

**AN EXPLORATION OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS'
RESILIENCE THROUGH THEIR EXPERIENCES**

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education

in conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

August, 2013

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ABSTRACT

Much research about the adaptation of Chinese international students focuses on challenges and stresses they experience in their adjustment to the host country, a perspective that is largely negative and pessimistic (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Although resilience, highly congruent with positive psychology and broadly defined as successful adaptation to adversity, has been studied among several populations, it has not been widely applied to these students. This study employs the cultural-contextual theoretical framework of resilience to gain an understanding of the resilience of 16 Chinese international students by examining: (1) How do these Chinese international students view challenges? (2) What resources do these Chinese students view as helpful in overcoming challenges? (3) How have their individual identities been negotiated and transformed? (4) What are their subjective views of success? The interviews revealed four leading challenges for these Chinese international students across different contexts: English, loneliness, relationships, and academic challenges. The participants identified intrinsic and extrinsic, cultural, and contextual resources they perceived helpful and important for them in overcoming challenges. They additionally described their transformed identities in personal, social, and cultural dimensions. The study revealed students' patterns of navigation and negotiation, and their personal views on success, views that were dramatically different from what they saw as traditional Chinese success. This study expands the conceptualization of resilience from a cross-cultural to a more contextual understanding. This understanding might be helpful to provide more efficient assistance, build more effective intercultural communication, or even design more updated intervention programs for Chinese international students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to my participants. I feel grateful for their willingness to talk with me about their happiness, unhappiness, their ups and their downs, and their life journeys and reflections. Their stories not only completed my data but also enlivened my research.

My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. John Freeman. From five years ago when I met him at the CSSE conference in Vancouver through four years of my Ph.D. to now when I am completing my dissertation, he has been always the one who believed in me and encouraged me to explore my own strengths, most of which I did not know before. He also taught me an important life lesson, which was to listen to my heart when facing diverse options, by challenging me from multiple perspectives at the initial stage of research. Most importantly, I was deeply touched by his caring and support, which was not shown by his talking but through his actions of spending endless hours providing feedback.

I am deeply grateful for Dr. Nancy Hutchinson who agreed to be my committee member despite her busy schedule. Her sharp comments, her insightful critiques, and her ample feedback helped me to reshape my thinking and writing to become an academically mature researcher. At the same time, her sincere support at every corner of my progress assisted my research in reaching today's goal. I also want to thank Dr. Azza Sharkawy. Her kindness, her understanding, her support, and her efficient feedback gave me further strength and hope of finishing my dissertation.

My gratitude also goes to my external examiner Dr. Cheryll Ann Duquette, my Queen's university examiner Dr. Colleen Davison, and my Faculty of Education examiner, Dr. Lindsay Morcom, for their insightful discussion points and inspiring questions.

I want to take a deep bow to my parents for their profound love and eminent support. This dissertation was also built upon their huge sacrifice of being separate from me and missing me while fighting their fatal illness alone without my companionship or taking care of them in person. Also thank you to my greatest friends, Carolyn, Donovan, Gloria, and Lisa, who are my family in Canada and helped me to sustain difficulties, frustrations, stresses, and challenges to accomplish my personal resilience.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When I am asked about what makes me feel proud of myself, I usually do not have an appropriate answer. It is not that I am not proud of my achievements. Like many other international students, I have gone through challenges with linguistic, social, cultural, and psychological adaptations. Widely embedded in different areas of my life, these life changes can be as concrete as the academic accomplishments I have earned and as intangible as the abilities I have developed. Abilities gradually emerge during the process of working through challenges. These abilities are what I cherish most and view as invaluable to my life. They are not only accomplishments related to a particular life stage but also continuing positive impacts on my life.

Much of the literature I encounter about the adaptation of international students focuses on challenges and stresses they experience in their adjustment to the host country. The contemporary image of international students facing challenges seems to be negative and pessimistic (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Yet in some research (e.g., Hsieh, 2007; Zhang & Brunton, 2007), we find indications that international students are actively navigating resources to overcome challenges and negotiating their former beliefs and behaviours to connect with the ones expected in the new context. Now looking back at what I have gained from my experiences, I am interested in knowing how other Chinese students deal with their transitional issues and challenges, and how and what they have learned from their experiences.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how 16 Chinese students conceptualize their resilience and how they navigate resources and negotiate their beliefs and behaviours to overcome challenges. Four research questions guide this research: (1) How do these Chinese international students view challenges? (2) What resources do these Chinese

students view as helpful in overcoming challenges? (3) How have their individual identities been negotiated and transformed? (4) What are their subjective views of success?

Definition of Key Terms

The terms, *resilience* and *international students*, are key to this research. *Resilience*, broadly defined as successful adaptation in the face of adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000), has increasingly captured the attention of researchers because of its transformative ability to turn the negative into the positive (Masten, 2001). There are several diverse concepts of resilience given by leading researchers in the field of resilience studies (e.g., Masten, 2001; Richardson, 2002; Ungar, 2008). For example, Connor and Davidson (2003) suggested that resilience embodies personal qualities that enable one to thrive in the face of adversity. Masten (1998, 2001, 2007, 2008) provided another group of definitions of resilience through her research. At the early stage of her research, she conceptualized resilience as “manifested competence in the context of significant challenges to adaptation or development” (Masten, 1998, p. 206). Later, she defined resilience as a “class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (Masten, 2001, p. 228). Recently, resilience in Masten’s work (e.g., 2007, 2008) has been viewed as “the capacity of dynamic systems to withstand or recover from significant disturbances” (Masten, 2007, p. 924). In contrast, Ungar (2008) indicated that resilience is a process of individuals negotiating culturally meaningful ways to navigate their way to resources. Since these aforementioned concepts are based on different approaches, which have their individual advantages and disadvantages for studying resilience, in this proposal, I begin with the description and selection of these concepts of resilience and their approaches.

The term *international students* refers to students who cross a national border for the purposes of education and are enrolled outside their country of origin (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006). Considering most international students in Canadian universities are from Asia and the largest group of these students is from China, Chinese international university students are the focus of this study.

Theoretical Framework

Over the last few decades, researchers in different fields such as biology, neuroscience, psychology, education, and social work have been working on exploring and identifying resilience (Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010). These approaches usually start with different lenses and are built upon three paradigms: trait, developmental, and cultural/contextual approaches (e.g., Connor & Davidson, 2003; Masten, 2007; Ungar, 2008). These paradigms have different emphases when approaching resilience.

The trait approach focuses on identifying personal qualities related to resilience. According to the trait approach, a person's well-being should be *homeostasis*, which is a point of bio-psycho-spiritual balance (Richardson, 2002). Adversity represents a disruption, or a threat of disruption, to the state of balance. Resilience is conceptualized as a set of personal qualities enabling one to thrive in the face of adversity (Connor & Davidson, 2003). A set of identified personal qualities has been developed to describe resilience: self-confidence (Rutter, 1987), positive future orientation (Clausen, 1991), self-control (Kobasa, 1979), hardiness (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982), openness to change (Kobasa, 1979), patience (Lyons, 1991), and faith (Acklin, Brown, & Mauger, 1983). With reference to these early works, a number of scales, such as the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003), have been developed to measure these personal qualities. The trait-based measurements are often used in

the context of clinical treatments and interventions designed for patients with psychiatric disorders (Roy, Sarchiapone, & Carli, 2007), posttraumatic stress disorders (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005; Davidson et al., 2008), and other personality disorders (Campbell-Sills, Cohan, & Stein, 2006). This approach has been criticized in two ways. First, the list of innate resilient personality traits fails to explain the scope of phenomena composed of changes, transitions, and the complexity of human lives (Masten, 2001). Second, this approach has been critiqued on its exclusive emphasis on the striving spirit of the individual, while neglecting the importance of social, cultural, and contextual factors that can have a great impact on personal qualities for solving problems (Rigsby, 1994; Wright & Masten, 2005).

Compared to the trait approach, research in the developmental approach has included wider populations and has integrated different factors including individual, social, economic, and political ones (e.g., Luthar, 2003; Masten, 1998, 2001). The developmental approach is based on the framework of *developmental psychopathology* —“the study of behavioral health and adaptation in a developmental context” (Masten, 2007, p. 47). Resilience in this approach has been defined as “the capacity of dynamic systems to withstand or recover from significant disturbance” (Masten, 2007, p. 923). This system is formed by a wide range of protective factors working collaboratively to prevent or ameliorate the influence of risk factors, with a risk factor being defined as “a measurable characteristic in a group of individuals or their situation that predicts negative outcomes on a specific outcome criterion” (Wright & Masten, 2005, p. 19), whereas a protective factor is viewed as a “quality of a person or context or their interaction that predicts better outcomes, particularly in situations of risk or adversity” (Wright & Masten, 2005, p. 19). Two major causal-effect models—variable-focused and person-focused models—are

dominant methods in the developmental approach for identifying specific links among risk factors, outcomes, and protective factors (Masten, 2001).

There are five primary challenges associated with the developmental approach. First, it is difficult to identify the degree of risk factors due to their chronicity and contextual variances. For instance, some chronic risk factors are not easily detected (Masten et al., 2005). High versus low risk also varies across different cultural and social contexts (Luecken & Gress, 2010). Second, although the developmental approach informs exchanges between people and context, it is overgeneralized and does not explain why things happen or why connections exist in a specific context (Ungar, 2002). Third, risk factors can be contextually specific and constructed across populations, and protective factors can be multidimensional, contextually specific, and developed by individuals' life experiences as interpreted by themselves (Ungar, 2004). However, causal-effect models, upon which the developmental approach relies, fail to delineate the individual's subjective understanding of the impacts of contextually-sensitive risk and protective factors on outcomes. Fourth, determining the degree of outcomes is difficult because they can be heterogeneous due to the combination or accumulation of the effects of risk and protective factors (Rutter, 1999). Finally, the developmental approach is largely based on Western-centric culture. When comparing positive outcomes of some ethnic and racial minorities with the outcomes of middle-class populations growing up in Western societies, researchers focus on only a limited range of indicators without an adequate understanding of the experiences of the people and their own culturally accepted meanings of resilience (Ungar, 2005a).

Recently, Ungar has moved beyond the developmental approach toward a socio-ecological approach (Ungar, 2011). Whereas the trait approach concentrates on the individual and the developmental approach views the individual within the immediate context, the socio-

ecological approach moves beyond the immediate context to include more distal factors, such as culture and values (Ungar, 2005b). As people negotiate many different distal contexts, Ungar takes into account the fact that, as individuals move across contexts, they are changing themselves and the contexts in which they reside (Ungar, 2012a).

Guided by the socio-ecological approach, and to better conceptualize resilience across cultures and contexts, Ungar (2008a) proposed a new definition of resilience:

Resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways. (Ungar, 2008a, p. 225)

This definition draws upon the dual processes of navigation and negotiation. Navigation implies both personal agency and resources within the environment as factors to enhance resilience. Resilience is therefore a combined outcome of both exercising personal agency and getting support from resources (Ungar, 2011). Through using the negotiating process, individuals are constantly making meaning of their lives and negotiating their values and identities (Ungar, 2012b). The processes of value shifting and identity changing are multi-directional and potentially diversified as the result of reciprocal interactions between individual and context (Schoon, 2012).

This definition makes major contributions to studies of resilience. First, the understanding of the interaction among personal agency and resources and contexts helps us to understand how resources can be maximized. Second, individuals' identification of helpful resources in their navigating process helps us to understand what environments would likely be facilitative and how individuals interact with their facilitative contexts. Third, the negotiation

between individuals and their contexts should lead us to a better understanding concerning the complexity of what and why values and identities have been changed. Finally, rather than applying a universal measurement of resilience to different populations, this definition reminds us of the importance of paying attention to culturally and contextually specific resilience embedded in different populations and individuals in addition to heterogeneous aspects of cultural influences. The culturally- and contextually-embedded view of resilience allows us to access hidden resilience undiscovered by researchers in mainstream Western studies. The heterogeneity of cultural influences encourages us to explore individuals' unique viewpoints on the relationship between culture and resilience.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The majority of international students in Canada are from Asia with Chinese international students being the largest group (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada [AUCC], 2007). Considering their different linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds (Chen, 2006), it is important to identify what challenges these students encounter in their studies and daily lives in their host countries (Yeh & Inose, 2003) and how they overcome these challenges and adapt to this new environment (Pan, Wong, Chan, & Joubert, 2008).

The traditional approach to studying Chinese international students focuses on their challenges and stressors. Chinese international students are found to have five domains of stressors—language barriers, academic problems, psychological-social-cultural issues, financial concerns, and miscellaneous other barriers (Pan et al., 2008).

Language barriers are often manifested as lack of English fluency (Lee, Kim, & Park, 2009; Yeh & Inose, 2003). English proficiency is frequently measured through widely-applied English tests (e.g., Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOEFL], Graduate Record Examination [GRE]). The lower performance on these English tests can be negatively related to the academic achievement of international students (Ayers & Quantlebaum, 1992; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Wait & Gressel, 2009). Since English is also used in day-to-day conversations and daily lives, lack of English proficiency may hinder international students' ability to build relationships with professors, classmates, and peers (Brown, 2008).

Academic problems are most likely reflected in students' difficulties in adapting previous learning strategies in a new context (Hsieh, 2007; Ladd & Rubby, 1999). For example, Asian students have to adapt their lecture-oriented learning skills applied in Asian countries to independent study skills encouraged in Western countries (Ladd & Rubby, 1999). They have to

learn to voice their views in front of others in the classroom and to overcome their previously learned habit of shying away from classroom discussions and participation (Hsieh, 2007; Lee, 2009). These academic challenges often lead to increased stress for international students (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Lack of social support is another significant cause of stress. International students need social support from a variety of resources to deal with their challenges (Brown, 2008; Kun & Berliner, 2009; Mallinckrodt & Long, 1992; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998). However, building social support in a new environment can be challenging due to language and cultural differences (e.g., Hayes & Lin, 1994; Koeske, Lee, & Sales, 2004; Koyama, Thiagarajan, & Carr, 2003; Misa, Crist, & Burant, 2003; Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007). Compared to language barriers, cultural distance is more intangible. Asian students are mostly considered to be from a collectivistic culture with an emphasis on interdependence, whereas the dominant culture of the host English-speaking countries is individualistic, based on independence and personal uniqueness (Hofstede, 1980; Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2000). These two cultures are considered to be distant from each other (Oyserman et al., 2000). The greater the cultural distance, the more difficult it is for a person to adjust to a new culture (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Church, 1982). Cultural differences, as well as language barriers, may lead to insufficient social support.

Another stressor for international students relates to financial concerns. International students are usually required to pay higher tuition fees than domestic students. Indeed, the issue of rising tuition fees and high living expenses has become a major concern for international students (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2007). In addition, as a result of visa restrictions on the number of hours international students are allowed to work, it is hard for them to remedy their worrisome

financial situations. Financial difficulties can therefore be one of the main reasons that international students withdraw from their studies (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2007).

There are three primary weaknesses in the stressor-oriented research about international students. First, these stressors are often treated as isolated factors with the impact of their interplay with each other neglected. For example, language barriers and cultural distance often cause international students difficulty when they try to quickly develop a reliable support system in this new environment (Lee, 2009) or even lead them to feel marginalized in their treatment within schools and groups in implicit or explicit ways (Hsieh, 2007). The integrated stressors can lead to a sense of loss, a feeling of homesickness (Sandhu, 1995), and negative emotions, such as low self-esteem, anger, and frustration (Castillo & Misra, 2004; Cooke, Barkham, Audin, Bradley, & Davy, 2004; Robinson-Pant, 2009; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006).

A second concern derives from standards of assessing challenges and adaptation. There are two general standards of evaluating if students adapt well in facing challenges. One is to examine their mental health status, such as depression and anxiety (Sam & Berry, 2010). However, this standard has been questioned due to cultural variations in that people from different cultural backgrounds may have different understandings about mental health (Yip, 2005). Another standard to evaluate students' adaptation is based on their academic achievement. However, some international students with higher academic achievement who are usually regarded as being adaptive do not report having satisfactory acculturating experiences (Huang & Rinaldo, 2009). A potential explanation is suggested by research showing that the desired goals students have when coming to English-speaking countries vary (e.g., Chirkov et al., 2007). Consequently, their conceptualizations of adaptation may be different. Therefore, questions such as how international students perceive their stress and successful outcomes, how their

perceptions of these stresses come to be, and how their successful outcomes are obtained need further in-depth exploration.

A final concern is the lack of a lens of human agency to investigate international students' adaptation issues. The dominant paradigm for improving well-being among international students is based on this challenge-focused approach with the aim of reducing these challenges. Students are viewed as passive recipients of challenges who do not take actions to change the adverse situations they face (e.g., Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Ku, Lahman, Yeh, & Cheng, 2008; Hsieh, 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003). They are perceived to be vulnerable to the negative effects of challenges, such as depression and other mental health issues, and to be incapable of bouncing back from the adverse situations caused by the challenges and stressors (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). Services offered to international students on campus mainly target reducing stress and risks, such as offering counselling services (AUCC, 2007). However, these services are often unsuccessful due to high rates of student turnover or students' low acceptance of these sources of assistance (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004).

In contrast to the traditional approach of focusing on students' stresses and challenges, resilience is built upon strengths-based psychology, which shifts from the diagnosis of challenges to assets (Smith, 2006). Assets refer to resources that are helpful for students to overcome challenges.

Resources of Chinese International Students

Assets that help Chinese international students to overcome challenges include intrinsic, extrinsic, and cultural resources. Intrinsic resources are resources within the person. Extrinsic resources are resources outside an individual. Cultural resources are resources related to the culture(s) within which a person resides.

Intrinsic Resources

Intrinsic resources may include personalities and personal motivations. With regard to personalities, Wang (2009) explored the relationship between a set of personalities and the psychological adjustment of 270 international graduate students in the United States. More than 60% of students in the study were from Asian countries. The results of a series of t-tests, ANOVAs, and multi-regression analyses showed seven personality variables (positive world view, positive personal view, focused, flexible thoughts, flexible social ability, organized, and proactive) had positive effects on international students' psychological adaptation. In studying Singaporean international students studying abroad who mostly self-identified as Chinese Singaporean, consciousness, agreeableness, extraversion, emotional stability, social initiative, open-mindedness, and cultural empathy were strong predictors of students' adaptation (Leong, 2007; Ward, Leong, & Low, 2004).

Another intrinsic resource that helps international students to adapt to a new cultural environment is personal motivation. A key area of interest in the research on the relationship between motivation and adaptation is international students' motivation for studying abroad in relation to the outcome of their adaptations (Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, & Lynch, 2007; Chirkov, Safdar, Guzman, & Playford, 2008). The more self-determined Chinese international students' motivations for study abroad, meaning they are not driven by others' expectations or extrinsic conditions, the more successful students' adaptation to a new cultural environment tended to be.

Extrinsic Resources

Extrinsic resources that help Chinese students to overcome challenges include parents, teachers, and peers. Parents normally play a crucial role for a person's development. The existing

literature has supported the link between parental support and the overall psychological wellbeing of American students (Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994), ethnic minority students (Parade, Leerkes, & Blankson, 2010), and Asian immigrant students (Dinh, Sarason, & Sarason, 1994). Parents are an important supportive source for Chinese immigrant students to decrease stress and anxiety in overcoming acculturation challenges (Qin, 2009b; Ying, Lee, & Tsai, 2007).

Positive relationships with teachers are associated with students' positive perceptions of the school environment, life satisfaction, and academic motivation (Danielsen, Samdal, Hetland, & Wold, 2009). A warm, trusting relationship with a teacher predicts students' academic achievement, positive habits, and classroom adjustment (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008). Teachers influence international students' adaptation to a new environment. Teachers' empowerment and responsibility demonstrated in the relationship with students encourages international students to participate in classroom activities and communication (Planas & Civil, 2009). Teachers' acceptance of cultural diversity is helpful in understanding international students' needs (Strickland, 2012). Teachers' openness to pedagogic diversity is beneficial in engaging international students in the classroom (Schultz & King, 2012).

In addition to parent and teacher relationships, peers play an important role in students' adaptations. There is evidence that peer relationships become more and more important as individuals mature due to experiencing more time with their peers and less time with their parents (Piko & Hamvai, 2010). Students' participation in extracurricular activities with their peers is positively related to their attainment of life satisfaction (Gilman, 2001). In a review of studies on adjustment factors of international students in English-speaking countries (Andrade, 2006), peers emerged as an important factor for helping international students adjust to an

English-speaking learning context. With the support of host national peers, international undergraduate students reported gaining more knowledge about campus services, improvement in their language fluency, and more satisfaction with their first-year adjustment as compared to a group of students with less support from host national peers (Quintrell & Westwood, 1994). Furthermore, working with peers from the same culture is seen as an alternative way by international students to solve the issue of being isolated in group work due to cultural and language barriers (Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998).

Cultural Resources

There are three traditional cultural influences in China: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Chinese people normally view Confucianism as a traditional value, whereas they see Taoism and Buddhism as religions. According to Confucianism, adversity can be treated as a mandate of Heaven to test a person's willpower to attain self-realization, which is the ultimate purpose of life (Leung, 2008). To overcome adversity is a way to obtain self-realization. As for Taoism, it is essential to keep the Yin-Yang balance, which represents a dynamic equilibrium of two opposite concepts. Although adversity is the opposite to success, it is always possible for adversity to turn into success (Leung, 2008). Taoism practices emphasize physical immortality, alchemy, breath control, and hygiene. Buddhism believes that people will be reborn into the blissful "Pure Land" after achieving absolute emptiness. In line with Buddhism, adversity is inevitable because life itself is a form of inherent suffering. To diminish adversity is non-attachment.

Chinese traditional cultural beliefs may have an impact on Chinese international students' resilience. For example, the positive relationship between Confucian thought and psychological well-being was found to be significant among Chinese adolescents dealing with adversity in

studies conducted by Shek and his colleagues (Shek, 2005; Shek et al., 2003). In their cross-sectional study (Shek et al., 2003) of 229 Chinese students experiencing economic disadvantage in Hong Kong, the *Chinese Beliefs about Adversity Scale* (CBAS), a measurement based on traditional Chinese proverbs and Confucian thoughts, was applied to examine the relationship between cultural beliefs and psychological well-being in facing adversity. In Shek's (2005) longitudinal study, this scale was also used to predict one-year outcomes of adjustment issues for 199 Chinese students in economic disadvantage. Positive traditional Chinese cultural beliefs derived from Confucianism, such as Ren ding sheng tian (Man is the master of his own fate), were shown to be positively related to better mental health and negatively related to problem behaviour of Chinese students.

The religious beliefs, Taoism and Buddhism, have demonstrated their influences among Chinese international students. Pan (2008) and his colleagues used the *Chinese Personal Meaning Profile* (CPMP, Lin, 2001) to examine the relationship among the meaning of life, acculturative stressors, and positive affect of 627 Chinese international students in Australia and Hong Kong. The meaning of life was positively related to positive affect and negatively associated with the stressors of these Chinese international students. One of the most significant factors of life meaning in predicting positive affect was the acceptance of setbacks and contentment with adverse situations. This finding might be related to Taoism's emphasis on individuals following natural law and Buddhism's advocacy for the acceptance of suffering as a result of karma (Pan, Wong, Chan, & Joubert, 2008).

During the last two decades, compared to Taoism and Buddhism, Christianity has become a predominant religion among Chinese students in the United States (Abel, 2006; Hall, 2006; Wang & Yang, 2006; Yang & Tamney, 2006; Zhang, 2006). Christianity advises people to

worship God because God is the only resource upon which people can rely to help them to overcome adversity. Some researchers (Yang, 1999) suggest several explanations for the rapidly increasing number of Chinese people converting to Christianity— the desire for certainty in face of post-migration uncertainties, the search for social group belonging, and the perceived compatibility with Confucianism. Other researchers (Abel, 2006; Yang & Tamney, 2006) have offered a series of alternative reasons. These explanations are composed of macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors (Li, 2012). Macro-level factors include the yearning for Christianity due to the lack of a dominant religious belief in China and dissatisfaction with materialism. Meso-level factors refer to the vast number of local Christian institutions or organizations, while micro-level factors are shown to be proactive approaches taken by Christian organizations, such as offering favours to international students and actively contacting international students on a frequent basis. These cultural and religious beliefs and resources are viewed as important for students' coping styles and help-seeking attitudes when they face challenges (Hodges & Oei, 2007; Li, 2012; Palsane & Lam, 1996).

Limitations

Trying to synthesize results across previous studies of resources for Chinese international students to inform the current study is difficult for three major reasons. First, results are less consistent than might be expected. For example, with regard to intrinsic resources, flexibility was a significant factor correlated with students' adaptation in Wang's (2009) study but not a strong indicator for students' adaptation in Leong's (2007) study, while openness was an influential predictor in Leong's (2007) study but not in Ward and his colleagues' (2004) study. In the case of parent-child relationships, some studies (e.g., Qin, 2009b; Ying, Lee, & Tsai, 2007) show that immigrant students get material and emotional support from their parents, while others (e. g.,

Choi & Dancy, 2009) show that Chinese students are pressured by and have conflicts with their parents. For relationships with teachers, it is unclear whether international students perceive their teachers as supportive and their relationships with their teachers as satisfactory (e.g., Zhang, 2009), or negatively and their teachers' impact on them as destructive (e.g., Pailliotet, 1997). Moreover, peer influences were not necessarily all positive in relation to adaptation. For example, Chang and Le (2005) suggest that Chinese students can be influenced by peer delinquency. Thus it would be over-generalizing to indicate that certain resources are always helpful for assisting students in overcoming their challenges.

Second, there is a lack of contextual analysis in much of the research. It is unclear how strongly current Chinese people's attachment to traditional cultural beliefs remains under the influence of Western culture. Some values, such as self-reliance, individual achievement, and direct communication, which usually appear to be central to the American value system and contradictory to traditional Chinese social norms, are valued among contemporary Chinese people (Peppas, 2004). In addition, for Chinese students who are traditionally considered as filial and conforming, their relationships with their parents are challenged by their contextual changes and cultural value shifts. For example, Chinese immigrant adolescents have different perceptions on autonomy and authority from their parents (Fuligni, 1998). Chinese American youth hold divergent views on academic expectations from their parents (Qin, Rak, Rana, & Donnellan, 2012). Chinese students on the mainland increasingly need their independence, no less than their American peers (Chen & Lan, 2006). Some Chinese students may choose not to tell their parents about their difficulties to avoid worrying their parents (Yeh, Kim, Pitue, & Atkins, 2008). Religion is understudied as a cultural influence: religion as a source of strength helping people adjust in facing adversities has been mostly studied in Western clinical settings (Ai, Peterson,

Tice, & Koenig, 2004; Pargament, Cole, Vandecreek, Belavich, Brant, & Perez, 1999; Wink, Dillon, & Larsen, 2005) but often neglected in studies on Chinese international students.

Therefore, for Chinese international students who were brought up in contemporary China with changing cultural values and who went on to further their education in another culture, it would be important to know what contextual resources were perceived as important in a new environment.

Finally, information is lacking about subjective understandings of Chinese international students on what and how resources help them to overcome challenges. For example, quantitative studies on intrinsic resources focus on only a certain subset of personality variables that the researchers are interested in measuring and do not necessarily reflect the ones that participants would identify as important. Furthermore, although traditional cultural beliefs can significantly influence how Chinese people perceive, experience, and cope with adversities in life (e.g., Lee, Kim, & Park, 2009), more information is required about specific lenses or how an individual reconciles different beliefs in facing adversities. There is relatively less knowledge on whether, what, and how Chinese students' religious or spiritual resources support students as compared to the existing information on their social, academic, and linguistic supports. More importantly, considering the changes of contexts, without participants' subjective understanding of what resources they perceive to be important and how these resources help them to overcome challenges in different contexts, researchers may well reach an unwarranted conclusion about a universal and fixed set of resources as helpful for Chinese international students.

Identities of Chinese International Students

In addition to resources, identities are contributing factors for Chinese students adapting to a new culture and overcoming their challenges (Chen, Lau, Tapanya, & Cameron, 2012; Chen

& Zhang, 2011; Costigan, Koryzma, Hua, & Chance, 2010). Identity encompasses three aspects: personal, social, and cultural (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2005). Personal identity refers to the relatively stable perceptions of one's self, which can be manifested in certain types of personality or a set of values and beliefs that individuals adopt across situations. Social identity refers to the self in relation to social contexts with which individuals interact. Cultural identity refers to the individual's affirmation with the ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and norms of the particular cultural group. Within cultural identity, there are two sub-affiliated identities: ethnic identity and religious identity. Ethnic identity is the subjective meaning of one's ethnic membership (Eugenio, Tzuang, & Pumariega, 2010). Religious identity is one's affiliation with a group of people who share a common religious faith. Both ethnic identity and religious identity are contained within the broader concept of cultural identity.

Personal Identity

Among personal identities, extraversion seems widely considered to be an important predictor of positive adaptation (Searle & Ward, 1990). Compared to introverted inclinations, which "imply self-absorption or self-demand instead of being demanding of others and trying to change the external environment" (Yip, 2005, p. 396), extroverted inclinations are related to "the assertion of personal rights and demanding others to change" (p. 396). The underlying assumption is that extroverts have higher levels of positive affect than introverts because extroverts participate in more social interactions than introverts (Srivastava, Angelo, & Vallereux, 2008). The ability to build social interactions is essential for effective intercultural transitions because it helps international students to explore solutions and strategies to overcome challenges (Kun & Berliner, 2009; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998).

In addition to extraversion, a number of personal identities have been discovered to be relevant to Chinese students in achieving their goals and overcoming challenges. For example, Chinese students who perceived themselves to be extroverted, conscientious, agreeable, and open reported themselves to be more successful at achieving their goals (Chen & Zhang, 2011), while Chinese students who considered themselves to be hardy reported themselves to be more extroverted, conscientious, agreeable, and open (Zhang, 2011). Other personal identities, such as being hopeful, self-efficient, and optimistic, which are adaptive human attributes (Skodol, 2010), have been found helpful for Chinese individuals when they are facing challenges in highly changing and competitive contexts (Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Li, 2008).

Social Identity

Family serves as the most basic social unit among Chinese individuals. Filial piety is the most fundamental rule guiding the function of family according to Chinese traditional values. “Filial” indicates the relationship between children and parents, while “piety” emphasizes the respect, honour, devotion, and obligation that children are expected to have toward their parents (Tsai, 1999). Therefore, an important social identity for Chinese people is that of being a filial child (Liu, 2008). Chinese students are expected to respect and obey their parents’ decisions, meet their parents’ expectations, and honour their parents through good achievements (Leong & Hartung, 1997). This social identity still exists among the overseas Chinese population and serves as an important motivator for overseas Chinese students to overcome difficulties (Li, 2001a). For example, in semi-structured interviews with 15 highly resilient Chinese immigrant undergraduate students who successfully graduated from ESL classes in secondary school, the dominant theme that emerged from the interviews was that the major contributing factor for

these students' achievement of academic resilience was their sense of being filial children (Séror, Chen, & Gunderson, 2005).

Cultural Identity

In studies of cultural identity in relation to the adaptation of Chinese students, three major protective identities have emerged: Chinese ethnic identity, integrated identity of Chinese and Western cultures, and religious identity.

Chinese ethnic identity. Ethnic identity refers to “a multidimensional construct related to an individual’s orientation toward his or her ethnic group” (Costigan, Koryzma, Hua, & Chance, 2010, p. 264). Two common dimensions used to study ethnic identity are ethnic identity belongings and ethnic identity achievement, based on Phinney’s (1992) work. Ethnic identity belonging refers to feelings of belonging to an ethnic group. Ethnic identity achievement refers to achievement of a sense of membership in an ethnic group. Costigan and her colleagues (2010) explored the relationship between these two dimensions and resilience with 95 Chinese immigrant youth in Canada. Both ethnic identity belonging to Chinese ethnicity and ethnic identity achievement of being Chinese were positively correlated to Chinese immigrant students’ self-esteem and negatively correlated with the level of their depressive symptoms. Additionally, Chinese students’ ethnic identity belonging was associated with higher academic achievement. Costigan and her colleagues therefore suggested higher Chinese ethnic identity (both belonging and achievement) could be a protective factor for Chinese students facing challenges of academic achievement and psychological adaptation.

Integrated identity of Chinese and Western cultures. Instead of focusing on Chinese students’ adherence to their ethnic identity, some researchers (Brisset, Sada, Lewis, & Sabatier, 2010; Eyou, Adair, & Dixon, 2000; Pittz, 2009) examine Chinese students’ ethnic identity in

conjunction with their identification with the majority culture. Based on the model of acculturation developed by Berry and his colleagues (1987), cultural identity is broken down into four categories in this model: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization, which are “determined by the relative strengths of identification with the ethnic group and mainstream society” (Eyou, Adair, & Dixon, 2000). Assimilated individuals turn their back on their original cultural identity, while actively interacting with members of the host society. Integrated individuals seek daily interaction with other groups, while still maintaining their original culture. Separated individuals maintain their original culture only and avoid interaction with people of other cultural groups. Marginalized individuals lack interest in or possibility for both kinds of cultural maintenance. A study of 400 Chinese immigrant students’ adaptation in New Zealand demonstrated that the largest group of Chinese students fell into the integrated category, with the self-esteem of integrated students significantly higher than separated and marginalized peers (Eyou, Adair, & Dixon, 2000). One study of integrated cultural identity involved Hong Kong (HK) bilingual university students’ attitudes toward HK reunification with China (Ng & Lai, 2011). Students with an integrated cultural identity were more flexible and adaptive in facing cultural-political changes. Thus an integrated cultural identity can be protective or helpful in assisting Chinese students’ adaptation to different contexts and their ability to overcome challenges.

Religious identity. In recent decades, religious identity has emerged as an important contributing factor for resilience (Pargament & Cummings, 2010). Higher levels of religiousness have been found to correlate positively with the speed of recovery and optimism of patients in different clinical settings (Contrada et al., 2004). Religious identity plays an important role in helping people to withstand emotional and psychological pain (Murphy, Johnson, & Lohan,

2003; Walsh et al., 2002). In studying migrant youth in Thailand and Canada, Chen and her colleagues (2012) found that religious identity was an important protective factor for youths at risk in both cultural contexts. Religious identity was also found to be positive social capital for immigrant Asian students to achieve their academic success in North America (Park, 2012).

Limitations

There are however a few concerns about the literature on Chinese students' identity. First, there is a lack of contextual analysis to explain inconsistent findings. For example, extraversion was a significant predictor of the psychological well-being of Malaysian students in New Zealand (Searle & Ward, 1990), but did not account for mood disturbance among Malaysian students in Singapore (Ward & Kennedy, 1993a). Chinese immigrant youth in New Zealand had strong acceptance of filial piety obligation (Liu, Ng, Weatherall, & Loong, 2000), whereas Chinese immigrant youth in the United States failed to behave in the filial way that their parents expected of them (Lieber, Nihira, & Mink, 2004). Some researchers (e.g., Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989) indicated that cultural identity was closely related to an individual's adaptation, whereas other researchers (Ward & Kennedy, 1993b) found that cultural identity based on Berry's acculturation model was not related to the adaptation of international students who were involved in an exchange program in the United States. Therefore, analysis about contextual factors, such as the availability of resources (Mavondo, Tsarenko, & Gabbott, 2004), environment of the community (Poyrazi & Grahame, 2007), and the culture of the university and racial diversity on campus (Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986), may help us to develop a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between students' identities and their resilience.

Another concern is the lack of sufficient descriptions of interactions between the

development of individuals' identities and their surroundings. For example, personal identities can be changed or reinforced by one's surroundings. For shy individuals without sufficient social skills, their shyness can be reinforced by the difficulty of other people trying to connect with them (Cheek, 1990). In contrast, extraverted people are more expressive in communication. Other people are easily attracted to this type of person so that the extraversion is maintained. Furthermore, interactions encompass identities beyond cultural identities. As indicated by Costigan and her colleagues (2010), in describing the limitations of their study, ethnic identity may interact with other identities: participants who were more confident might be more likely to be expressive about their ethnic identity. Participants' other identities related to interpersonal relationships, such as the parent-child relationship, might impact their affirmation of ethnic identity. Li's (2012) study on Chinese students' religious beliefs and their identities showed that students' Christian identity was negotiated in the interactive relationship with their Chinese ethnic identity and their social identity, such as, someone who struggled with the conflicts of her identities: "How could we then face our families (as we are devout Buddhist families) when we return to China? Primarily because we do not want to upset our families" (p. 251).

The third concern is the lack of a lens in examining the formation of identities from a process perspective. Studies to date have largely focused on dimensions such as Extraversion vs. Introversion, Chinese ethnicity vs. Non-Chinese ethnicity, and Integrated vs. other acculturative types, rather than on the processes of identity development. However, identities are not fixed within these dimensions but fluid as individuals interact with surroundings that change over time (Ungar, 2010). For example, Chinese international students actively reconstruct their learning styles (Wan, 2001), redefine their identity (Hsieh, 2007), rebuild worldviews (Yang, Harlow, Maddux, & Smaby, 2006), and reform social norms and values (Zhang & Brunton, 2007) during

their overseas study and living experiences. As migrant youth seek resources and supports from their surroundings, their identity formations are nourished and scaffolded through their social interactions within their social and cultural contexts (Chen et al., 2012). Therefore, the development and formation of identity is a dynamic, fluid process of individuals negotiating with multiple cultural contexts (Bhatia & Ram, 2009).

Success

To understand international students' experiences and responses to their challenges involves a sense of what is considered success in their lives. Resilience is often understood in the context of schools as being related to academic success (Lee, 2006). Chinese students in North America are therefore often considered as a model of success in terms of their high academic achievement (Kao, 1995). Success, however, needs to be conceived as more than passing classes, getting higher marks in exams, and completing degrees because academic success is closely tied to students' psychological and socio-cultural adaptation (Lee, 2006). Studies (e.g., Huang & Rinaldo, 2009) have shown that some international students with higher academic achievement who are usually regarded as being successful do not perceive themselves to have truly successful learning and living experiences. This phenomenon implies that success cannot simply be considered as what they have achieved but more importantly that for which they are striving. Subjective views of success are important because what individuals and cultures perceive to be success influences people's goal-striving behaviours (Fan & Karnilowicz, 1997). Goal-striving behaviours are often a manifestation of resilience (Martin & Marsh, 2006; Messersmith & Schulenberg, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial to have an in-depth understanding of Chinese students' subjective views of success.

Confucianism had a great impact on Chinese people's views of success for centuries. Under the influence of Confucianism, the Chinese traditional view on success has four major features: family-based, status-oriented, social-related, and moral-emphasized. First, success was familial success. Glorifying one's ancestors and family was one of the important meanings for one's life (Huang & Charter, 1996); thereby bringing a higher reputation to one's family could be considered a success in one's life (Hu, 1944). Second, success was an accomplishment of status-oriented goals (Li, 2001b). Confucianism divided Chinese society into nine classes, of which the highest one was officials. The prerequisite to be an official in the bureaucratic system was to pass selective exams. Status-oriented success therefore includes academic success in selective exams and professional success of being selected to work in the bureaucratic system. Third, success was an accomplishment of social-related goals (Liem & Nie, 2008). Confucianism values social relationships. Maintaining interpersonal harmony was considered as a part of success. Finally, the Chinese traditional view of success emphasized morality (Wah, 2010). Confucianism taught people to develop virtues through self-cultivation. An ideal role model of success needs to have virtues in addition to tangible achievements.

Since the economic reforms of the 1980's, Chinese culture has been increasingly mixed with Western culture (Fang, 2006), which views success as being centered on the accomplishment of individuals' economic and physical needs (Klinge, 2012). Money is an important measure of this accomplishment (Furnham, Wilson, & Telford, 2012), with this money-based concept of success being accepted by most Chinese (Fang, 2006). While Chinese society was actively adopting Western culture, Western culture experienced its own changes. One of the most important changes was a value shift from materialism to post-materialism. Compared to materialism, which emphasizes economic and physical needs, post-materialism is

more concerned about humanistic needs, the quality of life, and self-actualization (Inglehart, 1971).

The limited number of studies on this topic shows that current Chinese students may hold diverse viewpoints on success. For example, in studying the subjective understanding of success perceived by Hong Kong Chinese students, Salili and Mak (1988) asked 80 high school students, including both high achievers and low achievers, to rate the importance of their success goals. There were four goals these groups shared in common: “happy family and good marriage,” “academic achievement,” “career success,” and “friendship and wide acquaintance” (p. 135). This result suggests that Chinese success focuses on social-related achievement and is radically different from the Western definition of success, which emphasizes individualistic achievements. In this study, the researchers additionally found Chinese students perceived individualistic-achievement-based success as related to social or status factors. For example, “feeling proud of oneself” (p. 136) was associated with power and leadership concepts. In this way, Chinese students’ success was status-oriented. In addition to social- and status-related success, what Chinese students perceive to be success may be associated with money. In Lau and Pang’s (1995) mixed-method study on Hong Kong Chinese university students’ expectations about their prospective successful jobs, they indicated that their success after graduation would be getting a job with satisfactory financial rewards: “Money can reflect a person’s status and confidence” (p. 20); “money is something tangible” (p. 20); “I think salary reflects, or is an indicator about one’s ability” (p. 20). Hence success perceived by Chinese students seems more money and tangible-attached instead of moral-emphasized in this study. However, in studying how Hong Kong Chinese who worked in Britain viewed success, Pang and Lau (1998) found that the younger generation of Chinese regarded “quality of life, nature of work and how money is made” (pp.

869-870) as important goals as opposed to simply “how much money is made” (p. 870). Pang and Lau suggested that this approach to success was influenced by British values of success. The longer Chinese young people stay in a host country, the more likely they are to adopt some of the values of the host society in evaluating success (Pang & Lau).

However, these limited studies were conducted in Hong Kong or with students originally from Hong Kong, which has different social and political contexts from the Mainland. The majority of Chinese international students are from mainland China, and they were born in the 1980's and 1990's when Chinese economic reforms had just started. These Chinese international students were brought up in the waves of transformation that economic reforms brought to Chinese society. Now they are immersed in Western culture and education. Therefore, it is important to know what Chinese international students' subjective views of success are, and how their views of success have been shaped by their experiences in both the current Western cultural context and the current Chinese cultural context.

Summary

Most literature about the challenges of Chinese international students underscores a series of obstacles that Chinese students often encounter overseas; however, the research to date has tended to use stress-oriented models and statistical analyses, and neglected to a large extent human agency. Applying the lens of resilience, the current literature review steers our focus from merely looking into challenges to paying attention to an area of research on Chinese students' resources and their affiliated identities that could be helpful for them to overcome challenges. At the same time, the literature review raised a few concerns embedded in this area of research, which encompassed inconsistent findings on types of resources and identities, a lack of

contextual analyses and subjective understandings, and limited attention to interactions between individuals and their environments, and changing processes evolving from the interactions.

Because success is an important manifestation of resilience, in addition to the literature on challenges, resources, and identities, the literature review examined the historical concept of success in Chinese culture, and contemporary attitudes towards success in today's Chinese society. However, the view of success among Chinese students is still inconclusive from the review of literature due to the limited number of research studies conducted and varying conclusions.

Therefore, investigating Chinese students' identification of their challenges, navigation of their resources, negotiation of their identities, and attitudes towards success could be helpful for enriching and supplementing the current literature.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

My interest in resilience started a few years ago when I was working as a research assistant in a SSHRC-funded project entitled *Experiences of female teachers who are immigrants to Atlantic Canada*. The literature we were using at that time tended to describe immigrants' psychological well-being as vulnerable due to unemployment, acculturation, language acquisition, and discrimination. However, through listening to the research participants' stories, I came to greatly respect people's strengths when facing challenges and uncertainties (Walsh, Brigham, & Wang, 2011).

Later, my interest in resilience was reinforced by my own master's thesis research on Chinese international students (Wang, 2009; Wang, 2011). Although my research was to explore how Chinese international students conceptualized the meaning of career and how they thought about career counselling services, what I discovered was more than what I expected. Through listening to these participants' stories, I was impressed by their strengths to face and deal with challenges instead of escaping from obstacles and giving up on choices. More importantly, their stories triggered my introspection into my experiences of being an international student in Canada. During the two years of my master's studies, I experienced a significant physical illness, a close family member's trauma, and a break-up of a long-term relationship; all or any of these incidents could have hindered my further study and caused me to stray from pursuing happiness and success. With support from my wonderful thesis supervisor, my kind research supervisors, and my caring roommate, I chose to stay in the program until I finished it with an excellent academic record and research training, which led me to be successfully accepted into Ph.D. studies at Queen's University. Therefore, my previous participants' and my own stories told me that international students' resilience should be further explored, and specifically in a way that

captures the dynamic and interacting resources contributing to resilience, and changes in a person's identity during the interactive processes.

This research address three major gaps in the current literature on resilience. First, resilience has seldom been studied among international students. Second, personal, contextual, and cultural factors, all of which contribute to an individual's resilience, have rarely been examined from an interactive process perspective and from individuals' subjective understanding. Third, resilience studies seldom look into individuals' identity changes evolving in the resilience process.

Additionally, I explore how individual Chinese international students define success. I found success from both my previous participants' and my own perspectives has been shaped by our individual experiences after we came to Canada. I used to treat success as merely academic success. Some of my previous participants used to view success as material success. However, after I came to Canada, I discovered that the meaning of success had been unconsciously re-conceptualized in the process of my studying, living, and interacting with local people and culture and influenced by my experiences of coping with difficulties. For me now, I view success as an ability to maintain a loving, empathic, and positive spirit in spite of facing storms of difficulties. In this study, I therefore wanted to have a thorough understanding of other Chinese international students' views on success to see what they thought success was and if the meaning of success had been changed in accordance with their experiences.

This study was initially guided by four research questions: (1) How do Chinese international students understand resilience through their experiences? (2) How do Chinese international students view success and challenges? (3) What resources are helpful for Chinese international students to develop their resilience? (4) What are their subjective views of success?

I altered my first research question directly after the pilot testing, as the pilot test participants were unable to articulate how they understood resilience. As my study progressed and I conducted and transcribed the interviews and analyzed my data, I altered my third question slightly to better reflect the study participants' responses. The questions my study addressed became: (1) How do these Chinese international students view challenges? (2) What resources do these Chinese students view as helpful in overcoming challenges? (3) How have their individual identities been negotiated and transformed? (4) What are their subjective views of success? Among these four questions, questions (2) and (3) particularly expanded Ungar's conceptualization of resilience to the context of Chinese international students. Question (1) aimed to reveal challenges from students' perspectives, while question (4) would lead us to exploring students' subjective views of success, views that reflect the goals for which students are striving during their process of navigating resources and negotiating identities.

Context of Study Site

Internationalization is part of the key strategic plan of Queen's University where this study took place. Attracting over 2000 international students annually has been set as the goal in Queen's University International Centre's Annual Report 2010-2011 (Queen's University International Centre [QUIC], Annual Report, 2010-2011). Among foreign countries, China has been one of the key interests of Queen's international connections (Macleod, 2009; Woolf, 2012a). The goal of recruiting more Chinese students to Queen's University has been highly voiced by the Principal of Queen's University (Woolf, 2012b). However, Queen's interests in Chinese students seem primarily focused on the economic benefits these students could bring to the university and their potential roles in further expanding Queen's influence at a global level. Although providing international students with a high level of support and assistance in their

transition to the city and university is specifically stressed and highly recommended as one of the initiatives according to the university's strategic plan

(<https://adv.queensu.ca/lookingahead/strategicgoal4.php>), the plans or resources do not specifically identify how these objectives will be met. Queen's documents show insufficient explicit consideration of these students' experiences in relation to challenges these students face, resources they perceive as important, identity changes that occur during their time at Queen's, and eventually how these students overcome challenges

(<https://adv.queensu.ca/lookingahead/strategicgoal4.php>). Understanding students' perspectives on these questions would provide informed and more effective approaches for service providers at Queen's to assist Chinese international students. Therefore, this research investigated Chinese international students' subjective understanding of challenges, resources, identity changes, and the meaning of success not previously studied at this site.

Data Collection

Interviews

To explore Chinese international students' subjective understanding of challenges, resources, identity changes, and the meaning of success, semi-structured interviews were used in this study. Interviews are valued as a way to know interviewees' interpretations of and meaning-making about certain issues, their experiences, and their contexts (Kvale, 1996; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2010). Semi-structured interviews not only capture specific data in which the researcher is interested, but have the flexibility of allowing new questions to be brought up during the interview process (Schwandt, 1994). Compared to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews are more flexible at connecting the formalized questions on resilience with broader

issues in relation to personal reflections and contexts (e.g., Cohen, Ferguson, Harms, Pooley, & Tomlinson, 2011; Malindi & Theron, 2010).

Recruitment

Ethics clearance was received to interview Chinese international students about their challenges and resources, their perceptions of identity changes, and their views of success (WANG GEDUC-625-12; see Appendix A). After receiving ethics clearance, I chose several techniques to invite Chinese international students to participate. I first placed a recruitment notice (Appendix B) in places with high traffic of international students, including the Queen's International Student Centre where international students often go to obtain information and attend social events, and the John Deutsch University Centre (JDUC) where many international associations and clubs hold meetings and social events. I also posted the recruitment notice on the places in Mackintosh-Corry Hall, gyms, and Queen's students' Common Ground coffee shop, where students go for dinner, break, and exercise. In addition, I sent the recruitment notice to a major online server that Chinese students at Queen's use, QCSSA@yahoo.ca, an email list managed by the Queen's Chinese Students and Scholars Association (QCSSA). I sent a recruitment notice to a not-for-profit non-political student-run club that is registered and affiliated with the Alma Mater Society (AMS) at Queen's University. I posted the notice at the Facebook page of QCSSA (qcssa@groups.facebook.com). As well, I sent the recruitment notice to the Society of Graduate and Professional Studies (SGPS) and School of Graduate Studies (SGS) newsletters.

Six graduate students were recruited from QCSSA email contacts. Another graduate student contacted me after being referred to the study by a friend. A further graduate student contacted me via email after seeing my recruitment post on the SGPS Facebook page. Within

two weeks, 8 graduate students had been successfully recruited. However, there was a low response rate of Chinese undergraduate international students in that only one student contacted me after seeing the recruitment post on the QCSSA Facebook page. I had to reach out in person to other potential participants by introducing myself to some Chinese undergraduate international students who had lunch breaks every day at Queen's International Centre. I built some connections with them by asking about their home cities and their studies at Queen's. I then explained my purpose for approaching them. After explaining my research purpose, some students showed interest in participating and introduced me to their friends. I thereby recruited 7 additional undergraduate participants.

The 16 students in this study were recruited from 10 different academic disciplines (Business, Chemical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Economics, Education, Environmental Studies, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Psychology, and Statistics) at Queen's University. Students ranged in age from 18 to 37 years. Eight students were undergraduate students (4 female and 4 male), while 8 students were graduate students (4 female and 4 male). Two graduate students (1 female and 1 male) were married, while the rest of the students were single. Four students came to Canada during high school, two of whom (Julia and David) came with their parents for educational reasons and two of whom (Lan and Qiang) came by themselves. Many Chinese immigrant parents choose to come to Canada not for their own economic or social benefits but for their children's education (Li, 2001a). International students are identified as students who cross a national border for the purposes of education and are enrolled outside their country of origin (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006). In such a case, if Chinese immigrant students came to Canada for the purpose of education while in secondary school, they could still be considered as

international students. Especially, those who came to Canada during their later adolescence (after 16 years old) might face similar challenges as other Chinese international students. Participants' real names were replaced by pseudonyms. If a participant called him- or herself by an English name, then I gave the person an English pseudonym. Similarly, Chinese real names were replaced by Chinese pseudonyms. All the pseudonyms were randomly selected from online websites illustrating popular English and Chinese names.

Table1. Participants

Name	Sex	Age	Status	Level of Study	Program of Study	Came to Canada as	Interview Language
Claire	Female	18-22	Single	2 nd -year undergrad	Environmental Studies	High School graduate	Chinese
Lan	Female	18-22	Single	1 st -year undergrad	Psychology	Grade 12 student	Chinese
Mei	Female	18-22	Single	4 th -year undergrad	Life Science	High school graduate	Chinese
Julia	Female	18-22	Single	3 rd -year undergrad	Mathematics	Grade 11 student	English
Yan	Female	22-26	Single	2 rd -year Ph.D.	Chemical Engineering	Undergrad graduate	English
Lin	Female	26-31	Single	4 th -year Ph.D.	Business	Undergrad graduate	English
Mary	Female	35-40	Single	3 rd -year Ph.D.	Education	College graduate	English
Ting	Female	26-31	Married (child)	5 th -year Ph.D.	Economics	Undergrad graduate	Chinese
Qiang	Male	18-22	Single	3 rd -year undergrad	Statistics	Grade 12 student	Chinese
Liang	Male	18-22	Single	2 nd -year undergrad	Electronic Engineering	High school graduate	Chinese
Peng	Male	18-22	Single	2 nd -year undergrad	Electronic Engineering	High school graduate	Chinese
David	Male	18-22	Single	4 th -year undergrad	Mathematics	Grade 11 student	English
Tao	Male	26-31	Single	3 rd -year Ph.D.	Mechanical Engineering	Master's graduate	Chinese
Wei	Male	26-31	Married (child)	4 th -year Ph.D.	Chemical Engineering	Master's transfer	English

Dong	Male	22-26	Single	2 nd -year Ph.D.	Chemical Engineering	Undergrad graduate	Chinese
Bo	Male	26-31	Single	2 nd -year Master's	Psychology	Master's graduate	English

Interviewing and Recording

Except for one participant (Wei, a pseudonym) who talked about 90 minutes, the length of time for interviews with the rest of participants was approximately 60 minutes. All interviews were audio-taped. Each interview was conducted in two phases: reflection and response. In the reflection phase, interview questions in both English and Chinese were sent to each participant three days before the interviews to allow the participants to reflect on their experiences. In the response phase, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a conversational approach. Corbetta (2003) explains the implementation of semi-structured interviews can be flexible in terms of the order of topics and wording of questions. Therefore, interview questions were used as guidance for interviewing; however, additional questions were added to obtain clarification and explanation of the answers. Information gathered from all participants was maintained in a confidential fashion. Each interview was conducted individually in a quiet individual group meeting room in Stauffer Library at Queen's University to ensure the interview would not be interrupted or disturbed and so the interview would be clearly recorded. Before the interview started, participants were presented with a Letter of Information/Consent Form (Appendix C). They were informed of the nature of this research, the format of the interview, and the time requirement of the interview. Participants were assured that the researcher would not share any information that could be used to identify a particular participant in her or his transcripts or in any written report. They were further assured that their participation was totally voluntary and

that they could refuse to answer any questions for any reason or withdraw from the research at any stage. All interview data were kept secure in an encrypted file folder on a password-protected computer. Confidentiality was ensured to the best of the researcher's ability by replacing participants' names with pseudonyms on codes, quotes, themes, discussions, and any reports.

Interview Questions

The International Resilience Project Adult Interview Guide (Ungar, 2010), a multidimensional investigation consisting of nine questions that draw on the outcomes and processes of people's navigations and negotiations in culturally variant contexts, was used as a guide for designing the interview questions about these students' experiences in the new environment. These interview questions and probing questions have been used in a number of studies in different cultural contexts (Canada, Colombia, Thailand, China, India, and others; Ungar, 2010). Because the interview questions were used in an original cultural context in previous research and have not been used in the transitional socio-cultural context (e.g., questioning about international students' transitional experiences), the original questions were revised to form individual interview questions (Appendix D) tailored to my research. For example, the questions in Ungar's (2010) study view mental health as the outcome of resilience. One original question is "What does being healthy mean to you and others in your family and community?" Another question is "Do you have someone you consider a mentor or role model? Can you describe him or her?" In this study, however, I was more interested in exploring what success (instead of mental health) meant to Chinese international students.

The interview questions were divided into three parts. The first part included three initial questions to get to know participants' general background and experiences since they came to

Canada. The second part encompassed seven intermediate questions to get to know how the participants viewed their successes and challenges, and what resources and what cultural beliefs they thought helpful for them to overcome challenges. The last part was four concluding questions where participants could provide further insights and comments.

I translated the questions into Chinese in case some participants preferred being interviewed in Chinese. The translated Chinese questions were translated back to English by a Ph.D. graduate with a major in Teaching English as a Second Language from a Canadian university to ensure the meaning and intention of the language was retained. These bilingual questions were piloted with Chinese international students who were outside of Queen's University to ensure that the wording was appropriate and easy to understand. According to feedback from the two pilot students, one interview question, 'How do you describe how people bounce back from adversities? What words do you use?' was deleted due to their thinking that this question was ambiguous.

Languages

Among the eight undergraduate participants, the two immigrant students, Julia and David, preferred talking in English during the interviews, while the rest of the participants chose to talk in Chinese during the interviews. Three of the eight graduate participants preferred talking in Chinese during their interviews: Ting, Tao, and Dong. Ting came to Canada with her husband seven years ago. She finished her master's degree in Economics at another Canadian institution before she enrolled in Ph.D. studies in Economics at Queen's University 5 years ago. She expected to graduate two months after the interview. Tao was pursuing Ph.D. studies in Mechanical Engineering. He came to Queen's University after he finished his master's degree in China three years ago. Dong spent one year doing an exchange program in the United States

before he came to Queen's. Dong was a second-year Ph.D. student in Chemical Engineering. Participants who chose to talk in Chinese perceived Chinese as a better way to convey their thoughts. Participants who preferred talking in English indicated that there was no difference for them to converse in either Chinese or English.

Considering the high cost of backward translation on complete transcripts, I first translated the Chinese interviews into English myself and selected certain parts of transcripts I used as quotations in the findings later. Then I sent the specific parts of translated transcripts to the Ph.D. graduate with a major in Teaching English as a Second Language to ask her to translate these parts back to English to improve the validity of the data. The transcription technique was employed with verbatim transcription. I wrote down word-for-word the verbal data audiorecorded in the interviews to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts. Verbatim transcription facilitates the accuracy of translation and backward translation.

Data Analysis

Coding

During the coding process, I applied the elaborative coding procedure suggested by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). Elaborative coding is “the process of analyzing textual data in order to develop theory further” (Auerbach & Silverstein, p. 104). The process of elaborative coding is “top-down” where one selects relevant text with theoretical constructs in mind. Auerbach and Silverstein suggested six general steps for researchers to follow during the elaborative coding process: (1) explicitly state the research concerns and theoretical constructs, (2) select text that is consistent with the research concerns and theoretical constructs, (3) group together related passages of relevant text, (4) organize themes by analyzing the grouped

passages, (5) elaborate the theoretical construct by organized themes, and (6) create a theoretical narrative by retelling participants' stories.

Before I started coding, I first reviewed the theoretical construct and my research concerns. The theoretical construct of this study is Ungar's (2008a) definition of resilience, which places emphasis on navigation of resources and negotiation of identity changes. My two research concerns were: what challenges do participants identify from their own perspectives and what do participants believe to be success. Together, the theoretical construct and research concerns were articulated in four research questions (the first having been altered after pilot testing from its original form): (1) How do these Chinese international students view challenges? (2) What resources do these Chinese students view as helpful in overcoming challenges? (3) How have their individual identities been negotiated and transformed? (4) What are their subjective views of success?

Keeping these research questions in mind, I started reading the transcripts. For each interview transcript, I highlighted the texts relevant to the research questions. I further categorized these texts into the same subgroup with leading themes. I took David as an example to illustrate how I grouped the relevant data together and further categorized into themes. The reasons for taking David rather than other participants were based on the considerations: (1) he was one of seven participants who used English as the language of the interview; (2) he had relatively decent English expression because he came to Canada during high school; (3) Although Julia also came to Canada during high school, David provided more rich information about his transitions and life stories. Therefore, for the sake of original language expression and the volume of information, I took David as an example. In David's interview, texts about challenges were classified into two stages (before coming to Canada and after) with seven

leading themes (being judged, relationships with teachers, relationship with father/parents, English, making decisions, stick to his plan, loneliness) in total (see Table 2). His texts about resources were grouped into four leading themes (teachers, friends, extracurricular activities, parents; Table 3), and his perceived identity changes were grouped into three leading themes (being loser to being model, being irresponsible to being responsible, being Chinese to being Chinese Canadian; Table 3).

Table 2. David's Challenges

Name	Challenges before coming to Canada	Why challenging	Challenges after coming to Canada	Why challenging
David	(1) being judged by others	<i>(1) They probably judge you by the things you do, the way you dress. Say, if I smoke, doesn't mean I am a drug addict. If I drink, doesn't mean I am alcoholic. But they think you in that way when I was kid, especially when I was a kid. Yes, make a sense in some scientific way. But I am myself and decide my life. If I want to do this way, doesn't hurt anyone. I will do it. But in China, it doesn't work like that. So I got misjudged. So it's bad feedback.</i>	(1) English	<i>(1) The school was quite challenging, especially the English class, history class, you know, requiring-a-lot-of-language-speaking-and-writing class, really hard for me. But I tried to manage to get used to it. 60%, 70% are what I got. It's quite challenging to make friends with locals because you have to at least understand what they are talking about. If you don't, you just don't.</i>
	(2) Relationships with teachers	<i>(2) It's bad relationship between me and [teachers, schools, and others]. Yes, I was pretty disappointed at life when I was in China.</i>	(2) making decisions	<i>(2) When I entered my Grade 12, that's quite challenging because I had to know whether I had to go to university, or get a job or go to college, I didn't know what my future is.</i>
	(3) Relationship with father/parents	<i>(3) My dad played a major role for why I am here. My dad, you know, he is very traditional Chinese guy, absolutely loves rules. When he talking about the rules, there were tons of rules, family rules, school rules, if you don't follow, you will get into trouble. That's how he was raised, right? He tried to apply same rules on me. But since I was such a rebel, we had a big conflict one day when I was in China. One day, my dad finally realized I couldn't make a living in China if I keep doing this. No</i>	(3) Stick to one's plan and make it happen	<i>(3) During high school: The most challenging ... how to say to have a goal and have a path. stick to your plan and make it happen. Because in Canada, it's a free country. There are opportunities if you can do well, you can get good. During University: When I entered Queen's by myself, everything changed. I tried to put less work to get a bigger reward. But it didn't work that way. University's courses are way harder. I basically fucked up in my first year. I drunk a lot and partied a lot, smoked a lot of weed. First year was absolutely disaster for</i>

		<p><i>way I can get into university, no way I can get a job, no way that I can become a good person, I guess.</i></p> <p><i>My dad gave me huge expectation when I was young. I didn't catch up it. I was disappointed. So that's why I ended up in the street.</i></p>		<p><i>me. I had really bad marks. I was really disappointed.</i></p>
			(4) Loneliness	<p><i>(4) Challenge in the university is also how to deal with loneliness. Loneliness doesn't just mean that you are on yourself. Loneliness means you feel that nobody understands you. You feel like that why nobody understand you , why you want to do this. It's really personal challenge.</i></p>

Table 3. David's Resources and Identities

Name	Navigate resources		Negotiate identity	
	Resources	How	Identity changes	How
David	(1) Teachers	<p><i>(1) I also did a lot of work. I did every single exercise in the whole book. Every single one, seriously. I did every single one. I showed them to my math teacher. My math teacher was so impressed. My mid-term mark was 105%. They were telling me that I was a superman. I did everything I can. My teacher was like, "My God, I didn't see any students like this before." I was like, "yes, that's right!" So after a whole year, I had a perfect mark in the exam. I had perfect marks in single assignment. I did extra work, extra extra work, not just homework.</i></p> <p>Regain his confidence through awards and recognition:</p> <p><i>They were really nice people. They were quite helpful. They know I came here from a long way. I didn't know nothing about the society. They help me as much as they can. There were ESL program but not strict ESL program. They don't teach you anything. They just help you do homework. If you have problems in your homework, they will help you out. They help you read the book. Really nice people. Even if you have life problem. ... how to say this, ok, two months after I came to Canada, I need a bank account. When I got a job, I need a bank account, they need give me payment. My ESL teacher told me, "you should do this, bambambam. It's fairly easy." Then I got the bank account. That's not that hard. People were nice. Basically, they were all nice. I love them.</i></p>	(1) Being a "loser" vs. Being a "model"	<p><i>(1) I was also got elected to be "Youth Salute." This is a thing in Sak, every year, every high school has to select four students to them. The members of Youth Salute have to be very well in their school work, involved in a lot of community work, volunteering, and having impacts on others. These students have to be role models for others. Speaking of me, I was a foreigner, came here, knew nothing, but I managed to step up every day day by day. They got impressed. So that's the reason for why I can come here. I definitely did a lot of work back there.</i></p>
	(2) Friends	<p><i>(2) How did I get the job back to date were all about asking friends. Like, where do you work? Do you need to get to know more people? Is it easy job? Do you like it? If I am interested in this job, can you</i></p>	(2) Being irresponsible vs. Being responsible	<p><i>(2) I was thinking ... there was a big dilemma in my mind. did I come here for a good reason or bad reason?</i></p>

		<p><i>hook me up? Can you ask your boss to see if he needs one more person? Yeah, it's how it begins. My first job, I asked one of my friends, he does not speak, not even a word of English. He didn't understand anything. He was just cleaning in the office. He's kind of "Ok, come to me and talk with my boss." Then I talked with his boss. The first day then I didn't do anything, just signed the paper and then got the job. It was like that, you know.</i></p>		<p><i>Why I am destroying myself? If it is a good thing, why I am doing bad? If I am doing bad, it should be bad thing, right? So I am thinking if my choice of coming to Queen's is good or bad.</i></p>
	(3) Parents	<p><i>(3) They are Chinese parents, you know. They work for their kids. You know, my dad still in China right now. He came here with us, with me and my mom. He went back. He still lived in Shanghai. He has a job there. Apparently, he did immigration which was definitely for me. 100 percent. My mom ... I really appreciate her sacrifice. She worried about me. She doesn't want to leave me here alone. So she stayed and lived in Sak . for three years. She cooked for me. She didn't have any friends. There are less Chinese right there. After I came here, she left for China. Hopefully my parents will be here for my graduation.</i></p>	(3) Being Chinese vs. Being Chinese Canadian	<p><i>(3) I am 80% Canadian and 20% Chinese now. I keep good things of Chinese, trying to be polite, trying to be outgoing, trying to be helpful to others even without asking something back. A lot of bad things about Chinese, such as misjudgment, they don't even know the person, they just assume, something is wrong with this person. Also, I abandoned a lot of things too. Canadian culture, I should North American culture, is free, you have to give people opportunities. What did you ask about?</i></p>

I also organized each participant's view on success into tables. I provide David's table as an example (Table 4).

Table 4. David's Views of Success

Name	Success in Chinese culture	Personal definition of success
David	<i>Chinese people think money and social class</i>	<i>Personal contribution to humanity or society. If you being a scientist, or carpenter, as long as you have contribution to the society, and make this world better. It does not matter what you do. That's success. Say, it's a big thing. If I am scientist and discover something, if I am pharmacist discovering some solution curing HIV, it's huge. If you are on the street and cleaning the street, you make contribution to this society, you are a success.</i>

After gathering up 48 (3x16) tables of 16 participants, I started telling each participant's story. I began with describing the participants' challenges by selecting parts of their original quotes and adding my interpretations of participants' feelings and my understanding of the connections among those challenges. After I described the individual's challenges, I continued to describe his or her resources in a similar way. Because identity changes were embedded in personal experiences, sometimes the changes could be too subtle to be clearly articulated by the interviewees themselves. After I finished all the transcriptions, I read the interviewees' stories, highlighted their changes and transformations, and then summarized their identity changes and transformations by using comparative terms (see Table 3). The comparisons between interviewees' old identity and new one included several contrasts. I described individuals' identity changes by presenting how their identity changes had evolved.

After describing the individual's challenges, resources, and identity changes, I had planned to illustrate the interviewees' definitions of success respectively as I did on with challenges, resources, and identity changes. Since each individual's personal definition was

articulated in a straight-forward way and ran only a limited number of lines, I collected personal definitions of success from four participants together by group (female or male × undergraduate or graduate) and described them collectively as groups.

I presented the results in order of female undergraduate students, female graduate students, male undergraduate students, and male graduate students. As a female Chinese student who moved from undergraduate student to graduate student in Canada, I was more interested in the transition of other female Chinese international students and felt more comfortable reflecting on their stories. As a result, I decided to describe females before I did males.

Quality of Data Analysis

Trustworthiness is an important issue in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It includes a set of criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings of researchers are congruent to the personal constructions of participants. For instance, Guba and Lincoln suggest that credibility can be achieved by member checks. Member checks were assured by sending interview transcripts to participants. I offered participants an opportunity to receive their own transcript; they all refused but some indicated that they were interested in reviewing the final draft of the dissertation once it was completed.

Transferability is the extent to which the study findings can be applied in other contexts. In-depth interviews with Chinese international students about their experiences of overcoming challenges, navigating resources in different settings from their previous environments to the current setting at Queen's, and their identity changes across these settings provide implications for transferability of resilience. For example, one of the distinguishable transformations that a number of participants shared in this study was their thinking and behaviours moving from a

traditional Chinese approach. Some changed their beliefs through the influence of attending church, some changed during high school education in Canada, and some changed after coming to Queen's. Therefore, contributing factors for these changes were composed of different contextual factors; thereby, the findings of this study may be used as a reference for future studies in other contexts.

Dependability refers to the extent to which the findings can be discovered in a replicated study with the same participants in the same situations. Dependability can be achieved by ensuring diligent research practices have been followed. Three strategies can help researchers to improve dependability. First, the researcher has to clearly explain the research method design to participants and illustrate how it is implemented. In my study, I explained the research including the purpose and method to my participants before and after the interview. Some participants raised questions about the published research on resilience, so I briefly described my literature review. Another strategy to increase dependability is to address the details of data gathering. I ensured that these explanations were included in my description of my methodology. Furthermore, to increase dependability, the researcher should refine the effectiveness of the inquiry process. Prior to the formal interviews with participants, I reflected on the pilot interviews with two Chinese students.

Confirmability helps ensure that the research findings reflect the data collected from the participants rather than the preferences of the researcher. I was cautious of my own expectations when reading, coding, and analyzing the data, and was open to a variety of possible findings.

Based on the interview methodology described here, these interviews allowed me to explore Chinese international students' resilience through understanding their experiences of encountering challenges, navigating their resources, negotiating their identities, and making

meaning of success. Although participants were all students at Queen's University, their experiences of encountering challenges and overcoming challenges did not only include their stories at Queen's but encompassed their previous experiences in other cultural, social, and contextual settings. Thus their multi-dimensional experiences can help to expand the concept of resilience across cultures and contexts.

CHAPTER 4: FEMALE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS (GROUP A)

Group A included four female undergraduate students: Claire, Lan, Julia, and Mei. Claire was a second-year student in Environmental Studies. She spent one year in Australia before she came to Canada. Lan was a first-year student in Psychology. She returned to school after a one-year medical leave. Julia was a third-year student in Mathematics. She came to Canada at 16 years old with her parents. Mei was a fourth-year student in Life Science. She started her study at Queen's School of English before being admitted into university. These four participants experienced some common challenges, navigated some common resources, negotiated some similar identity changes, and had similar understanding of Chinese success. However, these four participants also struggled with their individual challenges, had some special resources that helped them to overcome their challenges, went through their unique identity changes, and viewed personal success in ways that were differentiated from each other.

Claire

Claire's Challenges

Claire described her challenges in two stages: one in Australia and one in Canada. She went to Australia as a high school exchange student for one year. In the beginning, she "felt scary of being alone," because "before, at home, if something came up, my parents will handle," but "by living alone now, you have to deal with all sorts of things by yourself, such as, learn to cook, fix utilities, and deal with conflicts." She chose not to "tell much about the issues" because she "didn't want to let them [parents] worry." Even when a murder happened in her neighbourhood, she didn't "speak a single word about the case" to her parents until several days later when the murderer got caught. After that, a scary feeling became constantly present especially when Claire was travelling across the neighbourhood every day on the way to school.

The challenges of taking care of herself, facing traumas alone, and lacking a sense of security co-existed during the year when she was in Australia. However, the biggest challenge during that time was not these difficulties but “mainly psychological inadaptation.” She was subjectively unwilling to “accept the new environment and make new friends.” She was constantly “missing home, missing what I had back in China.” Every time when “feeling tired about study, I can’t help feeling controlled by negative emotions and hard to reach out and start a new life.”

The second stage of Claire’s challenges focused on the first year she was in Canada. First she had to face the challenge of how to adapt to the Canadian learning style, which she described as being given only “facts” instead of being given “a template to follow.” Being presented with facts, “you have to exam it” and “you have to figure out what you want to do.” She was confused “since I didn’t grow up here, I didn’t know what I need to do.” Another challenge in her first year was to participate in the classroom activities. Sometimes, she felt a sense of loss in the classroom because she didn’t know “how I should get along with others. Especially in the seminar, I don’t know what role I need play.” The difficulty of getting along with local students was not only manifested in the classroom but also on a daily basis because of different interests; “For example, I like to read something Chinese online. I may watch something English but only limited to academic areas,” but when topics were tapping on “North American TV and games, I am not a fan.” Therefore, the challenges of adapting to the Canadian learning style, confusion about classroom participation, and building social relationships with others were interrelated. However, since Claire arrived in Canada, the most significant challenge was her fear of being judged by Canadians based on her “self-centered” habits carried from China. For example, regarding her previous frequent behaviour of throwing out food easily, she now felt that “wasting food is a shame.” Compared to the Canadians with a strong sense of environmental protection,

she felt “I was not good enough and may unconsciously cause the disgusted feelings of others. So I felt very anxious about my behaviours.”

Claire’s Resources

The resources Claire considered helpful in overcoming challenges encompassed friends, schoolmates, and “me.” Friends generally provided emotional and physical support for her to overcome challenges. Back in Australia, friends and schoolmates provided Claire with emotional support when she learned to become independent dealing with unexpected incidents. For example, after the murder happened, her Chinese schoolmates formed a peer-support network that empowered her to be brave. “We, all Chinese exchange students living together in the house, discussed together and made a consensus that no one would tell parents what was happening there until the case was solved.” After Claire came to Canada, friends were still important in her life. Emotionally, thanks to her friends’ positive life attitudes, Claire changed from a person who was “easily controlled by negative emotions” to a person who “cherishes and feels grateful for what you have now.” Physically, when Claire needed help, such as for moving, buying furniture, or settling down in a new place, friends were there for her.

Claire’s schoolmates set examples for her. Inspired by some of her Chinese immigrant classmates who “have been well adapted to local learning environment,” Claire became more involved in classroom activities than before, changing her passive learning style to an active one. Influenced by Canadian schoolmates’ global awareness, Claire started looking for volunteer experiences and thinking about what she could contribute to the community and society.

The biggest helpful resource for Claire was herself. She believed that, without her determination to make a “psychological adaptation,” all the resources would not have been utilized. Claire used to be a person who “liked recalling old memories” and “didn’t want to

accept a new life” when she was situated in a new environment. This unwillingness to accept a new life led her to feeling stressed and unhappy all the time in the new environment. Later, Claire realized that her psychological objection to the new life was the biggest obstacle for her to adapt to the new environment. She kept reminding herself that “people cannot always carry their memories along with them all the time,” and “cannot escape from the reality.” After being aware of the need to change, Claire started to pay attention to her surroundings and “actively devoted to a new life.”

The way Claire navigated resources appeared to be a pattern of comparing external resources received from others with her inner resources. In the process of comparing and contrasting the two resources, Claire often took an integrative approach, which “combine[d] these two forces together.” Normally, she “will have a brief idea first and listen to other’s opinions.” Then she “will balance different options to make a final decision.”

Claire’s Identity Changes

Claire negotiated her identity in two distinct ways: dependent vs. independent and being self-centered vs. being aware globally. In the past, Claire was extremely dependent on her parents. “In China, students even after entering the college are still dependent on their parents.” The center of her life was nothing else but study “because that’s the only thing their parents wanted them to do.” Being overly dependent on her parents and only focusing on study made Claire “not ready for getting into the society.” After Claire came to Canada, seeing “the people with independence admired and respected,” and knowing Canadian students “started doing part-time jobs when they were very young,” Claire felt motivated to become more independent and had a desire to get to know this society through doing volunteer work in the local community.

Whether a person should focus on herself or have a broader horizon on global issues was another identity issue which Claire tried to negotiate. By comparing “[Canadian] people [who] care about the social, political, and environmental issues,” she perceived “most Chinese are relatively self-centered and lack the interest of caring about this world and others.” She didn’t want to “copy exactly what they [Canadian students] do.” She thought the best way was to improve her shortcomings by learning from others’ strengths and doing “basic things that you come cross every day,” but “most Chinese don’t pay attention to,” such as “trying to buy the environmental-friendly products as much as possible” and “turning off the tap if water is running.” Although Claire realized she needed to change from one identity to another, she also noted “I cannot change myself to them [local students] instantly. It is a process.”

Lan

Lan’s Challenges

Lan divided her challenges into four stages: one before she came to Canada, one during her high school in Canada, one during the first year of university before she took a medical leave, and the current one after she came back to university again. The primary challenge encompassing the first three stages was Lan’s chronic stomach-ache illness. Within the past decade from her elementary school to university, this illness got her admitted to hospitals back and forth many times, forced her to take medical leave twice, and made her academic progress fall behind her peers. Her body weight “had been only 29 kg for a long time.” Suffering from depression due to the illness, she tried to commit suicide twice.

Lan considered that this stomach-ache problem was actually related to her repression of her story of being bullied by a teacher before she came to Canada. When Lan was in Grade 3, she was wrongly accused of stealing a box of coloured pencils from a classmate. The head

teacher of the classroom slapped her face in front of the whole class without listening to her explanation. From then on, she had been always troubled by the shadow of this incident; “you would feel chilling when you are with them [teachers].” She buried her story in front of her parents because “during that time, my parents were very busy with their business and I didn’t want to let them worry about me.” She battled with this dramatic pressure of hiding the secret and unspoken fear about teachers for years. Gradually, her stomach-ache problem evolved, and her health began deteriorating. She was sent to Emergency a few times due to acute physical pain or emotional collapse. Then she was seen to be physically fragile and mentally weak by her friends, peers, and family members. Therefore, she had a strong need of changing and proving herself. “I want to change, I want to start from a complete new environment, and I want to prove myself.” She came to Canada for education after a three-year medical leave in high school in China.

After Lan came to Canada, starting in Grade 10 in a Canadian high school, she was challenged by picking up the knowledge she had not learned before, catching up with the rest of the class, and learning something totally new to her. First, she had to improve her English skills and regain her confidence; “When I first came here, it’s been three years since I dropped out of school. I almost forgot everything. I need to look for everything through dictionary. I was experiencing lack of confidence.” Many times, she couldn’t read some items on quizzes and tests due to unknown English words. Additionally, she was challenged by the local academic requirements. For example, she made a mistake of plagiarism due to unfamiliarity with the local academic culture. Furthermore, she had to fight her inner fear of having direct contact with teachers due to the old-time nightmare.

During her first year in university, Lan started getting herself to reach out, but she still encountered some challenges. For example, when connecting with local students, she found it difficult; as she said, “I want to build up a closer relationship with some Caucasian friends. But I am not sure where the boundary is or I can feel there is a boundary but I cannot break through.” This boundary might be tied to “language difference or the different ways of how the meaning is delivered by languages.” Therefore, “the way we expressed may not be accepted by others and we cannot understand some underlying meanings and deep feelings of each other.” Another challenge in her first year in university was to learn to deal with daily issues. For example, she had to learn how to negotiate with different landlords and get herself to be familiar with many legal issues involved in renting property in Canada.

Currently, after just coming back from China after a two-year medical leave, Lan said that, within the past two years, she started to understand more about the meaning of life but she was still concerned with her emotional control problem; “I want to become a person who can deal with things calmly instead of emotionally no matter how difficult the situation is.”

Lan’s Resources

For Lan, Canadian teachers, classmates, friends, and her parents were important resources. Canadian teachers helped her to totally overcome her previous fear of teachers. Lan found Canadian teachers she met in Canada differed from Chinese teachers she encountered in China in terms of having no “attitude related to the position of teacher.” For example, “teachers and students could be friends after class although teachers could still be strict in class.” “When I was in a bad mood, teachers could be my good listeners.” She gradually improved her self-confidence thanks to her teachers’ “positive feedback, support, and encouragement.” For example, “when he [her biology class teacher] noticed my progress, he appreciated my efforts

and often commented, ‘you improved so fast. Great job.’” Encouraged by her teachers’ positive feedback, Lan “improved more and more, faster and faster,” and “performed even better than the rest of students in the class.” Canadian classmates helped Lan during her initial transition to a different language environment. “At that time, I could not speak English well. When I was describing something, they were listening to me patiently. Sometimes, when I didn’t understand a specific word, they also could explain it to you.” Chinese friends helped Lan on some daily issues, such as showing her around when she first moved to Kingston, walking her home for her safety, checking about her health from time to time, and providing her with some useful suggestions in relation to studying and living. The most important resource for Lan was her parents, especially her mom. “Mom was the person who accompanied me all along” when she was battling with her sickness. Because of her mom, she realized that she needed to cherish life more. She felt that “what I could pay back to them was to be healthy and happy every day.”

Lan’s navigating resources built on “acceptance” and “companionship.” When she found she was accepted by her Canadian teachers, she regained her confidence that had been long lost in the Chinese classroom. When she found that she could be accepted by her Canadian classmates, she appreciated her classmates’ understanding and assistance. She valued her Chinese friends a lot because she was often accompanied by Chinese friends when she was in need. She felt most grateful for her mom’s companionship during her chronic physical illness and recovery.

Lan’s Identity Changes

Lan negotiated two identities in two distinct ways: care-receiver vs. care-giver and traditional (conservative) Chinese vs. Westernized (liberal) Chinese. During the time of staying at home recovering from her illness, Lan had been taken care of by her parents. Her mom’s

unconditional love and support let Lan become more and more aware of the importance of being understood and accompanied by others when a person was in need. After Lan came back to school, she started applying what she had learned from this experience to her life. For example, she changed her role from a mere care-receiver from her friends to a care-giver for her friends. “I may not give some tangible suggestions to people around me. But I can assure them that I will be there for them when they need me.” Although Lan admitted she still remembered the negative experiences in the past, she no longer was traumatized by them. Lan was more willing to consider herself as a role model for others who might be battling with their difficulties.

Conservative and liberal attitudes co-existed in Lan. Being Chinese, Lan felt she was still influenced by some conservative traditional Chinese values. “I was born in China. More or less, I would have some comparatively traditional ways of behaving and acting.” However, being a person who longed for changes in her life, she perceived herself more Westernized than other Chinese. “In a spiritual perspective, I don’t feel I am one hundred percent Chinese. I am very open to Western ideas.” According to her own description, “my body is conservative but my mind is very liberal.” For example, she was “very conservative about intimate relationships” because she felt that “girls needed to be self-respected and cautious of physical contact,” but she was open to the idea of making friends with members of the opposite sex.

Mei

Mei’s Challenges

Mei’s challenges mainly emerged after she came to Canada, including her facing English barriers, struggling with her personality shortcomings, and experiencing stress when missing the deadline of registration at university. First, Mei struggled with both English listening skills and oral expression. Before she came to Canada, “my English was not good,” she said. In the first

semester at the School of English, she experienced the hardship of not “understanding what teachers taught in the class.” After the class, “I often didn’t fully understand what cashiers talked to me in superstores.” Compared to the insufficient English listening skills, oral expression was even harder for Mei; “I cannot express what I want to say,” she sighed.

Another challenge emphasized by Mei was her introverted personality. She believed the difficulty of expressing herself in English was only partially caused by her limited knowledge of English vocabulary. She indicated it was mostly hindered by her personality. “I am a kind of person who even does not like to talk a lot in Chinese, so it’s even harder for me to talk in English.” She pointed out that she was troubled by building social relationships in Canada due to this personality trait. North American culture “favours the type of people who are outgoing,” so she was often being “misjudged as a person who is cold and hard to get along with” due to her “too introversive” personality. In fact, “I am not and I do not even like my personality as well,” she argued. This personality caused her to lose marks in courses; “you have to talk in the class specially in the tutorial class. If you don’t talk, then you will end up with a low mark.”

In addition, Mei was challenged by some unexpected issues, such as the crisis of her delayed registration in university. After finishing her study at Queen’s School of English, she received the admission letter for university entrance but she didn’t get the package from the registration office. She didn’t realize she was missing something until she passed the registration deadline. If she could not register in courses, she would have wasted one more year. This challenge was clearly recalled because it was the first time she needed to independently negotiate different resources to solve her issue. The whole process of negotiation and coordination took more than four months and brought Mei a lot of pressure, frustration, and anxiety during that time.

Mei's Resources

Mei found a long list of resources helpful when she managed to overcome challenges. These resources included her teachers, classmates, flatmates, home-stay parents, the university environment, Canadian schoolmates, and her parents. She felt grateful for her teachers and classmates at Queen's School of English because they suggested she change her personality a little bit to learn English better. "I really appreciate my teachers and classmates. They told me if I wanted to improve my English, I needed to communicate with others more, and practice more." Then she "really tried to make efforts to talk more" by "bringing up some topics to talk" about with others and letting others feel she was "interested in their talking." To improve her English, she tried to catch every opportunity to chat with her Canadian flatmates in her student residence. To better adapt to Canadian culture, she chose to move out of student residence to live in a home-stay. She was very thankful for her home-stay parents because "they treated me very nicely, and they also helped me to practice what I learned in the class and helped me with my homework."

Within these four years at Queen's, Mei found that she benefited a great deal from university. Her previously repressed broad interests were reactivated with the university's encouragement of students' participation in different extracurricular activities. "Queen's advocates that university is not only a place for study but also a place where students should gain social experiences and develop their all-around competence." Influenced by this advocacy, she joined some clubs and groups on campus. In addition, the university provided different kinds of online information that were helpful for her to get involved in different activities. "There is a lot of information posted on the university website." Through the university website, she found the clubs in which she was interested and the on-campus job she secured later. Furthermore, the jobs

Queen's offered helped her in study and life. For example, working in the university library helped her to know "a lot of techniques about how to navigate resources in the library's online data base," which "probably a lot of students do not know if they do not work in the library." The money she earned from her part-time jobs on campus helped her to "save some money for her family." She found that her Canadian schoolmates were willing to help her build a better understanding of Canadian society and were willing to understand her perspectives. "They [Canadians] want to communicate with you and want to share something they think interesting and might interest you as well. They also want to know the feeling of you as being a foreigner." With the Canadian students' understanding and acceptance, she found it possible to "switch my disadvantages [of being a foreigner] into my advantages." She added, "After they knew I was a foreigner, I found they began talking slowly. If I didn't understand something, they would rephrase their sentences." Finally, Mei commented on the importance of her parents' "support and encouragement." "Every time when I face difficulties, my parents help me to examine what happened and think of solutions. If I feel upset, they encourage me. They say, 'Don't give up so easily.'" Because Mei was in a new socio-cultural environment different from China, "my parents may not give me any tangible suggestion. But with their support, I felt my heart is grounded."

Mei's pattern in navigating resources had changed from passively receiving to actively reaching out. Initially, she received advice from teachers and classmates at school. After that, she began actively reaching out for resources, such as finding chances to chat with her flatmates to improve her English, choosing to live in a home stay to better know Canadian social norms and culture, and searching for extracurricular activities and working opportunities with which to get involved.

Mei's Identity Changes

Mei negotiated two sets of identities: a mono-cultural view vs. a multicultural view and Confucianism vs. Individualism. Mei started negotiating the first set of identities at Queen's School of English, which played a primary role in shaping her world view from a mono-cultural approach to a multicultural approach. "Before I came to Canada, I was a simple kid without many thoughts about the world." "Since I came to Canada, I have met people from different parts of world, from Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North and South America." Being exposed to the multicultural context, and communicating with her schoolmates in the School of English of different nationalities, Mei "found out there are some clashes in terms of culture and ideology." She was then motivated to learn "more and more about what culture of that country is and what kinds of opinions the people of that country normally hold." Through learning about different cultures, Mei recognized the legitimacy of cultural differences: "A culture has existed for thousands of years. There must be reasons for the existence and development of a certain culture or a certain type of ideology or phenomenon. It must have its own strengths." Mei embraced this difference. "We cannot simply say that it is not good as compared to ours."

Compared to the first set of identities, the second set of identities, Confucianism vs. Individualism, was not an either-or relationship. Mei selected the doctrines of Confucianism and Individualism to apply separately to different perspectives of her life. In terms of behaviours, Mei was inclined to adopt the Confucian manner. "The core of Confucianism is mean. Mean can be the working principle of many Chinese people. For most people, it is a safe strategy." *Mean*, according to her understanding, was to behave in a "gentle, polite, and elegant" way. For example, when dealing with the issue of her delayed registration, Mei sent "many emails to the university to argue for assistance," but she would never use intense or drastic ways of forcing

others to help her, such as the use of “harsh words” or “quarrelling with the staff at the university.” She just repeated “please help me as much as you can.” Compared to her pro-Confucianism behaviour, Mei’s mind was more Individualistic-oriented: “Although I like Chinese traditional cultural belief, I feel there is something in my heart longing for some unique opinions different from the public one.” To maintain her own individual uniqueness, Mei didn’t care about social comparisons. “I am not jealous of other people’s happiness and their ways of living.”

Julia

Julia’s Challenges

English had been the major challenge for Julia since moving to Canada, but it had manifested itself in different ways across her school years. In the beginning, English was challenging because of oral part interaction. She felt that English she learned in China was not too helpful for her oral communication because “it [English education in China] simply focuses on grammar and vocabulary.” However, “when you are speaking with other people, it is different. You cannot use those kinds of sophisticated word and you have to be simple.” The difficulty of oral communication was also related to the different accents of English students in her high school, “which was really multicultural, everyone speaks English in their own ways ... that’s particular tough for the people come from a country which does not speak English.” In Julia’s later years in high school, English became a challenge because it impaired her original future goal. During Grade 12, she noticed her English not progressing any more. She self-examined why this thing could happen. Finally, she found this phenomenon called “plateau effect,” which means, “until your level got a certain point, you stop developing [language skills].” The discovery of this disadvantage made her reshape her future goal. She had always

been obsessed with the idea of being a lawyer in the future, but “I learned that to be a lawyer, you have to learn so many professional words. If you cannot no longer continue your language or speaking skills, you cannot get there.” Therefore, she had to give up her dream.

Besides English, another challenge for Julia was the difficulty of making friends with other students from other cultures because of closely bounded ethnic circles in her high school; “students with same ethnicity always group together, Chinese with Chinese, Indians with Indians, Arabic with Arabic. Each of them was not open to students with other ethnicity. ”

Julia’s Resources

Julia found that teachers, the library, online resources, extracurricular activities, and her religious beliefs were helpful resources for her to overcome challenges. Teachers were helpful during her early transition to the local classroom. “If you have troubles of adapting yourself to the class, go find your teachers and they are gonna explain something to you.” In particular, “for Chinese students, they are really shy and don’t want to open their mouths to speak out. Teachers will help.” Julia discovered the library was a helpful place for her to “enrich knowledge” since the “library does have a lot of resources and you can really look through and get a lot of resources.” Julia benefited from online resources when doing her research. “The online resources do guide your way to your research.” Julia got involved in extracurricular activities, such as “Translation Club” and “High School Responding,” to expand her social network and to “get to know new friends” outside the group of her own ethnicity. Through making friends with different people, Julia found her English improved as well. The most important and helpful resource for Julia was her religious belief in Christianity. Julia strongly believed that “God saves and will guide you to a better future.” Instead of relying on God doing everything for her, she

regarded God as someone who “works with me” while, at the same time, she didn’t “rest [her own] steps” either.

Julia’s way of navigating resources was to reconcile her actively searching for external resources with her strong belief in God. For her, teachers, the library, online resources, and extracurricular activities were something external to be approached or discovered. The way to use these resources was largely decided by God. She believed “He [God] is not dragging me around” when she was using these resources. Furthermore, the ultimate purpose of utilizing these resources was not “for my own purpose or others” but for God because “what I am doing is glorifying God.”

Julia’s Identity Changes

Julia negotiated two sets of identities. One was being ethnically bounded vs. being open to diversity. Another set was being a Chinese daughter vs. being a child of God. The first set had been negotiated starting at middle school and ending during the first year at university. Because students at her middle school were mainly immigrant students, and they were often grouped separately by their own ethnicity, Julia had to stay with the Chinese group in her school and her friends in school were all Chinese. After she started doing extracurricular activities, Julia came to know people of other ethnicities and have friends other than Chinese. After Julia entered the university, she found the Queen’s student population was highly ethnically diverse. She became more and more aware that it was imperative for her to change her previous ethnic-attached mentality to a diversity-accepting one: “If you only want to get into your Chinese group, you won’t be able to study because the campus is of all sorts of people” and “if you only want to get into a little group, there are thousands of people right there, you will only end up with two or few friends.”

In addition, Julia had to negotiate a second conflicting identity: being a Chinese daughter vs. being a child of God. Being a Chinese daughter, Julia felt obligated to making her parents feel proud of her, whereas being a child of God, she had to glorify God. It was difficult for her to satisfy both sides at the same time. For example, her parents would be happy and proud if she could be rich and have a good job in the future; however, in God's eyes, "you may find that you wasted all the life." Although she knew that her parents' expectations of her fitted in "the big social trend," Julia chose to believe that "my future is not in their [my parents'] hands but in God's hands." Julia cared less about her parents' expectations because "Jesus, the son of God, is kind of person who just follows God's words." To be more like Jesus, Julia was determined to "just follow wherever God leads me."

Commonalities across Undergraduate Female Participants

Common Challenges

Across these four participants, a common challenge was the difficulty of making friends with students other than Chinese. However, they understood this difficulty as caused by different reasons. Mei attributed it to her introverted personality; Lan saw it as one side effect of language differences; Claire thought it was caused by her holding interests and hobbies different from Canadians; Julia blamed it on the environment of her high school.

Three participants, Lan, Mei, and Julia, found English to be a challenge especially when they first came to Canada. Lan struggled with her English foundations after a two-year medical leave from her previous education. Mei was troubled by her English listening and speaking skills, while Julia was unhappy with her oral communication and later suffered from the fact of her English stopping developing and her not being able to follow her dream of being a lawyer.

Mei, Lan, and Claire came abroad as international students by themselves. Dealing with issues related to study and life independently challenged these three participants. These issues could be an unexpected incident, such as Mei's delayed registration due to a lost registration package. They could be trauma, such as the murder case that happened in Claire's neighbourhood. They could also be minor issues on a daily basis, such as Lan's negotiations with landlords.

Mei, Claire, and Lan shared a strong need to make a change. Mei wanted to change her personality from "too introversive" to "outgoing"; Claire wanted to change her "self-centered" image to the person with global awareness on environmental issues; Lan wanted to change others' impressions of herself as being weak and fragile and also wanted to be more mature and calmer when handling crises in the future.

The challenges the participants faced included tangible and external pressures such as making friends with students other than Chinese, English barriers, and dealing with unexpected or daily issues alone. However, there were also intangible and internal challenges they wanted to overcome during their adaptation, such as change a personality from introverted to out-going, transforming an old image of being 'self-centered' to a new one with global awareness, and converting an impression of weakness to one of independence.

Common Resources

Among the four participants, other people were the most frequently mentioned resource including schoolmates/classmates, friends, teachers, and parents. Schoolmates/classmates were a common resource for Claire, Mei, and Lan. Schoolmates supported Claire emotionally when she was in Australia and helped her to better adapt to the local learning style when she was in Canada. Mei's schoolmates made her start realizing her personality shortcomings and helped her

to improve her English communication skills. With Lan's classmates' help in English, Lan became less stressed when she was talking that language. Claire and Lan viewed friends as one of their resources. Claire's friends helped her to change from a negative and pessimistic person to a positive and optimistic person. Also, her friends offered her tangible help in moving and settling. Lan's friends provided Lan with care and a sense of security after she came to Canada. Teachers were regarded as an influential resource by Julia and Lan. Julia's teachers helped her to better adapt to class when she had just arrived in Canada. Lan's Canadian teachers made Lan completely overcome her previous fears about teachers. They also helped Lan to regain her confidence and re-like school. Parents were significant for Mei and Lan. Mei's parents provided her with encouragement and emotional support during her dealing with some specific problems. Lan's parents had been care-givers for her in her illness. From her parents, Lan learned to become a person who was willing to provide care to her friends in need.

The resources these four participants listed were multidimensional including both external resources (such as friends, schoolmates, teachers, parents), internal ones (oneself), and global ones (e.g., University ideology and culture). These resources were mostly intertwined and related with each other.

Common Identity Changes

For each participant of this group, two strands of identities were entangled. Claire learned to change from being dependent to being independent, and from being self-centered to being aware globally. Julia went from being ethnically bounded to being open to ethnic diversity, from being a Chinese daughter to being a child of God. Lan switched her role of being a care-receiver to being a care-giver, and kept two conflicted identities—being conservative and being liberal—co-existing peacefully. Mei changed from a mono-cultural world view to a multicultural lens, and

selected doctrines of Confucianism and Individualism in the ways of her behaving and thinking respectively. For Claire and Julia, they aimed to replace their former identities with the latter ones. For Mei and Lan, some of their previous identities continued with the latter ones.

For the four participants, at least one of the common identities they negotiated was related to Chinese culture and values. For Claire, her former identity was her previous Chinese identity, which was being self-centered. For Julia, her former Chinese identity was being a Chinese daughter who should be obligated to family honour, For Mei, one of her ongoing identities was congruent with Confucianism. For Lan, she still thought of herself as partially Chinese because she valued the conservative part of Chinese culture.

For Claire and Lan, another identity they changed was from overly relying on their parents to relying less on their parents. Claire became more independent through expanding her social activities. Lan became aware of providing others with support and care instead of simply receiving support and care from her parents. However, for Mei and Julia, one identity change resulted in becoming open to diverse cultures and people with different ethnic backgrounds.

Success

Claire said, in elementary school, most Chinese students were told what success should be. Success in Chinese society was manifested as: “get into a good high school, then get into a good university, then get a good job.” Claire personally thought that to be a successful person, it was “not necessary to be a person who has a lot of knowledge, or accomplishments, with prestigious job, or a good education.” According to Claire’s criteria, a successful person should be “a type of people who quietly contributed to society and others without asking for rewards” and “made a difference to society,” “regardless you are rich or poor; educated or uneducated.” For Claire, there was no specific role model of success. She treated “everyone like a book which

has good and bad aspects.” The good aspects could serve as an example for Claire to learn from and bad aspects could be used as a “mirror” for her to reflect upon herself if she had similar errors.

For Lan, success in Chinese culture meant “you earn a lot of money, have a high social status and make your name well-known.” Still Lan’s own success was different from the Chinese cultural view of success. She viewed her success was to “have a happy family and satisfactory life” and “pursue something [to] satisfy” her inner needs. Her role model of success was her mom who had a successful career and a happy family.

Mei perceived success in Chinese culture was symbolized by fame and money. However, Mei viewed the goal of success was to satisfy her inner happiness, which, at her current life stage, was to explore the world and something new. Her role models included two persons: one, a famous Chinese TV female host; another, her mom. The TV female host’s decision to bravely quit her job to pursue her own dreams during the height of her career inspired Mei. Another significant influence in shaping Mei’s views on success was her mom. Her mom’s “persistence” in insisting on her own life choices in spite of pressures and setbacks, such as, getting married late, going back to school after getting married, and restarting a business after bankruptcy, set an example for Mei to discover her life goals.

Similar to other participants’ understanding of success in the Chinese culture, for Julia, success in Chinese culture was normally considered to “have a lot of knowledge,” “be top in the society,” “get respects,” and “have money.” However, this success was not success in Julia’s eyes. For Julia, “those kind of stuff [knowledge, social ranking, respects, money] are necessary but not symbolize you are successful.” She believed that “to be the most successful, you are following God” and need to “devote to God” and “be more like Jesus.” For Julia, Jesus was her

role model of success, because Jesus stayed with the truth that God told Him and didn't compromise Himself to "the big trend."

These four participants understood the meaning of success in Chinese culture in the same way: money, fame, and power. Their own individual definitions of success were different from each other's: Claire's success was to make a contribution and difference to society; Lan's success was to have a happy family and a spiritually satisfactory life; Mei's success was to find her inner happiness and explore the world; Julia's success was to follow God. Thus each was constructing her own individualized version of success.

CHAPTER 5: FEMALE GRADUATE STUDENTS (GROUP B)

Group B included four female graduate students: Yan, Lin, Mary, and Ting. Yan was a third-year Ph.D student in Chemical Engineering. She transferred from the Master's to the Ph.D program after one year of studying with the same supervisor. Lin was a fourth-year Ph.D student in Business. She spent one year in the United States for an exchange program during her undergraduate studies before she came to Canada. Mary was a third-year student in Education. She has been in Canada for almost 10 years. Ting was a fifth-year Ph.D. student in Economics. She was married with a child.

Yan

Yan's Challenges

“Proving myself” was a frequent reiteration when Yan was talking about her challenges. In high school, Yan was challenged by proving herself right about the decision to switch a class. She used to be a top student in high school in China. After she had a conflict with the head teacher on the teaching methodology applied in the class during her senior year, she had to switch classes. Switching classes didn't win sympathy or understanding from Yan's new teachers. Rather, she started being elbowed out in her new class; “they [new teachers] talked down to me.” Standing up for herself alone in school, Yan was “confused” and “scared.” The invisible marginalization and stifling pressure led her academic performance to continuously slip during the last year of her high school. Finally, in the National College Entrance Exam, she “failed” to enter an “A-level” university in China.

In the following four years in an “unknown university,” Yan placed a premium on questioning herself: “why I didn't get into better universities I want and what I should do in the rest of my life; what I should do to change my life pattern and what I should do if I should

change my fate?" Therefore, the challenge in the university in China was her struggling with questions on how to prove herself through changing her fate.

With a hope of changing her fate, Yan came to Canada for her graduate studies after university. As soon as she arrived at Queen's, the pressure of "proving myself" became more intense. Coming from an "unknown university" in China, surrounded by "so many top Chinese students from all over different places in China" and "so many top international and Canadian students," Yan lacked self-confidence; "where am I and how can I rank myself among them?" The most fearful thing was to attend Chinese students' events. When being asked "where you are from and which university you graduated," she felt so embarrassed since she was "from a school with the name nobody knows." She was troubled "by thinking of knowing I was not good enough to compare with other Chinese students." So she kept urging herself "to work hard to prove that I can do things and I am equally good as other people here." In addition, Yan was threatened by the perfect image of a senior fellow student of her supervisor: "He was so good and good at everything"; "He knew everything"; "His English is perfect and his was the best TA in my department"; "Compared to him, I knew nothing." Concerned with being looked down upon by other Chinese students due to her undergraduate background and afraid of being compared to another Chinese student of her supervisor, Yan was constantly worried about being able to prove herself.

In the course of proving herself at Queen's, Yan experienced other challenges. One was loneliness. Because of feeling her undergraduate background was biased against by other Chinese students, she started distancing herself distant from the Chinese community at Queen's. Another challenge was anxiety, not so easily relieved; "I was so nervous for doing my first mid-term. My mid-term was ok. I got all As in my courses. But I was so scared and I felt lonely."

Compared to loneliness and anxiety, English was the biggest and longest challenge in the course of Yan proving herself. English first manifested itself as a challenge in listening and reading. In the classroom, Yan had a hard time “understanding all those lectures,” so “every time I went to classes, I would fall into sleep even though I tried hard to follow the professors.” After class, she endured the added difficulty of understanding the textbooks and reading materials; “I had so many English textbooks and papers. Those are difficult. I never read pure English textbook before.” English was also challenging in relation to her communication needs with others. In her research, when communicating with her supervisor, Yan found it challenging to elaborate her research ideas in English explicitly to prove to her supervisor that “I am fully capable of doing what I am doing now.” In her daily life, when communicating with her native-speaker housemates, Yan was concerned that her insufficient English communication skills would not help her to show “the personality I have” and “let them like me.” When her housemates were “talking about the little things you don’t know, the culture, food, music, movie, movie director,” because “everything is new to me,” it was difficult for her to prove she was equally as smart as her housemates. “It took me so much time to remember that word and I felt stupid.”

Yan’s Resources

For Yan, schoolmates, boyfriend, mom, friends, roommates, and herself were helpful resources. Yan’s schoolmates encompassed her senior Chinese fellow office mate and her Canadian schoolmates. Her senior fellow office mate, a Ph.D. student of her supervisor, helped her with her research and study. Because “he knew all the things I was learning because he learned before,” he “helped a lot.” Yan’s Canadian schoolmates helped her to face her weaknesses bravely by offering positive feedback. “People here are confident and positive.”

“They always encourage people by saying, ‘I think you are good and you are beautiful. You are definitely capable of doing this and you should believe in yourself’” Yan’s boyfriend was another helpful resource for her because they shared many experiences in common: “We knew each other since we were 12.” “He also graduated from a B-level university in China as I did. He has overseas experiences as well and knows a lot of things usually top students do not know. He encourages me a lot.” Yan’s mom was her role model for overcoming challenges. Her mom entered university after more than two decades of missing school education due to the Chinese Cultural Revolution. “She [my mom] redid her education when she was 38. She was the oldest in her program” and “she never took any classes after Grade 3 and never learned English, math and statistics,” but “she always got the top marks in her class and got the scholarship.” Yan attributed her mom’s success to the spirit of “working very hard, never giving up and being positive.” Yan felt that she inherited “this spirit from mom,” especially when she was facing difficulties in Canada.

The most appreciated resource she encountered were her Canadian friends. First, they helped her to “regain my confidence” by re-examining her past experience. As she noted, “I failed in Chinese college entrance exam. But when I was talking with my friends here, they say ‘you cannot say that you failed. You can say you didn’t get in. But not saying you failed because you are.’” Moreover, friends helped Yan to improve her English. “Susan and other friends are very helpful. Also, Wendy from English conversation class. ... She started with having friendship with me and helping me with my poor and miserable English.” “Nancy is my mentor here. She corrects everything I say.” “She [Nancy] always says, ‘you are doing amazing job. You are different. If you keep doing what you are doing, one day your English will be good as native speakers.’” The fourth resource for Yan was her previous roommate and current housemates.

The previous roommate was one of the few Chinese to whom she felt close. Yan appreciated her previous roommate's help with her housework. "She is very kind and nice and taught me how to cook and how to cut the vegetables and how to do pork ribs and how much water I should put into rice cooker." Also, she felt grateful for her previous roommate's help with her schoolwork. Because "she is a visiting professor from Math department," "my research is about mathematical modeling, which needs a lot of math, sometimes I cannot solve the problem and talked with her." Yan's current housemates often provided her with some insightful advice. As Yan remarked, "my housemates, they are very special, very kind, very nice, and very intelligent women. Sometimes, when I got confused and talked with them, they gave me very positive suggestions." With her housemates' companionship, Yan also didn't feel lonely anymore: "we watch TV together, we drink outside, we feed each other, we cry together." For Yan, one special resource for her was herself. She considered her analytical ability was an asset for her to overcome challenges. As she said, "I like to analyze things a lot. I think a lot. ... I actually like to entertain myself by thinking and analyzing. When I am free, I always like to think about things and try to analyze what is going on and why and how."

Yan's Identity Changes

Yan negotiated her identities in such a way that the old Chinese identities were largely replaced by the new Canadian ones: (1) being critical vs. being encouraging; (2) living up to others' comments vs. staying true to oneself; (3) being indirect vs. being direct; (4) being negative vs. being positive; (5) being judgmental vs. being non-judgmental; and (6) being dependent vs. being independent.

First, Yan replaced being critical by being encouraging. For Yan, there was quite a difference between Canadians and Chinese in the way of providing comments. "They

[Canadians] always encourage people by saying ‘I think you are good and you are beautiful, you are definitely capable of doing this and you should believe in yourself.’” However, encouraging other people was “something we don’t have in our country [China] and in our [Chinese] culture.” For example, Yan found that Chinese were actually more critical than Canadians about accents. “When they [Chinese students] have parties, they will criticize each other, they say, ‘you know you have accent, it’s weird.’” The purpose of criticizing each other was to make a social comparison, as “by criticizing each other, they kind of look up the social status of themselves among people.” Therefore, the critical attitude and consistent social comparison formed a sharp contrast with the Canadian people’s encouraging manner and upholding social freedom. As time passed, Yan became more and more discontented with the Chinese way: “Chinese people are not supposed to do these and saying something bad about other people by letting other people know they are better than others. It’s terrible, it is terrible.” From her positive experience of being encouraged by her Canadian schoolmates, friends, and housemates, Yan concluded the better way of treating others should be the Canadian way instead of the Chinese way because encouragement could be a good motivation for people to accomplish more: “People should stand with each other better and do not criticize their flaws. If you encourage people more, they will do things better.”

Furthermore, Yan was prone to the Canadians’ life because of staying true to herself instead of living up to other people’s comments like most Chinese. “One thing I don’t like about Chinese culture is that I feel that people live based on others’ comments. They will think too much about how other people feel rather than what they really feel inside their heart.” For example, what Yan really felt inside her heart was to improve her English, so she chose to stay

with Canadian people as much time as she could in spite of taking the risk of being marginalized by other Chinese students.

In addition, after Yan came to Canada, she discovered that Canadian culture was more direct at expressing their needs: “People here if they want something for themselves, they would say ‘yes, I want this if you don’t need it, I will take it.’ So it’s very direct.” Nevertheless, Chinese culture was “more indirect and requires others to be mind-readers.” The longer Yan stayed in Canada, the more difficult it was for her to go back to Chinese indirectness: “They [Chinese] are very indirect. They say the half of sentences and you forget what they really mean.” The more Yan got used to Canadian directness, the more difficult was it for her to get accustomed to her boyfriend’s indirectness. “I only notice this or start noticing this deeply when I am talking with my boyfriend recently. I often say to him ‘what do you mean unless you tell me what exactly you mean?’” However, her boyfriend thought she already knew what he wanted to say and didn’t understand why she still needed to get a specific answer from him. Yan often responded in this way: “Sorry, this is how I talk with people. Your talking is too confusing. You have to tell me what you mean.” However, when talking about caring about each others’ feelings, Yan found it was just the opposite: “they [Canadians] are so worried of hurting each others’ feelings” by providing direct opinions; on the contrary, Chinese people were “so direct at hurting other’s feelings by saying ‘you are not right and you are wrong,’ ‘What you did is very wrong today,’ ‘You are not smart,’ ‘Look at what you wear today. It’s a wrong colour.’” Yan found that “the more I interact with the culture here, the more I feel that I am away from our own culture.” Sometimes, Yan could even “overreact to what Chinese say to others” because she realized that “they [Chinese] are not supposed to hurt other people.” For example, Yan became picky about the way that her mom talked: “Sometimes when I talk with mom, I say, ‘Mom, this

is not how people are talking in this country, you would say this this this.” Although her mom accepted Yan’s change, her mom still felt unadjusted to the fact of being corrected by her own daughter: “My daughter, I have been talking like this within past 20 years, I cannot change. But you change, you talk in the way you want.”

From being negative to being positive was another transition of Yan’s identities. Compared to Canadian people’s positivity, Yan found Chinese people were generally negative, in that “Chinese people want to create a bubble for themselves, within this bubble, thinking how miserable they are and how unfortunate their lives are.” Instead of being like most Chinese who “just sit there and think how miserable their life is,” Yan enjoyed her life here by actively expanding social circles: “Outside the bubble, life is so beautiful and there are so many things I can do.”

Moreover, Yan expressed disapproval of Chinese people’s habit of easily judging others. Moving out of the Chinese community, staying away from Chinese students, and talking with Chinese only in English, Yan’s behaviours were viewed as alien in the eyes of other Chinese students. In the beginning, Yan felt bad about being judged by other Chinese. However, the more Yan got to know Canadian culture, the less she was afraid of being judged. “This is a country that people won’t judge you. So I am not afraid of what I want to do. Not afraid of hearing the comments on me.”

Being independent was Yan’s sixth new identity. Before Yan came to Canada, she viewed herself only as “a traditional Chinese daughter and maybe a traditional wife in the future as well.” Her life would be largely determined by what kind of husband she would marry in the future. “I thought I cannot do a lot of things and cannot be good as men. So I was seeking for a husband who can do things for me.” Later, Yan became more and more “brave.” She realized

that she didn't need to depend on others in her life. "Since I came to Canada, for the things I want, I can get things by myself through working. If I need something, I don't need to rely on someone else. I can get it by myself." This transition was credited to the result of her overcoming challenges: "That is the power you gained from overcoming your challenges."

Overall, Yan wanted a complete transformation of her identity from Chinese to Canadian. This goal served as the greatest motivation for Yan to adapt herself to the local culture and to get to know more people and to fit herself in this culture. As she said, "At same time, I feel that I shut down my Chinese channel" and "I don't hang out with Chinese people." Except for talking on the phone in Chinese with her parents and friends back in China, Yan chose not to "speak any Mandarin at all in this country" even with her Chinese office mates. "I talked with my office mate in English. The first day he came, I said 'no, there is no Mandarin in this office. Anything you want to ask, or anything you want to talk about has to be English.'" Although her office mate "felt it was very weird for two Chinese people talking in English with each other," Yan insisted on it and made her office mate "get used to it."

Lin

Lin's Challenges

"Approval or attention addiction" as Lin called it, was a dominant challenge in her life. Lin has fought her "addiction" for years until now. At different stages of Lin's life, this "addiction" displayed itself in different forms. Back at university in China, lack of attention in school caused her homesickness first and yearning for attention later, which led her to being attacked personally by other students. Since her university was only a three-hour drive from her home, she went back home almost every week in the first year. Lin was still missing home a great deal because the solo attention she received from her parents was not available from other

students in school; “every time when I went back home, I felt so loved. I was the center of the family but while at school, everyone is their own center.” To win attention from other students, Lin became involved in student government. “I wanted having a role in there [student government], I wanted getting people’s attention and I wanted people to like me.” Later, this “addiction” continued to drive her to run in the Presidential election for student government because she wanted to be the most “popular girl” who was on “the favourite list” of everyone on campus. Finally, this “addiction” jeopardized her peaceful life to be a target of being insulted, gossiped about, and made the subject of innuendoes; “I became the target of many people,” and “people began talking bad things about me on the internet.” It was the darkest moment of Lin’s university life. “It was very sad. I don’t hate them. I just wanted them to like me. So I felt so bad they don’t like me.”

After Lin came to Canada, this approval addiction still remained influential in different areas of her life: her relationships with people in her social life, her relationship with her supervisor, her time management on her study, and her service in church. At the beginning, her motivation for attending church events and being highly involved in “doing a lot of things” was still to get people’s attention; “at the beginning, I didn’t have a pure heart,” and “I was thinking, if I am doing things, people would think I am good and they would start to like me.” Although later becoming more and more devoted to Christianity, Lin was still struggling with her balance between getting approval from people and being favoured by God. “I want to be good in God’s eyes, and I also want to be good in people’s eyes.” These people especially were the people in Lin’s church and her supervisor; “I started caring less about me. I don’t care how strangers care about me now. But I still do care how the people in the church look at me.” “Especially how my supervisor looking at me is quite challenging.” Now, in her senior year of doing her Ph.D., Lin

was more bothered by her concern about how her supervisor looked at her because “she [supervisor] is the one who is going to write reference letter for me eventually.” She did not think she had a “healthy relationship” with her supervisor “because I care too much about how she looks at me.” To try to maintain a good impression with her supervisor, Lin worked extra hard on her research compared to other students on her research; “every time when I had problem, I would not go to her. I solved all the problems by myself. At the end, I just present a beautiful paper to her.”

Besides her relationships with people in church and her supervisor, Lin had to struggle with the issue of time management caused by her need of getting favoured or recognized by others. Although she was already overwhelmed with her independent way of doing research, she still allocated a lot of time to contribute to others who needed help. Her kindness was not only rooted in her Christian beliefs, but more about her need to earn others’ positive feedback. “My challenge in time management is I care too much about how others look at me. If people ask me to do something, I would do it for them.” Therefore, the tension between the concern about humans’ comments and her faith in God’s opinion was fundamental for Lin the last couple of years. She felt she was positioned under the pressure of meeting the “high expectation” of meeting the standard of pleasing God and appealing to human beings. “I know I only need to look at how God look at me. But still there is a part of me wants favour from people.”

Lin’s Resources

The helpful resources for Lin included friends, parents, people in church, and God. Before Lin went to church, her friends and her parents were her major resources. Friends mainly played the role of companions in Lin’s previous life. “Friends may not give you solutions, but just talking to them, you will feel good.” When she needed a specific suggestion, she turned to

her parents for advice because her parents had rich life experiences and set an example for her: “I know my parents went through a lot of things”; “I think they are very experienced in this society”; “Sometimes, they gave me suggestions”; “Sometimes, only thinking of the difficulties they went through will encourage me.”

After Lin devoted herself to Christianity, her friends outside church and her parents were less helpful for her, whereas the people in church and God became significant in her life. She consulted people in church on life issues more than her friends outside church. “I talked about my problems with people in church”; “I still talk to my friends but I start talking less to my friends outside church.” However, compared to God, people in church were less influential. “I start to talk less to these people [the people in church] as well.” “My bounce-back [power] is just relying on God. Talking to brothers and sisters in church is only when you need to, but don’t use it as final backup. Your final backup is always God.” Therefore, the spiritual power she perceived from God was the most important resource for her current life. “The thinking of God loving me for who I am is very very encouraging.”

Lin’s pattern of navigating resources changed from the outward to the inward. The line between the outward and the inward was Christianity. Friends and parents were seen as outward resources, while the people in church and God were viewed as inward resources. The more Lin focused on her Christian faith, the more important God became and the less important people became, even those inside the church.

Lin’s Identity Changes

The identities Lin negotiated were all centered around “me” vs. God: (1) attention from others vs. attention from God; (2) believe in “me” vs. believe in God; (3) what “I” want vs. what God wants; and (4) being a Chinese daughter vs. being a child of God.

Seeking attention from others used to be important in Lin's life. Driven by it, Lin had been "very ambitious" in every aspect of her life: In study, she worked very hard to "get the first place." In life, she was active in different social settings to win people's attention. After Lin went to church, she realized more and more that it was essential to obtain God's attention and approval instead of people's.

Instilled with the belief in oneself by her parents, Lin used to be a self-admirer. "I grew up in the family, which taught me believing in myself. I completely believed in myself." "If there was an idol, that would be me, just myself." After her grandma got injured and a guy friend on whom she had a crush came out as gay, Lin found there were many things out of people's hands. After she became a devout Christian, Lin totally dumped the idea of believing in herself and turned herself to God. As she summarized, "In the beginning, there were a lot of things I believe in myself but since as time goes on, I find a lot of things out of my control. Without God, I can't do anything." "So the believing in myself has gone."

For Lin, the third transition was not as easy to complete. Lin was often positioned between "what I want" and what God wants. What Lin wanted were basically secular goals for her life. "A lot of people work hard to make themselves look good, I want that, I definitely want that." However, Lin also knew what God wanted from her was not necessarily the same as what she wanted for herself. She used an example to explain the discrepancy between these two. For example, if she wanted to get a job but didn't get it, she would be "unhappy." "Although, theoretically, I should know that God has the best plan for me but I still feel unhappy." "Sometimes, I think, God, I love you so much but you didn't give me the best thing. But I know that my best thing is different from God's best thing." Because these two identities "don't work

well together and sometimes are contradictory to each other,” Lin realized that, in the long run, the only way to solve this conflict was to “change my way to satisfy God’s way.”

Compared to the above-mentioned conflicting identities, being a Chinese daughter and being a child of God were highly reconciled with each other. Lin selected the suggestions that her parents provided to listen to in accordance with the doctrine of Christianity. In addition, she found that the Chinese way of being a good daughter highly resembled what a Christian was expected to do. “Something, like respect your parents, honour your parents, and be humble, I think those are good because these are similar to what God teaches us.” The identities Lin negotiated were thus divided into three ways: “either-or” in the first two groups; “co-existed” in the third group; and “reconciled” in the last one.

Mary

Mary’s Challenges

Mary’s biggest challenge was taking responsibility. Her journey of taking responsibility started with college life in China. First, Mary found it was challenging to deal with homesickness responsibly. “First, living away from home, you felt the change ... a lot of things,” such as “living habits,” “school rules,” and “money.” Especially being the youngest child in the family, “I felt that a lot of things have been taken care of and I don’t need to face the reality of living by myself.” Therefore, when having to take care of herself, and learning to get herself accustomed to the change, Mary “started missing your parents, you think they might comfort you but they were not around you.” Although homesickness had been challenging for Mary, what was more challenging was acting responsibly by keeping this feeling to herself rather than telling her parents. “I did not want them to worry, so I have to control myself not to let them know that I was alone and not happy. That struggle was a bit harsh.”

Another challenge for Mary was to be responsible for her and her parents' dignities when facing the fact that her English was not good compared to her schoolmates. During her college years in China, Mary chose her major to be English because "I really like English," but "my foundation was not strong, my foundation was actually very weak when I entered the college." English was perceived to be challenging not only because of her "weak foundation." More importantly, English was considered as a challenge because it was tied to the fear of not being responsible for her and her parents' dignity: "I didn't want to embarrass myself. I didn't want to embarrass my parents."

After Mary finished her first university degree in Canada, she started realizing that it was more challenging to make a responsible choice. When faced with a variety of life choices after finishing this degree, Mary was confused about "whether you should get a job and what kind of job." At the same time, she was wondering "whether it is time to start a family or whether it is time to start a relationship." Seeing "everybody's path is different and everybody's thought is different," "you feel a bit lost about what you want to do and what you should do," she said. After she took the responsibility of making a decision to continue her academic pursuits, another two challenges appeared: loneliness and scholarly growth. According to Mary, the loneliness was academic loneliness; "You are doing your work by yourself. Although you are attending some classes, you are still doing your own research." Becoming a true scholar was a long-term continuous learning process as you "try to find a topic, try to find something to support your topics, to become a true scholar. You have to get yourself to learn a set of skills."

Mary's Resources

Mary's helpful resources included her Chinese classmates in the ESL class, Canadian teachers and staff, her housemate and friends, her parents, and herself. When Mary first arrived

in Canada, her Chinese classmates in the ESL class helped her to get to know more people in school. “They [Chinese classmates] introduced me to other Chinese students.” They also helped her to solve some of her needs, such as study materials. “They offered me second-hand books.” Canadian staff working in the school helped Mary to get familiarized with the school setting. “The staffs were very helpful at that time. They helped me getting to know the school structure.” Starting as an ESL student, Mary also received a lot of help from her Canadian teachers. Their caring and paying attention to her made Mary’s initial adaptation “so smoothly.” “They made a special arrangement for me to study ESL while I can study regular classes at the same time. I felt that people look after me, not just treat me as an ordinary international student.” Her teachers continued to influence her attitudes toward study. “Teachers are role models. They work hard but they don’t get a lot of gains.” As a result, Mary knew that “I have to take my study seriously as well.” Mary’s housemate helped her to broaden her vision and removed her fear by bringing her to get involved in different activities. “She took me to see the Parliament Hill in Ottawa. She also took me to seek the opportunity of volunteering in the hospital.” From these experiences, “I knew there were a lot of things I could do. I knew life here was not scary.” Friends helped Mary in dealing with her loneliness by doing some “simple things together,” such as, having “dinner together,” “eating together,” and “touring together in a city.” Thanks to her friends’ companionship, Mary felt less lonely than before. “You have friends around you and you are so adaptive. That loneliness will be gone.” In addition to the tangible assistance Mary received from her friends, teachers, and housemates, Mary was touched by their “faith and love,” as well as “kindness and encouragement.” These emotional supports manifested in a lot of “tiny things” and gave her a lot of strength to bounce back from adversity.

Parents were also an influential resource for Mary. She learned mostly from observing her parents' way of living. "They [my parents] never tell me exactly what I need to do. They just did what they are supposed to do. I saw it." She viewed her parents' way of doing things as "the right thing to follow." For example, she considered self-discipline was essential for study and credited her self-discipline ability to her family education. "I learned self-discipline. Maybe I was born in a military family. I am not bad at it." Mary also considered herself as one of the resources of helping her to overcome challenges. She described herself as a persistent person who "stay on it to the end" because "everything is commitment." "If I committed in one thing, I want to carry it over." Mary viewed herself as a person with optimism, which helped her to see every challenge as an opportunity. "You have to stay optimistic. You have to see good sides of everything. Appreciate what you have and do not look at things you don't have." "Every challenge can be an opportunity as well. Because of those challenges, you become stronger and start to appreciate life."

A major feature in Mary's process of navigating resources was observing and applying. After Mary observed how her Canadian teachers diligently treated their work, she applied the same work attitude when facing her own school work. After Mary observed how her housemate actively participated in social activities, she applied the same strategy to adapt to Canadian society. After Mary observed how her parents were self-disciplined in their behaviours, she applied the same principle in treating herself.

Mary's Identity Changes

Growing from being immature to being responsible was a theme in Mary's negotiating process. Before Mary went to college, as the youngest child in her family, she used to be taken care of by other family members. After Mary went to college, feeling like being "sudden thrown

out” of family, she started learning how to deal with homesickness responsibly. In the beginning, Mary viewed herself as still immature. “When I was in college, I cried a lot to my mom.” “When I look back, I was kid.” Later she realized that her behaviour was irresponsible because “once I cried, I made her [my mom] cry.” Mary learned not to cry on the long-distance calls with her mom any more. Although it was difficult for her to keep the feelings to herself, Mary considered it was “a sign of being mature” and was “a responsibility.” “I cannot be a kid all the time.” “It was also not easy for your parents to let you go and pursue your own dream.”

After Mary came to Canada and graduated from university, facing diverse life choices, she decided to pursue graduate studies because she considered this choice as responsible for herself. Compared to a lot of her friends at her age who “got married, have kids, went back to China, or stayed working,” her choice of staying at school and enduring the loneliness might have been difficult for some people to understand. However, Mary felt happy about her choice because she believed that she had made a responsible decision and stayed true to herself. After entering the graduate program, Mary started staying away from extracurricular activities because she considered that a graduate student should be responsible for study instead of spending time on something else. “I don’t think it [extracurricular activity] should be right thing to do because I don’t know if it is required [by the rules of graduate students’ academic training].”

Therefore, to Mary, being responsible had two aspects: in her decision-making, responsibility meant being true to oneself; in her behaviour, responsibility was demonstrated by doing “something required by your social identity or social responsibility.” Responsibility was already inseparable from Mary’s life. “Responsibility is an enjoyment to me. To enjoy something is to carry some responsibility.”

Ting

Ting's Challenges

Coming to defend her doctoral thesis, Ting said, "I think this [the completion of Ph.D. degree] can be a biggest challenge. It does need a perseverance of overcoming a lot of hardships." These hardships mainly included English barriers, differences between Chinese and Western learning styles, insufficient comprehension and application skills, and the need for detail orientation leading to frustration with facing repeated failures. First, Ting was troubled by English listening, as "you may not understand what teachers taught in the class. You may have to read through books." Another challenge was the Western learning style, which Ting considered to be different from the Chinese learning style. In China, she felt that "teachers have summarized everything what you need to learn." After she came to Canada, Ting found what teachers taught were "are all pieces which need you to pull together." She gave an example to show the difference: "I never saw any teacher here [in Canada] compare different literature to draw a conclusion for you. On the contrary, in China, teachers will do so and do it well." Therefore, after Ting came to Canada, it took her "a long time to sort out what you are learning."

A third challenge for Ting was comprehension and application skills. "Chinese students may have a good math foundation and follow mathematics steps very well." However, if being given a task of explaining "what the context or issue in which the equation can be applied, most Chinese would feel challenging," as did she. The reason could be linked to limited comprehension; "what the teacher told you is simply a statement, you still cannot understand thoroughly." Although "we [Chinese students] can score high in exams, we may not understand thoroughly." Breaking through the learning difference and the ceiling of comprehension and application skills was especially difficult for Ting because "if all were in Chinese, you would

learn [to pull things together] more quickly and more thoroughly,” and “it [limited comprehension] might be related to the language because our language is not English, we may not be able to have Canadian way of thinking.” Therefore, challenges of English, learning differences, and comprehension and application skills were interrelated.

In addition to these three, detail orientation was challenging, Ting said, “For example, we have to do with a lot of serial models in our studies. If the teacher asks you to check a thing, you cannot change a tiny spot.” “If you changed, then you would have to redo another month to get the result.” Sometimes, she was frustrated by facing repeated failures on the same model even if she had “spent two or three months on it, but the result was not what you expected.” Ting had to “start from zero and find out which one might work through continuous testing and after repeated failures.”

Ting’s Resources

The helpful resources for Ting included her husband, government assistance, teachers, parents, and Buddhism. Although Ting gave birth in the second year of her Ph.D. studies, she never considered having a baby while studying as a challenge because Ting had a very supportive husband. “Since we had a baby, he quitted his job and came to Queen’s to study.” By doing so, Ting’s husband could have a flexible time schedule of helping her to take care of the baby. Her husband was not only a good helper for looking after the baby. He was also an asset for Ting to clear clouds and justify thoughts on many issues. “It’s always good to have him around. I feel that I don’t need to deal everything by myself, such as we can have more time of thinking about some issues together and discuss it together.”

Government assistance was another helpful resource for Ting to be a mom while being a full-time student. Ting viewed government services, such as “daycare and subsidies programs,”

as “a great help.” Additionally, she appreciated government policy supporting women’s rights to take maternity leave. “For graduate students, if you have a baby and wanted to take maternity leave, your scholarship won’t be cancelled. It may stop for one year but it will extend to next year.” Ting thought “these policy and services were very humane.”

Ting’s teachers were noteworthy resources for Ting’s completion of her Ph.D. degree. “A good professor can be very helpful [for graduate students]. As for Asians, this was even more important.” Ting felt understood by some of her teachers who had intercultural experiences. “I have two supervisors. One of them had been to Japan. He knows a few about Asian culture. He is very understanding.” In addition, because Ting’s research was largely based on mathematical modelling that required her to pay a lot of attention to details, she felt grateful for her supervisor’s assistance in reviewing her work. “There are many things you may not find it problematic until he checked. His meticulousness helped me a lot to avoid many detours in my research.”

Ting’s parents were essential for Ting’s life. They were perceived to be helpful because they provided the greatest motivation to complete her study in Canada. “I was mainly thinking of my parents when I encountered difficulties in my research.” Because her parents were going to retire soon, Ting felt she could not “leave them alone back in China.” Therefore, although Ting perceived the completion of the Ph.D. as the hardest thing to do in her life, she still finished her degree on time and would “go back to get together with them.”

Buddhism was important for Ting’s completion of Ph.D. studies. Believing in Karma, a law of moral causation central to Buddhism, Ting was very patient in parenting her own child and tolerant within different relationships. In addition, because “Buddhism emphasizes on the emptiness,” that everything lives in a temporary and changeable state, Ting became less

ambitious to pursue external things in her life. For example, she held a peaceful spirit when facing the job market when approaching the completion of the Ph.D. program.

The dominant feature of Ting's pattern of navigating resources was goal-driven. Her goal was to complete her Ph.D. degree as soon as possible and then be reunited with her parents back in China. Her husband, government services, and teachers were all viewed as essential supportive forces for her to accomplish this goal.

Ting's Identity Changes

Ting negotiated four sets of identities: (1) being less enduring vs. being more enduring; (2) being less responsible vs. being fully responsible; (3) being oneself vs. being filial daughter; and (4) other beliefs vs. Buddhism.

One of the important qualities Ting developed from her studies after she came to Canada was endurance. Challenged by English barriers and academic difficulties, Ting viewed endurance as the key to her academic accomplishments. She believed that there was no short cut in study except to endure hardships, such as "spending more time reading and studying"; "If you need to read 10 times then 10 times, until you get it"; "You have to read words by words, line by line, and go through every details."

Being responsible was another identity Ting perceived as important in her studies. Ting saw responsibility as an inseparable factor for her achieving good scores in exams. "I would prepare for it [exam] very very early. I never leave it to the last minutes. I need to keep reviewing the notes and materials until I feel a certain level of confidence." Being responsible was also reflected in Ting's attitudes toward her research. "If my supervisors told me to do something, I feel a strong responsibility of doing it well and cannot take any risk of jeopardizing the task or disappointing them."

Being a filial daughter was the third identity Ting negotiated. Ting used to be the type of person who made major life decisions by herself and was less caring about her parents' thinking and feelings, such as getting married and studying overseas. However, for these years away from her parents, instead of satisfying her own ego, Ting felt that filial piety played a more and more important role in her life. After recognizing the importance of filial piety, Ting started paying more attention to her parents' suggestions and ideas. "Parents experienced a lot in their lives. They can see long-term interests for their children. Children can only see the short-term ones." Ting thought that filial piety was a mirror to reflect if a person was truly genuine and responsible. "Filial piety is a basic to everything. If a person does not listen to his/her parents, then everything about this person must be fake." "Once you have a filial piety for your parents, then you can be responsible for other people and nation."

Having a religious belief was the most important change in Ting's identities. Before she committed to Buddhism, Ting used to be very determined to conquer any difficulty in her way. "If I met a difficulty, I thought to myself that I had to conquer it." After she believed in Buddhism, she started caring less about the result and was more accepting of the fact for what it was. "After I had this religious belief, I would say, it's not that matter whether I overcome it [the difficulty] or not. I don't care a lot about what I can get or what I will lose." In addition, Ting highly integrated Confucianism with Buddhism because, according to her understanding, filial piety, as one of the key messages Confucianism delivered, was also the basic stone of Buddhism. "The basic of both Confucianism and Buddhism is filial piety."

Commonalities across Graduate Female Participants

Common Challenges

Among the four participants, three, Mary, Ting, and Yan, indicated English as one of their challenges. Mary was troubled by her weak English foundations; Ting was challenged by her English listening skills; Yan was challenged by her English listening, reading, and communicating skills. The three participants also revealed that English being perceived as a challenge came from in-depth reasons. Mary considered English as a challenge because she wanted to protect her dignity in front of others, while Ting saw English as a challenge because it hindered her development of the Western learning style and blocked the growth of her comprehension and application skills. Yan was not satisfied with her English because insufficient English skills caused difficulties for her to prove herself to be equally as good as others.

Two participants, Lin and Mary, experienced homesickness when they started university life. Homesickness for Lin was caused by the gap between the full attention she received from her parents at home and the lack of attention when back at school, whereas homesickness was perceived as challenging by Mary not simply because of the difficulty of learning to take care of herself but also her striving to keep this feeling to herself.

Loneliness appeared to be another relatively common challenge for Mary and Yan. Yan's loneliness was based on her social needs, and it existed during the time period between her intentionally detaching from the Chinese community and her finding chances to access Canadian circles. Mary's loneliness was focused on her feelings of being alone and lacking collaboration with other colleagues in her area of study.

The major theme of the challenges Yan identified was her strong needs to prove herself that evolved from proving herself correct about changing classes in high school, to proving herself equally as excellent as students in A-level universities in China, and later to proving herself not inferior to any other graduate student at Queen's. Other challenges, such as English, loneliness, and anxiety, were subordinate to her "proving myself" challenge. Similar to Yan, Lin's theme was her "approval/attention addiction." Almost everything in her life was built upon seeking attention and approval. In the beginning, she was only challenged by seeking approval from human beings. Later, she was troubled by balancing the need of getting approved by God and being favoured by humans. Her other challenges, such as homesickness, being attacked personally, and her "unhealthy" relationship with her supervisor, were all side-effects of this theme. Ting's theme was her completion of her Ph.D. Hardships such as English, comprehension and application skills, detailed orientations and others involved in her pursuit of her Ph.D. degree were considered as sub-challenges. Mary's theme was to take responsibility. She had to be responsible for keeping homesickness to herself rather than letting her parents know; protecting her dignity from being judged on her weak English foundation; making a decision for herself among a variety of life choices; and enduring the loneliness and challenge of becoming a true scholar.

Common Resources

These four participants turned to a number of individuals for support as they navigated graduate education including parents, significant others, friends, schoolmates, and teachers. For example, all the participants saw parents as a resource. Yan viewed her mom as a role model for overcoming challenges. Lin trusted her parents' rich life experiences when she needed suggestions. Mary learned self-discipline by observing her parents' behaviours and manners.

Ting's parents were an important incentive for her to complete the Ph.D. degree. Significant others such as a boyfriend or a husband were important for Yan and Ting. Yan felt the hardships she went through could be understood by her boyfriend who had similar experiences. Ting's husband's support for her being a mom while being a full-student made a great difference to her completion of the Ph.D. program.

Friends were influential for Yan, Lin, and Mary. Yan's friends helped her to regain her self-confidence and improve her English. Lin's friends provided a comfort when she was stressed. Mary's friends accompanied her when she felt lonely. Yan and Mary viewed schoolmates as very helpful when they first adapted to Canadian society. Yan's Canadian schoolmates helped her to re-examine herself from a positive and objective perspective. Mary's Chinese schoolmates helped her to enlarge her social circle by introducing her to more schoolmates.

Teachers had a great impact on Mary's and Ting's lives. Canadian teachers' diligent work attitude influenced Mary to treat her study seriously. Ting's supervisor's intercultural knowledge and meticulous working style lessened the degree of difficulty in her research work. Finally, oneself was imperative for Yan and Mary. Yan often got inspiration from her own habitual thinking and analyzing. Mary's persistence and commitment empowered her to overcome adversities.

Common Identity Changes

No one lens could be used for the identities of these four participants. For Mary and Ting, responsibility was important. Their sense of responsibility was rooted in their caring about their parents. Mary felt responsible for not letting her parents worry about her, so she kept the homesickness to herself without telling her parents. Ting felt responsible for taking care of her

aging parents, so she was driven to finish her Ph.D. degree as soon as possible to go back to China.

For Lin and Ting, a religious belief was central in their lives: Lin believed in Christianity, while Ting believed in Buddhism. However, their social identity of being a Chinese daughter was not in conflict with their religious respective identities. Lin thought loving one's parents was in line with God's expectations. Ting viewed loving parents as the cornerstone for Buddhism. Compared to Lin, the idea of loving parents might be more important for Ting's life because a filial child was not only the basic tenet of Buddhism but also a foremost principle of being a decent citizen.

For Yan and Mary, staying true to oneself was viewed as an important change in their identities after they came to Canada. Yan stayed true to her own self-expectations, such as improving English communication skills by mingling with Canadians instead of following the general pattern like most Chinese students of living together with their country fellows. Mary stayed true to her own choice of continuing to pursue her academic life instead of following the life trajectory of most people at her age, such as getting married or finding a job.

Success

Yan understood that success in Chinese culture was to “get into a good or relatively good university,” “have a strong family background,” and “have money.” Yan's own view of success was similar to the success viewed by Chinese culture. She emphasized that money was an important component of her own success. She said that she “want[ed] money” because she believed money would give her and her family members purchasing more freedom during their purchasing. “When we, our family, need something, we can purchase it without being afraid of being short of money.” However, she also added another four components to her definition of

success: a) “being around people who love me and I love,” b) “being healthy,” c) being open and learning things quickly, and d) “hav[ing] time with family and parents.” Yan did not have a specific role model of success. She learned from “a piece of here and a piece of there” from different people.

According to Lin’s observations, according to Chinese culture, a person would be judged to be successful based on several criteria: “how much you earn, what job you have, whether your kids go to good schools and what kind of car you have and what kind of house you have.” For ordinary people in Chinese society, success meant “what people want.” However, for Lin, success was not what she wanted anymore but “what God wants me to do.” Based on Lin’s understanding of her Christianity, “what God wants” her to do was “to be holy, to be righteous, to love people, to love God, and always have God as priority in front of everything.” Her role model of success was a professor who shared the same religious beliefs with her. Lin highly admired this professor, not because this professor was an accomplished researcher but because of this person’s way of relating to God. Compared to Lin’s sometimes “selfish” wanting for herself, this professor was “very still and peaceful” and always “wait[ed] for God.”

Mary considered success in Chinese culture to be conceptualized as living “a common life but use one’s life to make basic contributions to others and society.” Her role model of success was “teachers” who did not limit their roles to teaching in schools. Mary included parents and “any kind of people providing faith, love, and courage” as her “teachers,” because she felt that these teachers taught her “what life is about” and guided her to “see what is the right way to do things and what a person should do and what a person should not do.”

Ting divided Chinese culture into the “old one” and the “new one.” In current China, Chinese culture evaluated success based on a person’s “social status, salary level, life condition.”

However, according to old Chinese culture, success was not about “one’s individual success” any more but about a person’s contribution to her or his country and people. As for her own success, Ting believed, as long as she had a happy family and raised her child to be a decent person with dreams and contributions to society, she would be successful. She didn’t have a specific role model of success. Nevertheless, she indicated that she would do her best to become a role model for her child.

For Lin and Yan, success in Chinese culture was about money, fame, and social status. For Mary, success in Chinese culture was to make contributions to society. Ting believed the meaning of success in Chinese culture had evolved from the “old” one of making a contribution to society to the “new” one represented by money, fame, and social status.

Lin did not agree with the Chinese definition of success. Her own success was to please God by doing things God wanted her to do. Yan accepted a part of the Chinese definition of success that emphasized money. However, Yan also considered success as living with loved ones, being healthy, and being flexible for learning new things. Mary’s own success was aligned with her understanding of the Chinese definition of success with respect to making contributions to society. Ting agreed with the “old” Chinese definition, which regarded a person who made contributions to society as successful, but not the “new” definition.

CHAPTER 6: MALE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS (GROUP C)

Group C included four male undergraduate students: Qiang, Liang, Peng, and David.

Qiang was a third-year student in Statistics. He came to Canada in Grade 12 before being enrolled into Queen's University. Liang was a second-year student in Electronic Engineering. He had a three-month language class at Queen's University before being officially accepted into the undergraduate program. Peng was also a second-year student in Electronic Engineering. In the last year of high school in China, he transferred to the class with an international curriculum to prepare for his overseas education. David was a fourth-year student in Mathematics. He immigrated to Canada at the age of 17 years old with his parents.

Qiang

Qiang's Challenges

Since coming to Canada, Qiang has encountered academic differences, the perception of a tense relationship with the head teacher, academic failure, and difficulty making friends with local students. First, due to differences in terms of academic expectations, Qiang considered it difficult to get high scores in exams and assignments. "Teachers in China are more flexible on marking your paper. But here, teachers are strict on your performance." A second challenge was Qiang's view that he had caused problems for and thus created a tense relationship with his head teacher in Grade 12. A few days after he arrived in Canada (the night he was picked up from the airport and sent to student residence), Qiang's wallet with a few thousand dollars was stolen. Because his head teacher was responsible for arranging accommodations for international students, she got punished, even though Qiang felt the wallet was stolen because of his carelessness. He was afraid the head teacher blamed him for her punishment. "I was afraid that she would blame me on this thing." In addition, because this teacher looked "very serious" and

seldom smiled, for quite a long time, Qiang found it nerve-racking whenever he saw this teacher. “I tried to avoid seeing her as much as I can.” A third challenge for Qiang was being faced with academic failure. Qiang was one of the top students in his first year at Queen’s University. He was given the privilege of choosing his major during the first round of major selection starting year two. “I picked the most difficult major, bio-chemistry, as my undergraduate degree.” But, when he started doing the major courses, he found they were very difficult for him. Qiang only got 29% in one of the Chemistry courses at the end of the term. “I knew it was difficult but I didn’t know how hard it can be in this way. I thought to myself, ‘That’s it. I am done here.’” This result was unacceptable for Qiang; “I imprisoned myself in my apartment for almost one week, cannot sleep, cannot eat. Don’t want to talk to anyone. Just staring at the blank wall every day.” It was the most stressful moment in his life. In addition to these challenges, Qiang mentioned making friends with local students could be a challenge. He said that it was difficult to make friends with local students because they were not reliable. In his words, “you cannot rely on local ones. Local ones can only be your party friends.” According to Qiang, local students were only warm in response to his invitations to hang out, but whenever he felt a need for help with his academic work, he always got disappointed at local students’ coldness. “If you say you want to borrow some notes of lectures, you would never get any reply.” The most outrageous thing for him was “someone even want to charge you with money if they loan their notes to you.”

Qiang’s Resources

Canadian instructors were the most significant resource for Qiang. There were two Canadian instructors who left a profound impression on Qiang. One was a head teacher at the senior high school in which he enrolled after he came to Canada. Because of the trouble Qiang got the teacher into, he was afraid of being marginalized or discriminated against by the teacher.

However, the teacher's fairness allowed Qiang to realize that his fear was unwarranted. "She was really fair to every student." In addition, the teacher's sincerity and responsibility further warmed Qiang's heart. "More you knew her, more you liked her. She was a type of person who helped others without bluffing. She was also responsible for what she promised you."

Furthermore, the teacher's careful and earnest working attitude helped Qiang to improve his English writing considerably. "The assignments she marked were the most detailed. She corrected every grammar mistake for you. If we wrote a journal, other instructors would simply mark it with a check. She read word by word, line by line." Another teacher whom Qiang saw as important was a department undergraduate coordinator. After Qiang failed the chemistry course, this instructor provided constructive suggestions for him. "He reviewed my record and found that I was strong at math, weak at chemistry, and average at biology. He suggested that I may transfer from chemical-biology to biostatistics for not wasting my previous credits." More importantly, the coordinator offered hands-on assistance with Qiang's major-switching process. "My average point of biology courses was four points below the prerequisite for the biostatistics program. He told me that he would talk with the coordinator of the biology department to negotiate this thing." After two weeks, Qiang successfully switched to the new program. He felt deeply grateful for the help of the coordinator. "He did EVERYTHING for me. Compared to other students [who] did everything by themselves, I didn't do anything." Qiang found that Canadian instructors were more caring in general as compared to Chinese teachers. "In China, teachers won't talk with every student in class. But here, teachers often spent time with individual students talking with them and listening to them." Qiang really enjoyed the casual talk with his instructors because he felt he was cared for and felt "warm inside."

Since Qiang came from an international school in China, nearly all of his schoolmates were now in Canada as well. Because of these old friends, Qiang never felt alone or lonely when he began school here. “During holidays and weekends, we can see each other.” Sometimes, just thinking of his friends had been enough comfort for him. “Just thinking of them can make me happy.” His old friends broadened his mind to solve the crisis of failing the chemistry course by suggesting he change his major. More importantly, his old friends were the overarching reason for Qiang to choose to stay in Canada to face the crisis instead of going back to China to escape the adversity. “As long as I am still in Canada, we still can find time to get together from time to time. But if I went back to China, I would be alone and never find anyone to have fun together.”

Qiang viewed people who were older than him as valuable resources for his life. Qiang perceived his senior schoolmates as helpful because of their rich experiences and insightful suggestions when he needed direction. “For example, they may tell you how to apply for a study-work permit when you had no clue about what it was. Even if they don’t know exactly, they may direct you to the right person who may help you.” Qiang found out that he could be inspired from seniors’ rich experiences through interacting with them. “They have gone through substantial things during their lives. They have plenty of wisdom. Even by chit-chatting with them, I can learn a lot from them.” “When I am with friends at my age, I feel happy; when I am with seniors, I learn a lot and avoid making mistakes in my life.”

Qiang’s pattern of navigating resources was mostly driven by his need for insightful suggestions and guidance. He normally sought advice from his teachers and those who were older than he.

Qiang's Identity Changes

Qiang negotiated three sets of identities: being less traditional vs. being more traditional; being stubborn about one's ideas vs. being open to others' suggestions; escaping from problems vs. facing problems.

Qiang considered himself to be more traditional than he had been previously. Being more traditional was mainly manifested in three aspects: being more family-oriented; being more joyful around senior people; and being more in line with some traditional doctrines of how to behave and think. First, Qiang admitted, "I really love home now. I think I will definitely be with my family in the future. This idea never grabbed my mind a few years ago." In addition, Qiang started to enjoy spending time with seniors, not only with those among his own family members back in China but also among seniors in Canada. Qiang had been actively involved in diverse university-organized volunteer activities related to assisting senior residents in the community. Furthermore, Qiang's life philosophy was in line with some traditional doctrines. For example, he maintained personal boundaries by choosing not to have physical contact with women. Qiang also imagined himself one day to be a traditional husband who would be socially, morally, and financially responsible for his wife and children.

Through dealing with the crisis of failing a chemistry course, Qiang became more open to others' suggestions instead of attached to his own ideas. "I find that it is always a way to solve the problem after you talk with others rather than dealing with difficulties by yourself alone." "Never lock yourself at home alone when facing adversities. Some people may say cool-off will help you to see things through. In fact, it doesn't help at all." Qiang also became braver facing problems rather than escaping them. "At that time, what I only thought was how to manage to leave Canada, how to not to study anymore, how to leave this place, how to erase this wound."

After Qiang chose to stay to face the problem and then successfully solved it, he was proud of himself for becoming more courageous and for not being cowardly.

Liang

Liang's Challenges

Liang divided his challenges into two stages: the first during his senior high school and the second after he came to Canada. His senior high was located in the provincial capital city, far from his home town. "I was 15 years old. It was the first time I left home and started living independently." Loneliness was the greatest challenge for him at that time. "At beginning of senior high, I felt lonely because I was far from my parents." An additional challenge was his accent. "My Mandarin was very bad, so I barely talked with my classmates even in the dorm, I barely talked with my roommates." In addition, Liang described his personality to be "shy and introverted." His personality intertwined with his concern about his accent led to the problem of communication and difficulty in group work. "The biggest challenge was the difficulty of communicating with others," but "in the high school, you had to communicate with others, or do things as a group." In addition, because Liang got his previous education in a less-developed region, after he came to the provincial capital city, he was troubled by the gap of the regional imbalance in education. "I was a good student compared to others. But after I came to X-city [the provincial capital city], I found myself not a good student anymore." He was "not happy with myself."

After Liang came to Canada following his high school, he had to spend three months in one of Queen's ESL programs. Because his performance in the ESL program would be essential for his successful admission into Queen's University, he felt a lot of pressure. In the beginning, Liang was challenged by English writing skills. "I only got 50 on my first essay. In fact, first few

marks of my essays were all very low. I was so upsetting.” However, he had to pass the course within three months or “otherwise I will miss the deadline of application for entrance.”

Therefore, Liang was under pressure not only to improve his marks but to do so quickly.

Once Liang was accepted into the university, his writing skills continued to pose a challenge. “In my experiment class, you have to write a report based on a case. You have to write a lot, around 2000 to 3000 words. It was quite challenging for me at that time.” Liang further indicated that the difficulty of writing reports was not only that he was intimidated by the length of the assignment. He felt challenged because writing a report needed a set of complex knowledge involved in different things he never touched upon or learned before. Liang encountered some new software application he never saw before. “You need use Matlab to create a model to do the data analysis. This was the first time for me to use this software application.” As well, Liang was still concerned with his English language communication ability. “My language was not good but I had to communicate with my group mates during we doing our experiments together.” Liang was unfamiliar with the experiment itself, as “I was not familiar with the experiment because in China, we seldom did experiments.” All these factors made him question whether or not he could “write a good report.” In addition to these English challenges, Liang was troubled by adapting to the Western teaching style. “It’s much easier to listen to class in China. You just need to listen to what teachers taught.” In Canada, he had to learn how to interact with teachers and other students. Because Liang still thought of himself as an “introverted” person, he felt anxious about participating in classroom discussions or group work.

Liang’s Resources

For Liang, teachers, schoolmates, university-organized activities, and people who were older than him were helpful resources. Canadian teachers’ approachability and responsible

working attitudes were two major qualities Liang greatly appreciated. First, Canadian teachers' benevolence and approachability changed Liang's previous impression of teachers back in China. "In China, if I encountered some problems, I would not talk with teachers. But here, you can say whatever you want to say and ask whatever you want to ask" because "the feeling teachers here give you is not to let you be afraid of them but to let you have a willingness to be friends with them. They are very approachable." In addition, Liang deeply valued his Canadian teachers' careful and responsible working attitudes. "Every time, teachers corrected my writing words by words, and line by line." With such thorough feedback, Liang was motivated to spend more time and effort improving his English. "I checked the dictionary and found the right words to replace the wrong ones and kept revising until teachers concluded the writing was fine."

Schoolmates, including Canadian classmates and his group mates, were other helpful resources for Liang to adapt to Western-style learning. "Through communicating with Canadian classmates, I became more familiar with the procedure of experiments." "Through discussing with local students in the group, I began to understand how I could write a lab report." Additionally, university-organized activities, "such as seeing movies, picking apples, playing soccer, basketball, and badminton," provided great opportunities for Liang to improve his English communication skills.

Liang considered the people who were older than him as assets both in his life and studies. When facing problems, Liang preferred consulting these people. "I prefer to communicate with people who are older and more experienced than I am." Regarding life-related issues, "I would consult my parents." With regard to studies or academic-related issues, "I would listen to the opinions of senior students."

The pattern of Liang navigating resources was to “force” himself to reach out. To improve his English scores at the School of English, Liang “forced” himself to “interact with teachers in class.” To improve his English communication, Liang “forced” himself to “participate in the events” organized by the university. For a better performance in labs, Liang “forced” himself to “practice more and speak more” in group work settings.

Liang’s Identity Changes

Liang negotiated three sets of identities: being self-focused vs. being globally minded; being less traditional vs. being more traditional; and being less self-confident and determined vs. being more confident and determined.

Liang’s global awareness developed gradually after he came to Canada. Back in China, Liang seldom paid attention to volunteering activities, although he considered himself the type of person who had sympathy for socially disadvantaged people. After coming to Canada, inspired by his Canadian peers’ active involvement in different volunteering activities and broad vision on global and social issues, Liang became dissatisfied with only a “soft heart.” He became keener on doing something to help people in need. “The unconsciousness [of wanting to do good things] was stimulated by the culture here. Here people are interested in doing volunteering. Once they were talking about their volunteering experiences, I thought to myself: I need to try that as well.” Last summer, Liang joined a non-profit organization’s volunteer group, spending two months teaching Chinese students in rural China. This experience had a great impact on Liang because he realized that he “change[s] other people’s life by volunteering.” Through this volunteering experience, he also learned about intercultural communication with “people from all around world” and cooperation within a team.

Liang became more traditional than before, which was mainly reflected in his acceptance of some old Chinese values. Although Liang had been educated by his father to behave in accordance with Chinese tradition, he did not quite understand and only recognized the importance of this tradition a few years ago. “My father always told me that a person needed to have five virtues, kindness, decency, courtesy, intelligence, and honesty. I didn’t quite understand their deep meanings.” After having life experiences of living in different places and building connections with a variety of people, Liang gradually appreciated some Chinese traditional values his father instilled in him, such as being kind and honest in dealing with peer relationships, as well as being polite and respecting teachers.

Liang became more and more confident in his competence through overcoming challenges. Beginning in high school, by working hard, Liang overcame an academic challenge due to regional differences. Liang realized “as long as I make efforts, then I can achieve my goals.” This belief was reinforced by his later experience of improving his scores in laboratory courses at the university. “I thought to myself: the lab cannot be extremely difficult. As long as I practice more and communicate more with other students, follow the steps of instruction carefully, I can get there in the end.” Liang was braver and prepared for any challenge he might face in the future. “As long as I am determined, any challenge can be conquered. There is no way to escape a challenge but to face it.”

Peng

Peng’s Challenges

Peng was troubled by a range of challenges: loneliness, English problems, different academic requirements, and personally perceived shortcomings in terms of lack of critical thinking, creativity, being self-centered, his ability to master his life, and making decisions.

When he first came to Canada, Peng felt lonely because he had spent his whole “junior and senior high in the same school” and “had the same social circle.” “Then once the environment and school changed, I felt strange and lonely.” At the same time, he struggled with his English oral expression. “My oral English was far from the minimal requirements of Q-Bridge.” At Q-Bridge [a course that prepared ESL students for the usage of academic English required by admission to Queen’s University], debate was one of the common practices to improve students’ oral English. Peng often caught himself making “diverse grammar mistakes” and lacking “appropriate words to express ideas.” A third challenge Peng faced when he was at Q-Bridge was to meet the local academic requirements, which were different from the academic requirements in China. “It was difficult to meet the expectation of teachers. I had been frustrated for a while. It was quite painful.” The academic requirement of fitting a specific academic writing format, with which Peng was not accustomed, was often stressed as critical. “One time, I only did some in-sentence citations but forgot to add the reference list at bottom of writing. Teachers were quite unhappy.”

Peng was mostly challenged by his personal perceived shortcomings in critical thinking, creativity, being self-centered, lack of an ability to master his life, and making decisions among diverse life options. According to Peng, critical thinking consisted of developing “an idea different from mainstream ideas” or, if presented with a mainstream idea, “you have to think both its pros and cons.” Like most students in China, Peng was not trained to use this critical thinking. For example, “in China, all the cases are affirmative or mainstream ones. And you may feel that these cases are sound enough for your argument.” Peng soon found out his argument was weak after he came to Canada. “According to the eyes of Q-Bridge teachers, these evidence may have many flaws and need to be argued about.” After he started his major studies, he

discovered he not only lacked critical thinking but also “sufficient creativity.” Peng considered creativity to be an ability to generate divergent ideas quickly. He saw himself inferior to Canadian students in terms of this ability. For example, “although Canadian students may not know exactly what they need to do in the next step, they may have a few options of doing for next steps.” In contrast, he “need[ed] a long time of thinking [of other options].” Since “the engineering needs you to do one step immediately after another one [and] I do not have fast response,” Peng was not confident in his studies. Not only lacking confidence in his studies, he was concerned with whether or not he was “self-centered” in other’s people’s eyes. The “self-centered” ideology was manifested in the way that “we [Chinese students] are more concerned about how we can do the thing for our own individually instead of caring about how our team together can do a thing well.” He was constantly examining himself whether or not he committed self-centered behaviours. For example, he felt shame about not contributing ideas to his teammates. “Although I knew I was in a team, but my primary focus was still on myself and I was seldom aware that I need provide some suggestion for my teammates.” Peng sometimes felt powerless to master his life. “Compared to Canadian students who are actively involved in different extracurricular activities, such as students’ clubs, campaigns, promotions, research, I seem less able to master my life.” Compared to Canadian students’ strong ability of “exploring their potentialities,” Peng’s discovery and development of his potentialities were constrained by his inability to do the same in his life. In addition, he was challenged by making a decision among different choices. “For example, you want to do part-time job, at the same time, you also want to join the student associations, and do this and that, you may be confused.”

Peng's Resources

Chinese immigrant schoolmates who were used to both the Chinese way of thinking and the Western education model were good examples for Peng. Peng perceived the ability of “seeing the big picture” and being skillful at exams as features of a Chinese way of thinking, with creativity and problem-solving ability as a strength of Western education. Peng viewed one of his Chinese schoolmates as a specific model for his current stage of study. “She was a Chinese student. She is perfectly bilingual and familiar with local culture. But she also can see the big picture. Therefore, she does not only have good marks in exams but also has an excellent problem-solving capacity.”

Peng's Canadian working peers in class had a great impact on Peng's shaping his previous way of learning. Compared to his thorough preparation before doing experiments or projects, Peng admired his Canadian peers' ability to make an instant response to a situation without advanced deliberate thinking. “They are very quick, not only in thinking but also in doing. Most of time, their thinking has been all-round enough.” Peng believed listening to what his Canadian group mates asked him to do, and observing how they were doing, and working with them represented an efficient way of improving his shortcomings. In addition, his Canadian peers' team spirit and non-judgmental attitudes made Peng feel included in the group working. “People won't judge how much you really do for team. They made you feel that as long as you sit beside me, you are my team member.” Peng really “appreciate[d] this type of attitude and this team spirit.”

Friends were important for Peng. Peng especially appreciated the “simplicity and kindness” offered by his friends when he was experiencing difficulties. “I find that there is a quality my friends have in common is their simplicity and kindness,” which was manifested in

many ways, such as “they may invite you to hang out or simply buy you a dessert” when Peng was in “negative mood.” Peng viewed his friends’ kind behaviours as a central factor for him to overcome his negative emotions that he sometimes felt were uncontrollable. “Their kindness constantly reminds you how beautiful life is since I have so many good friends to share my pain and happiness with.”

The pattern of Peng’s navigating resources was seen mostly through interacting and observing. Through interacting and observing his Canadian peers’ thoughts and behaviours, Peng became gradually adapted to local learning styles and culture and open to diversity. Through interacting with his friends, Peng’s negative mood was abolished by his friends’ contagious kindness and positivity.

Peng’s Identity Changes

Peng negotiated four sets of identities: being judgmental vs. being non-judgmental; following the mainstream vs. having individual critical thinking; being self-centered vs. being team-focused; and care-receiver vs. care-giver.

Peng viewed being non-judgmental as one of the important identities he changed after he came to Canada. Through interacting with Canadian students, Peng found that there was a big difference between his attitudes and Canadian students’ attitudes when facing divergent opinions. Compared to his conservative attitudes toward different thoughts, Canadian students were more open-minded and non-judgmental. “They do not judge what others say. They just simply express what they want to say. They won’t say, ‘your idea is not good, you need to think twice.’” Inspired by his Canadian peers, Peng intended to change his stiff attitude to a less judgmental and unbiased one. “I think this also influenced me to hold an open attitude toward others and respect other people’s opinions different from mine.”

Coming from a collectivist society, Peng had been trained to follow the mainstream instead of having his individual views on social issues. After Peng came to Canada, he started “see[ing] things from other perspectives.” Peng listed an example to explain his change. Peng said that he would have been a blind patriot like a lot of young Chinese “burning Japanese cars and Japanese flags” if he were still in China in face of the diplomatic issue of the disputed island between China and Japan. Now he highly disagreed with the young Chinese who did such things in China. Peng considered “these behaviours are too brutal” and not “a true demonstration of patriotism.” He insisted that only bilateral talk would be helpful in such a context. Peng valued the critical thinking ability he had been trained to develop since he came to Canada as a significant asset for him to form his individual views and shape his personality. “I think critical thinking is a good thing for me. It helps me to develop my personality fully and makes me become more independent and persevering. I feel that my life no longer needs to be led by others.”

A third important identity change for Peng was from being self-centered to becoming team-focused. When he started working with his Canadian schoolmates, Peng noticed an apparent difference between him and his Canadian schoolmates in terms of working attitude. Compared to his self-centeredness on his own thoughts instead of contributing ideas to his teammates, Canadian students were more willing to share their ideas and provide suggestions for other team members. Through interacting with his teammates, Peng became more open and sharing in team settings.

From being a care-receiver to being a care-giver was another important change of Peng’s identity. Peng used to be taken care of by his parents and surrounded by the love of his friends. Every time when Peng encountered problems, his parents or friends provided him with advice.

After living and studying independently in Canada for almost two years, Peng became inclined not to tell his problems to his parents and friends to prevent them from worrying about him. “I think if I told them the problems, I may bring some pressures to my friends and my family.” Peng thought that, if he solved the problem by himself, he could gain some life experiences that might be helpful and a good role model for his friends. “I think it’s better for me to solve the problem alone. If others come across the similar ones, I can help them by sharing my experiences.”

David

David’s Challenges

The growth pattern of David has been much like a roller-coaster. Before he came to Canada, he was a “rebel,” and everyone in school hated him. After he came to Canada, he turned himself into one of the most adorable and diligent students in his high school. However, as soon as he entered university, he lost himself in drugs and alcohol. After two years, he got back on track again. During each period of his life, David experienced different challenges. During his school experience in China, “it was really not pleasant to talk.” David was deeply troubled by his very tense relationship with teachers, even though he “still liked school but teachers didn’t like me. They HATED me. Seriously, they hated me.” Every time, when David came across teachers, “they looked me, they were like, ‘why you were still here!’ I started swearing to them.” David admitted he was rebellious at that time, but he was still angry with the way he was being judged by teachers. “They [teachers] probably judge you by the things you do, the way you dress.” David thought it was untrue and unfair to simply make a quick judgment on a kid. “If I smoke, doesn’t mean I am a drug addict. If I drink, doesn’t mean I am alcoholic.” “So I got misjudged. So it’s bad feedback,” he said. This bad feedback pushed David further and further away from

the school so that he “skipped the school basically every day.” During class time, David preferred to wander in the streets, smoking, drinking, street-fighting, gambling, and robbing. His constant troubling behaviours made his relationship with his father deteriorate until “we had a big conflict one day when I was in China.” David totally disappointed his father. “My dad finally realized I couldn’t make a living in China if I keep doing this.” At the same time, David was disappointed about himself because he knew that he could not live up to his parents’ expectations. “My dad gave me huge expectation when I was young. I didn’t catch up it. I was disappointed.” The strained relationship with teachers, the tense relationship with his father, and his anger about being judged in a biased fashion left David feeling generally “pretty disappointed at life when I was in China.”

After David came to Canada with his parents, he enrolled in one of the local senior high schools. Although he had very positive relationships with teachers and other students, he was still challenged by some issues. First, English was especially difficult as it related to his academic performance and his making friends with local students. “The school was quite challenging, especially the English class, history class, you know, requiring-a-lot-of-language-speaking-and-writing class, really hard for me.” Additionally, “it’s quite challenging to make friends with locals because you have to at least understand what they are talking about. If you don’t, you just don’t.” Although he had been good enough in school, he was anxious of proving himself more by being excellent. “I was the top student in my school. I had a chance to do it and prove myself. How to prove yourself?” A second challenge at this time was his decision-making about his future. “When I entered my Grade 12, that’s quite challenging because I had to know whether I had to go to university, or get a job, or go to college.” David felt confused about his future as he “didn’t know what my future is.” After David made a decision or goal for his life,

the hardest part for him was how to “stick to your plan and make it happen.” For example, although he was determined to get into university, he still experienced a few months of hesitation and inner struggle after being promoted to be a manager and persuaded to stay in the store as a full-time employee after he graduated from high school.

The temptations that made David steer away from university did not stop after he entered university. He found it difficult to stick to his plan of finishing his university degree because “I drunk a lot and partied a lot, smoked a lot of weed. First year was absolutely disaster for me. I had really bad marks. I was really disappointed.” After David recovered from this decadent lifestyle, he started re-examining the meaning of friendship. David found out he was facing a further challenge, loneliness, because he lacked true friends who could understand him. “Loneliness doesn’t just mean that you are on yourself. Loneliness means you feel that nobody understands you. You feel like that why nobody understands you. It’s really personal challenge.”

David’s Resources

For David, teachers, friends, extracurricular activities, and parents were the main resources for him to overcome difficulties.

Canadian teachers were significant in David’s life. First, they helped David to regain his self-confidence. David had been always fascinated by math. However, when he was in China, David had continually been misjudged by his teachers as a “bad kid” based on his appearance. His confidence was destroyed by his teachers’ neglect and discrimination. As a result, David almost totally abandoned his academic work. After he came to Canada, David’s interest in math was recognized by his Canadian teachers, and his self-confidence was gradually recovered. David described this turning point in his life: “my mid-term mark was 105%. They [Canadian teachers] told me that I was a superman. I did everything I can. My teacher was like, ‘my God, I

didn't see any students like this before.' I was like, 'yes, that's right.'" Encouraged by his Canadian teachers, David's passion for math was further stimulated. He recalled, "I had perfect mark in each exam. I had perfect marks in single assignment. I did extra work, extra extra work, not just homework." David's confidence continued to be boosted by different awards, and he was totally transformed from a "bad kid" to an excellent student. For example, David was elected to be one of the members of "Youth Salute," which was an extraordinary honour for high school students in Saskatoon. As David explained, "the members of Youth Salute have to be very well in their school work, involved in a lot of community work, volunteering work, and having impacts on others. These students have to be role models for others." In addition, Canadian teachers helped David to become familiar with local society. As he remarked, "I didn't know anything about the society. They helped me as much as they can." For example, after he got a job and needed a bank account, his Canadian teachers directed him to open an account for himself.

Friends were a major resource for David to find jobs and better adapt to Canadian ways of living. David asked his friends who worked about their experiences to obtain knowledge about the nature and ethics of Canadian jobs. He normally started the conversation with his friends in ways such as "Is it an easy job? Do you like it?" David also actively passed to his friends the information that he was interested in looking for a job. He often asked, "If I am interested in this job, can you hook me up? Can you ask your boss to see if he needs one more person?" With his friends' help, David often successfully got the job he wanted.

Extracurricular activities were also important in David's life since he came to Canada. David's lifestyle changed from wandering in the street, robbing little kids, or often getting involved in street fighting to a more healthy and positive state. When he came to Canada, David

found a few hobbies that helped him to stay away from the negative things he used to do: “When I came here, I could do a lot of things, a lot of good things, cool things, you know, music, DJ, if you play sports, you can be super good. You don’t need to be the bad guy.” He realized, “cool things are not necessary to be bad things.” These extracurricular activities expanded David’s vision and stimulated his curiosity of exploring something new and interesting things in his life. As he concluded, “I want to get good. I want to get in the area I didn’t know before and I want to explore knowledge.”

David’s parents also played an important role in changing his life. Thanks to his father’s decision to come to Canada, David got a second chance of “transforming” himself from being a “bad” kid to “a school kid” and later to a “super school kid.” Owing to his mother’s “sacrifice” of her life and endurance of loneliness after she came to Canada, David could be well looked after.

David’s pattern of navigating resources was defined by his desire to transform from the “bad school kid” to the “super school kid.” His parents provided him with a chance to radically alter his life. Canadian teachers motivated him to make a transformation, and friends and extracurricular activities were supplementary forces that kept him on the right path.

David’s Identity Changes

David experienced three major identity transitions: from being a “loser” without hope to being a “model” with high self expectations, from being irresponsible to being responsible, and from being Chinese to being Chinese Canadian.

David had committed some prohibited activities—robbing, street fighting, and smoking—before he came to Canada. He was seen as a “loser” in the eyes of his teachers, his father, and others. After he came to Canada, Canadian teachers’ non-judgmental attitude,

support, and encouragement lighted David's hope to become a good student at school with a perfect school record and to actively get involved in different extracurricular activities. Later, David was viewed as a "model," being awarded with the title of "Youth Salute," a great honour for a high school student in the city of Saskatoon. Through transforming himself from a "loser" to a "model," from a "good school kid" to a "super school kid," David had more confidence in himself. He learned the following lesson: "Believe in yourself. Overestimation is not a bad thing. If you overestimated many times, you would make mistakes, but if you don't overestimate, you won't reach your potential." David began to hold high self-expectations. For example, he was no longer satisfied with staying in a position after being promoted to store manager: he quit his job and concentrated on studying and applying for university. He surpassed his parents' expectation that he would have to attend whichever university accepted him, as he became one of three high school students from Saskatchewan who were accepted by Queen's in the year he graduated. Approaching his graduation from university, David was planning to push himself further. He wanted to become an actuary playing the leadership role in "a big company" as his future career; at the same time, he aimed to participate in a world championship for DJs in his spare time.

A second important identity change David experienced was from being irresponsible to being responsible. After David got into university, there was a period when he felt lost again, as he became addicted to drinking, drugs, and parties and failed his exams. David later described his behaviours as "irresponsible" for himself because what he "cared about" was only "how to make friends, how to be cool, and how to enjoy myself" instead of "concentrat[ing] on my work as much as I am supposed to do." Later, David realized "the whole track and the whole things seemed just wrong," and he began to ask himself what was the purpose of his coming to Queen's. He recalled, "I asked myself, what's reason for me to come here? So I was seeking the

answer. The answer was simple, I want a degree and better education. That's why I am here for. Nothing else. What is gonna take me to get the degree, nothing but hard work." Once David realized what he wanted, he felt he needed to be responsible for himself and his goals. He decided to totally abandon all the bad habits and determined to commit to accomplishing his goals. "Once I realized that [my purpose], I was like, enough party, enough drinking, enough drug, I did nothing but hard work." Since then, David felt that "believ[ing] in truth" and "believ[ing] in rationalism" were keys to acting responsibly for himself.

David did not perceive himself as completely Chinese anymore because of certain "bad things" he disliked about the Chinese culture. The greatest source of his discontent was others' judgment of him, which was evident in the way they treated him. David felt that he was victimized by this culture, and he complained of, "a lot of bad things about Chinese, such as misjudgment, they don't even know the person, they just assume something is wrong with this person." Now, David described himself as being "80% Canadian" and "20% Chinese." He truly and deeply appreciated "Canadian culture" and "North American culture," which he felt gave people the freedom and opportunities to prove themselves. In such a culture, David had been able to show to others what he truly was. At the same time, David still valued some "good" aspects of Chinese culture and tried to maintain them in his behaviours. He explained, "I keep good things of Chinese, trying to be polite, trying to be outgoing, trying to be helpful for others even without asking something back."

Commonalities across Undergraduate Male Participants

Common Challenges

Among these four participants, loneliness was a challenge that Liang, Peng, and David shared. Their loneliness was experienced during different life stages. Liang's feeling of

loneliness occurred in his high school in China due to leaving home. Peng started feeling lonely after he came to Canada because he had stayed in the same school for too long to get used to a new environment. David's loneliness mainly reflected on his spiritual need of being understood.

Another common challenge was English. English was seen as difficult by Peng for its oral expression. According to Liang, English was challenging for its writing part. English was challenging for David because it was closely relevant to his class performance and making friends with local students.

Peng and David both found that decision-making was a challenge when they faced many life options. Peng was confused about whether or not he should join in some extracurricular activities and which options were most appropriate for him. David struggled with whether he needed to go to school or go to work.

Finding it difficult to make friends with local students was common for Qiang and David. However, their reasons were different. Qiang found that local students were not reliable when he needed help. David's difficulty of making friends with locals when he first came was simply caused by his insufficient English communication. Similarly, both Qiang and David mentioned the hardships of building a strong teacher-student relationship, although in unique contexts.

Common Resources

Canadian teachers were beneficial for Qiang, Liang, and David. For Qiang, Canadian teachers helped him to improve his English and his learning attitude and assisted him in solving his academic crisis. Canadian teachers' friendly and responsible working attitudes had a beneficial impact on Liang by bringing the relationship between his teachers and him closer than the relationship he had experienced in China. For David, Canadian teachers were mostly

significant because they allowed him to totally transform himself from a “bad school kid” to “a super school kid” through their non-judgmental approach and positive feedback.

Other people than teachers helped these participants. Qiang, Peng, and David benefited from their interactions with their friends. Qiang’s friends were important for him in that they were the most important incentive for keeping him in Canada and facing his challenges. Peng’s friends’ kindness prevented him from sinking into negative moods and reminded him of the happy and positive side of life. David’s friends helped David to connect with different working-related resources. Similarly, schoolmates were helpful for Liang and Peng. Both credited their schoolmates with helping them to adapt to a Western-style learning environment. In addition, Qiang and Liang liked seeking advice from people who were older than they were. Qiang liked to talk with seniors because of their rich life experiences, while Liang felt inspired by the suggestions his senior schoolmates offered to him. Liang and David both benefited from extracurricular activities. Different extracurricular activities organized by the university provided Liang with chances for practicing his English, while extracurricular activities helped David to realize that there were many opportunities he could enjoy in his life.

Common Identity Changes

For Qiang and Liang, the identity they changed was becoming more traditional than they were before they came to Canada. The manifestation of Qiang’s being traditional was his becoming family-oriented and willing to spend more time with seniors. Liang’s becoming more traditional was exemplified by his acceptance of the traditional Chinese culture that his father had taught him before.

In contrast, Peng and David moved away from the traditional Chinese approach by realizing the importance of a non-judgmental approach, which they saw in Canadians.

Enlightened by his Canadian peers' non-judgmental approach, Peng became less judgmental when he treated others and viewed divergent opinions with respect. Benefiting from Canadian teachers' non-judgmental attitude, David totally transformed from a "loser" to an "excellent student."

Beyond the move away from or toward traditional Chinese beliefs, Peng and Liang became more caring about bigger issues instead of focusing on their individual needs. Peng changed from being self-centered to being team-spirited. Liang became more enthusiastic about getting involved in volunteering through helping disadvantaged people.

Success

Qiang's understanding of the meaning of success in Chinese culture was one's "economic success." He found that, in most Chinese people's beliefs, family happiness was not part of the definition of success. However, after he came to Canada, he became more and more aware of the importance of family happiness to his own success. Qiang imagined that, one day, if he could bring all of his family members in China to Canada and live close to his good friends, then he would consider himself successful in his life. As compared to money, he valued his family members and good friends more. His role model of success was his parents. In his memory, his parents only had two quarrels in their marriage so far. He appreciated the humorous and optimistic spirit of his parents when they were facing difficulties.

Liang's understanding about Chinese success was to be rich. "The success I have seen from grownups since I was young was related to money." His idea of success was to become a person who "has a lot of friends, a certain influence, a happy family, and children who can perform well academically." Among these components, the most important component was social influence. The social influence Liang wanted to achieve was to "sponsor the people in

need, such as build a school for socio-economically disadvantaged students.” His role model was a famous movie star who succeeded in his career and, more importantly, “founded a charity to sponsor a lot of people in need.”

According to Peng, success in the Chinese culture was assessed by whether or not “a person can obtain what he wants and get his family members to have a wealthy life.” His own understanding about success encompassed two stages: first, he would get what he wanted, such as “house, car,” and something he could bring to his family; after he reached this goal, he could still have “passion and motivation” for doing more things and pursuing new goals. His role model of success was Steve Jobs because “he did not only get what he wanted for his career but also kept his passion for technical innovations and marketing strategies.”

David’s understanding of the meaning of success in Chinese culture was the same as the other participants’. “Chinese people think success is represented by money, social class.” He viewed success in different ways. “Personal contributions to humanity or society” would be his success, and it was not related to the person’s economic or social status. As he said, “If you are a scientist, or carpenter, as long as you make a contribution to the society, and make this world better, it does not matter what you do. That’s success.” “If you are on the street and cleaning the street, you make a contribution to this society, you are a success.” His role model of success was Einstein, because Einstein “was extremely smart and solved the extreme questions in the universe, which we never think or reach in our life,” and the contributions Einstein made were “a giant leap of humanity” and “no one can pass him.”

According to these four participants, the meaning of success in Chinese culture was the same: money, fame, and power. However, they conceptualized their own success differently from the one viewed in Chinese culture. Qiang’s success emphasized family happiness. Liang

considered his success as having a lot of friends, a happy family, academically well-behaved children, and social influences, which he applied to help people in need. David's success was to make contributions to society. Although Peng's success was partially attached to the Chinese cultural one, his success did not stop at the stage of material needs being satisfied but extended further to keep pursuing dreams and challenging himself. Thus each participant had different approaches to his own success.

CHAPTER 7: MALE GRADUATE STUDENTS (GROUP D)

Group D included four male graduate students: Tao, Wei, Dong, and Bo. Tao was a third-year Ph.D. student in Mechanical Engineering. He chose to come to Canada for study because of his American visa having been repeatedly rejected by the American Embassy in China. Wei was a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Chemical Engineering. He was married with a child. Dong was a second-year Ph.D. student in Chemical Engineering as well. Two years ago, he finished a one-year exchange program in the United States, and after that applied for graduate studies at Queen's. Bo was a second-year Master's year student in Psychology. He had already obtained a Master's degree in Psychology in China before he came to Queen's.

Tao

Tao's Challenges

During his adolescence, Tao faced the question of how to prove himself in spite of living in an unjust system. The year he graduated from junior high school, he applied for vocational school instead of normal senior high. Although his score was high, his application was still rejected due to another student whose family had acquaintances inside the school being given the place. Tao was "filled with the strong discontent of being treated unfairly." He felt the system was "so unjust" in that "everyone has some certain kind of background except me." Tao then stayed another year in junior high.

Tao wanted to prove himself by having a better future than his advantaged peers. He insisted on applying for senior high school during the next round of high school entrance examinations, in spite of his family suggesting that he re-apply for vocational school, which he could finish quickly to get a job soon and lessen the financial burden on his family. Regardless of these objections, Tao was successful in getting into and completing senior high school.

After Tao successfully finished his university degree and master's degree in China, he encountered the challenge of maintaining a long-distance relationship with his girlfriend who had gone to the United States to do her Ph.D. studies. To get together with his girlfriend, Tao spent all his spare time preparing for the different English exams required by American universities. It was difficult for him to work while studying. "Every day after dinner, I had to go back to study English. The schedule of every day of seven days a week was compacted." He "felt a huge pressure and extremely tired." In addition, he was living on a very tight budget, because, as he was going abroad, he only "got temporary jobs" and "still didn't have enough income." Later, although Tao had good scores in all his exams and got admission letters from a couple of American universities, he still could not go to the U.S. because his visa application was repeatedly rejected due to his educational background studying nuclear materials. His girlfriend started getting disappointed about not seeing him coming to the U.S. He felt powerless to solve the issue. When they had a quarrel on the phone, Tao often felt guilty about jeopardizing their relationship.

The issue of uniting with his girlfriend in the U.S. continued to bring similar relevant challenges after he came to Canada. To visit his girlfriend, he had to continue to apply for an American visa but was still rejected for the same reason. Because he collaborated on the research with some researchers in the U.S., the visa rejection "hindered both the relationship and research development." Tao felt very frustrated. Moreover, he was still challenged by his financial situation. He hoped he could "pay off my debts I owed before I came to Canada and at the same time save some money for getting married to my girlfriend." However, "the amount of money from TA work was limited." Later he got a part-time job in hope of solving the financial issue, but he was often troubled by time conflicts between the job and his school work. For

example, “if I had TA in the morning around 10 am, I had to get up around 6 am to go to cafeteria and started cooking the soup. After that, I came back to school.” He felt “every day was exhausting.” Most importantly, his research “was distracted due to lack of enough time and effort devoted.”

There were two additional challenges after Tao came to Canada. One was his TAship. He felt the TAship was challenging, partially because his “English was not good” and partially because his students were less motivated to attend class, as “most of the time, a lot of students already left before the class started. Normally only 7 to 8 students stayed.” Another challenge was his coordination between his research and his religious activities. “I found it quite challenging for me at this stage to allocate my time for my service in church and my research.” Therefore, time management first emerged during the time of balancing his part-time job and TA work and became increasingly significant after he became more and more involved in church.

Tao’s Resources

For Tao, his friends, his girlfriend, his supervisor, and his religious life were helpful resources. When Tao was in China preparing for going abroad, he was suffering great pressure. Playing soccer, drinking beer, and talking with his friends helped Tao to partially lessen his anxiety and stress level. Although keeping the relationship with his girlfriend was a challenge, Tao considered his girlfriend as the major incentive for him to go through hardships before he developed his religious beliefs. His girlfriend assisted Tao with his English exams by “revising writing samples” and “checking grammar and vocabularies.”

Tao felt grateful for having a helpful and kind supervisor after he came to Canada. First, his supervisor’s research interest was closely associated with Tao’s previous working and research background. Benefiting from this perfect academic match, Tao found it less stressful

than expected for him to adapt to a new research environment: “I can apply what I learned in China to my current research project. It was relatively easier for me to conduct the research here. I feel that I am doing research quite smoothly.” In addition, the trust and freedom that Tao’s supervisor gave him reduced his anxiety of conducting research. As he explained, “my supervisor does not watch me closely all day seven days. He simply asked me to update my research status from time to time. I feel more relaxing and less stressed when managing my research process.” Moreover, Tao’s supervisor assigned other graduate students to go to the U.S. to do experiments on behalf of Tao. Therefore, Tao could continue with his research when his American visa application was rejected. As Tao concluded, “In spite of not being able to go to the States by myself, I could still continue on my research without changing the research topic.” Furthermore, the strength of Tao’s supervisor’s research area let Tao feel optimistic and confident about his future professional development. “My supervisor’s research has a broad prospective. I don’t need to concern about my future career.”

Tao’s religious life was the most significant resource for him. Church entered Tao’s life when he was in China under the pressure of keeping the long-distance relationship with his girlfriend and improving his English in a short period. In the beginning, Tao went to church because “there were some comforts that I can never get from my friends.” Church became a place where Tao could liberate himself from pressure and stress. “When I was singing worship songs in church, I felt I could get my stress released. Sometimes, my eyes filled with tears when I was singing. After singing in church, I felt better.” After he came to Canada, church was not only the place where he could found comfort but also a place where he met most of his friends. The people in church were generally “friendly” and “kind.” He was constantly cared for and supported by the people in church. “When Sisters and Brothers in church found that I was in

need, they all offered me with many help and suggestions. With such a support group, I feel confident on myself and less stressed in facing challenges.” With more devotion to Christianity, Tao began to rely more on the advice provided by the people in church. “The people I normally asked for help and seek suggestions from are the ones who are more spiritual than I am, who have more profound knowledge on Bible, and who love God more than I do.” In particular, one of the people in church became a close friend to him and a major source for suggestions. “I have a lot of communications with NJ on many issues including how to overcome challenges and difficulties. He experienced more than I have. He often can provide me with good suggestions.” The most important resource for Tao was still God, because God helped him to recover from the loss of his romantic relationship. As Tao remarked, “before, the center of my life was my girlfriend. I devoted completely to this romantic relationship. To be with her had been the purpose of my life. Once I was losing this relationship, I felt completely empty.” After he believed in the tenets of Christianity, Tao found the gap was filled, and the wound was healed by God. “The focus of my life has been changed. I realized that the purpose of life was not just for a certain person. Then I started feeling less stressed out.”

Tao’s pattern of navigating resources changed from a non-religious way to a religious way. Friends and his girlfriend had been the major sources of his supportive forces. Following his gradual immersion in Christianity, church, people in church, and God comprised the overarching supportive resources.

Tao’s Identity Changes

The major identity change Tao negotiated was from identifying foremost with being Chinese to identifying foremost with being Christian. A few specific identity changes associated with this main identity change evolved: from being competitive for money and fame to being

true to his spiritual needs; from being proud and judgmental to being humble and non-judgmental; and from being result-oriented to being process-oriented.

In China, Tao experienced the vast socio-economic gap between rural and urban. Tao felt that rural people were generally located in a disadvantaged position in Chinese society, being treated unequally and unjustly by the people in cities. In addition, Chinese culture was built upon “shame and honour” causing most Chinese people to “climb up” in society for “glorifying their families.” Wanting to be viewed equally, to be treated with respect, and to bring honour to his family, Tao had placed his life goal as the pursuit of financial wealth and socially recognized status. To reach his goal, Tao had been very competitive in his studies and work. As a result, he was constantly under pressure and filled with a strong sense of discontent about himself and others. After he came to Canada, Tao experienced Western culture, which, he believed, was rooted in Christianity and focused on individual needs. Tao started to reflect on his inner needs. He discovered that what he truly wanted was to be a good person with kindness and willingness to help others. As he described himself, “Looking back, I think what I always wanted was to be a nice person in other people’s eyes. Now, with this belief, I am more motivated to do good things and help others as much as I can.” These individual needs were in line with his spiritual needs to glorify and please God. “Now, I know why we have to love others, and how to love others. It is because God will be pleased of seeing us loving each other and help each other.” As his religious beliefs got deeper, Tao viewed his worries and frustrations caused by his external needs as unnecessary: “When we met some difficulties or did not accomplish something as expected, we may feel frustrated or disappointed. This is because we have desires and we want to have certain type of life or wish to have more money.” Since “God takes care of everything we need every

day,” Tao became more accepting of and peaceful with his life. “If we already have had gratification, we should be satisfied with what we already have.”

Another important identity change was from being proud to being humble. Besides “shame and honour,” Tao found that another feature of Chinese culture was pride. He concluded that Chinese pride was reflected in the Chinese people’s lack of appreciation and acceptance of foreign cultures and further led to Chinese people’s inability to adapt to Western society. “The conflict between Chinese culture and Western culture was mostly caused by our pride. Our pride hinders us to mingle with local culture and society. Because we are not humble, we cannot see other’s [Western culture’s] strength.” In addition, Tao attributed Chinese judgmental attitude to this spirit of pride. Being Chinese, Tao viewed his old self carrying these shortcomings: being proud of himself without recognizing his own weakness, being unwilling to learn from other people, and being judgmental about others. After converting to Christianity, Tao began to keep both his thoughts and behaviours in accordance with the doctrines of Christianity, which teaches people to be humble and non-judgmental. “Before, I thought I had been good enough as being a person. But now, I realized that it was far from enough.” “Only God has rights to judge people but people cannot judge people.”

From focusing on results to focusing on processes was another identity change under the influence of Christianity. Tao used to schedule his life with a series of goals, such as being married to a beautiful girl, getting a permanent well-paid job, and being a professor in the future. Tao “kept spending a lot of efforts” trying to reach these goals, although he often felt frustrated and stressed under these pressures. Now after he found his religious beliefs, Tao believed that “what God prepared for you are the best” and started to care less about the results. When he met difficulties or challenges, Tao thought more about what God wanted him to learn from the

process of going through the difficulties. Compared to the process, Tao regarded that “the importance of results is less important for me now.”

Wei

Wei's Challenges

For Wei, there were two stages of challenges: one before he came to Canada, and one after he came. Before he came to Canada, the major challenge for him was proving himself in the first year of university. After the national entrance exam, Wei didn't get into the A-level Chinese university about which he dreamed but ended up at a B-Level university. He didn't feel it was the right destination for him: “I didn't feel alright when I went to that university because that university [B-level university] was not one of best universities in China.” The idea of “I don't deserve coming here and I am better than this” deeply impinged on Wei's relationship with his schoolmates in the first year of university. He seldom had communication with his dorm mates and classmates. He actually chose not to make friends in the university. All day seven days a week, he studied. By doing so, he aimed to show others that he still could excel in school even though he didn't get into an A-level university. However, Wei later found that his attempt of proving himself failed because his accomplishment was not recognized by others. “I didn't get the scholarship even my GPA was the top one.” He felt disappointed. “It was not fair. For me, although my GPA was the top one, I still didn't get the scholarship. It didn't make a sense.” His effort suddenly seemed worthless, and he felt frustrated.” Other students having fun get the scholarship while I spent a lot of time studying and get nothing. It was not the way supposed to be.” What most agitated him was “they [the students who got scholarships] kind of looked down on me. They were like ‘we got the scholarship and had fun, you studied hard but didn't get anything.’”

The second set of challenges occurred after Wei came to Canada. The initial challenge was course-related academic challenges, partially from his English, partially from new knowledge, and partially from a new way of learning. He was first challenged by English in the classroom. "I had a problem of understanding what the professors said." Added with the new knowledge he had to learn, the pressure from academic learning intensified. "First, the technical things didn't make a sense to me. Second, the textbooks didn't make a sense either. I never read English in that way." Also, he had to wrestle with his old way of learning. "Back in China, although I didn't go to lecture, I understand the textbook and go ahead to read it and still have good marks at the end." However, he found himself not being able to do so because "here, you have to be active since the professor can ask you to get up any minute to answer questions. And sometimes, you have to do the project with others and have discussions with your team mates."

The second challenge about which Wei was anxious was his communication with his students, his supervisor, and his internship company. His TA class was composed of 140 second-year students whose experiences differed greatly from his. "I was kind of scared since it was in the first term of the first year when I came to Canada." He had to face this challenge alone. "You will be the only one in the class to face 140 students and your professor won't be there." He was extremely nervous. "When I was talking, I can feel my voice was shaking and my T-shirt all wet." He "was not sure if they [students] understood me." While Wei was challenged in making himself understood by his students, his Research Assistantship then challenged him to understand what his supervisor said. "My supervisor is a fast speaker. He is Canadian. He speaks really fast!" In addition, "his handwriting is also crazy. Even for my Canadian colleagues, they don't even recognize it." Therefore, "it [RA] was a disaster for me" because "first, I didn't fully understand what he was talking about. Second, I didn't know his handwriting." Moreover, Wei

was pressured by hiding his difficulty of understanding. “I cannot let him know that I didn’t understand.” “If the meeting was one hour, he can talk non-stop for 50 minutes. I had to pretend that I can understand. But actually I only understood half of what he said.” Compared to the difficulty of communicating with his supervisor, the difficulty of communicating with two parties involved in his three-time internships was more vividly remembered. The two parties entangled in his internship included the academic side represented by his supervisor, and the industry side embodied by his internship company. Wei found “there is always a big gap between industry and academic. They have different focuses. The industry only focused on money and the academic focused on something in-depth.” He was troubled by “some conflicts in-between”: “one side is my supervisor. He wants me to do something theoretical; another side is the company. They want money and don’t want to hear your equations.” In the end, the two sides “don’t talk to each other directly. They talk to me. I have to talk with both sides.” In Wei’s eyes, “all of these guys are bosses.” Wei felt pulled in two directions. “If my supervisor is not happy with my work, I cannot get my degree; but if the industry boss is not happy, I cannot get funding for my research anymore.” Wei felt “always stuck in between” and lacked the power of voicing his needs and opinions.

The third challenge for Wei was building deep friendships. “Here, people are generally nice” but “most people are Christian,” and “only Christians approach to us [international students] and make friends with us.” As a nonreligious person, Wei felt “something difference” between religious people and non-religious people because “people with different religions can respect each other and make friends with each other but it is difficult for friendship to get deep.”

Wei's Resources

Wei's helpful resources included himself, old friends, family, the computer, current classmates, and his co-supervisor.

Wei listed his curiosity as the most important incentive for him to overcome challenges. He defined himself as "a person with a lot of curiosities. I want to try a lot of new stuffs I didn't see before." Because of his curiosity, he often turned negative feelings into positive ones. For example, compared to his peers who felt homesick when they went to school far from their home cities, Wei was rather more excited about starting his own journey. As he recalled, "I still remember when my father sent me to the university, he asked me if I missed home since was first time for me to leave home and live all by myself. I said no." During studies at university, Wei "tried different things besides study." For example, "I tried to talk with more people" both in school and out of school; "I went to different cities for travelling." Through communicating with different people and travelling to various places, Wei discovered that he was "the more comfortable and more confident I am to do all the stuff by my own." This curiosity helped Wei to get familiar with his surroundings when he initially arrived in Canada. "I felt that Canada is pretty good and right choice. I don't have much homesick or feel frustrated when I leave home. No, not at all." Curiosity also helped Wei to expand his horizons. Compared to other international students "complaining 'I cannot suffer anymore'" when they were facing academic challenges, Wei was assertive about his choice of coming to Canada because he saw the process of overcoming challenges as a process of fulfilling his curiosity. "I think life in North America must be better than this, it's not suffering every day. For me, I want to go through this and enjoy it as well. If I discovered something new [during this process], I would be very happy." Curiosity also motivated Wei to get to know people and helped him to enlarge his social circle. "I tried to

be more active and try to join different activities,” making friends with different people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. For example, “I do want to make friends in different religions because you can know more about people even although I cannot become a Christian or Buddhist.”

Old friends were another important resource for Wei. Although he didn't pass the National College Entrance Exam the first time, he didn't feel upset because of his friends' support. “When I was preparing for my second examination, I kept contacts with my friends. They were already in universities. We often wrote letters or called each other sometimes.” Wei's friends also motivated him to be determined to go to university. “They often encouraged me and said ‘you'd better get out the place since life in universities are awesome.’” His old friends from China were one of his major supportive sources even after he came to Canada. “The close friends, they still try their best helping you. My closest friends are still from my high school and they are in China.” Along with his old friends, Wei's family provided him with comfort when he struggled with adversity. Wei found that “if I talk with family and friends, I feel comfortable.”

The computer and current classmates helped Wei to improve his English. He looked for new vocabulary to enhance his understanding of textbooks. “I always bring my computer to check the meaning of words. Back and forth between the textbook and computer, after the first term and finish my first course, I had a good score above 95%. I felt not bad anymore.” If Wei didn't “fully understand the lecture,” he normally asked for help from his classmates. “I can ask my classmates. It is much easier to ask questions after the class if your classmates don't understand you, you can try different ways to make them understand.”

His co-supervisor helped Wei to solve the crux of his being positioned between the expectations of his supervisor and the demands of his internship company. “My co-supervisor is

more caring about his students. He understands what kind of situation I was suffering. So he did a lot of communication stuff instead of me doing a lot of communication.” Therefore, with his co-supervisor’s help, Wei felt much less stressed about balancing the interests of both sides. “I talked with him about what I want to do and asked him to talk with industry people. That was such a big relief. He can do something in-between and I can get out from that stupid situation.”

Wei’s pattern of navigating resources was characterized by his consciousness of forcing himself to change. When facing language barriers in communicating with Canadians, Wei “just force myself to try, even sometime, they didn’t understand me.” When adapting to the new teaching methodology, “I forced myself to suffer.” According to Wei, forcing himself to change was enjoyable because he considered it as part of the process of fulfilling his curiosity. “I am a person with a curiosity about new things, so I like new changes. One part, I had to suffer, but another side, I did enjoy it.”

Wei’s Identity Changes

Wei’s identities were negotiated in the following ways: being focused on quantity and speed vs. being focused on quality and details; caring about his image vs. caring about others’ feedback; being Chinese vs. being Chinese Canadian.

The failure of Wei’s first-round National College Entrance Exam led him to reform his learning strategies. That year, he had only cared about how many test items he could finish. The following year in preparing for the second-time National College Entrance Exam, he considered himself as being more “mature” by attending to quality. This character stayed ever since.

“Starting from there, I always pay attention to details and accuracy instead of just quantity.”

Later, his research area in process control trained him to become more aware of the importance of quality. According to Wei, the key to quality was to focus on details and small pieces. For

example, if asked to finish a project within 10 days, compared to others who “may just start doing it [project],” Wei would more likely spend the first few days planning “how to do this project and chop the project into small pieces.” After running the trial test “with some models to see if it [the small piece] is feasible,” he could be confident to “follow the instructions step-by-step in last six or seven days.” This way of ‘chopping big project into small pieces’ had been also part of his life philosophy. “I seldom try to set a huge target.” “Some people say if you want to succeed, you have to have a big dream. I don’t believe in that. Just doing something small, you will get it anyway.” “Every day, I do something small. In the future, something will happen.”

Another change for Wei was his caring less about his image in front of other people. “In China, I cared more about how I appeared in front of other people. If I didn’t do it right, I would lose face or something.” Now “the idea of how you appeal in front of people is less important.” Although he “still care[d] what other people think about me,” he “care[d] more about why people think about me in a certain way and also pay attention to the feedbacks from other people.”

In addition, Wei considered himself less like a typical Chinese but more like a Chinese Canadian. He summarized the common character Chinese people shared as being competitive and the common character of Canadian people as being “peaceful” and “happy.” Like most Chinese, in China, Wei had to constantly compete with others to obtain “a sense of security” in society. At that time, he was not happy and “suffering every day.” After he came to Canada, Wei found that “people here are really peaceful and calm themselves down” and, most importantly, they were happy. “Might be affected by this society,” Wei didn’t want to give himself too much pressure of competing with other students academically, “For some students, they may care a lot about how many publications they have. For me, I just need to hit the bottom line. I don’t care.” He more accepted the “Canadian way of living” and agreed that “life is not only being a student

and about studying,” but also about his family and his happiness. However, Wei was discontented with the relationship between parents and children in Western culture. “Parents and kids do not have that strong connection with each other.” He would feel guilty of “send[ing] parents to the senior house” when they were old. Being a father now, Wei hoped that he could “have a strong relationship” with his child. Therefore, he tried to “spend as much time as possible” with his family and his child. He felt that developing and maintaining this bonding relationship as a feature of Chinese culture was important to him. When teaching his child, Wei felt obligated to “protect Chinese culture” by “passing it down to next generation” because he was proud of Chinese culture with “a very long history” and “a lot of stories behind them.”

Dong

Dong’s Challenges

Dong started being aware of facing challenges after he became an undergraduate student in China. The challenge he faced at university was his sense of loss in his social life. The university he entered was one of the best universities in China. Although Dong used to be a top student in his high school, he lost the glory of his excellence after he went to the university because he found “everyone seemed better than me and they were so versatile in different extracurricular activities such as sports and entertainment.” However, what he “can do only seemed to be study.” Hence he “felt something wrong with me and I seemed having a great loss in my life.”

In the senior year of his undergraduate studies, Dong went to the United States for a one-year exchange program. He was troubled by the hardship of maintaining a long-distance relationship with his girlfriend, surviving the supervisor-student relationship, and communicating with others in English. Keeping a long-distance relationship was both time-consuming and

emotionally demanding for Dong. “I had to spend two to three hours every day to chat with my girlfriend on the phone,” as “if there was no call in a day, she would be mad at me. I was also upsetting for the situation of not being able to stay with her.” The biggest challenge for Dong in the U.S. was the relationship with his supervisor. The supervisor wanted him to stay in the U.S. for his graduate studies, but Dong insisted on coming to Canada afterwards. His supervisor was very angry about his choice. At first, “he was yelling to me ‘you are stupid!’” Later, “he did not want to look at me and talk with me.” Dong felt so panicked. “I felt that I was totally screwed up and got myself on his blacklist.” The supervisor even cut Dong’s monthly financial support. Dong felt very stressed in the lab during that period. The third challenge was the English communication barrier. Dong was eager to exchange his ideas freely with his lab mates but he could not because “sometimes, the words seemed choked at your throat but you just don’t know how to say it out in English.” The situation could be “embarrassing because you can see everyone all waiting for you to complete your sentence.” Dong felt “embarrassed because I prolonged the time of conversation and caused the frustration of audience.”

English continued to be a challenge for Dong after he came to Canada. He was still troubled by his inaccurate expression in English. “English is a very specific language and focused on details. Everything in English has an individual expression whereas Chinese language emphasizes the context and general meaning.” He found it especially difficult when he was a TA supervising students to do experiments. “When you are teaching new students who usually do not have any lab experiences, you have to tell them specifically how to do. There are a lot of words I don’t know to describe the detailed actions and behaviours.” Loneliness did not become a challenge for Dong until he came to Canada. The loneliness was compounded by the relatively small number of Chinese in Kingston compared to the city where he did his exchange program in

the U.S., as “there were a lot of Chinese.” Another reason for Dong’s loneliness was that he found Chinese graduate students here tended to group in separate small circles. Once a person chose not to stick to one of them, “you are alone here.” So his initial challenge after he came to Kingston was “how to deal with loneliness.” “Before, if you feel lonely, you can go to bars, KTV. It was easy because a lot of friends you can ask out. Now, it was hard to find one to hang out.”

The biggest challenge Dong was facing at his current stage was his confusion about his life goals. Before, he had “goals for each stage of life: getting into high school, getting into a university for undergraduate studies, going abroad for graduate studies.” He was always “driven by the goals.” Now, as a Ph.D. student, Dong felt “I am lost.” “What am I going to do after Ph.D.?” he asked himself. He was further challenged by not being challenged. Getting a job, finding someone to whom to get married, having a baby, “all these seem not challenging.” “It was just matter of time” for everyone to obtain these goals. He experienced a sense of vacuum in not finding something “need you to fight for them.”

Dong’s Resources

Dong’s helpful resources included schoolmates and different associations including campus organizations and church.

Dong’s schoolmates helped Dong improve his English and solve some problems since his arrival in North America. Talking with his American schoolmates in the American university where he was doing his exchange studies was a good start for Dong to practice his English. “We could joke together and they did not mind about our English.” After Dong came to Canada, his senior schoolmates provided him with a lot of help in many areas of his life. First, his senior office mates introduced him to different social circles, both Canadian and international. Through

getting involved in these social circles, Dong became more comfortable with his English expression. For example, through doing volunteer work together with Canadian schoolmates, Dong got more chances to speak English outside the classroom. Through interacting with other international students in different on-campus events, Dong increased his confidence in speaking English. “I find that when I speak with other international students, I am more relaxing and confident.” In addition, Dong’s senior school mates set role models for him to adapt to Canadian culture and society. Influenced by the ways that his senior office mates actively reached out to local resources, Dong became more interested in seeking information. For example, Dong discovered a few associations on campus to enrich his extracurricular life, making friends and releasing his stress. “In life, I normally like to join some clubs or associations. Through chatting with others, not only improving my English but also helping me to get over the stress or depression sometimes.” “Every week, I have a supper with other members of the association. At beginning, I did not know a lot of people. But after we met a few times, we became friends.” More importantly, because Dong was the type of person who “likes to hear others’ advice before making decision,” he normally liked to consult with others for his decision-making. After Dong came to Canada, his senior schoolmates replaced his parents in this role. “I don’t ask for suggestions from my parents anymore. They do not have experiences here. Even I asked, it would be useless. I normally asked my senior schoolmates for advice.”

In addition to participating in school-related activities, influenced by some of his senior schoolmates, Dong attended Canadian churches and met more native-speakers to improve his English and broaden his social network. “I found that people in church was very friendly. When you were talking with them, they were very patiently listening to you. They have a lot of good virtues.”

Dong's pattern of navigating resources was actively seeking them. This active pattern of seeking resources was greatly influenced by his senior schoolmates.

Dong's Identity Changes

Dong negotiated five identities: being judgmental vs. being non-judgmental; being competitive vs. staying true to oneself; being collectivistic vs. being individualistic; being negative vs. being positive; and being impatient vs. being patient.

Dong used to care about other people's impressions of him because he knew that Chinese people normally like to make judgments of others. After Dong came to Canada, he appreciated the freedom and non-judgmental culture featured in the local society. "Canada is a country with freedom. No one will judge you; no one will gossip about you saying you should not do this and should not do that." Encouraged by this free and non-judgmental culture, Dong felt able to know himself better. "I can complete the development of my personality and my interests. Also, I can model myself in the way that I truly want to be." He became less critical of himself and overcame communication barriers with other students. "At the beginning [of practicing English with others], I was concerned about my face issue. But later, I found that not many native speakers judge my English. As a foreigner, as a second language learner, I have been good enough."

Dong had to face constantly "fierce" competitions and social pressures to "earn a lot of money and have power" or "have a comparatively high social status and reputation." To reach his life goals, Dong found he often could not choose the life he wanted; as he said, "you have to do something you don't want to do." Now in Canada, Dong was thrilled to find that life here has more freedom: "you can do something you always wanted to do and always can learn something new as long as you want." This life with more freedom was what he had "always wanted" and

living through this type of life, he could stay true to himself. Dong described his life so far like “a circle”: “When you were born, everyone is happy and innocent, but, in China, you have to force yourself to do something you don’t want to do, and squeeze yourself into the mainstream value. But here, I found I went back to where I was long time ago before I had stress.” He liked his “current being,” because it was “a natural and healthy state.”

Another identity Dong changed was from being collectivistic to being individualistic. Because Chinese culture “stresses the importance of collectivism,” Dong used to adhere to this cultural identity, although he didn’t agree with this value as he found that collectivism was built upon the loss of individual human rights. “For the interest of a group, you have to sacrifice yourself.” After he came to North America, Dong discovered that the individualism Western society advocated was more aligned with his values. First, he liked it because “it emphasizes individuals’ uniqueness.” Second, he discovered being individualistic was not to ruin team work but to better understand one’s personal strengths and contributions to the group. “Individualism does not mean that this value encourages you to become a megalomaniac. It means you may be ordinary within a group, probably no one even notices you, but you need to care about yourself and have confidence in yourself.”

Dong found that he gradually changed from being a negative person to being a positive person under the influence of Canadian colleagues. “When I was in China, I was a negative person. But after I came here, I found that everyone is happy to greet each other with ‘Hello, how are you doing? How are you today?’ You would be gradually influenced and start changing yourself.” He found that his Canadian colleagues often lightened the gloomy spirit by making jokes and even doing some non-harmful mischief. “In China, this kind of behaviour would be considered stupid or childish. But here, people think it is a good way of regulating stress.” Dong

admitted that observing this type of behaviour was not only a great lesson for him but also motivated him to change to be a positive person.

The most remarkable change was Dong's becoming more patient than before. Several times, when Dong had conflicts with the American supervisor of his exchange program, he almost gave up his program. Dong finally decided to be more patient when facing challenges. "At that time, it was very painful. I missed home so much. But after I decided to give myself more time and be more patient about the development of a situation, it became better after two months." From then on, Dong learned the importance of being patient. "There must be different types of difficulties in life, such as language, life, and studies. There are no shortcuts for solving these difficulties at once. I have to learn to be patient and pay attention to what I am currently doing." Dong described the state of maintaining patience under stress as the feeling of "walking in the dark valley" where "you have to walk every step and then gradually you will find a way out."

Bo

Bo's Challenges

When Bo was in China, the major challenge for him was making changes in his life direction. In the National College Entrance Exam, his mark was not high enough to bring him into the university he had been longing for. Bo faced two possibilities: "to choose another year to prepare for exam or drop out of school to do something else." To fulfill his dream, he decided to wait for another year to retake the exam. However, in the eyes of the people living in the economically underdeveloped countryside where he grew up, one more year of staying in school to retake the exam looked to be a highly financially risky and self-sabotaging choice. Bo was under a huge amount of pressure to prove himself right in his choice. After he was admitted into

university, Bo was challenged by his choice of changing his major. He started his studies with Humanities. Later, he found he had more passion for Psychology. He decided to switch his major. However, “at first, it was a little bit challenging” because “Humanities students only need study one math course whereas Psychology students need a full training in statistics and data analysis.” In addition, “the thinking styles are different from each other.”

After Bo came to Canada, he was challenged by English barriers, research difficulties, and the question of how to balance life and study. English barriers were shown in different forms: inadequate confidence in his oral expression skills, lack of sufficient listening ability, obstacles in comprehension, and hardship of communication. In terms of his oral expression, Bo was deeply concerned with his accent and fluency, as “my accent was not natural and I cannot speak about topics fluently.” This lack of confidence was apparent in his TA work when answering students’ questions in person during office hours. Bo felt TA work was “very hard” due to his inadequate oral expression. In addition, Bo felt “frustrated” about his listening skills as “I didn’t understand the requirements and questions in the class, so I got a low mark in my first homework.” Moreover, Bo felt “anxious” about his comprehension. “During the following few weeks [after I came], I still don’t fully understand the questions. I feel that it influenced my performance a lot.” His research difficulties mainly came from his confusion about research ideas due to a lack of previous training in critical thinking. Critical thinking, defined by Bo was “you need fully understand the research questions, how to test the questions, and to what extent the study result can be generalized outside the experimental condition.” Since “Chinese education system doesn’t pay much attention to cultivate critical thinking,” Bo “got kind of lost and didn’t know how to start and how to generate research ideas and how to test the ideas.” He couldn’t help worrying about his research progress. Besides study and research, Bo was troubled

by how to balance his life and study. He really wanted to “get involved in some activities” to “look into Canadian culture.” However, later, he “found I don’t have enough time. There are a lot of courses and projects need you to spend a lot of time.” In addition to the pressure of searching for his research ideas from a large number of journals, he had to sacrifice his leisure and social life. However, he was not willing to let his social life go and felt a strong need to balance his life and study.

Bo’s Resources

Bo considered his high school teachers, university professors, schoolmates, and online and on-campus resources helpful.

Bo’s high school teachers were generally viewed as “nice and caring” by him. “I think I encountered many good teachers in my school. They are very nice people. They spent a lot of time taking care of us.” Bo felt especially lucky to have a caring and supportive head teacher. For a rural student like Bo, staying in school was not easy due to financial pressures. “During that time, many students faced financial issues because their families cannot support their education financially. The tuition was high. So he tried many ways to help his students to overcome the difficulties.” Also, for a rural student, extracurricular books and activities could be considered as luxuries. Bo’s head teacher opened his mind through providing him and others with “extra books” to read, teaching them “new songs,” and reading touching and inspiring stories to them. These books, songs, and stories instilled in Bo a belief in having “a higher goal and dream for life.”

Since Bo came to Canada, his supervisor, professors, and schoolmates helped him to get familiar with a new academic environment. “She [my supervisor] introduced me to the program and talked with me about the progress a graduate student should work on.” A professor in his

department voluntarily mentored him in his research and his school life. “I was introduced to a professor in my program. We had a meeting every three or four months talking about my process and about issues I face.” His schoolmates, especially those who took the same classes with him or worked in the same lab with him, helped to improve his communication skills and better comprehend the homework requirements. For example, Bo often asked for clarification from his classmates, at least when he first came to the program. His lab mates talked with him about “how to deal with” students’ questions in his TA job.

Bo found that online resources were very helpful for him to better adapt to graduate studies. “There is online research, which help me to learn from other professors’ experiences.” He learned from “other universities’ guidelines” about “what kind of typical life is in graduate schools.” Bo found these guidelines informative. “You can use it to get yourself on track, such as what you prepare for the first year of graduate studies and what things you may expect to happen in the following years.” He learned to improve his critical thinking skills through these online resources. “They [online resources] share research experience about critical thinking skills and what important experience and skills need to be cultivated to prepare yourself to be a creative and productive researcher.”

For Bo, on-campus groups and events were an important channel for him to improve his English and to get to know people. “I get involved in an English conversation group in QUIC. You can find an English speaking buddy to help you to improve your speaking.” In addition, he registered in different workshops organized on campus to expand his horizons. For example, through the Emerging Leadership Program at the Centre for Teaching and Learning, he found his mentor. Through TA workshops, he learned to how to improve “teaching skills.”

Bo's pattern of navigating resources involved actively seeking information. He sought online and on-campus resources. He interacted with his schoolmates and professors. While Bo considered his positive attitude as part of his personality, he attributed the development of this positive attitude to his long time living independently in schools. As he said, "it has been part of myself since I grew up to accustomed to the way to find resources to solve the problems by myself."

Bo's Identity Changes

Over the years, Bo negotiated many aspects of identity: working hard to being balanced (for example, being result-oriented to being process-oriented); being competitive to being idealistic; and lacking self-knowledge to having self-knowledge.

Bo used to firmly believe that hard work was the center of life. This belief was first instilled when he was young by his father. "My father often told me, 'only if you can stand the hardest of hardships can you hope to rise in society.'" Being a rural student, the only way of changing one's social status and fate was through getting into a good university. Therefore, the importance of results overrode that of processes. In such circumstances, Bo's life had been preoccupied with studying hard without extracurricular life. "At that time, I had never been outside of the countryside and the area I lived. I didn't know there are other ways to change my life." Later in his university, Bo started to get readings on humanity and social sciences. Influenced by what he read, Bo began thinking about the meaning of life. "It started in the senior year in my undergraduate study. In humanity study, we read a lot about philosophy and history. Because there are many thinkers who have solved a lot of fundamental questions about life, [I also started thinking to myself] what's life for?" Bo figured out that his life could not simply be hard work and the pursuit of higher social hierarchy but "to live a meaningful and happy life."

To reach this goal, he realized that he needed to “balance life to have healthy life style” and enjoy every stage of life instead of only focusing on results. Therefore, although he was challenged by study and research once he came to Canada, Bo was still able to participate in different extracurricular activities as much as he could to balance his life. He felt it was important for him to “be open and be flexible for using all resources and opportunities.”

Another important change was from pursuing money and fame to pursuing dreams. For Bo, money and fame used to be critically important. According to his previous understanding, the way of totally changing his fate and proving himself was to “earn a lot of money, or be a powerful official with high rank in the government system.” However, starting from his senior high school year, influenced by his head teacher, Bo began paying attention to his long-term life “dream.” Later he discovered his life dream was to help others instead of simply pursuing money and fame; he switched his major to Psychology to better help others in the future. In his daily life, Bo was willing to help others as much as he could. For example, after he became accustomed to the Canadian learning environment, he shared his experiences with other newly arrived Chinese students and international students during their transition to Canadian culture and society.

Another feature of Bo’s identity was moving from limited self-knowledge to greater self-knowledge. Starting in university, majoring in Psychology, Bo began knowing himself better. “After learning psychology, I know more about myself.” From then on, Bo started spending time to “nurture the strengths and overcome the weakness.” To improve his communication skills, he was actively reaching out to make friends inside and outside his department. To develop his critical thinking skills, Bo learned the way in which other established researchers analyzed issues. Bo also became aware of and grateful for his experiences in encountering and

overcoming “setbacks and adversities.” From these challenges, Bo felt that he could “gain better understanding on” himself and “will understand about the life more,” and thereby “improve understanding on the way of doing things.”

Commonalities across Graduate Male Participants

Common Challenges

Among all these participants, TA work was seen as a common challenging experience. Tao was challenged by his English expression and how to motivate students to attend his tutorial. TA work scared Wei since he had to teach a large lecture for the first time by himself not soon after he arrived in Canada. Dong found TA work challenging because he had to explain experimental procedures in detail in English. Bo was troubled by his inadequate English communication skills in answering students’ questions during TA office hours.

English, as another common challenge among these four participants, not only intensified the difficulty level of TA work but also manifested itself in other aspects of life. According to Wei, English created difficulty when he tried to understand the class and when he communicated with his supervisor and internship company. English hindered Dong to freely exchange his thoughts with his lab mates. Bo perceived English to be challenging in many aspects: listening, speaking, comprehending, and communicating.

Among these participants, proving oneself appeared to be a common challenge for Tao, Wei, and Bo. Tao was challenged by proving that he could still have a bright future without any connections in an unjust system. Wei was challenged by proving that he was still an excellent student in spite of being at a B-Level university. Bo was challenged by proving that he had the ability to fulfill his dreams.

For Tao and Dong, maintaining a long-distance relationship was challenging. For Tao, it was especially frustrating due to repeated failures in his application for an American visa and the financial pressures involved in keeping the relationship alive. For Dong, it was a time-consuming and emotionally demanding task.

Balancing social life and study was challenging for Dong and Bo. Dong realized it was a challenge after comparing himself with his schoolmates who were active in different extracurricular activities in China. Bo was challenged by not being able to get involved in social activities due to the pressures from his research.

Common Resources

Faculty members (supervisor, co-supervisor, and university professor/mentor) were a common resource for Tao, Wei, and Bo. Tao's supervisor helped Tao to continue his research without changing research topic by assigning other students to do the experiments in their collaborative lab in the US. Wei's co-supervisor lessened the burden for Wei when he struggled with balancing his academic needs and the demands of his internship position. The co-supervisor assumed the role of communicating with Wei's academic supervisor and Wei's internship supervisor. Bo's supervisor and university mentor helped him to adapt to a Canadian research institution and academic environment.

Schoolmates were important for Wei, Dong, and Bo. Wei's schoolmates helped him to improve his English. Dong's schoolmates helped him to expand his social networks and motivated him to broaden his horizons. Bo's schoolmates helped him to clarify his confusion about his homework and TA job requirements.

Tao, Dong, and Bo were all actively involved in different associations on-campus and/or off-campus. Tao was mainly affiliated with Christian groups. These Christian groups offered him

a bigger platform of building friendships and for seeking spiritual support. Dong mainly joined both Christian groups and non-religious groups to reach out to a larger student population and to expand his social circle. Bo participated in different on-campus clubs and workshops to enhance his communication skills and obtain study- or research-related information.

Friends were a common resource for Tao and Wei. Tao's friends were divided into his non-Christian friends and Christian friends. His non-Christian friends helped him to release stress and depression when he was facing challenges in applying for overseas universities and maintaining a long-distance relationship with his ex-girlfriend. After he became Christian, he relied on his Christian friends for their suggestions. Wei's friends were mainly old friends who grew up with him. Wei considered his old friends as the major source of comfort in his life.

Technology, such as computer and on-line resources, was important for Wei and Bo. The computer was an important asset for Wei to increase his comprehension level of textbooks and lectures. On-line resources were important for Bo to enrich his knowledge and understanding about graduate studies in North America.

Common Identity Changes

The most common aspect of identity change among these four participants was being less competitive than before. Tao changed from being competitive for money and fame to being true to his spiritual needs because of his religious beliefs. Wei became less competitive academically under the influence of Canadian culture. Also influenced by Canadian culture, Dong could relax to choose the way of living he always wanted for himself. Bo became less materially competitive and more idealistic under the various influences he encountered (such as, his head teacher, his major study in university, and unnamed others).

Most identity changes were shared by only two participants. From being judgmental to less judgmental was a common identity change that happened to Tao and Dong. Tao's becoming less judgmental was mostly the result of humility being viewed as an important virtue in the Bible. As a Christian, Tao felt that his behaviour and thinking should follow the teachings of the Bible. Dong became less judgmental because he admired Canadian society's non-judgmental approach of treating people. Tao and Bo changed from result-oriented to process-oriented. Tao became process-oriented because he believed that his results were not controlled by himself but already planned by God. Bo became process-oriented under the influence of reading books related to philosophy and history, which deepened his thinking about the meaning of life.

Knowing oneself better was an identity change shared between Dong and Bo. After Dong came to Canada, he had more time to know himself better and to develop his personality fully. After Bo switched his major to Psychology, he increased his self-understanding. Working to balance life and study was a change that happened to Wei and Bo. Wei converted his focus from being only concerned about study to being concerned as well about his family. Bo actively participated in different activities on campus to enrich his extracurricular life.

Success

If Tao wanted to be viewed as successful by Chinese culture, he would have to be "a famous scientist, a member of national science committee, a prestigious professor, and to run big projects and be admired by a lot of people." However, Tao viewed his success in a different way. "To be successful, I need to have a holy spiritual life," which, in his view, was to "look down at money issues," "care more about other people," "have more wisdom during communications," and, most importantly, "guide others to believe in God and have a holy spiritual life as well." His role model of success was a famous Chinese Christian priest. This priest was "very

knowledgeable in Christianity,” could “explain a question in a thorough and deep way,” and “show others how mighty God is.”

Wei’s summary of the Chinese cultural view of success was “money plus power.” Wei viewed his own success to be “money, power plus enjoying life.” Among these three components, Wei listed “enjoying life” to be “more important.” For Wei, “enjoying life” was a combination of two things: “One thing is how to get along well with people surrounding me; another thing is how to explore different things in order to meet my curiosity.” Compared to other people “who don’t need money and power, and just enjoy it [life] in some natural way,” Wei needed “money and power at certain level” to “make it [enjoying life] happen” and make his family happy. His role models of success were different in “different stages” of his life. Currently, his supervisor and some successful engineers were his role models. Wei admired his supervisor’s academic achievement and successful engineers’ competence in “mak[ing] all the tough things work.”

According to Dong, success in Chinese culture was all about “money, fame, social status, reputation, and power.” In contrast, Dong’s own success was to “be the person that I want to be, and live a life that I want to live, and enjoy every day of my life.” If all Dong focused on was reaching success as defined in Chinese culture by any means, he would consider his life as “suffering.” Dong’s role model was a famous Chinese scholar. This scholar enjoyed his life and totally focused on his research instead of pleasing others to become famous. Dong perceived this scholar as “a man with a strong inner power,” which Dong admired most.

Bo’s understanding of success in Chinese culture was to “earn a lot of money or be a powerful official with high rank in the government system.” Rather, for Bo, “to live a meaningful and happy life” would be his success. “To be meaningful” meant “you use your

potential to contribute to large society and help others to achieve their dreams.” “To be happy” meant “to balance your own life to have a healthy life style and also have the freedom of doing things that you want to do.” His role models of success included his head teacher and two famous Chinese entrepreneurs. These three people shared one thing in common. They not only inspired young Chinese students to pursue their dreams but also used their resources to help these students to reach their dreams.

Success in Chinese culture, based on these four participants’ understanding, was closely related to money, power, and social status. These four participants had their own definitions of success. Tao’s success was to have a holy spiritual life; Wei’s success was to enjoy life in addition to having money and power; Dong’s success was to live a life he wanted for himself; and Bo’s success was to have a meaningful and happy life. None of these definitions was completely in line with their views of what Chinese culture found successful.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

This study examined four domains: challenges, resources, identities, and the subjective view of success, from 16 Chinese international students' subjective understanding and experiences and through a synthesis of the literature. The research additionally revealed some limitations of the current study that could be addressed in future research and some implications for practice that could be implemented at the university level. Through conducting this research, I learned not only from the findings as presented in this dissertation but also grew in my understanding of myself and my role as a researcher and a former Chinese international student.

Challenges

The interviews with 16 Chinese international students at Queen's revealed four leading challenges for Chinese international students across different contexts: loneliness, relationships, academic challenges, and English. Loneliness is normally caused by lack of sufficient relationships (Weiss, 1973). According to Weiss, there are two general types of loneliness: (a) personal loneliness caused by the absence of intimate relationships with lover, parent, or child; and (b) social loneliness caused by lack of sufficient social relationships with peers. In this study, participants' loneliness included both types. Personal loneliness occurred at the initial stage of some participants living independently from their parents. Liang felt lonely living far from his parents during his senior high school year. Claire felt lonely because she had to face her fears individually after a murder happened in the neighborhood where she was living in Australia. The second type of loneliness revealed by some participants was social loneliness. Social loneliness can be related to the quality and quantity of social networks (Green, Richardson, & Schatten-Jones, 2001), such as the number of friends and the closeness of friendships. In this study, social loneliness caused by the quantity of friends was reported by Yan, Dong, and Peng. Yan had been

feeling lonely because she did not have many friends due to being situated in the gap between the Chinese community and the Canadian social circle. Dong felt lonely because he could not find friends with whom to hang out. Peng's loneliness was due to the lack of old friends in the new environment. Instead of emphasizing the importance of quantity of friends, David expressed his need for quality of friendships. For David, his loneliness was caused by the lack of a close friend who truly understood his inner world. In addition to personal and social loneliness, a third type of loneliness emerged: academic loneliness caused by lack of research collaborations, as indicated by Mary. In previous studies, because of the role gender and age play in social and personal relationships, loneliness has often been perceived differently among people of different age and gender groups (e.g., Cecen, 2008; Mahon, Yarcheski, & Yarcheski, 1994); however, in this study, participants' perceptions of their loneliness were mainly influenced by their individual experiences within cultural transitions rather than simply influenced by their age and gender.

Difficulties in building relationships were another important challenge for some of these Chinese international students. These relationships included three major types: relationships with teachers/supervisors, relationships with schoolmates other than Chinese, and intimate relationships. The relationships with teachers/supervisors were viewed as a challenge more often by graduate students than by undergraduate students. Undergraduate students more likely viewed their relationships with their previous teachers in China as a challenge rather than their relationships with their teachers after they came to Canada. Lan's fear of her teacher at her elementary school in China had been haunting her for many years until she came to Canada. David's hatred of his teachers was strong when he was in China. Graduate students were more likely struggling with their relationships with their research supervisors after they came to North America. Yan was anxious about her supervisor's impression of her due to her fear of being

compared to a brilliant senior fellow student who was supervised by the same supervisor. The maintenance of a perfect image as a student became a great burden to Lin every time she had contact with her supervisor. Wei's communication with his supervisor was troubled by Wei's difficulty in adapting to his supervisor's talking speed. Dong's independent decision to come to Canada jeopardized his harmonious relationship with his American supervisor.

The interpersonal relationships with schoolmates were viewed as a challenge more commonly among female undergraduate participants than the other groups' participants. Two female undergraduate students, Claire and Lan, attributed the causes of the lack of social support to be language and cultural differences as the literature (e.g., Koeske, Lee, & Sales, 2004; Misa, Crist, & Burant, 2003; Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007) has previously suggested. The other two participants attributed the cause to other factors. Mei viewed her own introverted personality as a barrier for her to make friends, whereas Julia believed that the school's context caused the problem to make friends other than Chinese.

Another major challenge with relationships was intimate relationships. Intimate relationships have seldom been considered as an influential factor of international students' psychological adjustment (Popadiuk, 2008). In this study, this type of relationship had an impact on the lives of two male graduate students, Tao and Dong. Tao strived to maintain a long-distance relationship with his girlfriend in spite of all the possibilities of not being able to get together with her in the United States. Dong had to squeeze valuable working time to talk with his girlfriend on the phone for hours every day to keep the relationship alive.

Academic challenge was revealed as another important challenge among Chinese international students. The literature has suggested that cultural differences lead to different approaches to participating in the classroom (Lee, 2009) and learning styles (Tiwari, Avery, &

Lai, 2003). In this study, participation in classroom interactions and learning styles, such as critical thinking, comprehension, and application skills, were indicated as challenges by some participants. Rather than, as the literature (Lee, 2009) has suggested, students being shy or inactive in classroom participation as founded in traditional Asian culture emphasizing individuals being humble and silent in public, participants indicated that their being uncomfortable in classroom interactions was caused by a lack of previous training in these activities in Chinese educational settings. For Claire and Liang, the difficulty of getting involved in in-class participation was mainly caused by cultural differences between their training in Chinese classrooms and the behaviours expected in Canadian classrooms. Similar to the lack of training in in-classroom participation, critical thinking, comprehension, and applications were less trained or taught in different ways in China. For Peng, critical thinking was a new thinking style about which he had not been trained but gradually learned once he came to Canada. For Liang, some software applications widely applied in Canadian classrooms were new to him. Ting realized that comprehension skills trained in China were different from Canada in that China simply required students listening to teachers teaching whereas Canada required students to actively and independently think and learn during study. In addition, according to previous research findings (Austin, Saklofske, & Mastoras, 2010; Shahjahan & Barker, 2009), exams and research were common challenges among domestic and other ethnic students. In this study, some participants identified exams and research as their academic challenges. Qiang's failure on exams almost beat him to an emotional collapse. Bo struggled with research topics and progress ever since he enrolled in the graduate program.

English was the most common challenge across all four groups. Similar to the literature (e.g., Ayers & Quantlebaum, 1992; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Wait & Gressel, 2009; Brown, 2008)

that has suggested that English is closely related to students' academic performance as well as daily communication, in this study, the role of English was viewed significantly by participants. For undergraduate students who needed to pass language tests or a language requirement to get into Queen's, English was the key to their admission to university. For graduate students who needed to communicate with colleagues and supervisors about their research, English was the critical tool to express themselves and enhance the level of mutual understanding. However, the importance of English was not limited to these reasons. In this study, English was viewed as a challenge because of its integration with other challenges, such as proving oneself as equally good as other students, loneliness, Teaching Assistantships, making friends with domestic students, comprehension skills, and knowledge application skills. The participants' subjective perceptions of the difficulty of English show that English remains a significant challenge for these Chinese international students in line with previous literature. More importantly, their subjective perception of English as a challenge integrating with other challenges in different contexts presented English as a multi-dimensional challenge with evolving demands and needs.

While some of the growth experiences of undergraduate students in this sample are likely similar to those of other university students in Canada because of maturation, there are unique aspects specific to Chinese international students. For example, Chinese international students were reconstructing their ethnic identity in the process of overcoming their challenges, unlike students born in Canada. For example, Mei perceived her identity changed from mono-cultural to multicultural through her interactions with her ESL classmates from different parts of world. Her personality became extroverted in her process of improving her English. David felt that he was changing from Chinese to Chinese Canadian in his process of interacting with his Canadian teachers, peers, and communities. However, other students, such as Qiang, became more

traditional from his own experience of solving his academic crisis. English and educational contexts were two other factors that seemed to be minimally influenced by maturation and related almost exclusively to the participants being international students from a second language background. The challenges experienced by these students in struggling with English communication and their need to adapt to a Western educational culture were challenges largely absent with students from Canada.

Resources

Content of Resources

The results corroborate the previous research findings on resources that are helpful for Chinese international students' adaptation and add to our understanding of resources contributing to international students' resilience. The resources mostly shared by the 16 participants in common included intrinsic, extrinsic, cultural, and contextual resources. Although participants identified these resources as common ones, participants perceived the help and supports from the resources in different ways.

Intrinsic resources. The intrinsic resources were mostly mentioned by female students at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and male students at the graduate level. An intrinsic resource can be manifested as personal motivations for making changes; for example, Claire's determination of not escaping from reality anymore made her start embracing changes in her life with a positive spirit. This finding supports the cited literature (Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, & Lynch, 2007; Chirkov, Safdar, Guzman, & Playford, 2008) that self-determination is a significant motivation for international students' resilience. The result also supports the argument of previous research findings (e.g., Leong, 2007; Wang, 2009) that some personal qualities are important intrinsic resources for Chinese students' resilience. For example, Mary's persistence

and optimism helped her stay on the path of pursuing her academic goals instead of giving up in the middle. However, this study also revealed other personal qualities, individuals' analytical ability and curiosity, which were not revealed in the previous studies. Yan's analytical ability was an asset for her to keep alert in facing challenges and changes; Wei's curiosity was an important intrinsic resource for him to overcome challenges in a joyful manner.

Extrinsic resources. The results also supported the previous literature (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Qin, 2009b; Schultz & King, 2012; Ying, Lee, & Tsai, 2007) that extrinsic resources for Chinese international students included parents, teachers, and peers.

For example, Chen and Lan (1998) found that Chinese students were willing to accept parents' advice and academic expectations. In the current study, some participants indicated that their parents' advice and academic expectations were major sources of support for them to overcome challenges. Lin's and Liang's parents often provided useful strategies and wisdom for Lin's and Liang's adaptations to new environments. Ting's parents were her greatest motivation to finish her Ph.D. program on time. For the sake of their children, Chinese parents are also known to be willing to sacrifice (Zhang & Carrasquillo, 1995). In this study, David felt grateful for his parents' sacrifice of their careers for his better education and future in Canada. Lan's mom took a leave from her business to be a full-time companion for Lan during Lan's struggles with her physical illness. In addition to parents' advice, expectations, and sacrifice, parents themselves represented a source of inspiration for some participants. Yan's and Mei's moms were great role models for Yan and Mei to pursue their dreams in spite of difficulties. Mary attributed her persistence and self-discipline to her parents' influence on her.

As suggested by the cited literature (e.g., Planas & Civil, 2009; Schultz & King, 2012; Strickland, 2012) that teachers are influential for international students' perceptions about their

experiences in a host country, the current study demonstrated that teachers/supervisors played an important role in helping Chinese international students. Teachers/supervisors helped some participants with their studies directly. Ting's co-supervisor greatly supported her completion of the Ph.D. program by providing detailed revisions. Wei's co-supervisor helped him to avoid unnecessary detours by removing the barrier between his supervisor and internship supervisors. Tao's supervisor helped him to continue his original research topic without going to the United States in person to collect data. Somewhat indirectly, receiving positive feedback and encouragement from teachers provided Lan and David with more incentives to study harder and improve faster in their studies. Lan and David perceived their Canadian teachers as a significant force in re-building their self-esteem and reshaping their attitudes toward school.

The results also supported the previous research findings (Andrade, 2006; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998) on peers as important sources of help for international students. In this study, peers identified as being helpful included old friends, new friends, schoolmates, and housemates. They encompassed Chinese, Canadian, and other international students. Old Chinese friends of Qiang and Wei provided comfort when Qiang and Wei were frustrated about challenges in the new environment. Claire's new Chinese friends and Lin's and Tao's new religious Chinese friends provided emotional supports when these participants were anxious, puzzled, or stressed. Other than emotional support, friends provided some participants with specific help. David's new international friends who were also immigrants helped him to find his first part-time job after he immigrated to Canada; Lan's new Chinese friends safely guided her back home at night. In addition to old and new friends, schoolmates provided assistance for Chinese students to adapt to Canadian learning and teaching styles. For example, Liang's and Peng's Canadian teammates helped them to better adapt to teamwork, which was deemed essential in Canadian learning

settings. Bo's Canadian lab mates offered him helpful suggestions for doing TA work; Mei's Canadian schoolmates' interest in Chinese culture helped Mei to overcome her sense of insecurity and enhance her confidence. Senior Chinese schoolmates or Chinese schoolmates with more acculturated learning and living experiences in Canada were helpful for Qiang's, Liang's, and Peng's transitions. Roommates, flatmates, and housemates further built a net of support for these students. Mei's flatmates helped her to practice her English outside the classroom; Yan's housemates provided her with a sense of belonging to the Canadian culture.

Cultural resources. Previous research findings have suggested that Christianity has become an undeniable influence among Chinese students in the United States (Abel, 2006; Hall, 2006; Wang & Yang, 2006; Yang & Tamney, 2006; Zhang, 2006). However, there has been a lack of research on how Christianity has impacted Chinese students in Canada. The results of the current study show that Christianity was influential among these participants. For 3 of the 16 participants, Julia, Lin, and Tao, God was the most important supportive force for them to overcome challenges. In addition to showing that Christianity was an important cultural resource for participants, Christian believers in this study approached God in different ways. Julia believed that God worked with her and helped her to pursue her dreams. Lin and Tao were inclined to fully rely on God and prefer God's will over their personal goals. In front of God's power, Lin transferred her previous dependence on her parents' advice to the Bible and people in the church. Furthermore, in contrast to previous research (e.g., Pan et al., 2008; Shek, 2005; Shek et al., 2003) on the impact of traditional Chinese cultural resources on Chinese students, traditional Chinese beliefs such as Confucianism, Taoism, or Buddhism were less mentioned as an influential resource for Chinese international students. Only Ting clearly pointed out that Buddhism was one of the important cultural resources for her completion of her Ph.D. studies,

which was considered to be the biggest challenge for her. The rest of the participants didn't clearly point out that specific Chinese traditional cultural beliefs represented a contributing resource supporting them in overcoming challenges, as most of the participants felt that they were not familiar with the content of traditional Chinese culture.

Patterns of Navigation

In reviewing the findings of resilience from his research team conducted in 14 countries with 1500 youth globally, Ungar (2008b) suggested that the principle of navigation is “children can only select from the health resources they have available” (p. 231). Given the existence of a variety of types of resources available for individuals, patterns of individuals' navigation can be diverse. However, there is a dearth of studies revealing the patterns of individuals' navigation of their resources. In the current study, the following three general patterns of navigating resources were found: reaching out to extrinsic and contextual resources, reaching in for religious or personal resources, and integrating personal resources or religious resources with extrinsic, contextual resources.

Reaching out. In an empirical study on immigrant students' coping strategies in American high schools, Yeh and Inose (2002) discovered that half of the 274 Asian immigrant students actively sought social help when problems arose. The present study corroborates this view in that a majority of participants (10 of 16) chose to be active in or have an explicit awareness of seeking extrinsic resources when they encountered challenges. Although the potential explanations for Chinese students' choice of actively reaching out for resources can be embedded in their personality (Huang, Zhu, Zheng, Zhang, & Shiomi, 2012) and the stages of their transition (Wong, 2012), this study provided four potential reasons for doing so embedded in the participants' motivations. The first one was driven by specific personal goals as

demonstrated in Liang's active interaction with extrinsic resources. To fulfill the requirements for the Queen's University entrance English test and later university courses, Liang forced himself to look for resources such as schoolmates and university-organized activities to help him improve his English and academic work. A second category was driven by personal needs. With a need to be accepted, Lan worked with her Canadian teachers, schoolmates, friends, and parents. Feeling a need to make a change, David actively sought different resources including his teachers, his schoolmates, and school-organized extracurricular activities to reshape his image. A third motivation was gradually influenced by peers. Mei actively sought on-campus opportunities of improving her English and changing her introverted personality after taking the suggestions of teachers and classmates in the School of English. Mary's involvement in community activities was under the influence of her housemate. Under the influence of Canadian classmates, Peng started paying attention to extrinsic resources. The fourth motivation came from one's early life experiences. Qiang's early experience of dealing with academic failure taught him to seek guidance from older people. Bo's early experience of living independently in schools in China shaped his pattern of navigating school-related resources actively.

Reaching in. Another distinctive finding of this study was the influence of Christianity on participants. Although previous research (e.g., Abel, 2006; Hall, 2006; Wang & Yang, 2006; Yang & Tamney, 2006; Zhang, 2006) has suggested that Christianity has been emerging as a significant belief among Chinese individuals overseas, it has yet to demonstrate how Chinese Christians cope with difficulties. Pargament and his colleagues (1988) summarized three major religious coping styles—Deferring, Self-directing, and Collaborating—based on their analysis of the literature, their findings from 15 interviews with religious people, and their survey among 197 church members in the United States. Deferring refers to individuals solely relying on God

to solve their problems; self-directing means individuals take an active role in solving problems but still are affiliated with God. With a collaborating approach, individuals believe God works with them as a joint force in the process of overcoming challenges. Kolchakian and Sears (1999) tested this theory among 140 American undergraduate students, primarily Caucasians and with a belief based on the Bible (e.g., Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Baptist). They found that the three major styles all existed among their student participants. The results of the present study show that the three Chinese Christian students took two of the three major different approaches to solve their problems. Lin and Tao applied the deferring approach to their lives. For Lin and Tao, friends, parents, and supervisors were important, but compared to God, these resources should all be considered to be subordinate. After they converted to Christianity, Lin and Tao started alienating themselves from other resources. Lin and Tao believed that they needed to trust God's plan instead of following their personal will. Another approach is the collaborating approach employed by Julia. Julia integrated inner faith in God with her personal agency. As compared to Lin and Tao who viewed God as a supreme figure for whom they worked, Julia viewed God as an active supporter with whom she worked.

Integrating resources. Previous studies (Pargament et al, 1988; Kolchakian & Sears, 1999) on resources have not offered an explanation of how individuals with a collaborating style might integrate their resources by reconciling the potential conflicts between their religious beliefs and their personal choice to rely on other resources. The results of the present study add some useful pieces to this puzzle. For Julia, her personal choices or her personal goals were planned through communicating with God. However, she didn't fully rely on God's power. She felt she needed to work with God to explore resources to overcome challenges. Similar to Julia, although Ting believed in Buddhism, she took an integrated approach to reconcile the difference

between Buddhism's emphasis on non-attachment and her proactive approach to extrinsic and contextual resources. Ting indicated that the purpose of her proactive approach was to finish Ph.D. studies successfully, while the purpose of her completion of her Ph.D. studies was to show her filial piety to her parents, which was also the most important lesson she perceived to be learned from Buddhism.

In addition to integration based on reconciliation between religious beliefs and other resources, this study further showed another type of integrated approach that combined personal resources with extrinsic and contextual resources. Claire appreciated the help she got from her friends and schoolmates; however, she also considered her personal awareness as an important resource for helping her to reach out for these extrinsic resources. Although Mary viewed extrinsic and contextual resources as important for her to overcome acculturated challenges, she didn't separate her personal role of being responsible for her own life choices from the help she received from her teachers, schoolmates, and friends. Yan utilized her personal strength of reasoning with the process of working with extrinsic resources to improve her English, shorten the cultural distance between Canadian students and herself, and make changes to her life. Wei viewed his personal curiosity as an asset pushing him to actively explore extrinsic and contextual resources.

The types of the participants' resources support some findings that previous studies suggested to be important and helpful for Chinese students' resilience, such as personal motivation, parents, teachers, and peers. However, this study reveals some additional resources seldom or rarely mentioned in previous studies, such as individuals' inborn analytical ability and curiosity, and their newly-formed Christian belief after they came to Canada. Compared to the volume of studies relevant to the content of resources, the ones about patterns of navigation of

resources are few. In this study, the patterns of navigation embody the theoretical concept of navigation of resilience in three different concrete ways –reaching out, reaching in, and integrating), none of which was specifically discussed in previous studies of resilience in any context.

Identities

Changed Identities

Previous literature (Costigan, Koryzma, Hua, & Chance, 2010; Eyou, Adair, & Dixon, 2000; Li, 2001; Luthans et al., 2008; Searle & Ward, 1990) has suggested that personal, social, and cultural identities are helpful for individuals overcoming difficulties. The results of this dissertation show the personal, social, and cultural identities Chinese students perceived as important for helping them in facing challenges. Additionally, as Ungar (2012b) and other researchers (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Schoon, 2012) have suggested, identity was constantly negotiated during the process of individuals' interactions with multiple contexts, so that participants' perceived important identities were not fixed or pre-existent but gradually emerged as outcomes of their transforming, reshaping, or reinforcing their previous identities.

Personal identities. The personal identities participants perceived as important were not the same as in previous studies (Chen & Zhang, 2011; Luthans et al., 2008), namely, extroverted, conscious, agreeable, open, hopeful, self-efficient, and optimistic. There were a variety of other personal identities revealed: responsible, globally aware, non-judgmental, independent, caring, positive, process-oriented, true to oneself, and less competitive, which the participants had changed from less responsible, self-centered, judgmental, dependent, less caring, negative, results-oriented, living up to others' comments or expectations, and competitive,.

Among these perceived important personal identities, the most frequently mentioned one was being true to oneself. Yan preferred to be true to her own motivations of fitting into Canadian society instead of living up to other Chinese people's comments about her. Mary felt being true to her academic dream was more important than following the social trends of getting married or getting a job. Tao decided to be true to his spiritual needs instead of being competitive for material needs as he used to be. Similar to Tao, Dong used to be competitive but now he chose to be true to his real need, which was to maintain a natural and healthy state. Bo found that staying true to his interests was beneficial for him to make optimal life choices. The participants who realized the importance of being true to oneself were all graduate students.

A plausible reason for graduate students emphasizing the self more than undergraduate students might be related to age differences. Klimstra and his colleagues (2010) conducted a longitudinal study of 1313 Dutch adolescents from age 12 to 20 and discovered that the exploration of identity became more in-depth from early adolescence to late adolescence. In the current research, compared to undergraduate students who were either late adolescents or emerging adults, graduate students in their adulthood showed deeper understanding of their inner needs and were more aware of their self-knowledge. This study thereby suggests that personal identities were continually explored and became more self-aware as age increased.

Social identities. Traditionally, since familial and parental roles have been viewed as having the predominant impact on Chinese culture and personal development, submission to parents' suggestions and decisions has often been seen as equivalent to the concept of filial piety in Chinese culture (Leong & Hartung, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990). However, there have been increasingly conflicting opinions about parental impact on Chinese children. When comparing parental influences on career choices among Asian American, Caucasian American, and Chinese

college students, Tang (2002) concluded that the choices of Asian American and Chinese college students were more likely to be influenced by their families. However, Singaravelu, White, and Bringaze (2005) suggested that the role of family might be secondary to personal choice in terms of career decisions for Asian international students. The results of the present study support the latter argument by showing that, although many participants considered their parents as important resources, valued their parents' suggestions, and regarded their parents as role models, they did not choose to be uncritically obedient to their parents' suggestions and decisions.

Additionally, contrary to the impression that filial piety is the most impressive social identity of Chinese students (Leong & Hartung, 1997; Li, 2001; Liu, 2008), the results show only one participant (Ting) explicitly indicated she was a filial daughter. Although there were two other participants, Julia and Lin, who used to view themselves as filial daughters, once their religious devotion grew deeper and deeper, they more and more considered themselves as daughters of God.

Cultural identity. The literature review suggested three potential types of cultural identities: Chinese ethnic identity, integrated Chinese and Western identity, and religious identity. These identities could be related to Chinese international students' resilience. The results of the current study demonstrate the existence of all three types of cultural identity. Qiang and Liang perceived the identity of being traditional Chinese as helpful. Lan, David, and Wei perceived their identity to be of an integrated type. Julia, Lin, and Tao viewed their identity as being Christian. However, the results also show more types of cultural identity in relation to resilience. The first one was an assimilated one, reflected by Yan who was determined to change herself from being Chinese to Canadian by cutting off all her Chinese channels, for example,

living away from the Chinese community, speaking English in all contexts, and detaching herself from Chinese culture. Another cultural identity was a multicultural one, as perceived by Mei.

Moreover, the results reveal the process of participants changing or reinforcing their previous cultural identities to their current ones with contextual factors contributing to these changes. Being traditionally Chinese was a gradually reinforced identity during the process of Qiang and Liang learning to interact with others. The wisdom of senior people around him inspired Qiang to solve his problems and reinforced his belief in the value of the traditional Chinese teaching of respected seniors. Liang's acceptance of Chinese traditional teachings on being honest and polite in social situations was developed through his interactions with teachers and peers. Similarly, being Chinese Canadian was a gradually changing process with contextual influences. During their learning process in school and their interacting experiences with their teachers, peers, and local people, Lan, David, Wei, and Dong adopted what they perceived as the positive sides of Canadian culture into their ways of acting and thinking. From non-Christians to devoted Christians, Julia, Lin, and Tao were learning how to balance their own needs with spiritual teachings. Being assimilated was not the initial identity sought by Yan when she came to Canada. In a context where most Chinese students on campus were from A-level universities and keen on social comparisons, Yan felt uncomfortable. Walking the line between having a Chinese-style life by living with Chinese and fully immersing into local Canadian culture, Yan hesitated about her choice. From a mono-cultural environment to a multicultural context, Mei didn't simply value Chinese culture or Western culture but embraced multiple cultures brought by her international classmates.

Patterns of Negotiation

Given resilience as a dual process of navigation and negotiation (Ungar, 2010), in addition to individuals' navigation of resources, individuals' negotiation of values and identities was another dimension of this study. Although Ungar (2012b) and other researchers (e.g., Schoon, 2012) have suggested that negotiation proceeds in the matrix of different values and identities, they failed to further describe the potential patterns of negotiation during the process of the value shifting and identities restructuring. As one of the few studies on patterns of identity negotiations, Qin (2009a) studied 72 Chinese immigrant adolescents' negotiated different expectations in constructing their identities. These immigrant adolescents were situated in several competing values. They formed their sense of self through gendered patterns, so that girls were more likely to maintain a Chinese ethnic identity and keep their focus on school because being good girls didn't conflict with their femininity, while boys wanted to break away from the stereotypical Asian identity of being weak and nerdy by downplaying education to reform their image to be masculine. The results of my dissertation failed to show these gendered patterns. My analysis showed three general patterns of negotiation among both female and male students: reinforcing, replacing, and complementing.

Reinforcing. Some pre-existing values and identities were reinforced through individuals' experiences of going through difficulties. In the dimension of personal identities, being more responsible, more caring, and more true to oneself can be considered as reinforced. Mary's and Ting's current strong sense of responsibility was the outcome of their continuously reinforcing their early ideologies. Lan and Peng became more caring as a reinforced result of being touched by other people's kindness. Staying true to oneself was reinforced through Yan's battling with her own hesitations and Bo's development of self-knowledge. In the dimension of

social identities, Ting's role of being a filial daughter was reinforced by her need of taking care of parents and the influence of her devotion to Buddhism. In the dimension of cultural identities, Qiang's encountering the crisis of academic failure and Liang's experiences of interacting with his teachers and other students strengthened their beliefs in Chinese traditions.

Replacing. Some pre-existing values and identities were replaced by different sets of values and identities. With regard to personal identities, self-centered, judgmental, dependent, negative, and result-oriented were replaced by globally-minded, non-judgmental, independent, positive, and process-oriented, respectively. Influenced by Canadian peers who paid attention to social and environmental issues, Claire and Liang changed to care about the large arena of issues beyond their immediate social circles. Yan, Peng, Tao, and Dong learned to take a non-judgmental approach under different perceived influences, such as Canadian peers, Western culture, and Christianity. After years of living alone, facing and solving problems by themselves, Claire and Yan became fully accustomed to being independent. Positivity replaced negativity for Yan and Dong under the influence of their Canadian colleagues' and friends' attitudes toward life. Influenced by Christianity, Tao focused on process instead of being occupied by concerns about results. Being influenced by Humanities and Social Sciences, Bo began attending to the processes of his life instead of focusing on results. Similar to these transformed personal identities, social identities were sometimes totally replaced. As their Christian beliefs penetrated their lives, Julia and Lin didn't perceive themselves as their parents' daughters any more, but as daughters of God. With regard to cultural identities, there were two types of transformations: religious and cultural. Since converting to Christianity, Julia, Yan, and Tao became detached from their nationalities but closely clung to their religious identity of being a Christian. Yan was

inclined to be viewed as Canadian instead of Chinese because she thought Canadian culture had overarching positive influences on her.

Complementing. Some participants selected values or identities to complement each other. Mei selected the doctrines of Confucianism and Individualism to apply separately to different perspectives of her life. Lan had a liberal mind like Westerners but behaved conservatively according to traditional Chinese norms. David maintained the good aspects of Chinese culture he perceived and replaced the negative components he disliked with the freedom and non-judgment that Western culture advocated. Wei adored the Canadian style of living, while he couldn't fully accept the non-attached familial relationships that existed in Western society; therefore, he wanted to keep the Chinese tradition of maintaining close ties with his family. Dong adopted individualism in his team settings, while adhering to some Chinese characteristics such as being patient and enduring.

The participants' personal identities revealed in this study are not consistent with the findings of studies on the aspects of Chinese students' personal identities that are helpful for their overcoming challenges. Being true to oneself, which was seldom acknowledged previously as personal identity, emerged to be a distinguishable personal identity among participants in this study. Although participants perceived their social identity still as Chinese daughters and sons, their acceptance of parents' advice or expectations was not unconditional as the dominant literature suggested such acceptance to be. Cultural identities reflected upon by participants included three major types of identities (Chinese ethnic identity, integrated Chinese and Western identity, and religious identity) suggested by previous studies. However, the results also demonstrated assimilated identity can be a protective identity for individuals' adaptation. This study further demonstrated that the changes of participants' previous identities to their new

identities happened as the result of three types of negotiations: reinforcement, replacement, and complement. Some participants' identities looked the same as their previous ones but actually were more assertive than before as an outcome of their reinforcing their previous ones. Some participants' identities were different from their previous ones as the result of replacing or complementing their previous identities.

Success

With the exception of Mary who perceived Chinese success as a contribution to society, all participants perceived the current Chinese criteria for success as money, fame, and power. However, their subjective criteria for success were divergent according to their own experiences and contexts.

Subjective View of Success

Subjective success refers to individuals' personal criteria on the meaning of success (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). The patterns of change for subjective success seem to have moved from material success to spiritual-oriented success during the past two decades in Western society. Parker and Chusmir (1991) examined six specific dimensions of life success: status/wealth, contribution to society, family relationships, personal fulfillment, professional fulfillment, and security among 720 American managerial and non-managerial industry workers. In their study, personal fulfillment was negatively related to the need for achievement, and family relationship was negatively related to the need for power. This study revealed that participants' subjective views of success included neither personal fulfillment nor family relationships. However, other researchers have delineated different sets of components. For example, Dyke and Murphy (2006) conducted face-to-face interviews with 20 women and 20 men with ages from 25 to 67, working in different fields of work. Four subjective criteria for

success were found among both women and men: rejection of traditional success, balance, material success, and relationships. Although material success was still perceived to be important for subjective success, most of the participants also described personal fulfillment and relationships as essential indicators of their success. In Ashar and Lane-Maher's (2004) study, the components of success were even more leaning toward spiritual aspects. Based on focus groups with 49 law enforcement executives in the United States, 40 definitions of success were generated. Ashar and Lane-Maher summarized four main components from these 40 definitions: a sense of accomplishment, balance, contribution to society, and contribution to coworkers. During the focus group interviews, instead of defining success in materialistic—money, positional power, and status symbols—terms, participants used more spiritual terms, such as being connected, balance, and wholeness to describe success.

Situated between the current Western cultural context and the current Chinese cultural context, the 16 participants in the current study shared their individual understandings of their perceived success. A similar changing pattern of defining subjective success emerged, which has some overlap with the results of previous research such as family, personal contribution to society, personal fulfillment, and money. Yet a new dimension of religious fulfillment was also revealed.

Family was the most frequently mentioned component of subjective success among these 16 participants. Seven participants (Lan, Yan, Ting, Qiang, Liang, Peng, and Wei) stressed the importance of family in relation to their subjective success. Lan, Ting, Qiang, Liang, and Wei considered “a happy family” as one of the important indicators of their success. Yan and Peng considered an ability to provide their families with financial freedom as their success.

Claire, Mary, Ting, Liang, David, and Bo all considered personal contributions to society as an important symbol of success. Claire regarded her successful role model of success as a person who contributed to society without asking for rewards. Mary considered teachers as good examples of success because teachers normally “live a common life” but contributed their whole life in making a difference to society. Ting believed that personal contributions to society and one’s nation had significant impacts beyond one’s individual material success. David considered personal contributions to humanity or society as his ultimate goal in pursuing success. Bo viewed a successful person as someone with a capacity of making contributions to society and helping others to achieve their dreams.

Some participants revealed their intrinsic needs in relation to their life success. Lan indicated that her future success should be built upon the satisfaction of her intrinsic interests. Mei viewed happiness as an important goal for her life success. Peng identified one of his successes as maintaining a passion for pursuing new goals. For Wei, the fulfillment of his curiosity was an important component of his life success. Dong would consider himself to be successful if his inner power were stronger.

In this study, money was viewed as an important tool by Yan, Peng, and Wei to provide their families with a sense of financial security and increase the happiness of their families. However, money itself was not labelled as the symbol of success. Religious fulfillment as a unique discovery on the meaning of success emerged from this study. Julia, Lin, and Tao considered having a holy life and following God’s will as their life success.

In addition, the results of this study support Pang and Lau’s (1998) argument that today’s Chinese international student have a new approach to conceptualize success, which is different from the money-oriented or material-oriented definition of life success dominant in current

Chinese society. The causes for the differences between participants' subjective view of success and the perceived dominant definition of Chinese success are related to individuals' subjective experiences and their contextual changes. For example, learning from her own subjective experience of battling with her chronic illness, Lan realized the importance of family. Influenced by Canadian students devoted to global environmental issues, Claire came to know that the meaning of her life should not be centered on her own success but her contribution to society. Similar to Claire, the contextual change led David to build his success based on his perceived Western-centric approach to success where an individual should make personal contributions to humanity. The subjective experiences of dealing with life uncertainties and contextual changes made Lin strengthen her belief in the meaning of success that was to follow God's will.

The results regarding subjective success add more understanding of Chinese students' resilience in relation to why some resources were identified as important and why participants' identities were shaped in certain ways. For example, parents' support led Lan to overcome her chronic illness and made her realize the importance of family overriding material-labelled success. At the same time, Lan became more caring in her relationships with others. By doing so, she developed a positive ecological system around her and had more confidence in overcoming on-going and future difficulties. Mei's mom's experiences enlightened Mei to stay on the path of pursuing her dream in spite of facing some temporary difficulties or life detours. The pursuit of personal dreams and happiness later became Mei's life success. In searching for personal fulfillment of happiness, Mei's mindset became more individualistic. Teachers helped Mary to smoothly adapt to a new environment and overcome language and academic barriers. She highly regarded teachers' behaviour of guiding others as their contribution to society, and therefore she set criteria for her own success as making contributions to society as well. At the same time,

Mary learned a sense of responsibility at least partially from her teachers. Christianity helped Tao to overcome the psychological stress of dealing with the relationship with his girlfriend. Through believing in God, Tao found that following God's will was the ultimate success for him and helped him to overcome future difficulties. With such a strong belief system, he identified himself as a devout Christian.

Participants' subjective views of success deviated from the dominant views of success in Chinese society with their subjective views of success shaped by their individual experiences.

Limitations of the Study and Implications for Future Research

The three primary limitations of this study relate to the recruitment process, the interview method, and the single context. Due to the low response rate of undergraduate students at the initial stage of recruitment, I reached out to meet some undergraduate students at Queen's University International Centre (QUIC). The students who were recruited later were mostly easiest-to-approach ones in this setting. Those who were indifferent to social interactions at this location were unlikely to participate in this study. Students at QUIC might be more flexible in social interactions with others and more adaptive in identity reformations than students who did not frequent QUIC. Additionally, with a potentially more outgoing personality, they might receive more resources supporting them to overcome difficulties. Their navigation of resources and negotiation of identities could be different from those of the individuals who were not included in this study due to the latter group keeping a distance from such social circles and social interactions. Therefore, selection bias could be embedded in the resulting sample so that the findings might not be applicable to other Chinese undergraduate students at Queen's due to differences in personality and social networking. Future research could purposefully reach those students who did not participate in these kinds of interactions through references of supervisors,

teaching assistants, or departmental coordinators to expand the range of participants and the findings of the current research.

Considering the monetary and time cost of interviews, the interviewees were only interviewed once. The single interview has a few potential shortcomings, such as missing important information due to the difficulty in establishing rapport with the researcher (Patterson & Pipe, 2009), and participants providing less accurate reflections or interpretations of their experiences (Peterson, Moores, & White, 2001). As this study focused on the challenges and resilience of participants, which might involve some emotionally laden experiences, participants could feel less comfortable sharing with a researcher with whom they felt less acquainted. As a result, some sensitive or important information could be lost due to participants' perceived relational distance between them and me. Therefore, to produce fuller and richer descriptions, future research could conduct multiple interviews to promote the relationship of trust and interaction between the researcher and the participant and encourage more discussion.

This study was conducted at Queen's University in Kingston Canada. Compared to Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, big multicultural metropolises with diverse ethnic population, Kingston is a small-sized city with Caucasians as a majority of the populations. Differences in terms of geographic location and population may influence the formation of resources and identities of Chinese students at different universities. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be applicable to the Chinese student population of other universities across Canada. Future research could reach Chinese student populations at several different universities as representatives of their geographical and cultural contexts.

Implications for Practice

Given the complexity of challenges, the subjectively identified resources, the changed identities, and the personal approaches to success, three major strategies should be taken into account in interventions at promoting resilience among Chinese international students. First, such interventions need to help students overcome more than one challenge at a time. Second, they should integrate resources across different providers. Third, they should attend to students' individual experiences and transformative processes.

The findings of this study demonstrate challenges Chinese international students encountered were often integrated. Therefore, for future research, the findings indicate a need to address more than one challenge at a time (such as homesickness with a difficulty of making friends with local students and English communication barriers). For future interventions, the findings suggest the more collaboratively teachers, service providers, and facilitators work together, the more positive the results for international students in overcoming their challenges.

Furthermore, the findings of this study show that Chinese students actively navigate their resources either by reaching out, reaching in, or integrating. To help students navigate these resources more smoothly, different associations that provide resources directly or steer students to seek for specific resources (such as church, on-campus associations) should build effective intercommunication and work collaboratively.

In addition, the findings reveal that Chinese international students have subjective differences in terms of their identity changes and the meaning of success. Therefore, it is inadvisable to generalize Chinese international students as one group of people. They do not have the same thinking, behaving, and adjusting patterns with regard to their study skills, living abilities, and ideologies. As for counsellors, service providers, and facilitators who want to

provide Chinese international students with effective and efficient assistance, it is important to develop more efficient, updated, and human-centered assistance. This assistance should emphasize listening to students' personal experiences and building a thorough understanding of their individual backgrounds, social attitudes, characteristics, and changes.

Contribution

There have been only a few studies (e.g., Pan et al., 2008) that attempted to examine the role resilience played in Chinese international students' adaptation in host societies. Similar to these studies, this study changed the pessimistic lens of looking into negative issues of international students to positive perspectives through importing the concept of resilience in the context of Chinese international students. As such, this study makes important unique contributions.

First, in previous studies on the resilience of Chinese international students, resilience was measured as a group of factors researchers assumed could protect students from risks, rather than considered as a socio-ecological process in which students navigated resources and negotiated their identities to reach their success as they interacted with their surrounding environments. In this study, stories of these 16 participants show that students' resilience was gradually developed through their processes of navigating resources and negotiating identities. Even if these resources and identities need to be narrowly translated to be protective factors, the participants' perceived protective factors were not identical to what researchers have suggested these factors should be. This study therefore shifted the understanding of resilience of Chinese international students from the researchers' perspectives to participants' subjective perspectives. This shifting is helpful for bridging the findings of research with designing interventions and providing more efficient services to international students.

The exploration of participants' subjective understandings of their challenging resources and identity revealed hidden resilience and could change the bias of researchers. For example, according to most previous studies (Andrade, 2006; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998) on international students' adaptation, students who were actively involved in extracurricular activities might be considered as resilient. Those who didn't actively participate in activities could be considered as pathetic and pessimistic and non-resilient. Yet the stories of participants in this study told us that the forms of resilience can be different. Some people, such as Claire, Lin and Tao, who didn't participate in many activities, were resilient in their own ways through utilizing their inner resources.

The most important contribution of this study was the analysis of the patterns of navigation and negotiation, which were never discussed or explored by any previous researchers, especially those ones who employed Ungar's conceptualization of resilience in their studies. In the studies using Ungar's conceptualization of resilience, the types of patterns of navigation and negotiation were usually embedded within participants' stories instead of being extracted from the stories. The patterns of navigation and negotiation extracted from participants' stories in this study therefore not only explicitly show how students navigated resources and negotiated their identities but also clearly exhibit how differentially students navigated resources and negotiated identities.

These contributions lead to the most likely directions needed in future research. In this study, loneliness was revealed as one of the most significant challenges shared among Chinese students along with English, academic challenges, and relationship challenges. However, compared to English, academic issues, and relationship challenges, loneliness has seldom been discussed in the literature on international students. Therefore, the further exploration of

loneliness might be considered as a primary direction for future research. Additionally, this study mainly focused on the experiences of Chinese students after they came to Canada. It would be interesting for future research to compare students' perceptions about Canadian culture and society and expectations of their future life in Canada with their impressions and experiences after they came to Canada. In such a way, the differences between perceptions and realities may be emerged. The demonstration of difference can be useful for service providers on both sides—China and Canada.

Final Thoughts

Looking back at my Ph.D. research, I discovered my process could well be identified with resilience. The initial stage was mostly confusion due to indecision about the research topic, uncertainty about dissertation completion, and uneasiness with my future. Later, it became frustration because of the difficulty of collecting data and reaching the participants. Then, it seemed I was engaged in an endless rotation of writing, some pieces being accepted, other pieces being criticized, while I had periods of self-doubting and other periods of noticeable improvement. With enormous help from my supervisor, committee members, and my colleagues, and with generous support from my friends and my parents, I strengthened my belief in continuing my study and marching toward my goal through overcoming the difficulties of each stage. At the same time, I found myself changing. During the period of struggling with decisions on a research topic and research method, I changed from a person who didn't know well about herself to a person who gained knowledge about herself, especially her strengths. When living through the moments of despair about the lack of participants, I transformed from a person who would normally passively wait for changes to a person who took initiative to reach out to make things happen. Going through the rollercoaster of the writing process, I reshaped myself from a

result-oriented person to a process-oriented person, who saw success not only as an academic achievement but also as proof of persistence, a demonstration of positivity, and an outcome of maintaining hope and faith. Like my participants, I changed my identity in a fundamental way through doing this dissertation.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS CLEARANCE FOR INTERVIEWS



July 23, 2012

Ms. Yina Wang
Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty of Education
Duncan McArthur Hall
Queen's University
511 Union Street
Kingston, ON K7M 5R7

GREB Ref #: GEDUC-625-12; Romeo # 6007153

Title: "GEDUC-625-12 Clone of An exploration of Chinese international students' resilience through their experiences"

Dear Ms. Wang:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GEDUC-625-12 Clone of An exploration of Chinese international students' resilience through their experiences" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
General Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. John Freeman, Faculty Supervisor
Dr. Don Klinger, Chair, Unit REB
Erin Wicklam, c/o Graduate Studies and Bureau of Research

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Hello, my name is Yina Wang. I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. As part of my doctoral thesis, *An exploration of Chinese international students' resilience through their experiences*, I am conducting interviews with Chinese students. The interviews will take approximately 60 minutes and will occur at a group meeting room at Stauffer library. Participants will receive a five-dollar gift card as compensation for their participation in their individual interviews. Are you interested in taking part in this interview? If so, please feel free to contact me at this email address (yina.wang@queensu.ca) for further information.

Sincerely,

Yina Wang

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Name: *An exploration of Chinese international students' resilience through their experiences*

Principal Investigator:

Yina Wang
 Doctoral Candidate
 Faculty of Education
 Queen's University
 Kingston, Ontario, Canada
 yina.wang@queensu.ca

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. John Freeman
 Faculty of Education
 Queen's University
 Kingston, Ontario, Canada
 (613) 533-6000 ext. 77298
 freemanj@queensu.ca

Purpose of the Study

Resilience is broadly defined as successful adaptation to adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). The purpose of study is to gain an understanding of how Chinese students understand their resilience and how they navigate resources and negotiate their beliefs and behaviours to overcome challenges. This study is a Ph.D dissertation study. *This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.*

What will happen during the study?

I am inviting you to participate in a face-to-face individual interview. Participants will receive a five-dollar gift card as compensation for their completion of their individual interviews.

During the individual interview, I will ask about your understanding of resilience, your studying and living experiences in relation to resilience, and your perceptions of how cultural beliefs contribute to your resilience within your current institutional context. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded to improve transcription accuracy and will be transcribed verbatim. You can choose to be interviewed in Chinese or English or both. During the interview, you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable, and you can withdraw at any time without consequences by contacting the researcher. If you decide to drop out part way, in appreciation for your time, you will still receive a five-dollar gift card.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

There are no anticipated risks to this study. You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. If you withdraw, you may request removal of all or part of your data.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

This study would be significant to prospective researchers who are concerned about resilience issues for people of Chinese cultural background. This study might also be used as a window for people who work with international students to develop deeper understandings of Chinese international students' needs for resilience.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality to the extent possible. The only individuals who will have access to the data gathered will be myself as the principal investigator (Yina Wang), my advisor (Dr. John Freeman), and potentially a language specialist who will sign a confidentiality agreement. I will not report your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym in all presentations and publications. However, we are often identifiable to those who know us well through the stories we tell.

As part of the qualitative data analysis process, quotes will be selected from transcripts, and these quotes reported in support of themes that arise across participants. The resulting themes with quotations may be published or presented, for example, in my dissertation, at conferences, or in journal articles. If data are used for secondary analysis, they will contain no identifying information. In accordance with Queen's University Faculty of Education policy, data will be retained five years, at which point they will be destroyed.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by August, 2013. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Yina Wang at yina.wang@queensu.ca or my supervisor Dr. John Freeman at (613) 533-6000 ext. 77298 or freemanj@queensu.ca . Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca .

CONSENT FORM

An exploration of Chinese international students' resilience through their experiences

1. I have read and retained copies of the Letter of Information and Consent form and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I will be participating in the study called *An exploration of Chinese international students' resilience through their experiences*. The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of how Chinese students conceptualize resilience and how Chinese students navigate resources and negotiate beliefs and behaviours to overcome challenges. I understand that I will be interviewed for this study. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded to improve transcription accuracy and will be transcribed verbatim.
3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I do not need to answer questions that I do not want to answer or that make me feel uncomfortable, and I can withdraw at any time. If I decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to me, including to my status as a student at Queen's, and I may request removal of all or part of my data.
4. I understand that every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data now and in the future to the extent possible. The only individuals who will have access to the data gathered would be the principal investigator (Yina Wang), her supervisor (Dr. John Freeman), and potentially a language specialist who will sign a confidentiality agreement. Themes generated from the interviews might be published in professional journals or presented at conferences. In any circumstances, my name or any information that may expose my identity will not be mentioned. If I am interested, I am entitled to a copy of the findings.
5. I am aware that if I have any questions, concerns, or complaints, I may direct any questions about study participation to Yina Wang at yina.wang@queensu.ca or her supervisor Dr. John Freeman at (613) 533-6000 ext. 77298 or freemanj@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca .

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this interview.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please send a summary of the study's results to the following email or mailing address: _____.

Please sign one copy of this Consent Form and return to Yina Wang. Retain the second copy for your records.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Initial Questions:

- Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- Would you describe some previous studying and living experiences before coming to Canada?
- What are your experiences in Canada in terms of life, studies, and work?

Intermediate Questions:

- Can you share a story about how you managed to overcome challenges you faced after you came to Canada?
- What kinds of things are most challenging for you so far in your life? How do the challenges impact on your life?
- How do you describe your belief system? What kinds of values or beliefs do you find powerful and inspiring when you are managing to overcome challenges?
- What opportunities or resources do you find helpful for you to overcome challenges?
- How do you describe how people bounce back from adversities? What words do you use?
- How do the people in your culture normally view success? How do you view success?
- Do you have someone you consider a mentor or role model of success? Can you describe him or her?

Ending Questions:

- What are the valuable things you have learned from your experiences of overcoming challenges?
- What advice would you give another person who might face similar situations?
- Is there anything you would like to ask me or comment on?
- Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for participating in the interview.