with no restrictions on the type of employment, thus making international student employment more feasible” (Ortiz & Choudaha, 2014, p. 3).

Even though the number of international students coming to Canada is increasing each year, the growth of international students transitioning from temporary worker to permanent residency is significantly low (Van Huystee, 2011). Researchers and scholars have focused heavily on employment and culture adjustments of international students in Canada in the past because these two factors play the most important roles in their integration and settlement. Arthur and Flynn (2011) discuss that the three main difficulties for international students to migrate include the fear of not securing employment, cultural differences and language barriers.

Nunes and Arthurs (2013) analyze and summarize interviews from 19 international students in Canada, and they conclude: “Participants felt as though it was their lack of work experience, citizenship status, and (lack of) network that were the major barriers to employment” (p. 8). Most participants in the research also state that they “had difficulty obtaining employment in Canada in the 6 months following graduation” (p. 8). It is almost impossible for international students to immigrate to Canada without a stable job, so finding a job which meets the requirements of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to immigrate is usually the first step for international students after they graduate if they plan to stay.

However, Peykov (2004) debates that compared with other immigrant groups, international students represent a group of people who have clear advantages because they received a Canadian education and are also influenced by and familiar with Canadian culture. Highly educated international students not only inject diverse culture into the country but also can promote the economic development and technology advancement.

Chinese International Students in Canada

As stated previously, the number of international students coming to study in Canada has been increasing every year over the last few decades. The population of Chinese students coming to Canada has increased every year since 1999 (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2005). A report from the Canadian Bureau for International Education (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2016) shows that the population of Chinese international students comprises one-third (33%) of international students in Canada. Li, Dipetta, and Woloshyn (2012) point out that there are several reasons why Chinese students choose to study in Canada. Firstly, “the current Chinese supply of higher education may not be able to meet the demand, and universities in developed countries have been partly meeting the Chinese demand” (pp. 150-

151). China has the largest student number compared with any other country in the world. Nowadays, over 30 million students are receiving education in China (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2011). Based on the large student number and highly competitive education system, high school students have to take the university entrance examination in order to qualify for the chance to receive higher education. 9.33 million Chinese high school students took the university entrance examination in 2011 (Zhang and Li, 2012). However, of these, Zhang and Li (2012) also identify that there were almost 2.58 million (27%) who were not admitted into any higher education program. Studying abroad gives these students a chance to receive higher education. The second reason Chinese students choose to study in Canada is because many of them and their parents believe that education in a developed country is better than in China (Zhao, 2011). Li, Dipetta, and Woloshyn (2012) emphasize that students who opt to study in a Canadian university believe Canada has “a better academic reputation than Australia and Britain”, (p. 149) because the majority of post-secondary institutions are public and sponsored by the Canadian federal government. Thirdly, the tuition and living expenses in Canada are less than other developed countries. A report from UniCurve demonstrates that “Australia, the USA and the UK have the highest living expenses budgets of USD\$13,000+. Canada has the lowest setting (CAD\$10,000 for a student per year), followed by New Zealand (NZD \$15,000)” (Compare Student Living Costs By Country, Website, 2017). What’s more, the tuition fee in Canada is lowest among the other English-speaking destinations for international students (Compare Tuition Fees by Country, Website, 2017). Lastly, it is true that many Chinese want to immigrate to a developed country. They believe that Canada not only has flexible immigration policies that welcome skilled graduates to immigrate after graduation but also has a safer living environment compared with other developed countries (Li, Dipetta, and Woloshyn, 2012).

In addition, Canadian post-secondary institutions are also actively seeking out Chinese students to study at their campuses. Li, Dipetta, and Woloshyn (2012) illustrate that “several Ontario universities have international programs that cater mainly to Chinese students, and other Ontario universities are contemplating the establishment of international programs to attract more international students with Chinese students being one important focus” (p. 151). Due to their willingness to study in Canada and also the reliable and high quality education in Canada, the number of Chinese students coming to Canada has significantly increased in recent years.

Because of the huge social and cultural differences between East (China) and West (Canada), Chinese international students often face tremendous difficulties and challenges in the progress of adaptation, acculturation and integration. Zhang and Zhou (2010) state that “one of the major challenges for the international students is their weak English language proficiency, which effects their acclimatization to the new learning environment” (p. 44). Kim and Abreu (2001) claim that the English language, cultural differences and loneliness are three difficulties which international students have to face after coming to the host country. Compared with domestic students, the differential of international students’ expectations and approaches to problem solving also impede their process of adaptation (Grey, 2002). For example, Chinese students have adopted a teacher-centered method of learning for many years before coming to Canada, and they usually prefer teachers to do the talking in the class. Chinese international students may find it challenging to get used to the Western teaching and learning method, where students are encouraged to actively participate in class (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Instead of making friends and seeking help from Canadians or other international students, Chinese international students prefer to talk and communicate with friends only from their home country even though some of them speak English fluently and do very well in their academic studies. This

phenomenon largely impedes the progress of Chinese international students to learn Canadian culture and to experience the local life (Jiao, 2006).

In order to assist Chinese international students to overcome the challenges and difficulties, Zhang and Zhou (2010) suggest that international student educators “need to consider learning differences of international students in curriculum design and course delivery at both course and programs levels so as to best meet the needs of these students” (p. 55), and also to “encourage domestic students to get involved in events and activities organized for international students, so that both categories of students can benefit from the diverse learning environment” (pp. 56 - 57). Additionally, Zhang and Zhou (2010) suggest that universities provide more opportunities for Chinese international students to get in touch with students who are not from China in order to assist them better to overcome difficulties and challenges during their adaptation, acculturation and integration.

As many immigration policies have been launched by the Canadian government to encourage and facilitate international students to remain in the country after graduation, Zhang & Beck (2014) claim that “international students are not a nameless group reduced to unfavorable stereotypes; rather they are real people with specific social, cultural, and historical background” (p. 13). Lu, Zong and Schissel (2009) conducted a study, which explained the reasons and factors that influence Chinese international students’ intention to become permanent residents after they graduate from universities. One hundred and sixty Chinese students at the University of Saskatchewan participated in this research, and more than half said that they are uncertain about whether they will stay or return. Based on the data provided by the participants, Lu, Zong and Schissel (2009) summarize that the factors which influence Chinese students’ decision to stay in the country after graduation are various, including “Influences of Demographic Characteristics,

Remove Traits, and Canadian Experiences on Migration Intentions” and “Aspirations and Migration Intentions” (p. 7). In addition, Lu, Zong and Schissel (2009) also identify that social and emotional adaptations play a significant role in facilitating Chinese international students’ intentions to stay. It is not easy to change to “fit in” to a new environment. Students have to learn how to behave in the Canadian classroom, learn how to use Canadian ingredients to cook Chinese dishes, and so on. Learning from every detail becomes their daily routine. In order to face global challenges to keep more educated and skilled Chinese workers in Canada, Lu, Zong and Schissel (2009) suggest that “Canada needs to implement policy to make it easier to attract foreign students and to facilitate their decision to stay in Canada” (p. 307).

International Students in Nova Scotia

The population of international students in Nova Scotia continues to increase every year even though Nova Scotia is a small province compared with the majority of provinces in Canada. The number of international students enrolled in Nova Scotia increased by 148% between 2001 and 2011 (Trends in Maritime Higher Education, 2012). In addition, of the total enrollment in Nova Scotian universities, the percentage of international students, increased from 11.8% in 2011 to 17% in 2015 (Maritime Province Higher Education Commission , 2015). The data from universities in Nova Scotia show that those who come to Nova Scotia are from all over the world with China, Saudi Arabia, the United States, India and Bermuda being the top five (Students NS, 2016). However, the number of Saudi Arabia students in Atlantic universities may decrease in the following years as “the King Abdullah Scholarship is being "reshaped" and will only support students at the world's 200 best universities”. (Saudi Arabia stopping scholarships for Atlantic university, CBC, 2017)

Research demonstrates many international students are planning to stay in Canada. A 2013 report indicates that over 70% of international students do not intend to return home after completing their studies (A World of Learning, 2013). In addition, Nova Scotia is also in need of more immigrants to maintain and promote the economic growth and prosperity of the province because of a declining fertility rate, an aging population and many younger Nova Scotians leaving their hometowns to work in other provinces (One Nova Scotia, 2014). As was noted in 2005 by the (then) Minister of Immigration of Nova Scotia, Rodney MacDonald, international students play a very important role in the province's immigration effort. He stated that: "these students become familiar with the province, make friends, and because they get their degree or diploma in the province, their credentials are immediately recognized by Nova Scotia employers" (Nova Scotia Canada, 2005). Lena Diab, the current Immigration Minister of NS, claims that: "international students are ideal candidates for immigration because they are educated, speak the language and have already made connections within the community" (The Canadian Press, June 6, 2014). In addition, Diab also argues that, "not enough has been done until now to help international students pursue their career in Nova Scotia" (The Canadian Press, June 6, 2014). Similarly, William (2013) emphasizes that, "Nova Scotia needs international students as potential immigrants, to maintain enrolment at our universities, and for their important economic and cultural contributions" (p. 2). Keeping international students in Nova Scotia appears to be a win-win strategy both for the province and for the students themselves.

The transition from international student to immigrant is a huge project and usually will last for several years. International students have to conquer many difficulties during the process of transitioning including "lack[ing] social supports and [having to pay] even heftier tuition fees, adapt[ing] to a different culture, learn[ing] or function[ing] in a second language, and navigate[ing] complex immigration rules" (William, 2013, p. 2). Some people hold the view that

the province and institutions should only consider education of international students as an import industry and charge them very hefty differential fees in order to maximize the profits for local institutions. However, William (2013) summarizes that “Nova Scotia’s culture of fairness demands we treat international students not only as financial resources in global markets, but as unique individuals who enhance the social and cultural richness of our campuses and communities” (p.58). In order to assist international students to better adapt to the academic and social environment in Nova Scotia, three universities in Halifax-Mount Saint Vincent University, Saint Mary’s University and Dalhousie University-are offering many services including language and academic support, psychological guidance and career counseling. Two local non profit organizations, the Immigrant services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and the Greater Halifax Partnership (GHP), are also providing services to help international students with their employment after graduation. In addition, the provincial government is also making efforts to retain more international graduates in the province. Chira and Belkhodja (2013) state that “the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (NSOI) offers a supportive and successful PNP (Province Nominee Program) for international graduates (with about 200 yearly applicants), also providing funding support for settlement programming for this group regionally” (p. iii). Even though the province and universities recognize the importance of international students and provide assistance to help them in their transition from international students to permanent residents, William (2013) points out that it is far from enough. He outlines six strategies for both policy makers and international student educators to follow, which includes “collaborating in broad partnerships to make a plan, protecting post-secondary affordability, ensuring students attain language fluency, supporting student adaptation and success, promoting international students’ wellness, providing students with employment and immigration support” (p.58). Gates-Gass (2012) suggests that the service to assist employment and immigration should be provided to all

international students regardless of what is their plan after graduation. Additionally, the province, organizations and secondary institutions should also work on an advertisement campaign for Nova Scotia employers to raise their awareness of the importance to recruit international graduates (William, 2013).

Limitations of Current Research: Chinese International Students in Nova Scotia

Many studies have explored the variety aspects of international students in the host country and the literature review in this thesis provides an overview of international students' mobility, international students in Canada, Chinese international students in Canada and international students in Nova Scotia. However, I was unable to locate any specific studies that to investigate Chinese international students' living and learning experiences in Nova Scotia. Even though Nova Scotia is a province, which is not as well known to Chinese people as Ontario and British Columbia, the number of Chinese students has been increasing every year in the past decade. Especially with the declining of the Saudi Arabia students coming to Canada in the following years (Saudi Arabia stopping scholarships for Atlantic university, CBC, 2017), Chinese international students absolute become the largest ethnic group in in Atlantic universities. From my perspective, Chinese international students are a special group among international students because they have to face huge cultural differences between the East and West and also because they are the largest group of international students in Nova Scotia. In the last few years, there have been many Chinese graduates who not only have been successful in finding secure employment but also had positive integration experiences. Hearing about the encouraging experiences of international graduates who have already settled in Nova Scotia will be helpful for Chinese international students who are still in school or have just recently graduated.

Theoretical Framework

As a Chinese international student with three years studying and living experience, not only have my values and attitudes towards to life and world changed, but it has also helped me become an independent person. To be more specific, realizing the importance of critical thinking instead of believing the knowledge delivered by teachers is the most important lesson I have learned from the Canadian class. And also, the experience of working with refugees makes me grateful and cherish the peaceful life that I take for granted. When I look at the past three years' experiences in Canada, my values and attitudes have been unconsciously changed by the mainstream Canadian culture and my life and study experiences give a new perspective to look at the world. Additionally, as a person raised in Eastern culture and never having lived alone, surviving in a Western country is a big challenge for me. For the purposes of improving my English and knowing the local culture, I started reading the local news online and also listening to local radio almost everyday. I also learned how to cook Chinese food in order to feed myself because eating out in Canada is more expensive than in China and I had not had to cook for myself before coming to Canada. Self-directed learning has becoming a habit of mine in order to speed up the process of my adaptation in Canada. However, I was unable to locate any specific studies that explored the degree to which transformative learning and self-directed learning could influence and facilitate international students' learning, living and also future decision making.

Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) and self-directed learning (Candy, 1991) are the two theories which I drew upon to form the theoretical framework of my study; I argue that these two learning theories are playing significant roles in international students' transition processes after they arrive in the host country. In my thesis, I focused on the transformative learning experiences and self-directed learning experiences of my participants to uncover how

much these two types of learning experiences influence and facilitate their integration as well as their present and future decision-making. Additionally, through using these two theories to analyze the participants' lived experiences as international students and their engagement in communities, future Chinese international students who are studying and planning to stay in Nova Scotia can learn and benefit from the participants' success stories.

Transformative Learning

Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2012) state that “transformative or transformational learning is about change---dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live” (p.130). The process of transformative learning has been expanded by Mezirow (1998a & 1998b) into 10 phases:

- A disorienting dilemma
- A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
- A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
- Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that other others have negotiated a similar change
- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
- Planning of a course of action
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
- Provisional trying of new roles
- Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
- A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective

Summarizing the work of Cranton and Mezirow, “Transformative learning is a process by which individuals or social groups undergo a deep shift in perspective that leads them to a more open, permeable, and better justified frame of reference” (cited in Cranton, 2013, p. 101). Kumi-Yeboah and James' (2014) work on transformative learning experiences of international

graduate students from Asian countries verified that over 82.3% of 198 participants experienced transformative learning. They also confirmed that the “Majority of participants experienced transformative learning as a result of both educational and noneducational activities” (Kumi-Yeboah & James’s, 2014, p25). Chinese International students are facing tremendous differences between Eastern culture and Western culture not only in their academic studies but also in their daily life (e.g. food, weather, culture, etc.) after they start their new life in Nova Scotia. Their learning could be “understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). The prior interpretation international students bring to Canada is the identities they formed at home. In order to “fit into” the new society, Chinese international students have to face the situation by changing and learning to revise their interpretation. In a study of international students and transformative learning in a multicultural formal educational context, Ritz (2010) identified that “Each participant experienced disorienting dilemmas—some more than others—and reacted to them with feelings of fear or anger; but none displayed signs of having critically assessed personal assumptions”(p.163). This is the core of Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning process (cited in Kitchenham, 2008). Nova Scotia is not influenced by Asian culture as much as other larger Canadian cities such as Vancouver and Toronto, so it is not always easy for Chinese international students to find many connections between themselves and Chinese culture. In my study, I attempt to uncover the factors of transformative learning which bring positive results, and also the degree to which transformative learning influences Chinese international students’ adaptation in Canada. The ability to adapt and the willingness to integrate are the main factors for Chinese international students to choose whether or not to stay in Canada after they have experienced several years Nova Scotian life and culture and have compared it to their home life and culture.

Self-directed Learning

Self-directed learning is the other theory which I draw on to analyze the participants' adaptation and integration experiences. Cranton (2013) defines that "self-directed learning occurs when the individual has the opportunity and responsibility to make choices and decisions about learning, including at least some of the following: what to learn, what resources to use, who to consult, what strategies to engage in, how to sequence or plan the learning and how to assess the learning" (p. 100). Garrison (1997) expanded the scope of self-directed learning through a comprehensive theoretical model which "integrates self-management (contextual control), self-monitoring (cognitive responsibility), and motivational (entering and task) dimensions to reflect a meaningful and worthwhile approach to self-directed learning" (p. 18). Cheng's (1987) work on *Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English-proficient students* verified that international students in the United States must shift from the lecture method where they rely on their professors to a freer learning environment where they locate information by themselves. Stewart (2007) alludes to this in his work in the Australian context when he said "many international students struggle to adjust to an Australian higher learning environment where they are being increasingly encouraged to undertake self directed learning" (p.453). From Stewart (2007) and Cheng's (1987) findings we can conclude that the ability of self-directed learning is recommended by researchers to improve international students' academic achievement. Additionally, in Robles' thesis (2008) on adult immigrant and international students adopting self-directed learning skills, he used the qualitative research method to interview international students and examine how "self-directed learning has been, or can be, practiced by students who come from cultures whose learning traditions and/or conventions may not encourage them to adopt it" (p.1). After Chinese international students arrive in Canada, learning not only happens in universities but also in many different ways in

their daily lives. For example, Chinese international students can choose to learn how to behave in their Canadian classrooms from their Canadian classmates, or they can choose to learn how to use Canadian ingredients to cook food in their daily life. Choosing what knowledge to learn is their own decision, and these different decisions can largely influence their lives in Canada.

In my research, I summarized and analyzed the knowledge and abilities that participants thought were important and necessary for Chinese international students to learn by themselves in universities and after graduation. This may give good guidance to Chinese international students who want to remain in Nova Scotia after graduation. Chinese international students who have integrated into Nova Scotian society and who have a good job in Canada have used some self-directed strategies to facilitate their adaptation and settlement after they came to Canada, which I discuss in my research.

Research Questions

Having addressed in the first chapter the research questions in this study is focusing on why Chinese international students choose to come to Nova Scotia for universities and why they decided to stay in the province after they complete their studies. In addition, how much the transformative learning and self-directed learning take effect in Chinese international students' lives in times of their integration is also an important focus in this study.

International students have to get permanent residency before they can settle in Canada. The transition from international students to employees and finally to immigrants is a huge project for most international students. To be more specific, this thesis aims to investigate how and why some Chinese students are successful with their adaptation and settlement in Nova Scotia. As well, this thesis explores the reasons why Chinese international students choose to study in Nova Scotia as well as the reasons why they decided to stay in Nova Scotia instead of

going to cities which have larger Chinese communities after they graduate. Finally, the thesis also investigates whether transformative learning and self-directed learning plays a significant role in Chinese international students' process of adaptation and integration into Canadian society.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Qualitative Research

To address my research questions which are what are the reasons for Chinese international students choose to come to Nova Scotia for universities and also decided to stay in the province after they complete their studies and also the degree to which transformative learning and self-directed learning can influence and facilitate Chinese international students' integration in the local community, I used a qualitative research method for data collection. Qualitative research methods have been defined in many different ways in the literature by researchers. As Merriam (2002) states, in *Introduction to Qualitative Research*, “qualitative research attempts to understand and make sense of phenomena from the participants’ perspective”, and “All qualitative research is characterized by the search for meaning and understanding” (p. 6). Strauss & Corbin (1990) assert that qualitative research is a “type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons’ lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations” (pp.10-11). Marshall (1996) debates that “Qualitative studies aim to provide illumination and understanding of complex psychosocial issues and are most useful for answering humanistic 'why?' and 'how?' questions.”(p.522). Based on a review of the literature on qualitative research and relating it to my study, which is mainly to explore how and why some Chinese international students are successful with their adaptation and settlement in Nova Scotia, I believe that qualitative research has resulted in a richer and more meaningful analysis for this research.

I used a combination method of closed (forced-choice) questionnaire (Appendix A) and in-depth interviewing (Appendix B) for data collection. Merriam and Simpson (1984) defined that a closed questionnaire has items that force the participants to “choose one of the alternatives provided” (p. 127), and also “Items on a closed questionnaire represent factors surrounding the research phenomenon that are the focus of the investigation” (p.128). The feedback provided the essential information for the researcher to further analyze data. My study also involved individual interviews with eight participants who had already graduated from universities in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and who are now employed in jobs, which meet the criteria of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to immigrate to Nova Scotia. In addition, all participants were required to have graduated from universities within the last ten years and to be full time in the workplace, because not only is ten years long enough to secure full-time work, but it is also still recent enough to allow the participants to recall the reasons why they were hired and why they made their decision to stay. All the interviews were conducted in English because the participants I chose all had several years of experience living in Canada and their English met the language requirements of most professional workplaces.

Before I started interviewing my participants, they were required to do a quick ten-minute closed questionnaire (Appendix A). Merriam & Simpson (1984) indicated that “Responses from closed questionnaires are more easily analyzed because data essentially have been categorized prior to beginning the data gathering ”(p.128). I believe that connecting their personal experiences and decisions with their own backgrounds would make the findings more complete. After the participants filled in the questionnaire, I used the method of in-depth interviewing to continue to collect data. Marshall and Rossman (2011) verified that “Combined with observation (looking, hearing, smelling, or touching), interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people” (p.145), and they also confirm that: “An

interview yields data in quantity quickly” (p.145). Many researchers have used the method of in-depth interviewing for adult education in the past, and the results were fruitful. In-depth interviewing can be used for “the study of lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldview” (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p.148). In my study, I used in-depth interviewing because this method can allow participants to share their own life experiences from their past years in Canada. Though analyzing their success experiences and stories, the findings give meaningful guidance to the students who have intentions to stay in Nova Scotia. An example of the in-depth interview approach is offered by Shan and Guo (2013) in their research to investigate Chinese immigrants’ lives and work experiences in Canada. They interviewed twenty participants from three cities in Canada—Toronto, Calgary and Edmonton—to uncover “how immigrants experience disjuncture situations [when] ...there is a gap between the individual’s biography and perception and construction of the experience of the external world” (p. 8). With a focus on an identity of twenty Chinese immigrants, and through summarizing and analyzing their experiences negotiating the cultural differences between China and Canada, Shan and Guo’s (2013) research extends the social cultural studies of immigrants’ learning experiences after coming to Canada. Another example of in-depth interviewing is a study conducted by Arthur and Flynn (2011), in which they interviewed “international students who are completing their studies as temporary immigrants and who are embarking on the career journey of employment and permanent immigration” (p. 1). They interviewed nineteen participants in Western Canada, and found that since the immigration policies have changed to encourage educated international students to stay, it is essential and vital for the host country to provide support services to help them navigate their transitions from international students to employees to immigrants. The purpose of this study is to explore the adaptation and integration experiences of the participants from Chinese international students to permanent residents in

Nova Scotia, so I can confirm from these previous studies that in-depth interviewing is the most appropriate method to collect data for this research.

Research Participant Selection

I used the methods of convenience sampling and purposeful sampling to select the participants for this research. I contacted the international offices of three Halifax universities – Mount Saint Vincent University, Dalhousie University and Saint Mary’s University – and asked if they could provide or recommend some potential Chinese graduates to participate in my study or if they could post my recruitment poster. I also emailed the connector team at *Halifax Partnership* to see if they could connect me to the Chinese international students they have helped. *Halifax Partnership*, a Halifax economic development organization, has a connector program to assist international students in finding jobs after they graduate to help keep them in Nova Scotia and to promote the local economic development. The program has already successfully helped many international students find a job after they graduated from university. In addition, I have a few Chinese friends who found employment soon after they graduated from university and who plan to make Halifax their new home in Canada, so I invited them to be my research participants. I also found participants through word of mouth.

After a two-month selection process, I interviewed eight participants from various fields in Nova Scotia. For the purpose of protecting the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms which were provided by the participants themselves are used throughout this study. The following table shows the background information of participants in this research:

Table 1:

Name	Age	Years in Nova Scotia	Which university they attended	Program of study	Level of education	Present employment
Carina	24	6	Dalhousie University	Management	Undergraduate	Executive Assistant & Office Manager
David	32	11	Acadia University	Business Administration	Undergraduate	Financial Planner, Investment & Retirement Planning
Jay	29	9	Saint Mary's University	Science	Undergraduate	Financial Service Manager
Chris	24	4	Mount Saint Vincent University	Business Administration	Undergraduate	Program Coordinator
Jimmy	30	10	Dalhousie University	Statistics	Master of Science	Research & Statistics Officer
Cedar	24	5	Dalhousie	Management	Undergraduate	Supervisor

			University			
Amy	25	6	Dalhousie University	Marine Biology & Statistics	Undergraduate	Fund Operation Analyst
Jean	28	7	Saint Mary's University	Commerce	Undergraduate	Financial Service Representative I (one)

Eight participants in this study are from various provinces in Mainland China. Even though the data does not include participants from all Chinese provinces, the majority of regions where Chinese students come from are represented. The following table shows the geographic information of participants in this research:

Table 2:

Name	Carina	David	Jay	Chris	Jimmy	Cedar	Amy	Jean
Province	Hebei	Jilin	Sichuan	Fujian	Fujian	Shandong	Liaoning	Inner Mongolia

Additionally, participants in this study are between 24-32 and all of them have been living in Canada for at least four years. The following table shows the exact number of years.

Table 3:

Name	Carina	David	Jay	Chris	Jimmy	Cedar	Amy	Jean
Years in Canada	6	14	9	4	10	6	6	7

Ethical and Political Considerations: Access, Role, Reciprocity, Trust, and Rapport

After I received approval from Mount Saint Vincent University's Ethics Review Board, I started collecting data from participants. In order to ensure participants would not be harmed by participating in the research, it was necessary and important for me to carefully design the process of research and the methodology before I carried out my study. Also, I made sure that all the recordings and transcripts which I collected from participants were kept in the most secure way possible. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that: "respect for persons usually receives the most attention in institutional policies and procedures" (p. 52) for any research project. Participants' confidentiality is considered vital. The participants were asked to choose a fake name or "pseudonym" for this research so that they could not be identified in any of the documents that arose from this study, for example, thesis, conference presentations and etc. I also changed any personal information which could be used to identify the participants in any resulting publication from this study.

Additionally, I informed participants of the intent of my thesis and the expected outcomes before the interviews started. They had the chance to read the transcripts after the interviews and also had the right to modify the transcript. In addition, I also conveyed to participants that only

my supervisor (Dr. Susan Brigham) and I were able to access both the raw data and unattributed data (data which has been analyzed) during and after the study.

Data Collection Methods/Data Analysis Procedures/ Procedures to Address Trustworthiness and Validity

In order to ensure the validity of the data, the procedures and questions for participants were carefully designed before the interviews. As I already noted, I used a qualitative research design, in which I conducted one-on-one in-depth interviews. The interviews began with participants being asked to complete a closed questionnaire (Appendix A) that provided the background and basic information of participants. This closed questionnaire was filled in by hand by the participants and took about ten minutes for the participants to fill in before the interviews began. The interviews were each divided into five segments which were based on the following aspects: life as an international student, learning experiences in Nova Scotia, employment, identity, and reasons for staying in Nova Scotia. I encouraged participants to tell me their own stories and experiences about how they felt about living in Canada and also about their own life and learning experiences during the past years of living in Halifax. In addition, I also referred to interview questions to help me further investigate the reasons why participants chose to live in Nova Scotia, their successful employment experiences, and also their perspectives about future life and career expectations in Nova Scotia (See Appendix B).

The interviews were arranged to take place in mutually agreed upon locations such as libraries, offices and coffee shops. The length of each interview was a maximum of one hour and a half. The same interview questions were asked to each participant, and each interview was recorded to make sure that all the details were captured as accurately as possible and reported on

in my thesis. When I finished all the interviews, I transcribed all the data, which I had collected from the interviews. A copy of the results of my research will be sent to participants after thesis completion. All the questions were in regards to their experiences as international students in Nova Scotia and their integration experiences after they graduate from universities. This allowed me to uncover the reasons why they are successful in western society and why they have chosen to remain in Nova Scotia. With participants' consent, two digital recorders (in case one was not working) were used to record the interviews to ensure no vital information was missed.

I transcribed all the interviews. The method of qualitative data analysis was used in my study, which Caudle (2004) explains in *Qualitative data analysis*, "Qualitative analysis means making sense of relevant data gathered from sources such as interviews, on-site observations, and documents and then responsibly presenting what the data reveal"(p. 417). Description, analysis and interpretation are defined as the three essential activities in qualitative analysis (Wolcott, 1994). Patton (2002) debates "Analysis finally makes clear what would have been most important to study" (p. 431). My data analysis tried to uncover whether they were successfully integrated and, if so, what the reasons might be for their successful integration to the local communities as international students and also the reasons why they chose to stay in Nova Scotia, the qualitative data analysis is the most appropriate method in this research.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) reviewing the work of Strauss & Corbin (1997) indicate that: "Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes; it explores and describes and build grounded theory" (p.207). For coding data, I used the method of concordance on themes. I read the transcripts several times and labeled the information which I thought was relevant to the five themes, which are life as an international student, learning experiences in Nova Scotia, employment, identity and decision to

stay in Nova Scotia. Marshall and Rossman (2011) demonstrate that: “the codes come from varied sources, including the literature review, the actual words and behaviors in the data, and the creative insight of the research” (p.213). I coded by the themes which arose in the data. In addition, I also wrote various memos which I thought could contribute to the themes and my thesis writing while reading the transcripts and references. I also asked for a second opinion from my supervisor to look at the transcripts and to see if she coded the same themes as me, so that I would not miss coding any themes or information. After discussed, I included the themes that we both agree upon. The result of my data analysis not only described the themes but also built the connections between the themes which clustered by codes and the memos which I wrote during the data analysis.

Summary

As stated earlier in this chapter, the findings of this research are interpreted based on the theoretical framework: self-directed and transformative learning. This research not only can provide some direction to students who are still at university and ready to graduate but also inform universities about how to best provide assistance to international students. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2012) demonstrate that “What one wants to learn, what is offered, and the ways in which one learns are determined to a large extent by the nature of the society at any particular time” (p. 5). Because of the cultural differences between China and Canada, adapting to Canadian society should be the top priority for Chinese students after they arrive. Data from the Canadian Bureau for International Education show that in 2013 Chinese students made up 34.42% of the entire international student population in Canada, a higher percentage than any other nationality. From the moment Chinese students land in Canada, English becomes

their daily language instead of Chinese and English-Canadian culture is the mainstream culture. The quickness of adaptation for students depends on their learning ability. The process of learning for Chinese international students not only occurs in classes but also in their daily lives and their way of life starts changing little by little as time goes by. Students have to learn the language, the culture and how the society runs once they arrived. Just like the proverb says: “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”. Hopefully, my research can assist Chinese international students who want to make a permanent home in Nova Scotia after they graduate and also give guidance to Nova Scotian policy makers on how to keep educated Chinese international students in Nova Scotia after they graduate.

Chapter 4 Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents my analysis of the eight Chinese participants' responses to the questionnaire and research questions, and explores the participants' previous life experiences as international students in Nova Scotia, and also reveals the reasons for their success in securing employment and therefore their decisions to stay in Nova Scotia. In addition, this chapter also clarified whether or not participants experienced transformative learning and adopted self-directed learning during their processes of adaptation and integration into Nova Scotian society and to what extent these learning experiences influenced their life in Canada.

The practice of sending students overseas to gain advanced knowledge from developed countries has been promoted by the Chinese government since the late 1970s (Yan & Berliner, 2013). Since then, the number of Chinese students abroad has been increasing every year. Bodycott (2009) points out that with the expanding economic development and the improved standard of living in Mainland China, it has become more and more affordable for Chinese families to send their children to study abroad. Nowadays, the population of overseas students from Mainland China is larger than the population of students from other countries, making Mainland China the top country of origin for international students in the world (Zwart, 2013).

Zwart (2013) also emphasises that "Throughout its long and complex history, education has been highly regarded in China. Starting in the age of Confucius (551 BC-479 BC), great emphasis was put on scholarly pursuits and learning, and these values remain paramount in Chinese society today" (Zwart, 2013, p. 69). Ashley and Jiang (2000) add that investment in a

child's education is considered the second biggest priority for Chinese families; food is the first. With the belief that Western education will bring a brighter future for their children, Chinese parents are willing to sacrifice a large amount of their family income to support their children seeking education abroad (Zhang & Carrasquillo, 1995; Davey, 2005; Zwart, 2013). At present, compared with Chinese international students studying abroad who were sponsored by the government or affiliate institutes in the past, non-sponsored Chinese international students now make up the majority of Chinese students who study overseas (Zwart, 2013).

In addition, influenced by the one-child policy, which was launched by the Chinese government in 1979 (Huang, 1982) and ended in 2015 (Hesketh, Zhou & Wang, 2015), Yang (2007) states that “with only one child in most Chinese families, parents are making every effort to endure any financial burden to provide a good education for their children's future” (, p.4). Children born in one-child families undoubtedly receive more parental attention and investment compared with children who have siblings (Chow & Zhao, 1996), but at same time Chinese people also worry “about creating a generation of ‘ little emperors’”(Deutsch, 2006, p. 369). Crowell and Hsieh (1995) claim that “I think this generation will be the most self-centered in Chinese history and will turn traditional Chinese ethics and morality on their heads” (p. 50). Moreover, this generation of children also “might be more likely to internalize parental values and they also bear the entire responsibility for their parents' welfare” (Deutsch, 2006, p. 369).

Participants in this study were all fully funded by their parents in the early years after they arrived in Canada. Born between 1980 to 1995 during the one-child family policy, all of my participants came from single-child families. They also spent their childhood and the majority of their teenage years in China before came to Canada. Leaving their home and starting a new life without their parents, what are the life stories they experienced in Canada? what were the reasons

why they stayed in Canada and what are their plans in the future? Did they experienced transformative learning and adopted self-directed learning through their transition to Nova Scotia society? The answers to these questions are analyzed and discussed in the following two chapters. In order to narrate the qualitative results of this study, this chapter used two main threads, which are the participants' life stories and their learning experiences.

Life Experiences

For the purpose of understanding the life experiences of Chinese international students in Nova Scotia, this section is divided into three parts: coming to Nova Scotia, living in Nova Scotia and staying in Nova Scotia. In order to make the research realistic and ensure the validity of the data, I did not correct the English language mistakes, which were made by participants in our conversations.

Coming to Nova Scotia

Even though Nova Scotia is the second smallest province in Canada and the number of educational institutions is significantly fewer than those in Ontario and some other provinces in Canada, international students in Nova Scotia come from all over the world and the number of international students coming to Nova Scotia is continually increasing every year. The reasons why international students come to Nova Scotia vary. Williams (2013) confirms that the five main reasons for international students choosing to come to Nova Scotia are “quality of education, safety, English language immersion, possible immigration and relative affordability” (p. 1). The findings of my study specifically highlight the reasons why my participants chose to study in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia, located on the Atlantic coast, is one of the furthest Canadian provinces geographically from China. Compared to the nine hours direct flight from China (Beijing or Shanghai) to Vancouver, flights from China to Nova Scotia usually take almost about 16 hours, and Chinese students also have to transfer in Vancouver or Toronto in order to arrive in Nova Scotia. Yet, Nova Scotia's number of Chinese international students continues to grow and it hosts the largest foreign student group compared with students from other countries.

No participants in this study had ever travelled to Nova Scotia before starting their post secondary education. Studying in the universities in Nova Scotia was the most influential factors that attracted the participants to come to the province. For example, Amy explains why she chose a university in Halifax: "my major at Dalhousie is very famous in Canada so that is why I came to Nova Scotia". In addition, a smaller Chinese community and a better English language environment compared with bigger cities such as Toronto or Vancouver largely influenced participants' decision when they chose where to study before coming to Nova Scotia. For example, Cedar reflected:

I was in Toronto when I first came here. After a year, I realized that there is no difference in Toronto compare with live in China. I realized, okay, I need to learn Western culture, so I decide to apply a school, which is far away from big city. I got offers from several universities. Dalhousie is one of them. I Googled Halifax. It tells me it is a sweet town, people are friendly. Halifax is the first place British people came when they came to Canada. So, I said, okay this is the perfect place, I will go, so I chose Halifax, and Dalhousie is very famous in education. This is a pretty good choice.

Chris also reflected:

Nova Scotia, what I know, do have less Chinese, so it give me a chance to get out of comfort zone. I can practice more English. Those are reasons why I decided to study in Nova Scotia.

Similarly, Jay also expressed that a smaller city is better for him to focus on his studies compared to bigger cities with a large number of Chinese people.

Universities in Nova Scotia are strongly recommended by participants' Canadian teachers who either taught them in China or in Canada while studying high school to a large extent influenced their decisions about university selection. In China, world-famous universities are more valued by parents and students than smaller universities despite having a good reputation and reliable education. Because of their unfamiliarity with Canadian universities, participants and their parents are willing to follow the advice from their Canadian teachers. For example, in David's words:

I applied a lot of universities, and University of Toronto is the university I want to go to the most at that time. However, my academic scores are achieved the requirements but my English level is not achieved that standard. I received several offers from other university, but I don't know which one should I go. So I asked my high school teacher which one I should go, actually two of my high school teachers recommend me Acadia, that's why I went to Acadia instead of going to other province.

Carina also reflected:

All the teachers in that high school [in China] really recommend Nova Scotia because most of them came from New Brunswick. When I accepted by Dalhousie, they actually more excited than me because they think I

am heading to the like the top university in the east coast of Canada.

During my high school, they introduced Dalhousie even Nova Scotia quite a lot. I can see through their eyes Dalhousie is really a great university, so that is why I come here.

Formal cooperation mechanisms (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding) built between Nova Scotian universities and Chinese universities or other English language institutions are another factor that motivated students came to the province. For example, Jimmy said:

First time when I came to Canada, it's Vancouver, not Nova Scotia. I went to the language school there, and they, the language school, has the partnerships with the Dalhousie university. At that moment, I just want to get into University as soon as possible. I don't want to waste too much time on learning the language. I take the internal exam. I was very lucky and I passed the exam, so I enrolled in the program and also can transfer to Dalhousie University. Before I came to Nova Scotia, I know nothing about the province, but I don't really care where I was live. I just want to start my bachelor degree as soon as possible. That is the reason why I came to Nova Scotia.

Both Jean and Chris stated they chose to study in Nova Scotia because they participated in a 2+2 program in China, which means they came to Canada to finish the last two years of their undergraduate studies once they completed their first two-years in China. As Jean explains, “The University I studied in China has 2+2 program. They only have cooperation with Saint Mary's, which is in Nova Scotia. That is why I came here.”

Additionally, Amy emphasized that a flexible immigration policy was also an important reason for her to choose Nova Scotia as she had already plan to immigrate to Canada before she graduated from Dalhousie University.

In summary, even though the number of Chinese international students in Nova Scotia is still less than the major cities in Canada, participants in this study illustrated the various reasons why they chose to study in the province. A smaller Chinese community with an assumed better English language and Canadian culture immersion experience is one of the significant reasons that attracted participants in this study to come to Nova Scotia as they want to improve their English language and learn about Western culture. Recommendations from participants' Canadian teachers in high school highly valued the universities in Nova Scotia to a large extent influenced participants' choices about university selection. Additionally, flexible immigration policies and win-win formal agreements between Chinese universities and Canadian universities are all influential factors that attract Chinese international students come to the province.

Living in Nova Scotia

What we experienced in the past contributes to who we are today. In the interviews, participants recalled many stories and life experiences that had happened to them since they arrived in Nova Scotia. In this section, I center on the life in Nova Scotia for participants as well as the challenges that are still remaining in their daily life as new immigrants in this country.

Study and life experiences

Currently, the majority of universities in Nova Scotia have international education centers that offer services to international students. To a large extent, international education centers are a support for international students and also are a way for universities to hear international

students' voices. However, without their parents and living in an unfamiliar environment, starting a new life in a Western country is not easy for most Chinese international students as they not only have to focus on their studies but also they have to learn to take care of themselves in daily life. Participants in this study emphasized the two important facets that helped them to adapt to life in Nova Scotia and allowed them to successfully integrate into the local communities: the essential role of relationships with Canadians and individual resilience.

Relationships: The more friendly people international students meet in Canada, the less lonely they will feel. The sense of belonging to the host country can be cultivated through the relationships among the network with the outside world (Brigham, 2015). Love, support and help from a good friend, a good mentor or a good professor can become the motivations to push international students forward in a foreign country.

Five participants (David, Jimmy, Cedar, Jay and Amy) all expressed feelings of gratitude and thankfulness to their university professors. Not only did the professors teach them in class but they also had a great influence on their attitudes and values toward to life and study in Canada. For example, Jimmy reflected:

I am in the statistics. The professors in the department are really take care of students. That is the thing impressed me. Anytime when you have questions, you drop by the office and they are very patient and they explain every detail to you. And also when I was in the Master degree of the statistics. My supervisor, she is very busy, but she still squeeze her time with me to talk about my research topics and whenever I have question about my research, she sit down with me and helped me or give me some suggestions or give me some clues to solve the questions. When

my thesis was going to ending, she also helped me to go through with my grammar and the organization of my thesis. She actually modified my thesis five times. Every time, she puts a lot of notes on my thesis. I know she was very busy, but she still work very hard on my thesis. This is very impressed me. I think the professors in the university here, they really care about student.

Using a second language in the academic world is a challenge for the majority of Chinese international students. Jimmy was impressed and also motivated by the patience and hard work of the professor toward his thesis. Knowing someone is been there to support him to a large extent improved Jimmy's confidence in the process of thesis writing. Professors are playing an important role in the participants' life as they are not only influenced the participants' attitudes and values toward study and life but also increased a sense of well-being, confidence and fulfillment to participants' new life in Canada. For instance, Amy said: "I have a few very good professors who influence me a lot. As an international student, my languages and writing skills are not as well as local students. Professors are very nice to me. I study Biology. There are a lot of hard words to remember. When they give me marks, they consider this kind of situations. They also care about my life, like...how is the job is going." Jay also recalled the story that happened between he and his professor during his first year at Saint Mary's University. He shared:

[My professor] knows me that I am a newcomer and my English is not good, so he said to me that if you have any questions, no matter what, just come to me, I will definitely help you out. For the first couple of our quiz and our homework. I did not do very well because I have no idea about

what he is talking about in class. And he said, ok, how about this...after class...come to my office, I will spend half an hour with you help you if you have anything you do not understand in the class.

With the help of the professor for the whole semester, Jay not only successfully passed the course but also the impression of professors in his mind has been changed. Like the suggestions he gave to other Chinese international students:

When you in China, you feel professor is really serious and you don't want to talk with him after the class. Here, you just trust you professors as friends. Anytime you have questions, don't feel afraid, just free to contact them. They are definitely willing to help you.

Almost all the participants expressed that the positive experiences with their professors largely influenced their study and life in Canada. From their words, professors not only taught them in class but also were their mentors for life. Both David and Cedar also reflected about the help and support they received from their university professors, and they are very thankful and grateful. Cedar said: "Regarding to positive experience, I do have a lot, actually. I am going to talk my professor. I meet a lot of great professors at Dal. I think, at one time, like I was looking for scholarship, and I am looking for professor to write reference letter for me. They are really helpful... keep a good relationship with your professor, and that's will really help you not only for your university but also for life after that." David is the one that still keeps in touch with his professor after he graduated from university. He said: " I started job hunting in the fourth year university and my professor helped me a lot...he stills a man who I talked a lot every time he is in city (Halifax). He hook me up by introduce me to a human resource person from the company

I worked for now, and also I attend the seminar when the CEO of my company went to Acadia for a speech, and I took the chance to establish the connection before I graduate. After I graduate, I got this job right away.”

University is not only a place that students can receive knowledge but also is a place that can help students to learn life lessons and values as they may meet many great and intelligence people on campus. In addition to professors, Chris shared the reason why the university president is her life model from past to future. She said:

I remember when I was a student; she is such an inspiring person. She is managing the university. I feel, oh, female can get so many opportunities in Canada, could be a leader. Even in her age, she still so graceful. She knows how to build a better institution to educate female. Those are the factors which she influenced to me. When I am job searching... I went to many networking events. In one networking event, I met her, again. She knows I am from the Mount, so she asks me, "Chris, do you have the business card with you?" I said " yes", and she introduce me the people she know in the room, and I get a chance to shake hands with everybody. And then I do follow up with the connections she helped me to build. After a couple months, she asked me one time at school. She said:" Chris, do you have any update? Do you need any help? Such a fortune that I can get the help from my university president. When I am apply to this job, the position right now, I need a reference. She is one of my references.

With the traditional Chinese value in mind, Chris used to think that women had less opportunity than men in the working world. However, the President at Mount Saint Vincent

University changed her opinion and made her realized that women are having the chance to access equal opportunities in Canada.

In addition to the professors and the Mount President, participants met in universities, neighbors, friends or even strangers who more or less influenced their life in the last couple of years and at the same time helped them know more about Canadian values and life. For example, Jean had learned the importance of well organize and manage life in Canada from her Canadian neighbor. She shared:

Our house is next to Dave, he and his wife Sarah, they are very warm-hearted people. I learned from Dave that he worked hard before he retired. They paid off the mortgage of their house...And also, they save enough money, so they can retire and have a good life. To me, that means, anyone if they work hard and they plan well, they can have a happy and comfortable life after retirement. That is very important, because that is a sense of security. It's important for both individuals and whole society.

Amy shared her experience with two strangers on the street. She is very thankful for the help they provided:

The first year I came to Canada, during the Christmas time, I went to Toronto. I lived with my friends; her place is far away from the downtown. One day when I go back downtown to her apartment. I got lost. At that time, I met two local people, and I don't know them. I just tell them the address, and they send me to home. At that time, I felt that Canadian is very very friendly.

Good and positive relationships among professors, university presidents, neighbors and friendly strangers contributed and improved participants' sense of belonging and well-being living in the host country and made them feel welcomed and included by the local community and Canadian.

Resilience: Even though universities are offering several kinds of services to international students, most international students' still feel inadequate social and emotional support when struggling with challenges and obstacles in the host country. Thus, international students' resilience plays an important role in their daily life. The concept of resilience has been defined by Conner (1993) as "the capacity to absorb high levels of change while displaying minimal dysfunctional behavior"(p. 6). Conner (1993) considered that resilience is an important factor to successfully cope up with life changes, and resilient people usually have a positive attitude towards to themselves and their daily life.

Challenges arise for international students when they come to a foreign environment. Many participants in this study said that they used to have disappointing and desperate moments or sadness since living in Canada, but their attitudes or reactions toward adverse experiences were all quite positive. David shared his experiences:

Every country has bad person, and every province has bad person. I met a guy in Ontario, Hamilton when I first came to Canada. He is a Caucasian, but I don't think he is adapt Canadian culture really well, so that is a negative experience, just by the way he treat me. I don't think I like him very much and I don't think he is representative all Canadian.

Carina is a participant who deliberately chose to overlook her negative experience. She shared:

When I was fourth year, I took my paper to writing centre to ask someone to help me change it. I was forth year at that time, and the person tell me that you should go to public library and borrow some books to improve your English. I said, yes, I agree with you. What kind of book you suggest? I was pretty positive, right? And he told me, you know, those basic books, the book with pictures, like the really simple one. Not for children, but probably for High school or junior high school student. "What?!" It's really pissing me off. If I was first year student, that's fine. Junior High School? It's not discrimination, definitely. It's really make me upset. In the end, my paper is 90. I really don't care what he said to me. What I learned from this experience is learn English better, improve your English better.

The participants' positive attitudes towards to the negative experiences mitigated their sufferings in life. Even though Carina's experience may be considered as an instance of racial discrimination, she did not call it racism because she had not experienced racism in China. Instead of complaining about life, some participants are more caring about what they can learned from the negative experiences. As Amy said:

As an international student, sometimes you have to had teamwork. Maybe people would judge you based on your abilities, but on the surface everyone is keep friendly. You don't know what do they think deeply. You need to stay strong or you have to practice your oral English. At least, during the teamwork time, you need to kindle the tasks.

Homesickness is also a challenge for some of the participants studying and living in Canada. Because they live far away from their parents and hometown, Amy and Chris both had feelings of homesickness but at the same time they both found their own ways to solve the problem. For example, Amy said:

I think is homesick is one of the most hard for me. In order to solve this problem, I try to keep contact with my parents weekly and go back to China every year.

Chris said:

I am the only child, my family only have me, and I don't have any sibling. I move so far away from home in Canada. Sometimes, I felt lonely. I have to be very strong and have to join different kind of activities to make sure that I continue seeking my goal, remember what I am looking for. Because of lonely is negative feeling to you.

During the interview, Jean told me that she had experienced racial discrimination from locals when she was a student. However, instead of complaining, she said "I know it's there, it's happens, I am not feel so much hurt. I learned that people from all over the world, they would have opinions towards... people that is different... or from different background. "

Resilience is a vital factor that contributes to the participants' integration because living in a foreign country alone is not an easy task for all the international students. Even though all the participants had negative experiences they did not choose to reject adapting to the community or losing hope for the Canadian society. Due to the participants' positive attitudes and optimism towards life and study, they have had many achievements since they came to Canada.

Existing Challenges

Many scholars have contributed to the literature on Chinese international students' life in the host country. My study specifically looks at Chinese students' adaptation and integration in Nova Scotia. Kim and Abreu (2001) point out that there are three difficulties for international students after coming to the host country: English language, cultural differences and loneliness (reviewed in chapter two). For the purpose of fully understanding the participants' lives in Nova Scotia, the difficulties and challenges the participants are still struggling with are discussed in this section.

None of the participants said that life in Canada is easy for them even though they have settled in comfortably as an employed Chinese person in Canada. English language and Canadian cultural are still considered the most difficult for six of the participants (Carina, Jimmy, Chris, Cedar, Jay and David) in this study although their English ability meets the requirements in their workplaces and they have been in Canada for at least four years. Learning English is a lifelong project for all second language speakers. David, living in Canada for fourteen years, reflected:

Language. Still the language. What bother me the most is not to understand what people saying, but when I go to a restaurant or go to hospital. There are certain food names and terminologies, which I don't understand quite a lot. That is my biggest challenges. How do I conquer that? I have not conquered that yet.

In addition, getting used to Canadian culture is another challenge for participants. Compared to British Columbia and Ontario, Chinese international students rarely are surrounded

by Chinese culture in Nova Scotia. Living and working in a community with people, most of them having grown up in Western culture, participants expressed that they have to immerse themselves into Western culture so that they could integrate into the community.

For example, Jay said:

For the first couple of years, even though I got the job, sometime I felt is really hard to get in their life, right? For me personally, for my first years after graduated, even in school, I do everything by myself. After the work, after the study, back home, play computers. No social at all, that is my life before. Because when we play together with Canadians, you don't have some topics to talk about. When they mentioned about Hockey, you don't know. Baseball, you don't know. Hiking and Camping? Maybe a little bit, but not that....So we don't have common topic to share about. I think that is very challenge for couple of years because we want get into their life, but unfortunately we couldn't because our experiences in the past are totally different. That is the toughest part.

Similarity, Chris also shared about her experience:

Sometimes the Chinese student, is a little bit harder to get into the local culture. There is a gap between the international students and local students. I found that international student have to adapt themselves to join, even people here they are very friendly, very welcoming.

International students still need to do adjustment to be part of the local society. For example, when I first time join the orientation party for students...I found that the local student have a good time. They are

dancing together. International students, which come from China, are not joining. I feel awkward at that moment. Sometimes I feel that I do understand the English, but I don't understand the content. It is very hard to make friend with local people...I feel it is hard for people to really understand Chinese culture.

Even though all the participants already have a settled life in Nova Scotia, English language and understanding the culture are still the two biggest challenges they continue to face. Instead of complaining, participants all maintained peace of mind and heart toward the challenges they were trying to overcome. By doing this, the participants were able to integrate more smoothly.

Staying in Nova Scotia

Instead of choosing to go back to China or moving to another province, the participants chose to stay in Nova Scotia after completing their studies. The decision to be an immigrant in the host country not only takes courage but also takes serious contemplation. In this section, the participants' motivations for staying in Nova Scotia, employment experiences as a Chinese international student and their future plans are discussed.

Reasons to Stay in Nova Scotia after Graduation

The participants in this study all expressed a strong willingness to secure permanent residency status in Canada. In order to be eligible to apply, they had to obtain a full-time job, which meets the requirements to immigrate to Canada. Job opportunity was considered a very important reason influencing participants' decision to stay or leave Nova Scotia. For the participants in this research, receiving the job offer from their current companies are one of the most important reasons for them chose to stay in Nova Scotia. Additionally, the familiar

environment and as well as existing networks were also the reasons that convinced participants to stay. For example, in Cedar's words:

I did applied jobs in Toronto as many as I do here. I got a good chance from the company, which I work now. I am grateful that they give me the good opportunity. Second, I have been here for four years. Right now, it's actually five years. I start to get used to life here. I have my networking here, and I have my friends here. I just realized that I get used to life here. Why I change, right?

Jean said:

I believe that it's easier for me to get a job in Halifax than moving to Toronto or BC. That is why I stay in Halifax and also my friends are in Halifax, most of them. That is easier for me.

Three participants (Jay, Chris and Carina) mentioned the job opportunities that they received from local companies and also the connections they built in the community were their reasons for staying in Nova Scotia.

In addition, the welcoming and friendly local people were also an important factor convincing participants to remain. Jay emphasized that Nova Scotians are nicer compared to people in big cities such as Toronto and New York. Jimmy said that he could have more chances to learn Canadian culture and meet locals in Nova Scotia compared with living in big cities that with large Chinese communities.

A flexible immigration policy is another reason that participants gave for staying at least for a few years after graduation. Amy said "Nova Scotia has a really good immigration policy.

The job I have now can be the stepping-stone to help me go to another level. I can get the permanent resident here first and make other plans later.”

Employment experiences and Chinese identity

Motivations for wanting a job in Nova Scotia: All the participants expressed in the interviews that they had had strong intentions to find jobs in Nova Scotia; and the factors which motivated them to find jobs in Nova Scotia were various. For example, Cedar said:

First of all, I have to pay my bill. In the fourth year of my university, I stop asking money from my parents. Not entirely, I just try to ask as less as possible. After I graduate, I felt lots of pressure and I don't want to live in the same apartment that I used live. It's tiny, dirty. The place is awful. I want to pay my bill. That is the initial motivation. The second is Canada is one of the most advanced countries in the world. The "soft power" is very advanced compared with our country. In China, most of things are related with networking. All my networking is based by my parents networking. I don't want to go back, use their networking to find a job, and use their networking to get promoted. Here, as a foreigner, I can only rely on myself. My parents cannot do anything for me. I realized that, okay, to see if I can find a job here. First level, I prove that I can feed myself. Second, I can live in a pretty good environment. Third, if I work hard enough, I can get promoted. If I were lazy, I would be laid off. It's just a life that I want to live in. That's why; I stay in Canada and get a job. I don't know if I will stay here eventually. In the seeable future, I think that I will be here.

Having the ability to remain independent, living in a clean-air environment and having access to free health care were the three most important reasons which pushed Cedar to find a job in Canada. In addition, the possibility of acquiring permanent residency is another influential factor that motivates participants to secure a full time job. Both Jimmy and Jean explained that having a full time job is necessary for permanent residency in Canada. For Chris, She believes that Nova Scotia is a good place to gain Canadian work experience because most of companies still highly values Canadian business culture and also English is required as the official workplace language by the majority of companies in Nova Scotia. Additionally, Jay also mentioned that another reason to stay was that working pressure and competition in the workplace in Nova Scotia are not as serious as in China.

Employment experiences: Employment is the priority for most international students to face if they wish to have the eligibility of continuing to live in Canada. Without having English as the first language and without growing up in a Canadian culture, getting a decent job in Canada seems like a mission impossible for the majority of Chinese international students. In order to uncover the reasons behind the participants' success in their career, the participants' employment journeys are discussed in this section. The participants who found a full time job soon after graduating from university all had work experience which included part-time jobs, summer jobs or internships when they were students. The participants stated that their work experience not only helped them to build networks in the labour market but also helped them to familiarize with the Canadian working environment. Additionally, it is also a source of income. Except for Jean, all of the participants believe their work experience, to a large extent, helped them to find a full time job after graduation. Jay shared his experiences:

I was working a part time in a restaurant as a dishwasher. It's a pretty

big restaurant in town. They have three locations and they have a pub. At that time, before I graduate, my manager asked me, do you want to work here as assistant manager? I said, yes. So I got the job before I graduate. If I did not work in that restaurant, they won't hire me for that management position. Yes, definitely helped a lot. Right now, I am working in the bank for 2 years and three months. This is my wife's friend's refer me to the bank. If I don't have any work experience, our HR manager would say no because I don't have any experience. It is better to have experience no matter what experiences is. It is nice to have it before you graduate.

David also expressed that he was hired because the employer could see his potential from his past work experience. Jean is the only participant who did not have any work experience before graduation, and it took her a longer time to find a full time job compared to the other participants. With the help provided by Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), Jean got her first full time job in a financial institution more than one year after she graduated from Saint Mary's University.

Jimmy and Cedar both thought that volunteer experience may not help students find a job directly but is a good way to learn Canadian culture and make Canadian friends. In Cedar's words:

Volunteer experience is not help very much unless this volunteer is related with what you want to do. I encourage people, especially international students like you and me, to doing volunteer is not because you can find a job base on it, it's because you can learn the lifestyle or learn different culture from doing the volunteer. I am not encourage

people spend too much time on volunteer. It won't help you. Seriously, it won't help you. Doing stuff related to your work will help you.

Underemployment can be considered as the “unmet need for paid employment” (Congress, 2014, p. 2). As English language proficiency plays a significant role in the workplace readiness and employment outcome, international students face more difficulties compared to students whose first language is English (Arkoudis, Hawthorne, Baik, Hawthorne, O’Loughlin, Leach & Bexley, 2009). However, six of the participants (Carina, Jay, Chris, Jimmy, Cedar, Amy) clearly expressed that they are very much satisfied with their current position and salary. Cedar, Carina, Jay and Jimmy also explained that there is still a lot to learn if they are to advance to the next level in their career. Jean is the one participant who considers herself as underemployed because the functions of her company are not meeting her expectations. She said:

The organization which I am working for has its own limitation. For example, it's a smaller local financial institution. At least 90% of customers are local people. The diversity is not same as the other banks. If I had started with a bank, I would have step up or advance in my career.

Chinese identity: In the interviews, all the participants illustrated that Chinese identity is a benefit for employment in Nova Scotia and also they appreciate that Canadian society values multiculturalism. With an increasing number of Chinese international students and new Chinese immigrants coming to Nova Scotia, many companies have started to recruit employees who can speak both English and Chinese in order to meet the new market demand. For example, Jay said: “I used to work at the *** branch. They said that they want to hire people who can speak

Mandarin.” Speaking Chinese and knowing the Chinese culture is an advantage for participants in their workplace and the majority of them had experience with using Chinese to serve their clients. For example, David said: “when I first started in the bank. Lots of Chinese students are looking for me to help them just because it is easier for them to communicate.” Carina also explained that one of the reason she was hired is because she has connections in the Chinese community in Nova Scotia and she also knows how to develop a company’s program among Chinese investors and Chinese international students. As Canada is one of an attractive immigration destination for Chinese and also values multiculturalism and diversity, Amy and Jean said that their Chinese identity actually helped them make a lot of friends from all over the world. In addition, Chris also emphasized that good Chinese cultural values like humility and dedication helped her to earn more trust and respect in the workplace.

Future Plans

Even though all the participants expressed the possibility of going back to China in the future, they do not have any plans to leave Canada soon. Because all the participants come from single-child families, the thought of going home to take care their parents highly influences the participants’ decision to stay in Canada or to go back to China. For example, Jay said:

I have a plan, but not within ten years. My parents are still in China, so I want to stay with them when they get older. I like to stay with them for sure, and my wife as well. She wants to stay with her family in China as well. We want to take care of them when they get older.

Compared with working in China, Jimmy enjoys working in Canada much more. He said that to take care of his parents would be the only reason for him to go back to China in the future.

Five participants (Jean, Carina, David, Jay, Jimmy) clearly said that they will stay in Nova Scotia for the near future. When asked of their plans for the next five years, the participants' answers varied. For example, David said his plan is: "having a family here, get my credentials, meet more people and make more money." In Jean's words, "Next five years, would be get a Canadian nationality, the Canadian passport, and keep working. Maybe have a kid." Jimmy said that he wants to "move to the higher-level position and increase a bit salary. Change a bigger house." Chris and Cedar are more focused on their career development in the next five years. Cedar wants to pursue a Master degree after several years working and Chris wants to build more professional business skills from work experiences. Amy is the only participant who thinks that she may go to other cities to seek opportunities.

Learning Experiences

Facing the challenges of language barriers, culture shock, unfamiliarity with the new surroundings and not knowing how to navigate the system, living in Canada requires lots of new learning for the majority of Chinese international students who were born and raised in China. They are not only acquiring knowledge in classes but they are also consciously or unconsciously learning how to survive in a foreign country.

In addition to the participants' rich life stories and experiences and also reflections and feelings about living in Nova Scotia, exploring their learning processes is the other focus in my thesis. Specifically, I am interested in investigating and discussing whether or not participants experienced transformative learning and self-directed learning during their transition to Canadian society and to what extent these learning experiences influenced their life in Nova Scotia.

Transformative Learning

In examining whether the participants experienced transformative learning during their transition to Canadian society, I refer to transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2003) to guide my research. According to Mezirow, “transformative learning is learning that transforms problematic frames of reference-sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)-to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 58). Attitudes, beliefs and opinions generated through transformative learning will likely lead to more correct and justified actions (Mezirow, 2000). Because the participants were born in China and raised in Chinese culture and traditional values, finding whether or not Canadian culture and society transformed their perspectives, attitudes or beliefs towards life and if those transformative learning experiences sped up their adaption and integration processes may provide guidance to other Chinese international students who want to study and immigrate to Canada.

O’Sullivan (2003) defines transformative learning as “a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world” (p. 327). According to the 10 phases developed by Mezirow (reviewed in Chapter three) to examine the transformative learning experiences, six out of 8 participants in this study provided strong evidence that a perspective transformation did indeed occur during their transition to life in Nova Scotia due to the influences from the local people, culture and communities. The other two participants stated that they only adopted a few Canadian living habits such as having a cup of coffee in the early morning before going to work and driving more politely, but they did not indicate a transformation as defined by Mezirow.

Drawing on Mezirow's 10 phases of transformative learning (reviewed in chapter three) to understand participants' learning experiences in Canada, I see many of the phases such as disorienting dilemma, self-examination and reflection, exploration of options and new roles, and trying on new roles and building of competence and self-confidence within the participants' reflections about changes in themselves since they came to Canada as strong evidence of transformative experiences. Before discussing the detailed evidence of my participants' transformative learning, I summarized some examples of testimonials from their quotes.

Phase 1 Disorienting dilemma: the participants' previous values towards life and work have been challenged more or less by the mainstream of Canadian culture.

Phase 2 Self-examination and reflection: the participant reflected that working with his Canadian colleagues make him realize the importance of spending time with his family instead of only considering how to make more money.

Phase 5: Exploration of options and new roles: the participant learned and realized the importance of helping others and being a more considerate person by engaging with the friendly people they meet in Canada.

Phase 8 & Phase 9 Trying on new roles and building of competence and self-confidence: through the experience of working at a restaurant, the participant became more optimistic and confident when facing challenges and difficulties in life.

The participants' reflections, their attitudes, values and beliefs that were solidified in the past they have shifted to a new direction that lead them to better adapt and integrate in Canadian life. Take Chris as an example, from believing being humble is one of her principles in life to

realizing the importance of selling herself in her workplace, the Canadian workplace culture and the behavior of Canadians around her changed what she used to believe. She shared:

I found that student from here they are very confident. They know how to sell themselves. It is very different from Chinese culture. In China, we need to keep humble. In Canada, if you want to get a job or if you want to be a leader in your industry, you have to be more confident, you have to let people know more about you, you have to sell yourself. Something when I found, like students, when they do a introduction or when they meet people, or when they introduce themselves to someone else, they know what they are good at and they will mention it to people. People will know "okay, this person is really good at something". In Canada, you have to tell people how good you are rather saying, "No, I am not good at all". Compare with Chinese, like traditional humble culture. That is one biggest thing that I learned. You need to sell yourself.

Realizing the cultural differences in the workforce is a disorienting dilemma for Chris as she started to question the traditional Chinese values she believed in the past and this is a strong element of Mezirow's transformative learning process. Influenced by Chinese cultural values, the majority of Chinese international students are taught by their parents and schools in China that humility is an important quality for a person and being humble may even help people with their success. Studying and working in Canada shifted her opinion on humility and helped her understand that confidence and self-selling are more important attitudes in Canadian workplaces compared to humility.

In addition to humility, diligence is another quality that has been valued by Chinese culture for thousands of years. Instead of spending more time with families and friends, sacrificing personal time and holidays working is very common for Chinese people and in Chinese culture. Jimmy expressed that his perspectives on working and also attitudes towards to life and family has changed in Canada:

The things impressed me here is the attitude of the Canadians about life... The local Canadian, most of them...after they graduate, they would like to find a job that they would like to do...They would like to have less money, but to have more time with their friends or family. I think that really impact my attitude towards to life. Now, if the money is enough for the life, which is good, I don't want to struggling with make money to sacrificed my spare time.

Also influenced by Canadian culture, directly pointing out problems at work or life is another transformation David discussed in the interview. Instead of being direct, most Chinese people prefer to express opinions indirectly for the purpose of friendliness and politeness. After living in Canada for several years, David has changed his perspective on politeness and has started to believe that being direct does not mean being impolite, and it is a better way to express his opinions clearly and also to reduce the chance of misunderstanding.

In addition to culture shock, some international students are stressed because of living in a foreign country. Being positive does contribute to a sense of happiness for those international students who are struggling. Jay shared his transformative experiences with me. As an international student living in Canada alone, Jay was pessimistic because he had to work a part-time job in a restaurant to make money when he was still a university student, which is unusual

as many Chinese international students are fully supported by their parents. Feeling frustrated and upset about life, the manager at the restaurant used his personal experiences as a newcomer living in Canada for many years to make Jay realize the meaning of happiness in life. Jay shared:

When I was school, I was doing a part time job as a dishwasher ...

At that moment, I am not that positive...Some students they fly back to China or go to United States during the vacation or summer, but I have to work. I need some money for my tuition and for my living expense. I am not positive. Everyday I complain about...blah, blah, blah....How bad my life is to my manager. My manager just says, well, you know, that's normal. And he shares about his stories from his life because he immigrated over years. Like long time ago. He has a tough experience in Canada in twenty or thirty years ago. He told me when your life is tough how to face it but [not to] just complained every single day. You have to make yourself more comfortable every single day to face those challenges, and it's like making change to you favorite thingsfor example, you don't like dish washing, just make it for fun, listen to music or singing karaoke by yourself in the dish washing room.

After having experienced the disorienting dilemma during his transition to the host country and also hearing about his manager's immigration story, Jay's attitude toward to life changed and became much more optimistic than before. He continued working in the restaurant until he graduated from university, and the work experiences he gained at the restaurant became an advantage for him when he applied for his current bank job compared to other graduates who do not have any work experience. Transforming from pessimistic to optimistic not only helped him successfully immigrate to Canada after graduation, but also changed his perspectives of the

world and made him become an inwardly stronger person. At the end of our conversation, he declared: “I am more outgoing right now. Before, when I meet a stranger, like you are a stranger for me, right? I don't talk. Right now, even though you are a stranger, I want to make friend with you, so I talked a lot, very outgoing. Before, I don't like talk much. Compared with seven years ago, if you come and ask for an interview, I would say no. Now, I would like to say Why not? I like to know new people”. Like Jay, Amy also expressed that she became much more outgoing in Canada and also realized the importance of making friends with people from other countries. As one of a few Chinese students who studied Biology at Dalhousie, Amy realized that she would have to change from being quiet and shy to someone with an open heart and open mind towards life in order to make friends at university.

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, growing up in a single-child family easily results in children become more self-centered (Crowell and Hsieh, 1995). Cedar shared his inner transformation from a selfish young adult to a warm-hearted person. He said:

When I first came to Canada, I was 18 years old. I was still a child, like selfish....haha... All my roommates are much older than me... They all take care of me, and they treat me like little brother, and that was the first time I realized you can still meet nice people in a foreign county...and that actually influence my attitude...I realized that I have to grateful for everything they have done for me, and be good to people around me.

David emphasized that people he met in Canada helped change him into a warm-hearted person and also let him realized the importance of helping other people and making his small contribution to society. Moving to Canada, for the majority of Chinese is the first time that they

live by themselves away from their parents and have to figure out problems on their own. Without expecting help, care or support from people in a foreign country, both Cedar and David's attitudes have been changed by the people they met in Canada. Learning and realizing the importance of helping others and being grateful for others' help is a huge inner transition, moving participants from a self-centered person to one who is more caring. In this study, six of eight participants clearly experienced transformations in Canada which helped them to adapt to Canadian society. Transformative learning can be defined as "a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience" (Cranton, 1994, p.22). The participants' transformative learning experiences are further discussed in the chapter five.

Self-directed Learning

As outlined in the previous section, my study also aims to investigate whether or not participants in this study adopted self-directed learning over the past years studying and living in Nova Scotia and also to what extent self-directed learning influenced participants' adaptation and integration into the host country. Summarizing the work of Knowles, "self-directed learning is a process...that is, they take responsibility for, and control of, their own learning" (Towle & Cottrell, 1996, p. 357). In examining whether the participants adopted self-directed learning during their transition to Canadian society, I refer to Garrison's self-directed learning model. According to Garrison's model, I show that self-directed learning has been adopted by seven of eight participants. As reflected by the participants' learning experiences, self-directed learning not only plays an important role in their academic achievements, but is also still considered an essential skill for their personal development. Drawing on the three interdependent dimensions developed by Garrison (1997) which include self-management, self-monitoring and motivations (Review in chapter three) to examine the participants' learning experiences, evidence highlights

that these three dimensions have been adopted or used by the participants in their self-directed learning processes. Take Jimmy's experience as an example:

When I was in the big classes...the class contain hundreds of student. In this case, the professor cannot take care of everyone... We have to spend time after class to learn the materials by ourselves. In the higher level courses, the classes are smaller size. We still need to spend our spare time on the class material to better understanding the knowledge, because professors cannot tell too many details in the class. The class level is high, which means the students should equipped with high-level self-learning skills. Google is a very useful tool for study. I can find a lot of very useful solutions or very useful examples, which related to the class materials. It's very helpful for the self-directed learning during the university. When I was in 4000 level classes, the materials are very difficult. I am not very good at reading the English textbooks. It is hard to understand, so I try to find some Chinese version textbook and learn by myself. I think if you have both versions, you will better understand the material.

When looking at Jimmy's reflection I see that Garrison's (1997) three important elements of self-directed learning occurred in Jimmy learning processes. Accomplishing his academic goals is Jimmy's motivation to adopt self-directed learning. Additionally, realizing the importance of self-directed learning outside classes, using Google to search for solutions and studying Chinese versions of textbooks by himself in order to better understand the knowledge is evidence that self-management and self-monitoring skills were parts of Jimmy's learning process. Similar to Jimmy, both Jay and Amy also emphasised the significance of self-directed learning

that contributed to their academic studies when they were at university. Amy shared: “Self-directed learning is a very important learning skill. In the class, maybe because of the size of class is very large, professors cannot take care of everyone. Learning at home is very important for getting a higher mark and pass the classes.” Additionally, because of the language barrier, some Chinese international students cannot fully understand the lectures given by Canadian professors in class. They have to learn by themselves after class in order to catch up with their classmates and not fail the courses. Jay said: “...probably half of the class I don't understand because I don't understand the language properly, so I have to spend more time after the class, at home...definitely, self-directed learning is helping me a lot during the university for the first couple of years.”

In addition to adopting self-directed learning at school, evidence reveals that participants also conducted self-directed learning for their personal improvement and personal development during their transition into the host country. For example, David shared:

University is important, but I would say the biggest lesson I learned is that I learn from my mistake... I will say, you have to learn by yourself, nobody can teach you in your life, so I think it is really important for you to self-corrected your mistake. Self-directed learning from the mistakes and your life experiences, this is how I defined my success in Canada if I can say I am a success.

No one can avoid making mistakes. David's reflection indicates that he has strong self-management and self-monitoring abilities helping him not only to learn from his own mistakes but also always to self-correcting. Instead of being afraid making a mistake, David is more

concerned about what he can learn from his own mistakes and also he emphasized that self-correcting has contributed to his successful adaptation and integration into life in Nova Scotia.

Self-directed learning is an essential skill for Chinese international students studying and surviving abroad. For most of Chinese international students, studying in Canada is their first time living by themselves in a foreign country and far away from their parents. As Jean reflected: “I have to learn how to cook, how to organize my life between preparing my meals and going to school. I mean feed myself and study. I have to pass certain exams and manage my budget at same time.” Even though international students are facing many difficulties and challenges, there are no university courses specifically teaching them about how to survive abroad so having the ability of self-directed learning is crucial for international students for the purpose of balancing their study and life in the host country.

Additionally, Chris stated that self-directed learning has been frequently used at work to accomplish the tasks assigned by the manager such as Photoshop skills, how to make a professional poster and how to give a professional call. These self-directed learning experiences not only assisted Chris to successfully complete the tasks but also showed that she has a great capacity for work.

Many of the examples and evidence provided by the participants in this study revealed that self-directed learning has taken place over the past years in their study and life. Living and studying in a western country, participants’ successful integration experiences indicated that self-directed learning strongly contributes not only to their adaptation of academic life but also in their personal life.

Summary

This chapter presents the some of the participants' life experiences since they arrived in Nova Scotia and also their learning experiences in the past few years. As a group of Chinese international students who decided to stay in Nova Scotia after graduation and were also successfully hired by local companies in Nova Scotia, their adaptation and integration experiences provide examples and guidance for other Chinese international students who are still studying at universities or planning to immigrate to Canada after graduation. Living far from their families and friends, adopting a new culture in a short time and facing academic pressure, life in the host country is an adventure for the majority of Chinese international students in Nova Scotia. Through the exploration of the participants' life experiences and learning experiences in Canada, the questions about their motivation to come to Nova Scotia, life journeys over the past years in Nova Scotia, and also their reasons to stay in Nova Scotia asked at the beginning of this chapter have been answered. Meanwhile, this chapter also investigated the transformative learning the participants experienced and also how they adopted self-directed learning for the purpose of adapting and integrating into new life in Nova Scotia.

Chapter 5 Summary and Discussions

Summary and Discussions

The main goal of this research was to understand the experiences of a small group of Chinese international students' and their journey from students studying in Nova Scotia, to permanent residents settling in Nova Scotia. Understanding how the participants negotiate within Canadian society and their learning experiences in Nova Scotia may provide a better direction to other Chinese international students who plan to immigrate to Nova Scotia. The above findings analyzed students' living and learning experiences since their arrival to Nova Scotia. Additionally, the above findings also reported the influence and inspiration of transformative learning and self-directed learning of their integration and settlement. In this chapter, my research data are summarized and discussed, and it also shares suggestions provided by the participants to other Chinese international students are also listed in this chapter.

Life as An International Students in Nova Scotia

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the number of Chinese international students in Nova Scotia is steadily increasing in recent years and Nova Scotia is in need of more skilled international students to promote economic growth and prosperity. Although facing a completely different culture and experiencing challenges as a newcomer, my participants still chose to stay and settle in the province after their graduation. One of the goals in this research is to explore the participants' stories since they arrived to Canada through in-depth interviews. Three key stages were discussed in the life story section which include: 1) coming to Nova Scotia; 2) living in Nova Scotia and; 3) staying in Nova Scotia. The reasons why my participants were interested in

studying and immigrating to Nova Scotia instead of going to other provinces in Canada include: their willingness to learning the English language and to immerse themselves into the Canadian culture and because Nova Scotia has a smaller Chinese community compared with other larger provinces in Canada. In addition, recommendations from their Canadian high school teachers, the flexible immigration policies and the win-win formal agreements between Chinese universities and Canadian universities were also influential factors that attract participants to come to Nova Scotia. Some of these research findings correspond to the literature reviewed on the factors that influence international students coming to Nova Scotia. The factors were also found in Li et al (2012) and Williams (2013), although Li et al and William both noted that a sense of safety and affordable tuition and living expense are also important for Chinese international students which my participants did not mention as a factor. As all the participants were originally from China, the reasons that they addressed in this study may slightly be different compared to international students from other countries.

As a group of people who experienced the process of transitioning from being an international student to a permanent residents, my participants indicated that there are two aspects largely influencing and enhancing their adaptation and integration: the essential role of relationships with Canadians and individual resilience. More specifically, the help, the encouragement and support the participants received from their professors, university presidents, neighbours and even friendly strangers on the street have all contributed to their sense of belonging and well-being as international students in Nova Scotia. Additionally, one participant emphasized that the woman president in her university, to a large extent, changed her perception of women's roles in society and let her realize that women and men should have an equal chance to achieve success in every society.

Yet, participants were still facing difficulties, challenges and negative experiences because of their foreign student identity. As emphasized by the participants, having the resilience to protect themselves from adversity and to empower themselves to overcome obstacles to a large extent sped up their processes of adaptation and integration in the host country and encouraged them to be optimistic with a positive attitude towards life and the future. This finding was in accordance with the literature reviewed about the adjustment of Chinese international students in United States. Wang, Heppner, Fu, Zhao, Li and Chuang (2012) suggested that “having a balanced array of social support[s] and using acceptance, reframing, and striving as coping strategies were associated with a better cross-cultural transition” (p. 424). Even though they have been living in Canada for a few years participants reflected on how learning is a lifelong project and they are still in the process of improving their English language and learning the Canadian culture.

The findings of Lu, Zong and Schissel (2009) in their research on Chinese international students’ migration intention in Saskatchewan, suggested that, “social and emotional adaptations are as critical as economic adaptation in facilitating temporary residents’ intentions to stay” (p. 283). The authors also emphasized that the welcoming immigration policy to some extent can also influence and motivate Chinese international students’ intention to stay. Arthur and Flynn’s research findings (2011) identified that “the enhanced job opportunities and high standard of living” are two factors motivating international students to remain in Canada after graduation (p. 221). My research participants illustrated that the job opportunities, the social networks they have developed, friendly Nova Scotian people, flexible immigration policies and an unpolluted environment are the most influential reasons that keep participants wanting to stay in the province. Seven out of eight participants in this research found employment once they graduated from university, and this largely influenced the participants’ decision to stay in Nova Scotia.

Having a job which can put what they learned at university into practice not only can help them realize their self-value but also can facilitate the local economy. The participants also emphasized that work experiences prior to graduation were important as they helped them to learn about Nova Scotian culture and build effective social networks. No matter if it is an internship, a part-time job or a short contract summer job, all these work experiences became an valuable treasure for the participants as it gave them chances to accumulate work experiences before graduation. Compared with people in the big cities in Canada, the participants reflected that Nova Scotian people is more friendly and nicer. Their welcoming attitudes towards to new comers increased a sense of belonging for the participants living in a foreign country. In addition, the fixable immigration policy is also an asset for keeping international students to the province as some of the participants demonstrated that immigrating to Canada for the purpose of getting away from their polluted hometown is one of their aims for choosing studying in Canada. Based on the reflections from the participants, I found that Nova Scotia has it's own advantages to retaining Chinese international students even though it's a smaller province in Canada and has less Chinese population. Arthur and Flynn (2011) demonstrate that cultural and linguistic barriers are still the two impediments facing international students in securing employment but also in migrating to Canada. However, the participants in my study reflected that knowing the Chinese culture and speaking the Chinese language is an asset as they reflected that more and more companies were looking for bilingual employees in order to broaden the markets and face the international and globalized world. All participants expressed that they are quite satisfied with their life and didn't make any plans to leave the province in the next few years. Living in a foreign country and planning for immigration is a large endeavor for the majority of Chinese international students in Canada.

Transformative Learning and Self-directed Learning

Because of the language barriers, culture shock, unfamiliarity with their new surroundings and not knowing much about Western society, the participants indicated that they required lots of new learning in order to adapt to life and integrate into the Nova Scotian society. In this study, I used the lens of transformative learning and self-directed learning to explore the participants' learning processes after they arrived in Canada and to examine whether or not their transformative learning experiences and self-directed learning experiences contribute to their quality of lives in Canada.

According to the Transformative Learning Center (2017) transformative learning is “experiencing a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions.” For Chinese international students, they are facing not only differences in educational patterns between China and Canada, but also cultural differences between the East and the West. In this study, the participants highlighted the importance of their transformative learning experiences in their integration and settlement in Nova Scotia. During the interview, they stated that their beliefs, values and attitudes towards life and work have been changed more or less by the mainstream of Canadian culture and Canadian society for the last couple of years. For example, from believing being humble is the principle for their success to understanding the importance of self-selling to their success; from considering making money as the meaning of their life to realizing the importance of spending more time with family and enjoying life; from thinking the behaviour of directly pointing out problems is rude to believing it is a better way to express one's opinions clearly. Transformative learning not only occurs when participants face culture shock, but it also happens based on their own unique life experiences in Canada. From learning how to negotiate with and look at the hard times in life, transforms participants' perspectives and attitudes towards the challenges and difficulties in life, and fosters within them the development

of inner strength. The participants also learned and realized the importance of helping others and being a more considerate person by engaging with the friendly people they met in Canada. Over the past years, the transformative learning the participants experienced either consciously or unconsciously played an essential role in their processes of adaptation and integration in Nova Scotia.

In addition to the transformative learning, self-directed learning has also conformed the participants through the process of their adaptation and integration journey since they arrival in Canada. According to the participants' narratives, they employed different forms of self-directed learning when they were at the universities; not only for keeping a good academic record but also for self-improvement. Because of language barriers, the participants had to make more of an effort to study after class by themselves in order to fully understand the content taught by professors in class. They used Google Search to find learning resources for classes and reading the Chinese version of their textbooks to help them understand the English version of the textbooks. What's more, the participants also emphasized that they adopted self-direct learning when they were dealing with the challenges in their daily life. They learned how to balance their busy lives in a foreign country and they also learned how to cook by themselves. The outcomes of their self-directed learning not only improved their self-confidence in academia, but also contributed to their personal growth in Canada. Beyond that, self-direct learning also sped up the participants' processes to problem-solve, while improving their capacity to find work.

A report from the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2017) shows that the number of Chinese international students in Canada make up about 32.96 percent of entire number of international students, first among all other countries. The data also revealed that about 51 percent of international students plan to apply for permanent residence in Canada.

Learning and realizing the importance of transformative learning and self-directed learning can contribute to the participants' quality of lives. This thesis can offer Chinese international students who plan to immigrate to Nova Scotia a rare chance to explore and give an insight to the participants an adaptation and settlement journey while in Nova Scotia. In addition, understanding the experiences of the participants' transformative learning and self-directed learning provide important implications to international educators on how to give appropriate support for the Chinese international students in Nova Scotia.

The findings about the influences of transformative learning and self-directed learning to the participants' integration correspond to the literature review on how international students or immigrant learners navigate and negotiate in a host country. The findings of Kumi-Yeboah & James' (2014) research on *Transformative Learning Experiences of International Graduate Students From Asian Countries* examined that the "majority of the participants experienced transformative learning as a result of both educational and non-educational activities" (p. 25). Lyon (2002) suggested that, "the transformative learning experience is a key part of culture shock and adjustment to a host culture" (p.4). Ritz's research findings (2010) also indicated that "culture was at the core of an expected transformative learning process for participants"(p. 163). Elizabeth (2015) identified that newcomers' identities are being challenged and influenced in the host country in terms of their loss of social belonging and professional status. "They entered a liminal space of questioning cultural and family socialization and negotiating battles with emotions and desires. For them, these losses and conflicts were disorienting but also created the ground for growth" (p.637). For newcomers, their transformative learning processes usually involved "the dynamics of identity displacement, rejection, replacement and reassertion" (Elizabeth, 2015, p.637). With their change in values of what they used to believe and in making adjustments in their daily lives, the participants' integration journeys in Nova Scotia are similar

to other newcomers. However, through the participants' narratives in this study, they not only recognized the transformation of their identity but also knew how they have been changed by the mainstream culture. For example, David said "My values are not like Chinese any more; they [Chinese people] are trying to point out [a] problem not that obvious [indirect]. Sometimes will mislead you, but for me, I become more direct now". In this study, the participants are very clear with what they have learned from the Canadian culture and also the transformation of their values, beliefs and attitudes in the past few years after arriving to Nova Scotia, which reflects Mezirow's (1994) assertion that transformative learning as a rationalist process of "construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experiences as a guide to action" (pp. 222-223).

Robles's research findings (2008) strongly suggest that, "self-directed learning is an approach that adult immigrant and international students can practice and have practiced to bring about changes in their lives" (p. 92). Knowles (1975) identified that self-directed learning enables one to construct personal self-confidence and independence. For the purpose of achieving academic goals and having a quality life in Nova Scotia, the majority of participants in this study adopted self-directed learning not only in their studies at universities but also in their daily life for self-improvement and balancing life. The outcomes of the participants' self-directed learning sped up the processes of their adaptation and integration in Nova Scotia. Stewart (2007) used the international Masters students in an engineering management course as an example to exploring and measuring the link between self-directed learning readiness and project-based learning outcomes. 65 percent of international students in the engineering management course involved in this study and the standard to evaluate their self-direct learning readiness are divided into three factors, which are self-management, desire for learning and self-control. Through analyzing the answers of the questionnaire survey from the international students, Stewart's

research findings identified that self-directed learning plays an important role in the achievements of international engineer students' learning outcomes. Additionally, Stewart (2007) also suggested that "Graduating students with heightened SDL [self-directed learning] aptitude is one of the best outcomes an engineering education provider can offer the professional employment market" (p. 461). The findings in my research also shows that the self-directed learning the participants experienced after arrival to a large extent facilitate their adaptation and integration in Nova Scotia, which corresponded to the literature that I discussed above. However, influenced by the teacher-center style culture, most of Chinese used to rely on the knowledge provided by teachers instead of realizing the importance of conducting their own learning and being critical thinkers (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Then, may not all the Chinese international students realize and understand the importance of self-directed learning for their studying and living in a foreign country or they do not even know how to implement effective self-directed learning. Therefore, it is necessary and essential for universities to consider providing the learning strategies course about studying and living in a foreign country to international students to support and enhance their adaptation and integration.

The experiences of the participants in this study are not representative of all Chinese international students in Nova Scotia. Nevertheless, the living and learning experiences they shared still offers valuable insights in understanding the processes of their adaptation and integration in the host country. From the participants' stories, we can become more informed of the difficulties and challenges that Chinese international students may encounter in Canada and also understand their living and learning experiences as a new comer in a Canadian society. Additionally,

The findings of this thesis have important implications not only for Chinese international students but also for adult educators, higher educational institutions and universities, and Nova Scotian provincial policy makers. Firstly, the participants' successful adaptation and integration experiences can provide guidance to other Chinese international students who are planning to stay in the province after their graduation. Secondly, adult educators can inform from the participants' stories of their integrating experiences in Nova Scotia and their learning processes as a Chinese international student in a Western country. Thirdly, the findings of this research also have important implications to higher education institutions, universities, and policy makers not only for attracting more international students to study in the province and remaining after graduation, but also for providing appropriate assistance and support for international students.

Participants' Suggestions for Other Chinese International Students

Summarizing the past years of learning and life experiences from international students to permanent residents, the participants in this research also provided the following recommendations for other Chinese international students who have the desire and willingness to remain in the province after graduation. Below are examples from participants.

David: ...You have to trust them (Canadians), you have to believe them, you have to forget the ideology you have in your mind from China; because somebody in Canada who is willing to help you are truly from their willingness. They are not looking for any pay back. What you need to do is be honest, be generous, and be kind. Talk to the person you wish to talk, they

would help you if they can.

Carina: ... don't be afraid...if you don't know something or if you need help, just go talk to the people who can help you. Don't be afraid to think people will think you are silly or people think you are childish or whatever.

Jay: Try your best to meet more Canadians, not only Chinese international students...If you really want to live in Canada, study in Canada, do not just stay in the small Chinese community group. Meet more people, as much as possible. Not only learn about their language, but also about their culture.

Cedar: ...don't be afraid... Accept people from other countries. You don't have to be afraid of them. Like, for all Chinese, we always hang out with certain people. That is the life style we are used to, you don't have to change it. You have to open mind to other people, you have to talk to them. Just keep learning different things from people around you, that will change your attitude, that will be the time you actually start to experience West culture.

Chris: Attend as many events as you can. Don't stay at home playing computer or watching the drama. Go out to attend the networking event. Volunteer for local community event, join the Canadian family, celebrate the festival together. You have so many ways to join the local society rather to stay at home feeling lonely.

***Amy:** Most of all, you need to practice your oral English... When you send out your resume, apply as much jobs as you can. You don't need to consider like your major is a direct match to the work or not. Sometimes, applying cross fields also works.*

***Jean:** ...the first thing and the most important thing is the language, so I would encourage Chinese international students to speak English a lot more than they already do. The more you speak, the better you can speak. The better you can speak English, the easier you can communicate with the local English-speaking people. It's easier for you to get a job. ...do volunteer work, go to activities in school, or you can go outside school for networking or any event which interest you. That is the first step to learn about the society before you integrate into the society.*

***Jimmy:** As a Chinese student, we are not the local people, we have to build our own network here in order to well adapt to the local society. I would like to suggest Chinese students to learn the English language well and also to know some popular topic or the news going on here. And then we can better communicate with people here, like your classmates or your colleagues. You have to know some topic that we can chat with them, like Hockey. I also suggest students to join the local events.*

Although the suggestions provided by the participants are varied, the main goal is to provide guidance to Chinese international students with their adaptation and integration in Nova Scotia.

Recommendations

Through analyzing participants' life experiences in Nova Scotia, this research uncovered the participants' life and transformation journey from Chinese international students to becoming permanent residents in Nova Scotia. From finding out the reasons why the participants choose to study in Nova Scotia and also why they chose to remain in the province after graduation, to understanding their living and learning experiences in Nova Scotia, this study also explored whether or not the transformative learning and self-directed learning affected and contributed to the participants' adaptation to Western culture and integration into the local community. The findings of this research suggest that the participants' learning experiences not only contributed to the achievement they had in Canada but also it potentially sped up their processes of adaptation and integration.

In light of the findings of this study I list the following recommendations for Chinese international students in Nova Scotia, Nova Scotian universities and to the provincial policy makers.

Chinese international students should:

1. Take an active part in local activities and events for the purpose of understanding Canadian culture and improving the English language.

2. Develop a good relationship with your professors at university. Do not be afraid to ask them questions if you have any problem with your studies.
3. Step out of your comfort zone and make friends with people from other countries instead of only gathering and talking with Chinese compatriots.
4. Choose to be optimistic when you encounter difficulties and challenges. If needed, seek help from other people.
5. Have the intense curiosity towards life and also the attitude of being a true lifelong learning.

Nova Scotian Universities should:

1. Make an effort to develop a multicultural campus as it not only can help build a bridge between international students and local students but also contribute to a sense of belonging for international students living in a foreign country. For example, organizing more cross-cultural events to invite local and international students to join together and learn diverse cultures from each other, providing funding to support international students to celebrate their traditional festivals on campus, purchasing different language versions' textbooks for university libraries, and inviting international scholars from different countries to teach at the university.
2. Multicultural and diversity training opportunities should be provided by universities to faculty and staff as they work with international students.
3. Pay close attention to international students' physical and psychological health and help them to feel that they are being cared for in their host country.
4. Continue to develop and optimize formal agreements with universities in other countries.

Provincial policy-makers should.

1. Develop flexible immigration policies to attract more skilled international students to come and remain in Nova Scotia.
2. Sponsor a specific organization to help international students with their integration and employment in Nova Scotia.

In addition to the suggestions that I proposed above, it is also worth looking at the participants' learning and living experience in Nova Scotia from a critical perspective. Some participants in this research emphasized the necessity of adopting Canadian workplace culture and also the importance of "being like a Canadian" for the purpose of "fitting" into the local labour market to integrate into Canadian society. From my perspective, immigrants should not give up certain long held values or traditions, because Canadian society values multiculturalism and diversity. Additionally, immigrants' cultural identity is an invisible asset and treasure for themselves. Instead of sticking with one mainstream culture, immigration for Canada means the democratic society needs to be open to different values, ideas and culture. Some immigrants choose to become Canadian citizens after several years in Canada and they love Canada just like they love their home country. As a multicultural and multi-ethnic country, the importance of seeking common ground while recognizing and valuing differences should be an awareness of all Canadians; because it will not only promote mutual respect among different ethnic groups but also will contribute to the harmony and prosperity for Canadian society.

Limitations of My Study

I analyzed the limitations of this study in this section and also I considered the reliability and validity of the research. One notable limitation is that my analysis of Chinese international students' adaptation and integration only focused on the students who did their undergraduate studies in Canada. In fact, there are many Chinese international students who come to Canada for their graduate studies after completing their undergraduate in China like me. Their adaptation and integration experiences may differ from the students who come to Canada after graduating from high school. The small sample size (n=8 participants) is also a limitation in this study. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized and the participants' experiences do not represent all Chinese international students' experiences in Nova Scotia. Additionally, the analysis of international students' studying and living experiences in Nova Scotia did not involve a gendered perspective. Therefore, in future a gendered perspective analysis about the international students' studying and living experiences in Canada would be helpful. Misinterpretation may also be a limitation in this study as the interviews were conducted in English, and none of us is a native English speaker.

Considerations for possible Future Research

For future research, I recommend that researchers consider the following suggestions to expand on my study:

- Compare the differences and similarities in the adaptation and integration experiences of international students from Asia, Europe, Latin America and Africa within Nova Scotia.
- Explore the influences of the structure of society and policies that take effect in

international students' integration and settlement in Nova Scotia.

- Explore the factors that impact Chinese international students' identity construction, career choice and language learning practices in Nova Scotia.
- Explore how Chinese international students define their success in Canadian society and what they need to achieve this success.

References

- A World of Learning(2013). Canada's Performance and Potential in International Education 2013. Retrieved from <http://unews.ca/international-enrolment-on-the-rise>
- 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.
- Arkoudis, S., Hawthorne, L., Baik, C., Hawthorne, G., O'Loughlin, K., Leach, D., & Bexley, E. (2009). The impact of English language proficiency and workplace readiness on employment outcomes and performance of tertiary international students. *Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.*
- Ashley, D., & Jiang, Y. (2000). *Mao's children in the new China: voices from the Red Guard generation.* Routledge.
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. (2010). Advocacy and research: International students. Retrieved from http://www.aucc.ca/policy/priorities/internationalstudents_e.html
- Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What mainland Chinese parents and students rate as important. *Journal of research in International education, 8*(3), 349-373.
- Brigham, S. (2015). Mothering has no borders: The transnational kinship networks of undocumented Jamaican domestic workers in Canada. In G.C. Man, & R. Cohen (Eds.), *Engendering transnational voices: Studies in family, work, and identity* (pp.135-153). Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press.
- Candy, P. C. (1991). *Self-Direction for Lifelong Learning. A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice.* Jossey-Bass, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA

- 94104-1310.
- Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2005). The National Report on International Students in Canada 2002. Retrieved from http://www.cbie.ca/data/media/resources/2002_NationalReport_e.pdf
- Canadian Bureau for International Education (2017). Facts and Figures: Canada's performance and potential in international education. Retrieved from <http://cbie.ca/media/facts-and-figures/>
- Caudle, S. L. (2004). Qualitative data analysis. *Handbook of practical program evaluation*, 2, 417-438.
- Chakma, A., Bisson, A., Côté, J., Dodds, C., Smith, L., & Wright, D. (2012). International education: A key driver of Canada's future prosperity. *Government of Canada, Ottawa. August.*
- Cheng, L. R. L. (1987). *Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English-proficient students*. Aspen Pub.
- Chira, S., & Belkhodja, C. (2013). Best Practices for the Integration of International Students in Atlantic Canada: Findings and Recommendations A Study of the Policies and Practices Surrounding the Settlement of International Students in the Atlantic Provinces.
- Chow, E. N., & Zhao, S. M. (1996). The one-child policy and parent-child relationships: A comparison of one-child with multiple-child families in China. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 16, 35-62.
- Chinese Ministry of Education. (2011). 专题询问：国务院关于实施《国家中长期 教育改革和发展规划纲要（2010—2020年）》工作情况的报告 [Special news conference: Responses from ministers on the implementation of The National Mid-Term and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)]. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.cn/sofprogecslive/webcontroller.do?titleSeq=3431&gecsm>

essage=1

- Conner, D. R. (1993). *Managing at the speed of change: How resilient managers succeed and prosper where others fail*. New York: Villard Books.
- Congress, C. L. (2014). Underemployment is Canada's Real Labour Market Challenge: A Profile of Canada's Labour Market. *Research Note, March*.
- Compare Student Living Costs By Country. (2017). UniCurve. Retrieved from <https://unicurve.com/compare-student-living-costs-country>
- Compare Tuition Fees by Country. (2017) UniCurve. Retrieved from <https://unicurve.com/compare-tuition-fees-country>
- Cranton, P. (2013). Adult learning theory. In Nesbit et al. (Eds.), *Building on critical traditions, Adult Education and learning in Canada* (p. 95-p. 104). Toronto: Thompson.
- Cranton, P. (2006) *Understanding and promoting transformative learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. (1994). *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults*. *Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series*. Jossey-Bass, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104-1310.
- Crowell, T., & Hsieh, D. (1995). Little emperors: is China's one-child policy creating a society of brats. *Asiaweek*, 21(48), 44-50.
- Davey, G. (2005). Chinese students' motivations for studying abroad. *International Journal of Private Education*, 2, 16-21.
- Deutsch, F. M. (2006). Filial piety, patrilineality, and China's one-child policy. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(3), 366-389.
- Douglass, J. A., & Edelstein, R. (2009). The Global Competition for talent: The Rapidly Changing Market for International Students and the Need for a Strategic Approach in the US. *Center for Studies in Higher Education*.
- Garrison, D. R. (1997). Self-directed learning: Toward a comprehensive model. *Adult education*

quarterly, 48(1), 18-33.

Gates-Gasse, E. (2012). "International Students as Immigrants." In *Immigration and Settlement — Challenges, Experiences and Opportunities*, edited by Harald Bauder, 271–295.

Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

Global Affairs Canada (2017). *International Education: A Key Driver of Canada's Future Prosperity*. Retrieved from: [http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-](http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/strategy-strategie/index.aspx?lang=eng&view=d)

[rapport/strategy-strategie/index.aspx?lang=eng&view=d](http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/strategy-strategie/index.aspx?lang=eng&view=d)

Global Education Digest: Comparing Education Statistics across the World (2006). Montreal: UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

Global Affairs Canada (2017). *International Education: A Key Driver of Canada's Future Prosperity*. Retrieved from: [http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-](http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/strategy-strategie/index.aspx?lang=eng&view=d)

[rapport/strategy-strategie/index.aspx?lang=eng&view=d](http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/strategy-strategie/index.aspx?lang=eng&view=d)

Grey, M. (2002). Drawing with difference: Challenges faced by international students in an undergraduate business degree. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 7(2), 153-166.

Gu, Q., Schweisfurth, M., & Day, C. (2010). Learning and growing in a 'foreign' context: Intercultural experiences of international students. *Compare*, 40(1), 7-23.

Hesketh, T., Zhou, X., & Wang, Y. (2015). The end of the one-child policy: lasting implications for China. *Jama*, 314(24), 2619-2620.

Huang, L. J. (1982). Planned fertility of one-couple/one-child policy in The People's Republic of China. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 44, 775-784.

ICEF Monitor (2014). *The state of international student mobility in 2015*. ICEF Inc: Bonn, Germany. Retrieved from:

<http://monitor.icef.com/2015/11/the-state-of-international-studentmobility-in-2015/>

Immigration and Citizenship (2017) *Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program: Atlantic Intermediate-skilled Program (IMM5466)*. Retrieved from

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/guides/>

- International Education Center (2016). Mount Saint Vincent University. (personal communication, August 25, 2016)
- Jin, L., & Cortazzi, M. (2006). Changing practices in Chinese cultures of learning. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 19(1), 5-20.
- Jiao, J. (2006). Exploring the reasons for student ethnic groupings: The case of Chinese students at the University of Windsor.
- Kim, B. S., & Abreu, J. M. (2001). Acculturation measurement. *Handbook of multicultural counselling*.
- Kitchenham, A. (2008). The evolution of John Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education* 6(2): 104–23.
- King, R., & Raghuram, P. (2013). International student migration: mapping the field and new research agendas. *Population, Space and Place*, 19(2), 127-137.
- King, R., Findlay, A., & Ahrens, J. (2010). International student mobility literature review.
- Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and instructors*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education.
- Knopf, J. W. (2006). Doing a literature review. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 39(01), 127-132.
- Kumi-Yeboah, A., & James, W. (2014). Transformative Learning Experiences of International Graduate Students From Asian Countries. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 12(1), 25-53.
- Kumi-Yeboah, A., & James, W. (2014). Transformative learning experiences of international graduate students from Asian countries. *Journal of Transformative education*, 12(1), 25-53.
- Lee, K. & Wesche, M. (2000) 'Korean students' adaptation to post-secondary studies in Canada: A case study'. *Canadian Modern Language Review* 56(4): 637–89.
- Lindeman, E. C. (1961). *The meaning of adult education in the United States*. New

York: Harvest House.

- Li, X., DiPetta, T., & Woloshyn, V. (2012). Why do Chinese study for a Master of Education degree in Canada? What are their experiences? *Canadian Journal of Education*, 35(3), 149.
- Lu, Y., Zong, L., & Schissel, B. (2009). To stay or return: Migration intentions of students from People's Republic of China in Saskatchewan, Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'integration et de la migration internationale*, 10(3), 283-310.
- Lyon, C. R. (2002). Trigger Event Meets Culture Shock: Linking the Literature of Transformative Learning Theory and Cross-Cultural Adaptation.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, Gretchen B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Marshall, M. N. (1996). Sampling for qualitative research. *Family practice*, 13(6), 522-526.
- Marginson, S., & McBurnie, G. (2004). Cross-border post-secondary education in the Asia-Pacific region. *Internationalisation and trade in higher education: opportunities and challenges*, Paris: OECD.
- Mallinckrodt, B., & Leong, F. T. (1992). International graduate students, stress, and social support. *Journal of College Student Development*, 33(1), 71-78.
- Merriam, S., & Simpson, Edwin L. (1984). *A guide to research for educators and trainers of adults*. Malabar, Fla.: R.E. Krieger Pub.
- Mezirow, J. (1998a). Cognitive processes: Contemporary paradigm of learning. In P. Sutherland (Ed.), *Adult learning: A reader* (pp. 2-13). Stirling, VA: Kogan Page.
- Mezirow, J. (1998b). On critical reflection. *Adult Learning Quarterly*, 48(3), 185-198.
- Mezirow, J. (1994). "Understanding Transformation Theory." *Adult Education Quarterly* 44 (4), 222-232.

- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1996). Beyond Freire and Habermas: Confusion a response to Bruce Pietrykowski. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 46, 237–239
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of transformative education*, 1(1), 58-63.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (1st ed., Jossey-Bass higher and adult education series). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2012). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). Introduction to qualitative research. *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*, 1, 1-17.
- Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Montuori, A. (2005). Literature Review As Creative Inquiry Reframing Scholarship As a Creative Process. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 3(4), 374-393.
- Mori, S. (2000) Addressing the mental health concerns of international students. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 78, 137–144.
- MPHEC: Maritime Province Higher Education Commission (2015) Table 5:Enrolment* of International Students** by Province, Institution, Registration Status, and as Percentage of Total Enrolments, 2010-2011 to 2014-2015. Retrieved from http://www.mphec.ca/media/118042/Enr_Table5_2014_2015E.pdf
- Nova Scotia Canada (2005). International students able to work off-campus in Nova Scotia. Retrieved from <http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20051122006>
- Nunes, S., & Arthur, N. (2013). International students' experiences of integrating into the workforce. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 50(1), 34-45.

Number of foreign university students rising in N.S.,(2012). CBC NEWS. Nova Scotia.

Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/number-of-foreign-university-students-rising-in-n-s-1.1237198>

OECD (2005) Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2005, Paris, France, URL:

http://www.oecd.org/document/34/0,3343,en_2649_34515_35289570_1_1_1_1,00.html. Last accessed 16 May 2007.

One Nova Scotia. (2014). How or never: an urgent call to action for Nova Scotia. Retrieved from

<http://onens.ca/report/medium-resolution-digital-only/>

Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (2017) International students-Masters Graduate Program.

Retrieved from http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/pnp/OI_PNPSTUDENTS_MASTER.html

Ortiz, A., & Choudaha, R. (2014). Attracting and retaining international students in Canada. *WES*

Research & Advisory Services.

O'Sullivan, E. (2003). Bringing a perspective of transformative learning to globalized

consumption. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 27(4), 326-330.

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage Publications.

Peykov, P. (2004). Immigrant skilled workers: Should Canada attract more foreign students?

Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy. Retrieved from

http://www.uregina.ca/sipp/documents/pdf/PPP27_Immigration.pdf

Ritz, A. (2010). International Students and Transformative Learning in a Multicultural Formal

Educational Context. *The Educational Forum*, 74(2),158-166.

Robles, T. (2008). Learning for life : Adult immigrarnt and international students adopting self-

directed learning skills : Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree Master of Adult Education. Antigonish, N.S.: St. Francis Xavier University.

Shan, H. & Guo, S. (2013). Learning as sociocultural practice: Chinese immigrant professionals

- negotiating differences and identities in the Canadian labour market, *Comparative Education*, 49:1, 28-41, DOI:10.1080/03050068.2012.740218
- Saudi Arabia stopping scholarships for Atlantic university (2017). CBCnews, Nova Scotia. Retrieved July 08, 2017, from CBC Web site:<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/saudia-arabia-stops-scholarships-13377832>
- Schneider, M. (2000). Others' open doors. *How Other Nations Attract International Students. Implications for US Educational Exchange. Institute of International Education: <http://www.opendoorsweb.org>.*
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research* (Vol. 15). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Grounded theory in practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stewart, R. (2007). Investigating the link between self directed learning readiness and project-based learning outcomes: The case of international Masters students in an engineering management course. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 32(4), 453-465.
- Students NS (2016): international students sheet fact. Retrieved from <http://studentsns.ca/research/fact-sheets-data/international-students-fact-sheet/>
- Thomas, K., & Althen, G. (1989). Counseling foreign students. In P. B. Pedersen, J. G. Draguns, W. J. Lonner, & J. E. Trimble (Eds.), *Counseling across cultures* (pp. 205-241). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- The Canada press (2014): Nova scotia hopes to keep international students in province after graduation. (2014, Jun 06). The Canadian Press. Retrieved from:<http://ezproxy.msvu.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.msvu.ca/docview/1534090130?accountid=12617>
- TMHE (Trends in Maritime Higher Education), 2012: Volume 9, Number 3 May 2012 Retrieved from: http://www.mphec.ca/resources/TrendsV9N3_2012.pdf
- Towle, A., & Cottrell, D. (1996). Self directed learning. *Archives of disease in childhood*, 74(4),

357-359.

- Wang, K. T., Heppner, P. P., Fu, C. C., Zhao, R., Li, F., & Chuang, C. C. (2012). Profiles of acculturative adjustment patterns among Chinese international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 59*(3), 424.
- Williams, J. (2013). International students and the future of nova scotia's University. Retrieved from: <http://studentsns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2013-International-Studentsand-the-Future-of-Nova-Scotias-Universities-Amended.pdf>
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oak, CA: Sage
- Van Huystee, M. (2011). *A profile of foreign students who transition to permanent resident status in Atlantic Canada*. Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- Verbik, L., & Lasanowski, V. (2007). International student mobility: Patterns and trends. *World Education News and Reviews, 20*(10), 1-16.
- Yang, R. P. J., Noels, K. A., & Saumure, K. D. (2006). Multiple routes to cross-cultural adaptation for international students: Mapping the paths between self-construals, English language confidence, and adjustment. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 30*(4), 487-506
- Yang, M. (2007). What attracts mainland Chinese students to Australian higher education. *Studies in Learning, 4*(2), 1-12.
- Yan, K., & Berliner, D. C. (2013). Chinese international students' personal and sociocultural stressors in the United States. *Journal of College Student Development, 54*(1), 62-84.
- 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.
- Ye, J. (2006). An examination of acculturative stress, interpersonal social support, and use of

online ethnic social groups among Chinese international students. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 17(1), 1-20.

Zhang, X., & Li, M. (2012, May 26). 高考人数统计 [Higher education entry Examination statistics]. *People's Daily Overseas Edition*, 8.

Zhao, X. (2011, November 5). 中国劲吹留学风 [More Chinese plan to study overseas]. *People's Daily Overseas Edition*, 1.

Zhang, Z., & Zhou, G. (2010). Understanding Chinese international students at a Canadian university: Perspectives, expectations, and experiences. *Comparative and International Education/Éducation Comparée et Internationale*, 39(3), 43-58.

Zhang, Z., & Beck, K. (2014). I came, but I'm lost: Learning stories of three Chinese international students in Canada/Je suis venu, mais je suis perdu: Histoires d'apprentissage de trois étudiants internationaux Chinois au Canada. *Comparative and International Education*, 43(2), 1.

Zhang, S. Y., & Carrasquillo, A. L. (1995). Chinese parents' influence on academic performance. *New York State Association for Bilingual Education Journal*, 10, 46-53.

Zwart, J. (2013). Study abroad choices of Chinese students: Factors, influences and motivations. *Quarterly Journal of Chinese Studies*, 2(2), 68.



Appendix A: Questionnaire: Participant background

Instructions: Please fill in to the best of your ability in English

1. What is your name? _____

What fake name would you like me to use for you in this study? _____

2. When were you born?

3. Where in China did you come from?

4. How long have you been in Canada? _____

5. How long have you been in Nova Scotia? _____

6. Where you were before you coming to Nova Scotia? _____

7. Which universities did you attend in Nova Scotia? _____

8. What level of education did you received at this university?

a) Undergraduate b) Graduate

9. What program did you study?

10. What is your highest level of

education? _____

11. How long you have been working full time? _____

12. What is your job title right now?

13. Do you have any family in Canada or Nova Scotia?

YES NO

If yes, please explain:

14. Do you have permanent resident status in Canada?

YES NO

If yes, when did you become a permanent resident? _____

15. Are you a Canadian citizen?

YES NO

If yes, when did you become a Canadian citizen? _____



Appendix B: One-to-one in-depth interview question guide

First Theme: Life as a student

1. What were your main reasons for choosing to study in Nova Scotia instead of Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal, which are the typical immigrant and international student receiving cities? Please explain.
2. Do you still remember how you felt the first month after you arrived in Canada? Please tell me about it.
3. What kind of difficulties and challenges have you experienced since you came to Canada? How did you address them?
4. Tell me about either a special event or person that has influenced your life in Canada or influenced your attitude since you came to Canada.
5. Based on your own experiences as a Chinese international student what suggestions do you have for other Chinese international students that you think would help them integrate into Canadian/Nova Scotian society? Please explain.

Second Theme: Learning experience

1. Tell me a story about a positive experience that you have had in Canada. What did you learn from this experience?
2. Tell me a story about a negative experience that you have had in Canada. What did you learn from this experience?
3. Do you think your self-directed learning contributed to your success in Canada? Please explain.

Probe: Self-directed learning is when an individual takes the initiative and the responsibility for his/her learning. Individuals select, manage, and assess their own learning activities, which can be pursued at any time, in any place, through any means, at any age. (Cited from Wikipedia)

4. Do you consider yourself a lifelong learner? If so, please explain in what ways you are a lifelong learner.

Probe: Lifelong learning is the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated" pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. Therefore, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also self-sustainability, as well as competitiveness and employability. (Cited from Wikipedia)

Third Theme: Employment

1. What are your reasons for wanting to get a job in Canada? Please explain.
2. How long did it take you to find your first full-time job after you graduated?
3. Did you have any Canadian work experience before you graduated?

If no, go to question #4

If yes, did you remain in that same job after you graduated? Do you think that work experience helped you when you looked for a full time job?

Probe: Work experience including part-time jobs, volunteer experience and co-op provided by university.

4. Are you underemployed in your current job? If yes, what are reasons that caused this situation?

Probe: Underemployment is the condition in which people in a labour force are employed at less than full-time or regular jobs or at jobs inadequate with respect to their training or economic needs. (Cited from Wikipedia)

5. What do you think would help Chinese international students to get a job?

6. Do you have any suggestions for Chinese international students who are going to graduate soon and want to find a job in Nova Scotia? If yes, please explain.

Fourth Theme: Identity

1. Have you encountered anyone who seemed to make assumptions about you, as a Chinese person? Please explain. Did that person's assumptions about you have any impact on you?

2. Does your Chinese "identity" influence you when you are in the workplace? If yes, please explain.

Probe: Identity is the conception, qualities, beliefs, and expressions that make a person (self-identity) or group (particular social category or social group). (Cited from Wikipedia)

3. How have you changed since you came to Canada? Please explain.

Fifth Theme: Decision to stay in Nova Scotia

1. What are your main reasons for choosing to remain in Halifax, Nova Scotia after you graduated?

2. Do you have any suggestions for the NS provincial government, which could help encourage more Chinese educated international students remain in Nova Scotia? If yes, please explain.

3. Do you plan to go back to China to live and work in the future? Why or why not?

4. What are your plans for the next five years?

5. Are you satisfied with your life in Canada? Why or why not? Please explain.



Appendix C: Letter of Information

Title of Project: From University to Employment: Chinese International Students' Strategies for Integration and Settlement in Nova Scotia

Researcher:

Yuhui Zhang, Graduate student, Faculty of Education, MSVU

Introduction:

Thank you for your interest in this research project. My name is Yuhui Zhang. This letter provides information about a research project *From University to Employment: Chinese International Students' Strategies for Integration and Settlement in Nova Scotia* and your possible involvement in it. It is important that you understand the purpose of this research study, and what your participation will involve if you decide to participate, including any risks and benefits, and what is expected of you. This study is being conducted for Yuhui Zhang's Master of Education thesis at Mount Saint Vincent University. After completion, the thesis will be submitted to the library of Mount Saint Vincent University. Additionally, the results of this research may be published in peer reviewed academic journals and presented at academic conferences.

Purpose of the Research:

This research focuses on the Chinese international students who have studied in Nova Scotia and have chosen to remain in Nova Scotia after completing their studies. The purpose of this study is to find out the reasons why these Chinese international students have made this choice and the strategies that have helped them to integrate and settle in Nova Scotia after graduation. Specifically, the purpose of my thesis research is to understand: 1) the transitional experiences of Chinese international students after they arrive in Nova Scotia; 2) the reasons why Chinese international students choose to stay in Nova Scotia after they complete their studies; and 3) the self-directed learning strategies they use to help them adapt to a new environment and to find employment in Nova Scotia. The study's findings will be useful to new Chinese international students who want to know how to integrate within the university and society more quickly after they arrive and students who are close to graduating from their Canadian university programs who want to know how to find a decent job and settle in Nova Scotia after they graduate. In addition, the result of this research may inform the Nova Scotia provincial government about how to encourage more educated international students to remain in the province and also to attract more Chinese international students to come to study in Nova Scotia.

Participation criteria:

The criteria for participation in the study are: Adult Chinese international students who have already graduated from universities in Halifax, Nova Scotia within the last 10 years, and who are employed full time in jobs which meet the criteria of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to immigrate to Nova Scotia. Participants must be 20 years old or over.

What Your Participation Involves:

My study will involve interviews with six participants who have already graduated from universities in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and who are employed in jobs which meet the criteria of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to immigrate to Nova Scotia. The interviews will be arranged to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. The length of each interview will be a maximum of two hours. Before we begin the interview, I am going to ask you to complete a questionnaire that will provide me your background and basic information. This will be handwritten and will take ten minutes. I will then ask you some questions about your own story and experience about living in Canada. In the interview, you will only share as much as you feel comfortable with. Everything you share during the interview and in the questionnaire will be kept confidential. The interview will be audio recorded. You will have the chance to read transcripts after the interviews have been transcribed. You will be asked to choose a fake name, or “pseudonym”, for the purpose of keeping your identity confidential when Yuhui Zhang reports the research findings. When we transcribe the audiotapes and write about the interview, you will only be referred to by your pseudonym. For the purpose of keeping your involvement in this study confidential, it is very important that no other person (including family, friends) will be able to identify you by the “pseudonym” that you choose.

Confidentiality:

All the information collected will be stored securely. All the interviews are going to be audio taped and stored as sound files on the password protected laptop of Yuhui Zhang. Backup copies of those sound files will be saved on a flash drive lock in the filing cabinet in Yuhui Zhang’s room at home. Once the sound files have been transcribed, she will erase the sound files from flash drives and also the laptop. The electronic transcript of the interviews, which will not include any real names, will be saved on the password protected laptop computer of Yuhui Zhang. The electronic transcripts in the flash drives will be erased once the research is complete. The Participant Consent Forms and hard copies of the transcripts of the interviews which will be stored in Yuhui Zhang’s room at home, and will be shredded by Yuhui Zhang after she completes this thesis.

Duty to Report

Please note that there are legal limits to the information researchers can promise to keep confidential and that Yuhui Zhang has a duty to report. If, during the course of this interview, Yuhui Zhang learned that you plan to harm yourself and you present immediate danger to yourself, she is required to report this. In addition, if Yuhui Zhang learned you plan to harm someone else, she is also required to report this. If Yuhui Zhang learned that you are currently harming a child, or a vulnerable adult, she is required to report this.

Potential Harms:

It is possible you may experience emotional distress as you reflect on interview questions about your experiences studying or living as an international student during the past years in Canada.

This may conjure painful or difficult memories. Be assured that you will only share as much as you feel comfortable with. If you become distressed, Yuhui Zhang will ask you if you want to continue the interview or withdraw from the research project. If you decide not to continue your involvement in the research at any time, for any reason, you may discontinue without penalty and any of your contributions can be withdrawn too, if you wish.

Potential Benefits:

There is no direct benefit to you, but your participation may help to enhance your self-awareness and help to give you a voice or opportunity to share your experiences through this research. You will be able to express your views about issues that affect you as an international student in Nova Scotia. The information gathered in this research may help new Chinese international students who want to know how to integrate within the university and society more quickly after they arrive but also students who are close to graduating from their Canadian university programs who want to know how to find a decent job and settle down in Nova Scotia after they graduate from universities.

Withdrawal from Participation:

You may choose to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw, all data collected from you will be destroyed immediately. All files will be deleted from the password protected flash drive and all hard copies of information printed about you will be shredded in a cross cut shredder at MSVU.

Thank you for expressing an interest in this project. If you have questions about this study, please contact Yuhui Zhang at [REDACTED] / yuhui.zhang3@msvu.ca or Dr. Susan Brigham (Yuhui Zhang's thesis supervisor) at (902) 457-6733, or susan.brigham@msvu.ca.

This study has been approved by the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) of Mount Saint Vincent University. If you have questions or concerns about this study and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved with this study, you may contact the University Research Ethics Board (UREB), by phone at (902) 457-6350, or by email at research@msvu.ca.

Sincerely,

Yuhui Zhang



Appendix D: Statement of Consent

I have read the information letter and freely agree to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to discuss this research with the researcher, Yuhui Zhang, a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University, and I have had my questions answered satisfactorily. I understand that I will be given a copy of the information letter and this consent form after signing it. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw at any time. I agree to have my interview audiotaped.

I would like to receive a copy of a report of the research findings as an email attachment when the researchers have completed the research:

YES NO

To receive the final report of the research here is my email address:

Participant's name (please print): _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date _____

Researcher's signature: _____, Yuhui Zhang

Date _____