A positive shift: Chinese post-secondary students who identify as thriving discuss their cross-cultural transition experiences in Canada

by

Alexander Huang

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2009
B. Ed, The University of British Columbia, 2010

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Abstract

Throughout the literature, international students, and in particular Chinese international students from China, are portrayed as a vulnerable population because there is a tendency towards identifying and focusing solely on the challenges they encounter while studying in a new host-culture. As a result, both the community and select sub-populations of international students appear to be perceived as being prone to develop psychological distress. Inter-cultural variations also appear less pronounced because international students are often studied as a whole group, and results from various studies combine several culture-of-origins. Consequently, few studies have focused solely on understanding the overall transition experience of a selected population of international students with attention awarded to areas beyond challenges, such as the positive experiences, their desires, and unique characteristics.

This study, therefore, sought to determine the different facets of the cross-cultural experiences for a specific group of students: Chinese international students from China. In particular, both the positive and negative qualities of the transition were assessed. Furthermore, in order to portray the capacity for international students to prosper while studying abroad, only students who expressed they were “doing well” regarding the cross-cultural changes were selected. The methodology employed was the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT), and this method identified a total of 273 incidents: 135 helping incidents, 102 hindering incidents, and 36 wish-list items. The helping incidents were grouped into 9 facilitating categories that highlighted aspects such as the establishment and nurturance of relationships, personal growth and development, as well as the integration of culture-of-origin and host-culture attributes. The challenging incidents were grouped into 7 hindering categories, alongside 1 sub-category, and hindering findings reiterated the presence of challenging experiences. Finally, the
36 wish-list items were grouped into 3 categories (with 1 sub-category). Their expressed desires demonstrated the ability for personal insights and awareness to serve as an avenue towards addressing the challenges encountered by this specific group of international students.

It became evident in this study that by addressing a unique international student population, there appeared to be greater awareness towards the distinct experiences of this population, as well as the opportunity to contribute to the growing literature on international students. More importantly, the study provided a holistic perspective of international students by attending to both facilitating and hindering events. Supported by the deliberate selection of students who report that they are adapting well, the findings seemed to further corroborate a growing trend in the literature that views international students as capable of thriving and excelling, regardless of the difficulties or challenges they may encounter during their cross-cultural transition.
Preface

This research study was approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board on August 20, 2013 (H13-02019).
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

An important undertaking encountered by many students is attendance at post-secondary institutions, and a population of continued interest within higher education remains the international student community. Indeed, a sustained trend across North American institutions involves the growing number of international students on campuses, a trend that contributes to both economic growth and international recognition for select higher educational settings (Gu & Maley, 2008). For instance, across Canadian schools alone, overall international student enrollment rose from 159,426 in 2003 to over 290,000 in 2013, representing an 84% increase across the decade (Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE), 2014). The magnitude of this number is illustrated by the statistic that international students constitute approximately 8% of the post-secondary student population in Canada (CBIE, 2014). This population of international students, referred to as sojourners, are individuals who independently depart from their home country for various purposes, one of which is to remain in a host country for several years to attain international educational credentials (Andrade, 2006; Kuo & Roysircar, 2006; Popadiuk, 2010; Ying, 2001).

The sustained growth and large numbers associated with the international population, alongside their length of stay in a host country, has stimulated on-going awareness that post-secondary institutions should provide appropriate support programs, particularly to address the transitional process of international students while they reside in a foreign context (Andrade, 2006). After all, this process often requires individuals to adapt to novel aspects that include contextual and social changes, in addition to issues that are also common to all students, such as academic and relational concerns (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). As Popadiuk and Arthur (2004)
highlight, while the international student community encounters issues that are not distinct from other student populations, the added dimension of crossing-cultures and the temporary residence within a host-culture makes their experiences unique. Thus, without adequate supports in place, this period can be fraught with unaddressed issues that can affect the overall well-being of a number of students across post-secondary campuses (Gu & Maley, 2008; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Research into international students appears to possess three issues of concern: 1) a primary focus on negative experiences, 2) a bias towards quantitative methodologies that prevent further investigations into unique variations, and 3) minimal opportunity for students to describe and contribute their insights and awareness about their own transition.

1.2.1 A Focus on the Negatives

In order to address the perpetual growth of the international student community, research into cross-cultural transitions often derives from attending to common hindrances that stem from the general population of international students (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, and Al-Timimi, 2004). A possible rationale for this approach is that possessing the knowledge for general obstacles may assist resource providers, such as counsellors and advisers, address overarching concerns for an entire body of students (Popadiuk, 2010). Consequently, this research has identified several barriers that can relate to negative outcomes for an international student and influence his/her well-being within a post-secondary context. The difficulties include the following challenging issues: the loss of an established social support network, difficulties in learning a new language, hardships with adjusting to a new cultural context, and ethnic discrimination (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Yeh &
In addition to these experiences, there may be a number of other competing concerns encountered across the international student population, such as challenges with daily living, academic difficulties, family issues, and apprehension over intimate relationships (Arthur, 2004; Herbert & Popadiuk, 2008; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). It is assumed that international students encounter many hardships, and a possible consequence is that these difficulties place them at greater risk for developing psychological distress and other mental health concerns (Shields & Behrman, 2004; Yearwood, Crawford, Kelly, & Moreno, 2007).

Within the literature, there is also a growing recognition for cultural-sensitivity, and as a result, research has also focused on locating factors that seem to contribute to psychological distress among unique international populations (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Wilton & Constantine, 2003). For example, possessing a highly discrepant language from the host-culture, and shorter residences are factors that can predict a negative post-secondary experience for Asian international students (e.g., Kashima & Loh, 2006, Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Wilton & Constantine, 2003). Additionally, there may be espoused cultural mores that impede select international student populations from readily seeking help when challenges arise (Brown & Brown, 2009). The psychological health of international students, therefore, appears to be a concern because they may encounter general challenges associated with their status as an international student, as well as specific difficulties that stem from their culture of origin.

The issue raised within the research is that the emphasis on both general and specific difficulties appears to portray an image of a vulnerable and susceptible population that is more inclined to develop mental distress (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). This focus seems to account for the paucity of research that explores the positive cross-cultural experiences of the international student body (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). Another reason for the scarcity of literature may be
related to the increased attention towards alleviating distress (McLachlan & Justice 2009; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). Ultimately, the personal strengths and resources of this population can be missed as a result of the attention paid towards hindrances and potential difficulties (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). The additional areas of exploration, however, can provide clinicians and researchers with information regarding how international students are able to navigate this transition process, and more importantly, may be a way to illustrate the successes of this population (Yoon & Portman, 2004).

1.2.2 A Bias Towards Quantitative Methodologies

While this issue will be further elaborated upon within the literature review, a prominent observation to emphasize is that research exploring international student populations appears inclined towards the use of quantitative methodologies (e.g., Andrade 2006; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). Given the vast numbers of international students, it makes sense from a logistical and efficiency standpoint to accommodate the needs of this population by utilizing methods that generalize and address predominant issues. This inclination, however, combines various international student populations and minimizes the unique experiences that may exist between cultural groups.

1.2.3 Denying Their Perspective

The tendency towards quantitative methods raises a final concern of importance: given that the international students are often completing quantitative assessment measures, their personal insights and awareness can be overlooked (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). As a result, international students may be denied a more in-depth examination of their experiences that can include dimensions beyond simply their challenges. As Moores and Popadiuk (2011) argue, fixed ways of assessing international students deprive them from expressing the meanings that
they hold on particular issues, and more significantly, there may be a loss of information regarding how international students address and navigate their cross-cultural experiences. It seems that the acknowledgment and ownership of international student experiences may be lost amongst the data.

1.3 Purpose and Rationale

As previously stated, the general research focus on international students is primarily directed towards identifying possible difficulties and alleviating psychological distress. It seems appropriate, therefore, to contribute to the growing literature by nurturing a holistic perspective of the international student community. In particular, an area to further explore is the juxtaposition of hindering alongside facilitating experiences. Specific example experiences that influence one’s psychological health include developing new social networks, nurturing greater host-cultural competencies, encountering academic hardship, experiencing social isolation, and facing language barriers.

In order to acquire this knowledge, this study aims to utilize a qualitative approach because this action permits an exploration of the consequences related to these particular experiences. The qualitative approach also allows a deviation from the strong emphasis placed on quantitative methods used to study international students, and although the methodology is not meant to be generalizable, it does lend itself towards providing a voice to the international students selected for this study.

This study also seeks to highlight individual differences amongst the various international student populations. The unit of analysis, consequently, is to explore the facilitating and hindering cross-cultural experiences of Chinese international students from China, specifically selecting individuals who self-identify as thriving within the host-culture of Canada. A primary
reason for the focus on this group is the finding that Asian international students have reliably accounted for the largest portion of international students within post-secondary institutions (Statistics Canada, 2011). Accordingly, Chinese international students comprise approximately 32.42% of the overall international student population (CBIE, 2014). By focusing on a segment of the majority, it is my intention to highlight the unique experiences of this subgroup and provide additional knowledge about Chinese international students within post-secondary institutions. The analysis of their experiences can help in understanding the different qualities associated with the transition process, and more specifically, the impact of these experiences as it relates to the promotion of one’s sense of distress or welfare.

Another reason for the selection of Chinese international students is that the group, alongside other East Asian populations, are often viewed as being more susceptible towards psychological distress as a result of originating from cultures that appear to be quite divergent from the selected host-culture (in this instance, Canada) (e.g. Andrade, 2006; Gu & Maley, 2008). By directly selecting individuals who identify as thriving or “doing well,” the purpose of this work is to capture an image of a population capable of achieving success while cross-cultures. This work, therefore, incorporates aspects from the Positive Psychology movement, a framework that seeks to highlight positive experiences and personal characteristics of individuals, as well as a desire to turn away from areas beyond pathology and easing distress (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005). Success, however, does not entail solely positive experiences and personal characteristics; thus, an additional aim is to portray a population who self-identify as thriving, and yet can still identify and convey challenges during the transition process that have deeply affected them. Just as the rewarding experiences of success need acknowledgment, the challenges that can befall international students require recognition to
highlight the overall experience of these individuals. Perhaps through personal growth, resources, and strengths, there may be unique qualities that have helped this select population identify as flourishing while adapting to a new host-culture.

A final purpose for my research stems from the possibility of assisting researchers, practitioners and clinicians. As previously discussed, by focusing on only the hindering experiences of international students, there is a portrayal that this group acts as a continual burden within post-secondary contexts (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). It is clear, however, that despite the challenges, research reports a significant number of individuals also encounter facilitating experiences, such as developing a social network and adapting their behaviours, and as a result, these individuals are able to promote their development and well-being throughout their studies abroad (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). Moreover, previously considered hindering experiences may be valued and promote growth upon reflection by the international student. Thus, by identifying the facilitating and hindering cross-cultural experiences, it may help to 1) encourage awareness for the incidents that contribute to students successfully adapting to a new cultural context, 2) understand how others may fail to overcome the challenges encountered during their completion of studies within a foreign post-secondary institution and experience psychological distress, and 3) support the notion that international students are capable of thriving. It may also foster future research and counselling practice towards designing preventative strategies for incidents that occur frequently for this population. Ultimately, the goal is to prepare individuals for potential obstacles, as well as reinforce and develop their positive strengths and resources.

1.4 Research Question

The central question that arises from the problem statement is the following: “What
facilitates or hinders the cross-cultural transition experience of Chinese Post-Secondary Students from China who self-identify as successfully adapting in Canada?” The open-ended construction of this question permits an exploration of the international student’s transitional process, and thus, it lends itself towards a qualitative approach. The question also provides an avenue for a specific cultural group to express both the hardships and successes that influenced their psychological welfare.

1.5 Researcher’s (On-Going) Journey

When I was an undergraduate student, I completed one course in Cultural Psychology. During the process, I was briefly made aware of the issues surrounding multi-cultural experiences and the influence that culture has in shaping one’s life. The course stimulated a desire towards nurturing cultural sensitivity in my interactions with others; however, without having meaningful encounters or relationships with individuals from different culture-of-origins (aside from those born and raised in Canada), the information I acquired from the course remained on the pages of the text that I read. In fact, it seemed that I carried on within my own cultural lens and became stuck in terms of fostering cross-cultural proficiencies.

It would take several years until I once again had an opportunity to nurture my multi-cultural competencies, a development that occurred when I decided to take the Cross-Cultural Counselling course offered in my Counselling Psychology program. The unique aspect of this course was the coupling of knowledge with specific experiences – we were asked to seek out and interact with individuals from different culture-of-origins and to engage in “meaningful and significant conversations.” These encounters provided the initial lived experience needed to bring forth the information and knowledge I acquired.

Following this course, I was able to apply my understanding and develop my
competencies further when I completed my practicum within the college setting. In this context, I was exposed to an array of post-secondary transitional issues from a number of diverse clients. These conversations stimulated a renewed interest in the transition process, an area that was the initial impetus behind pursuing a Counselling Psychology degree. During these conversations, it was painful at times to hear the struggles that were encountered, particularly when there were instances of perceived injustice or intolerance. These stories brought attention towards my own action (or inaction) when I faced such discrimination. For instance, when I heard incidents where host nationals were perceived to treat the participants with contempt regarding certain culture-of-origin enacted practices, I recognized that I, too, may have been guilty of attempting to reinforce prevalent cultural mores during my encounters or interactions with diverse others. I was made aware of the selfish nature behind an implicit desire to have others “naturally fit” aspects I was accustomed towards, and the continued need to remain vigilant regarding my cultural sensitivities. This personal acknowledgment promoted an ongoing desire to nurture my socio-cultural competencies in relation to my continued engagements with culturally diverse others so that I can better assist the clients, and people, I meet.

Throughout my interactions with both clients and the participants of this study, there remained an inherent privilege in listening to the expressed stories of individuals who typically desire “better opportunities” within the host-culture of Canada, and who demonstrate a capacity to thrive. For example, some of the individuals expressed how the experience of particular struggles seemed to act as a catalyst towards learning how to manage the feelings associated with these difficulties, and how to ensure that the challenges would be addressed in the current host-culture. The hindering experiences appeared to take on a transformative quality, one that informed and motivated some of individuals I encountered. As one of the participants explained,
the experience of a particular struggle, while initially appearing devastating, prompted him to seek out available resources. Eventually, the hindering experiences would be juxtaposed with facilitating ones that appeared to promote the individual’s well-being and his/her ability to prosper at their respective post-secondary institution.

My interactions with culturally diverse others, and in particular the Chinese participants of this study, raises the issue regarding my own developing cultural identity. While I describe myself as a male Chinese-Canadian, it became evident in this research that aspects from this cultural identity, particularly the Canadian facet, were not routinely acknowledged or appreciated. For instance, with respect to the cultural component of location, some of my clients and participants readily expressed their love for the city of Vancouver and all that it can potentially offer individuals. During these conversations, it was apparent that the characteristics of the Canadian cultural landscape were aspects that I seem to have taken for granted because I have not lived or experienced anything to the contrary. Thus, the interactions with the participants encouraged me towards recognizing and valuing aspects of my own culture-of-origin. Moreover, the individuals also conveyed the importance of their homeland. This bi-cultural appreciation of both Canada and China, and the expressed importance of the Mainland, was not an element I possessed as I do not have strong ties (i.e. people) to this specific country-of-origin. My curiosity, therefore, was stimulated in these conversations, and a wish to adequately explore and to expand the Chinese cultural identity began to manifest in the process. Ultimately, the clients and participants reaffirmed the evolving nature of one’s cultural identity, and the importance of living and sharing experiences in order to promote knowledge, growth and development.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the Literature

In order to address the research question—“What facilitates or hinders the cross-cultural transition experience of Chinese Post-Secondary Students from China who self-identify as successfully adapting in Canada?”—there is a need to attend to the present literature about international students, a topic that includes understanding their decision to attend an international post-secondary school, as well as their college experiences within a foreign context. The literature review, therefore, is divided into several parts. The first part defines one phrase and one concept that will underscore this study: “positive and negative experience(s)” and “transition.” For my purposes, when stating “positive and negative experiences,” I am referring to outcomes that occur as a result of facilitating and hindering incidents—ones that contribute to either psychological well-being or distress. The positive and negative experience of interest relates to the overall appraisal of one’s residence within a foreign context. With respect to “transition,” the term highlights that international students are involved in a change process when they are admitted and attend a foreign post-secondary school. The term itself exists on a theoretical continuum that can relate to developmental stages, the context, life-span, goals, or life events (e.g., Broderick & Blewitt, 2003; Hawley, Goodman, & Shaieb, 2002; Levinson, 1986; Scholossberg, 1981; Young et al., 2011). The framework employed in this proposed work is to consider “transition” as a process, one that does not end at a specific period; rather, it is a continual experience of change that involves the self and the context, and results in the development of new behaviours, relationships, and thoughts (Schlossberg, 1981; Young et al., 2011). The particular transition of note encompasses the cross-cultural journey of international students who attend and reside within foreign post-secondary context.
The second part of the review explores pre-transition events, specifically concentrating on Chinese international students, and how their decision to cross-borders is possibly influenced by cultural variables, motivations, and concerns that are unique to this specific culture of origin (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Cubillo, Sanchez, & Cervino, 2006; Pang & Appleton, 2004; Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009).

The third part follows into the transition experience, and highlights notable hindering experiences associated with the general international student community. There is an exploration of the commonly discussed stressors and difficulties encountered by international students, such as a loss of social support, language and cultural struggles, and ethnic discrimination, each of which may contribute to psychological distress (Andrade 2006; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003). This section also examines the challenges that may be unique to East Asian and Chinese international student populations (e.g., Gu & Maley, 2008; Heggins & Jackson (2003), Yan & Berliner, 2011).

The fourth section stresses the growing trend towards a different approach in relation to working with international students (Moores & Arthur, 2004). Specifically, this section encompasses the acknowledgment of strengths and facilitating experiences that can arise for this population (e.g., Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). A factor that may influence facilitating experiences stems from the possibility of adaptive survival skills that help individuals thrive in spite of challenges and obstacles (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). Furthermore, facilitating experiences may occur due to unique factors that influence specific populations, such as length of residence and personal maturity for Chinese international students (Gu & Maley, 2008; Wilton & Constantine, 2003).

The fifth and concluding part of this review examines the methods for determining the
information on international students. This section highlights the seemingly predominant focus on negative experiences within post-secondary institutions, and the use of quantitative methodologies to discover the relationship between hindering experiences and the psychological distress of international students. In contrast, there is an inclination towards identifying facilitating experiences through qualitative approaches, such as Critical Incident Technique and Grounded Theory Interviews. It is apparent that the formulation of the research question derived from a desire to expand the literature on international students and to counteract the predominant focus on negative experiences and quantitative methodology.

2.2 Definition of Terms

2.2.1 Positive and Negative Experience

The phrase “positive and negative experience” is in reference to outcomes that relate to either psychological distress or to the promotion of an individual’s welfare while he/she completes a particular endeavour. In this instance, the specific endeavour is attendance and residence of international students at a foreign post-secondary school. A “positive experience,” therefore, connotes facilitating incidents that encourage psychological well-being, while a “negative experience” references hindering incidents that contribute to psychological distress.

2.2.2 Transition

At its most basic definition, the term “transition” references change. The term, therefore, is appropriate to describe the cross-cultural migration of international students because it is a cultural change (or transition) that is experienced. The literature, however, offers several paradigms for understanding the term itself; thus, it is necessary to briefly overview the variety of perspectives and to situate the framework undertaken in this work. One paradigm is the developmental perspective, which seems to describe “transition” as a universal occurrence that
evolves in a sequential nature (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). This definition creates a sense that “transition” is bounded and rigid, such as occurring only during particular timeframes (Goodman et al., 2006). There also does not appear to be a regard for specific factors (such as one’s gender and one’s cultural context) that may influence when transitional periods occur (Goodman et al., 2006).

The second paradigm is the contextual perspective (Hawley et al., 2002). Proponents of this viewpoint argue that “transition” is defined through changes in one’s social context, including historical, environmental, and cultural changes (Goodman et al., 2006). As a result, different outcomes occur for individuals undergoing transition (Hawley et al., 2002). There are, however, two prominent challenges with this perspective. First, the rapid rate of contextual change makes it difficult to study and determine the exact influence of external variables in terms of “transition” (Gergen, 2000). Second, it appears that this perspective does not account for an individual’s own internal mechanisms or processes (Young et al., 2011).

While the previous paradigm focused entirely on the context, the third paradigm, the Life-Span, attempts to account for both the individual and the context. It is maintained that an individual possesses an intrinsic ability for adaptation that develops over one’s lifetime, and it is one’s ability to adapt to a multitude of contexts that defines “transition” (Broderick & Blewitt, 2003). One construct that influences the ability to adapt is psychosocial maturity (Young et al., 2011). The level of psychosocial maturity develops differently for every individual due to intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Young et al., 2011). Thus, “transition” is seen as the product of both an internal mechanism and context.

The fourth and fifth paradigms, Goal-Directed Action and the Transition perspective, are discussed simultaneously because it is an integration of these views on “transition” that is
assumed in this study. Both perspectives contend that “transition” is a social process that is influenced by the individual and the context, and that it can occur for a significant period of time (Schlossberg, 1981; Young et al., 2011). For example, Goal-Directed Action argues that an individual is continually engaged in “transition-related actions and projects” (Young et al., 2011, p. 13). This framework, derived from Action Theory, strongly advocates for the individual’s agency when undergoing transition. This process, however, does not occur in isolation because the individual is engaged in communication with others, such as parents, that play an influential role; thus, there is a contextual component that further defines “transition” in terms of joint-actions towards an individual’s goals (Young et al., 2011). With respect to the Transition perspective, it holds that “transition” is defined by events or non-events that bring about change in the self and the world, and as a result, a transformation occurs in one’s behaviours and relationships (Schlossberg, 1981). While there is a focus on events and non-events (as opposed to goal-directed actions) in defining “transition,” both perspectives maintain the notion that the process is dependent on the self, the situation/context, the strategies/actions employed by the individual, and the support/relationships that are pertinent to the individual (Goodman et al., 2006). Finally, both viewpoints argue that the process of “transition” is further defined by the occurrence of multiple outcomes for an individual (Goodman et al., 2006; Young et al., 2011).

As previously stated, the transitional process of focus for this study is the cross-cultural migration of Chinese international students and their attendance at a foreign post-secondary institution. From the discussed framework, this transition encompasses four primary attributes. First, it is a process of change that involves the self (the international student) and the context (including the post-secondary school as well as the host country). Second, the process unfolds for a significant amount of time, and for the purposes of this study, the transition can begin prior
to the international student’s cross-cultural journey, as well as during and after completion of one’s post-secondary studies. Third, due to the development of the self and the multiple contexts that involve individuals, there are numerous outcomes that can occur from the process. This point reiterates how hindering experiences can contribute to significant hardship for some individuals, while others may view hindering experiences as a necessity for growth and personal development. Finally, this transition involves goals, strategies, and relationships. During this transition, international students are likely to encounter facilitating and hindering experiences, and it is these particular incidents that will be further explored in this study.

2.3 Influences on the Decision to Cross-Borders

Prior to discussing prominent experiences of international students, there is a need to introduce the influences that may contribute to their decision to attend an international post-secondary school. The decision to cross-borders gives rise to the encounter of facilitating and hindering experiences amongst international students, and the process of coming to such a decision is unique for each individual and population. For Chinese international students, the research seems to indicate there may be an emphasis placed on several key factors, and these include the importance on Confucian ideals, as well as unique attractors and detractors towards particular foreign post-secondary schools (Bodycott, 2009; Bodycott & Lai, 2012).

2.3.1 The Role of Confucian Ideals

Students from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) grow-up in a context steeped in Confucian ideals that place emphasis on the role of higher education, family and authority, and filial piety (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). The significance imparted on these values illustrates that the decision to cross-borders is often not an individual endeavour for Chinese international students; rather, it is a complex process that deeply involves both the individual and his/her family. One
particular value of note is filial piety, a concept that is exemplified through respect and obedience towards one’s parents (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). This value further demonstrates the interwoven decision-making process, and more specifically, how there may be an obligation to follow the wishes of one’s parents to study abroad, rather than to personally choose a particular institution for post-secondary studies. This point is represented by the findings that parents from the PRC are likely to cajole or convince their children to attend specific international universities (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). The students report that they feel the pressure to attend a specific university, such as an international one, as well as an obligation to follow the wishes of their parents due to the significant financial investment in the student’s educational prospects (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). A possible resulting occurrence, therefore, is the encounter of hindering experiences, such as the loss of a formerly established support network, that can contribute to a transition seen as negative and influence the development of psychological distress.

2.3.2 Unique Motivations and Distinct Concerns

In discussing the unique motivations of Chinese international students, the phrase often attributed to this area is “push/pull” factors. Accordingly, “push” factors relate to internal country determinants that prompt a student to study abroad, such as the local economic and political situation (Bodycott, 2009). Survey results indicate that while some international students may be “pushed” by immigration prospects, improved employment and economic growth (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), Chinese international students appear to be “pushed by a desire for higher quality education and international experiences” (Bodycott, 2009, p. 363). This notion appears to have been observed for several decades, most notably by Brzeinski (1994)’s empirical study that expressed the role of higher education abroad awarding prestige onto the individual, a finding that was re-emphasized in Yan & Berliner’s (2011) assessment of the
unique motivations of Chinese international students. The emphasis on attaining higher education degrees appears to be connected to the role of Confucian ideals, thus highlighting its pervasive and sustained influence.

In contrast to “push” factors, “pull” factors are seen as external mechanisms that attract students towards a host country (Bodycott, 2009). While there are several common “pull” factors amongst Chinese international students (see Bodycott, 2009), researchers recognize the role of the self and the role of the family; consequently, they identify “personal pull” factors and distinguish them from “family pull” factors (Pang & Appleton, 2004). For example, it appears that costs, knowledge and awareness for an institution, proximity to home, and prospects after graduation are seen as “family pull” factors, while factors such as an English-speaking environment, the presence of social and emotional support, and the availability of language support are more significant “personal pull” factors (Bodycott, 2009). In addition, Bamber (2013) stressed other personal pull mechanisms that may be endemic to a specific gender. In his study assessing Chinese women who study in the United Kingdom (UK), there may be intrinsic pull factors that include a desire to travel within a new host-culture, acquisition of knowledge, and hope towards career gains (Bamber, 2013). The Chinese international student, therefore, is attracted towards a particular institution and foreign context by both personal and familial reasons, and there may also be gender-specific attractors.

The discussion on “pull” factors illuminates several distinct concerns amongst Chinese international students when they decide to study abroad; these concerns seem to derive from external (the family) and internal (the self) sources and can influence the development of psychological distress amongst Chinese students. As demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs, the Confucian ideals are significantly defined through the importance of family; thus, a concern
from the family is whether or not the host country provides access to a family-type support network for the child (Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009; Sy, 2006). Indeed, if such a mechanism is not in place, the student is believed to rely on his/her own personal resources, resources that may be limited and unable to cope with the stressors associated with a cross-border transition (Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009). Consequently, it may be argued that the student appears vulnerable towards psychological distress.

Findings also indicate that there is a personal concern from the student as to whether he/she will be able to acquire cultural capital for the family (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). Cultural capital takes the form of language and financial rewards, and this capital is connected to the image of one’s family (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). The concern from the student that arises from this demand, therefore, seems to be whether he/she is able to acquire the necessary capital from a host-country so that there is a promotion of the familial image, rather than a denigration of it. Events that lead to the acquisition of cultural capital may be viewed as facilitating and contribute to the student’s psychological welfare, while incidents that obstruct the security of such capital may be seen as hindering and promote psychological distress.

2.4 Post-Secondary Hindering Experiences

While there are a number of competing demands and challenges encountered by international students during their time in a foreign post-secondary context, there appears to be four significant hindering experiences that have been prominently addressed in the literature. For the general population of international students, the four include a loss of social support (Poyrazli et al., 2004), language acquisition challenges (Yeh & Inose, 2003), cultural adjustment struggles (Andrade, 2006), and ethnic discrimination (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). There has also been research into the unique challenges that are purportedly derived from individuals
whose culture of origin stems from China (Yan & Berliner, 2011).

2.4.1 Loss of Social Support

A common hindering experience that occurs when entering an international post-secondary institution is leaving behind established social networks that can offer readily available support. Researchers, therefore, examine the consequences of this loss, and desire to determine what stressors, and as a result psychological distress, it can predict. For example, Poyrazli et al. (2004) wanted to demonstrate whether the loss of social support related to higher experiences of acculturative stress in the host country (Poyrazli et al., 2004). Acculturative stress is defined through the expression of debilitating symptoms such as anxiety and depression, as well as lowered physiological and psychological health (Hovey & Magana, 2002; Poyrazli et al., 2004). In their study, Poyrazli et al. (2004) distributed two questionnaires to represent the measures of social support and acculturative stress. Using correlational analyses, the results indicated that social support was negatively related with acculturative stress (Poyrazli et al., 2004). The negative relationship suggests that students with lower levels of support are likely to express higher levels of acculturative stress, while students who indicate higher levels of support are more likely to report lower levels of acculturative stress (Poyrazli et al., 2004). The researchers also reported on another dimension of social support; namely, interactions with other individuals. They found that in contrast to international students who socialized more with host-country individuals, students who predominantly socialized with non-host country individuals indicated greater acculturative stress (Poyrazli et al., 2004). This additional finding is supported by correlational research exploring the local ties of international students in Australia, where it was reported that individuals with greater local ties in the host country were more likely to express lower levels of distress (Kashima & Loh, 2005).
The research into the loss of social support illustrates that this hindering experience can relate to specific forms of difficulties, such as acculturative stress, during the transition into a foreign post-secondary context. Specifically, one is able to understand how psychological distress may arise for international students, since readily available support becomes absent. An issue that arises, however, is that this line of research does not further explore the constructs themselves. For example, while the researchers used a measure of social support in the form of a questionnaire, they do not further elaborate on aspects of the construct, such as what promotes it for some individuals in a foreign context, and what hinders its acquisition for others. Likewise, the construct of “acculturative stress” is not further examined, such as whether international students are more likely to report greater physiological distress or psychological distress. Future research, therefore, can benefit from the involvement of the participants, and asking them for more details about the constructs being investigated.

There are also a few limitations with the correlational methodology employed in this study; these limitations, and subsequent methodological limitations, will be discussed in the final section of this review.

2.4.2 Language Fluency Difficulties

Another competing hindering experience with the loss of social support is language acquisition struggles. Within the literature, there is a trend to assess fluency by requesting specific demographic information from international students, including their TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores, their native language and their self-reported fluency of English (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Afterwards, the demographic information is correlated with specific measures, such as questionnaires that measure psychological distress. In one study, the researchers used the requested demographic information and correlated it with a measure of
psychological distress, represented again through acculturative stress (Yeh & Inose, 2003). This research found that higher levels of English fluency (the host language in the study), greater use of English, and comfort with the non-native language predicted lower levels of distress (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

The rationale provided for this finding is that individuals who are more comfortable speaking the host language, such as English, may be more likely to take risks and connect with host students (Yeh & Inose, 2003). These events turn into facilitating incidents that help to alleviate distress. In particular, given the previous findings on greater local ties predicting lower distress amongst international students (Poyrazli et al., 2004), it makes sense that interacting with individuals in the host language predicts lower distress, since these individuals may be able to develop social ties with majority group members more quickly and at a less challenging level (Yeh & Inose, 2003). The researchers, however, do not further explore the individual differences of the participants. For example, it may be important to understand the differences that exist between individuals who report that they acquire the host language easier than individuals who report lower fluency, and further elaborate on the relationship between lower host-language fluency and greater distress.

### 2.4.3 Cultural Adjustment Challenges

The discussion on language struggles also brings up the issue of cultural adjustment challenges (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Yeh and Inose (2003), therefore, also utilized a participant’s ethnicity, deemed as an indicator of one’s cultural heritage, to determine if there were any relationships with acculturative stress. Their findings indicated that European international students were less likely to report acculturative distress than students from Asia, Africa and Latin/Central America (Yeh & Inose, 2003). These findings are substantiated by other research
which indicates Asian students are more likely to report greater acculturative stress in American studies (Poyrazli et al., 2004).

The basis provided for this observation relates to cultural proximity: European-born international students tend to originate from regions that possess similar cultural values to a host country, like the United States and Canada (Poyrazli et al., 2004; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2005; Yeh & Inose, 2003). It is argued that possessing similar values lessens psychological distress, as one may not need to compromise previously held values in favour of ones espoused within the host-country (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2005). Thus, the possibility of a hindering experience, such as being conflicted between one’s cultural values and the host cultural values, is less likely to be encountered.

One incident for such a cultural conflict to occur relates to help-seeking. In particular, the adjustment towards a new cultural context may not be experienced as adversely by European international students because they are more likely to utilize resources, such as counselling services (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). Such services can contribute to the development of facilitating incidents as they are generally meant to promote one’s welfare. In contrast, other cultures may possess different help-seeking attitudes, such as possessing a tendency towards asking for assistance primarily from trusted others, as opposed to strangers (Poyrazli et al., 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003). From these findings, an apparent resulting consequence is that students from similar cultures may be more likely to make use of the resources available to address their personal needs and alleviate their distress. In contrast, students who possess contrasting cultural values may be unable to find appropriate resources, and as a result, they may characterize this difficulty as a hindering experience.

The limitation with the work on cultural adjustment struggles rests in the absence of a
further examination into the relationship between the hindering experiences and distress. While the rationalization on the relationship between cultural values and acculturative stress may be applicable for cultural groups that possess sharply different values, it remains to be determined whether this suggestion also resonates with international students who are shaped by both similar and different cultural values.

2.4.4 Ethnic Discrimination: Actual or Perceived

A final hindering experience discussed in this review is ethnic discrimination. Ethnic discrimination has a number of psychological costs, one of which is lowering one’s self-esteem (Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003). While the experience of actual discrimination has been causally linked to lowering psychological well-being (e.g., Williams, Shore, & Grahe, 1998), perceived discrimination may also relate to distress, and in addition, make it difficult for international students to develop social ties with majority group members (Schmitt et al., 2003). Schmitt et al. (2003), therefore, sought to determine whether perceived discrimination, like actual discrimination, predicts lower self-esteem and lower ties to the majority group. Using a Likert-type question to measure perceived discrimination, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (Rosenberg, 1979) as a measure of self-esteem, the researchers found a negative relationship between the two constructs (Schmitt et al., 2003). They also found a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and identification with other international students (Schmitt et al., 2003). Thus, it seems that whether perceived or actual discrimination is experienced by international students, there is a negative correlation with psychological distress, such as lower self-esteem, and less likelihood of forming social ties with the majority group members. As previously stated, the lower ties with majority group members may exasperate distress, since higher social ties with majority group members predict lower acculturative stress.
These findings are supported by experimental research that has demonstrated perceptions of discrimination causing greater “other-group” identification and lowered psychological well-being (see Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001). Overall, the findings appear to suggest that actual and perceived discrimination can be seen as hindering incidents that can be debilitating and drive the student away from readily establishing social ties with others.

### 2.4.5 Hindering Experiences Unique to Chinese International Student Populations

While the general hindering experiences encountered by international students highlight the struggles and challenges broadly faced by this community, the literature also emphasizes unique hindering experiences amongst individuals whose culture of origin stems from China.

In their qualitative inquiry on Chinese international students attending an American post-secondary institution, Yan and Berliner (2011) found that the overwhelming majority of their respondents highlighted the inability to attain academic success to be one of the greatest sources of distress. The researchers expressed that this challenge is further compounded by both familial and personal pressures – since academic achievement contributes to a sense of honour within the family, there is a continual extrinsic force towards its attainment in order to avoid a sense of disgrace (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Moreover, because its attainment lends itself to garnering personal prestige, the student’s internal motivation and sole commitment towards academic success may contribute to sacrifices in other areas, such as social relationships and work-life balance (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Thus, it appears that the findings illustrate the potential for a culmination of hindering experiences for Chinese international students rooted in the sustained preoccupation towards achieving academic success.

In addition, Yan and Berliner (2011) found that Chinese international students may be
greatly impacted by certain socio-cultural concerns. For these researchers, the primary area related to uncertainty regarding the discernment of rules and norms surrounding discourse and social engagement with host-culture locals (in this instance, Americans) (Yan & Berliner, 2011). The researchers further reported that the inability to connect and build relationships with host-culture locals was exacerbated by language barriers (Yan & Berliner, 2011). This research, therefore, appears to complement the general international student inquiry in relation to a sense of frustration regarding the inability to connect with host-culture locals, particularly for Chinese international students.

Moreover, in their mixed-methods study (use of observations and interviews), Gu and Maley (2008) found that “learning shock” and existential/life struggles may be faced by Chinese international students attending a UK institution. Regarding “learning shock”, it was proposed that insufficient language capabilities coupled with unfamiliarity towards a different teaching and learning paradigm may compound unpleasant feelings for this group of students (Gu & Maley, 2008). This “shock” reaffirms previously stated findings that noted language difficulties and cultural adjustment challenges remaining a pressing concern amongst the general international student population. For Chinese international students, it appears that a specific aspect of cultural difference relates primarily to the entire academic system utilized within the new host-culture. As the researchers highlight, they may possess entrenched ways of learning, such as specific attitudes towards participating and engaging in class, that originate from the Chinese culture of origin and appear radically different from the host-culture’s approach (Gu & Maley, 2008). The inability to integrate a different approach, therefore, offers additional avenues towards distress for Chinese international students as they are required to learn and to “fit” a different learning mould. It is also clear that the researchers are reporting the issues can
be further impaired by the inability to utilize the host-language fluently.

Existential/life struggles pertains to the findings that there is psychological and physical challenges in relation to living within a different life pattern (Gu & Maley, 2008). These experiences relate to living a lonely and boring life, feelings of isolation towards the host-culture, and dislike of food (Gu & Maley, 2008). The researchers, therefore, highlight the possibility for a greater over-arching concern for their Chinese participants. In particular, beyond academic matters, distress for Chinese international students may derive from disconnecting with the host-culture in relation to specific aspects, such as the food that is available and the ways of living within the society, that contrasts from a previously accustomed way of life. Overall, the research appears to portray Chinese international students as particularly vulnerable towards distress, and an over-arching connection with the literature relates to language and cultural fluency within the chosen host-culture. A limitation with the presented works, however, remains the fact that the studies took place in locations that did not readily have culture-of-origin attributes present. Chinese international students studying in Canada, therefore, may not encounter the same level of distress reported by Chinese international students in other locales, as aspects from their culture-of-origin may appear more visibly prominent, particularly in certain parts of Canada, such as Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.

2.5 Beacon of Light: Strength-Based Focus for Cultural Transition

Despite the general and specific hindering incidents that can occur for international students, this section explores the growing trend within the past decade towards emphasizing the strengths of international students, and for the possibility of facilitating incidents to arise and to promote psychological well-being. The process of reappraising the cross-cultural transition affords researchers and clinicians the opportunity to explore other dimensions associated with
international students, including the learning and skill-building that can arise within the host-culture, as well as the positive qualities associated with the process.

### 2.5.1 New Cultural Awareness and Skills

In Arthur’s (2004) work, she emphasized that the transition process of international students is rooted in the notion of cultural learning; that is, international students devise ways to address their transition process and to meet their personal needs. This framework, therefore, places an emphasis on the strengths and abilities that international students either possess or learn to harness as they study abroad. Additionally, Arthur (2004) supports the notion that studying and living within a new host-culture actually provides opportunities for the effective management of contrasting and often competing ways of living – international students can become culturally flexible in order to mitigate their challenges. Thus, rather than viewing the students from a deficit perspective, this proposed outlook offers an avenue towards capturing the inherent strengths, as well as the possibility for new learning and awareness, to arise amongst international students. More significantly, Arthur (2004) contends that the experience of success for international students, such as overcoming cultural obstacles and devising new ways of socializing and behaving within a new host-culture, can be rewarding encounters.

### 2.5.2 Freedom

In line with Arthur’s (2004) perspective that the cross-cultural transition can be a rewarding experience, Brown and Brown (2009) reported that being away from one’s culture-of-origin provided international students a sense of freedom and opportunity for self-discovery. Utilizing an ethnographic approach that combined participant observations with in-depth interviews, Brown and Brown (2009) found that while their participants reported on encountering particular challenges, they also experienced a sense of liberation and reconnection.
The researchers found that some of their respondents expressed enthusiasm towards the assumption of a student life because it afforded them a sense of freedom from the “stressful professional ‘adult’ life”, and reconnected them towards a younger version of themselves (Brown & Brown, 2009, p. 349).

An issue with the presented work relates to the incorporation of all their sample members into one general category of international students. The uniqueness that exists for individuals from different culture-of-origins becomes unnoticed as all the results were compiled and presented together. Nevertheless, it is evident that transformation in relation to personal identity, roles, and cultural awareness becomes a possibility precisely because an individual chooses to study abroad.

2.5.3 Learning from Existing and New Skills

Two additional studies highlight the capacity for international students to learn to devise ways to mitigate the challenges they encounter (e.g., Hughes, 2011; McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). Through a critical incident approach that addressed the academic realm, Hughes (2011) identified the ability of international students to utilize their existing strengths in order to study and to learn within a different host-culture. Hughes (2011) found that existing Internet skills, cultural knowledge, and linguistic capabilities served to improve the study habits of their sample respondents. These findings demonstrate the ability to learn and to apply existing awareness and insights in order to address current issues, such as a different academic approach within a foreign cultural context.

Likewise, through the use of Grounded Theory Interviews with 20 international students, McLachlan & Justice (2009) were able to underscore that despite the psychological costs that can occur for international students, such as the loss of an established support system, some students
are able to possess the cognitive mindset to not only survive, but thrive, in a foreign context. The themes that emerged from this research include the creation of a surrogate family to act as a new support system, developing ties with faculty mentors to establish a strong connection with one’s school, attaining friends quickly from one’s own cultural background, developing confidence and openness as a result of living in a different cultural context, and engaging in activities to address loneliness (such as drawing, singing, and exercise) (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). These themes suggest that international students play an active role during their transition, and as Arthur (2004) argues, they appear to eventually learn to adapt, such as seeking out support networks, devising new ways to establish relationships, and developing their own coping strategies. Consequently, they seem to actively stimulate facilitating experiences to combat adverse situations and promote their well-being while they complete their studies in a foreign context.

In both examples, the line of research was able to illustrate the advantages of utilizing a qualitative approach. Specifically, there is a greater exploration of the individuals, and the emergent themes are able to portray the potential capabilities of the participants. The limitations of this approach, however, are that the results are non-representative as a result of the small sample sizes. Nonetheless, the two studies were able to capture an image of a population that is not entirely vulnerable; rather, it presents them as individuals who possess the capacity to utilize their existing knowledge, and to reduce the stressors encountered. As a result, they may be able to develop personal strengths and resources, such as resiliency, when they enter a foreign cultural context.

2.5.4 Further Qualitative Inquiry into the Positive Aspects of Transition

Moores and Popadiuk (2011) sought to determine additional positive aspects associated
with the cross-cultural transition process. In their critical incident study, they interviewed a sample of seven international students, and the findings indicated the following results: their participants were able to derive facilitating experiences by connecting with others, use pre-existing knowledge to support their present transition, illustrate flexibility and openness towards the transition process, and discover personal strengths such as the capacity to overcome obstacles (e.g., Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). It becomes apparent that the possibility for all of these qualities to arise derives precisely from the decision to study abroad and cross-cultures.

Like the previously presented findings within this strength-based discussion, the use of interviews with a limited sample size raises concerns over representation, especially since the researchers interviewed participants from a gamut of cultural backgrounds (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). Yet the findings are important because they continue to illustrate the shifting-perspective of international students towards viewing them as individuals who encounter rich and rewarding events, and not merely experiencing challenges and deficits.

**2.5.5. Unique Facilitating Experiences for Chinese International Students**

While the previous study approached general international students, the literature also presents work that focuses primarily on Chinese international students and their positive experiences. Gu and Maley (2008) focused their work on Chinese students in the UK, and one particular finding of note was the importance placed on mono-cultural (conational) bonds. Their respondents highlighted that connecting with individuals and aspects from their culture-of-origin supported their cross-cultural transition process (Gu & Maley, 2008). It seems, therefore, that it does not matter whether international students form attachments with majority group members or with other international students. In fact, Gu and Maley’s (2008) study are supported by the findings that irrespective of the type of association developed (e.g., students from other cultures,
students from the same home culture, or students from the majority culture), international students value relationships because they are seen as instrumental in the transitional process (e.g., McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). These results run contrary to the previous findings that indicated greater support from one’s own culture was related to more distress; rather, it seems that supportive relationships of any kind can be viewed as facilitating events that promote a sense of belonging and community during one’s cross-cultural transition.

Another unique facilitating feature found within Gu and Maley’s (2008) work related to the opportunity to discover the capacity to become more involved in class discussions, as well as adopting different ways of studying which promoted focused and engaged learning. Thus, it appears that for Chinese students, the chance to study abroad can provide a path towards self-discovering strengths and abilities, one that may not be readily nurtured within their culture-of-origin. For instance, there is little possibility of interacting and learning with individuals beyond the Chinese culture-of-origin in China; therefore, one is afforded the opportunity to grow and transform while residing in a new host-culture.

An important variable to consider in the transformative process is length of residence because time can be an influential factor in allowing for the process to emerge, and for permitting a positive experience to arise. As a result, researchers want to assess the relationship between length of residence and psychosocial distress amongst specific cultural groups, including Asian international students. In one correlational study, participants completed two measures that represented distress, and a demographic questionnaire which was used to indicate their length of residence (Wilton & Constantine, 2003). The results showed that Asian international students who were in a host country for a shorter period of time reported higher levels of psychological distress, while the reverse relationship occurred for individuals who had
longer residences (Wilton & Constantine, 2003). The rationale provided for this finding is that a longer stay provides opportunities to develop and establish social networks that were previously lost in the transition (Wilton & Constantine, 2003). In relation to the strength-based perspective, it seems that a longer residence affords international students the chance to discover and to transform, while a shorter residence may limit these opportunities of growth and development.

2.6 Assessing the Methods Used in the Literature Review

It is apparent that there is a predominant focus on using quantitative methodologies to address hindering experiences of international students as they cross-cultures and enter a foreign post-secondary context. For example, all of the hindering experiences discussed in the review were derived from questionnaires and surveys that were distributed towards a large number of international students (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Yeh & Inose). While this approach is able to reach a significant number of individuals, and create generalizable findings, there are several prominent methodological limitations, including biases with self-reports (Wilton & Constantine, 2003) and an inability to provide causal explanations (Poyrazli et al., 2004).

More importantly, the use of descriptive statistical techniques does not provide an in-depth exploration into the hindering experiences themselves. There is also little discussion into what makes the particular experiences significant for international students. An additional observation of note is the repeated use of demographic information to solely represent the client’s identity. For example, in several studies, the research appears to assume that ethnicity represents culture, and utilizes the stated ethnic background as the sole representation of cultural identity (e.g., Poyrazli et al., 2004; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh 2006; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). Cultural identity, however, is a multi-varied concept, and this reliance on demographic data does
not appear to fully represent culture, nor does it permit the participant to actually identify his/her cultural heritage. Finally, the use of quantitative methods appears to include all international students into one general category, and as a result, differences that exist amongst specific populations are lost in the process.

With respect to facilitating experiences, it seems that there is an inclination towards qualitative approaches, such as Case Study, Critical Incident Technique and Grounded Theory Interviews. Although results from these studies may not be generalizable and there may be biases in the selection of participants, they are able to explore the constructs more closely. In addition, the voices of the participants are made evident in the findings, ones that were previously hidden within the data of descriptive statistics. Thus, the growing literature that seeks to discern the strengths of international students, and the capacity for a positive experience, illustrates a desire to connect more closely with the participants.

2.7 Summary

The first part of the review began by defining the phrases and terms used in this study. There are two concepts of note: “positive and negative experience(s),” and “transition.” “Positive and negative experience(s)” is a phrase related to the outcomes associated with a particular event, such as the development of psychological distress, or the promotion of one’s welfare. “Transition” is defined as a process of change that involves the self and the context, it unfolds variably for individuals with multiple outcomes, and it involves goals, actions, and relationships.

The second part of the review addressed the pre-transition process, and in particular, the influences on Chinese international students that promote the cross-cultural transition and the selection of an international post-secondary context. For Chinese students, the unique influences
include the role of Confucian ideals, and distinct motives and concerns.

The third part of the review discussed notable hindering experiences of international students that contribute to psychological distress or well-being. The hindering experiences include the loss of social support, language and cultural adjustment struggles, and ethnic discrimination. This section also underscored hindering experiences that may be unique to Chinese international student populations in particular host-cultures; namely, the United States and the UK.

The fourth section discussed the emergence of a strength-based perspective – one rooted in the transformative opportunity presented to international students while studying abroad. This transformation gives way to cultural learning and exposes the possibility for facilitating experiences that include acknowledgment and discovery of strengths and capabilities. Moreover, it is argued that an important variable to consider in relation to this transformative process relates to longer residences within a host country. Overall, the depiction of international students appears to be changing, but the findings are limited in relation to unique characteristics of individual groups, as well as limitations in terms of generalizability because of the approaches utilized within the literature.

The review concluded with an examination of methodological approaches. It is apparent that hindering experiences primarily use one approach, while the literature on strengths and facilitating experiences uses a variety of qualitative approaches. In order to broaden the methodological literature, and counteract the dependence on quantitative approaches, particularly in relation to hindering experiences and psychological distress, this study proposes to use a qualitative approach, the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT), to discover significant hindering and facilitating experiences for international students from China who identify as
thriving. By focusing on both aspects, this approach also balances the predominant perception on negativity and distress amongst international students. The following chapter outlines this methodological approach and the rationale for using it to study the experiences of Chinese international students from China studying in Canada.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 3 outlines the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) and its use in collecting and analyzing the data for this study. Since the methodology employed in this research is the ECIT, the history of its foundational framework, the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), is first reviewed in relation to its characteristics, suitability and trustworthiness. Following this discussion, the epistemological paradigm of the ECIT is underscored. This chapter further includes the participant recruitment and participant demographic information, along with a discussion on data collection, analysis, and the fulfillment of the nine credibility checks established by Butterfield et al. (2005) for the ECIT.

3.1 History of CIT

Developed by Flanagan (1954) during the Aviation Psychology program for selecting and classifying air personnel in World War II, CIT was originally intended to address the effectiveness of pilot candidates. Specifically, some of Flanagan’s earlier studies tried to determine the reasons for a candidate’s failure and subsequent elimination from the aviation program. This information relied on a candidate’s self-reports, as well as information from instructors, and the reasons provided often included both “clichés,” as well as “specific observations of particular behaviours” (Flanagan, 1954, p. 328). The information about specific behaviours became the impetus towards uncovering concrete facts, and eventually, the studies involved requesting for detailed information that related to incidents seen to be either helpful or hindering in completing a particular activity, such as accomplishing a mission (Flanagan, 1954). Over the course of fifty years, the method has evolved beyond its original application within industrial and organizational psychology, and it has been applied to address concerns in a number of domains, including education and counselling psychology (Butterfield, Borgen,


3.2 Characteristics of CIT

CIT is a commonly used qualitative approach recognized for its ability to explore and to investigate a particular phenomenon of interest (Butterfield et al., 2005). The methodology adheres to five major steps, and they are as follows: “1) ascertain the aims of the activity being studied, 2) make plans and set specifications, 3) collect the data, 4) analyze the data, and 5) interpret the data and report the results” (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 477). For a detailed account of each step, the reader is directed to Butterfield et al., (2005), as well as Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, Amundson (2009).

The purpose of the CIT is to pinpoint “critical incidents” (or CIs) for individuals (Butterfield et al., 2005). An event is considered “critical” when it affects, positively or negatively, the outcomes of a phenomenon (Flanagan, 1954). While the original conception of critical incidents focused on observable behaviours, CIT has grown to account for cognitive, affective, and behavioural components, including the coping of an incident, as well as the consequences of an incident (Butterfield et al., 2005). In relation to my own research, it is argued that critical incidents are likely to occur while an individual engages in the activity of crossing cultures. The particular outcome of note relates to how an individual is able to derive a positive experience during and throughout his/her cross-cultural transition, in spite of changes that can affect his/her well-being.

The manner in which CIT elicits information from participants is primarily through a semi-structured interview where the interviewer asks participants to focus on recalling events or incidents that helped or hindered the individual during a particular activity (Butterfield et al., 2005). Specifically, the participant is asked to recount a critical incident and complete the
following tasks: identify and explain the source of the incident, discuss the incident and its importance, and explore the consequences of the incident (Popadiuk, 2010). As a result, an interview guide is useful as it will help direct the researcher and participant to actively explore a critical incident (see Appendix A for interview protocol).

### 3.3 Suitability and the Use of ECIT

As previously discussed, CIT has expanded beyond its original applications, and it has also been actively used within fields of education and counselling research. Woolsey (1986) argued that the approach appears to make use of the skillset and values of counselling psychologists. In particular, the approach is seen as inherently flexible at being able to “encompass factual happenings, qualities or attributes, not just critical incidents,” to explore differences or turning points, and to act as an exploratory tool in the beginning stages of research (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 480). Thus, the approach seems appropriate particularly when an endeavour or psychological construct has not been heavily investigated, such as the successful coping abilities of international students from China. In addition, there has been noted research that applies the CIT towards the population of Asian international students, including Popadiuk (2009), Popadiuk (2010), Moores & Popadiuk (2011), and Popadiuk & Marshall (2011).

While CIT in and of itself is seen as a suitable method for exploring events, it has been further improved by the presence of the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT), the methodology utilized in this research. ECIT follows the traditional practice of CIT, but it also permits a further examination of contextual issues, Wish List (WL) items, and includes nine-credibility checks (Butterfield et al., 2009). WL items are seen as resources (e.g., people, programs, and information) that were not present during a particular event, but would have been helpful for the individual during the phenomenon being investigated (Butterfield et al., 2009).
From the perspective of my research question — “What facilitates or hinders the cross-cultural transition experience of Chinese Post-Secondary Students from China who self-identify as successfully adapting in Canada?” — ECIT seems to be an appropriate choice for several reasons. First, as Woolsey (1986) suggests, CIT (and subsequently, ECIT) is not only able to explore events, but it is capable of uncovering key moments that helped an individual succeed during a particular challenging situation or experience. For my purposes, there is a predominant assumption that the multiple demands placed on international students make the cross-cultural experiences quite challenging. In contrast, the proposed application of ECIT within this research is to actively determine what facilitates and/or hinders this transitional process, and more importantly, how certain international students appear successful in negotiating this potentially challenging period. This portrayal may be able to lend itself towards dispelling the biased assumption within the literature that is directed at international students. An example of such a negotiation is reframing past hindering experiences and describing them as a necessity for personal growth and development. A second reason is that ECIT is a flexible method capable of accomplishing multiple functions, such as “understanding effective and ineffective ways of performing an [endeavour], discovering helping and hindering factors, accumulating descriptions of events or problems, examining successes and failures, or determining significant characteristics that are critical to important aspects of an activity or event” (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 476). Thus, for my purposes, the “activity or event” is represented by the negotiation of changes that can occur during one’s cross-cultural transition experience. It is my intention to use ECIT to thoroughly uncover and explore events thought to be significant for Chinese international students from China.

3.4 Epistemological Paradigm
The paradigm in which ECIT is situated is the social constructivist worldview (N. Amundson, personal communication, November 4, 2012). Consequently, there is an assumption that individuals seek meaning within their lives, and this meaning is achieved through subjective interpretation of experiences (Creswell, 2011). The meanings are multiple and varied, and the goal is to capture the participant’s perspective with respect to a particular situation of interest (Creswell, 2011). For my purposes, the experiences and subjective meanings are derived from an international student’s ability to negotiate a number of demands within a Canadian post-secondary context.

The social constructivist approach also recognizes the utility of open-ended questioning because it can highlight particular behaviours performed during certain circumstances (Creswell, 2011). The use of open-ended questioning illustrates the social component of this framework, where as a researcher, I will be co-constructing the meanings with the participants through our interactions and dialogue. As a result, I need to account for my own experiences, such as being a post-secondary student who initially struggled during his post-secondary studies. For example, the failure of an exam represented a primary turning point in my academic progress, as it was an event that appeared to motivate me to adjust my study habits and succeed academically. This acknowledgement illustrates how my own interpretations, like the participants of this study, are shaped by personal, cultural, and historical experiences (Creswell, 2011). For this reason, acknowledging potential biases becomes paramount, and strictly adhering to the interview protocol (see Appendix A) designed for this study is significant as it can mitigate personal inclinations. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the use of experts and judges during the credibility checks of this study will also bring about subjective interpretations, thus further illustrating that this approach lends itself towards the social constructivist paradigm.
3.5 Participants

In total, the recommended number of participants for ECIT is between 10 to 15 participants because this range is often seen as capable of highlighting an exhaustive number of critical incidents (Butterfield et al., 2009). A total of 12 identified Chinese international students from China participated in this study, and these individuals discussed facilitating and hindering events, as well as wish-list items.

3.5.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for participant selection was Chinese students who originated from China, and who have completed at least one term of study at a post-secondary institution in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. These individuals must also have possessed some mastery of the English language as all interviews and transcripts were completed in English. Thus, participants recruited for this study needed to be able to carry a conversation in English for the duration of the interview. Finally, individuals selected for this study were required to self-identify as “being successful” or “doing well” during their cross-cultural transition. The meaning attached to success or “doing well” was self-defined by the participants during the initial interview (see Appendix A). The exclusion criteria involved international students who were not Chinese and did not originate from China. The study also sought to exclude immigrant students, and individuals who did not possess a student visa.

Of the 12 students who participated in the study, 11 of them met the inclusion/exclusion criteria, while Participant 12 did not meet the criteria of being an international student with a student visa. Specifically, although Participant 12 self-identified as an international student who crossed-cultures for post-secondary purposes, it was determined during the screening process that she was originally born in Vancouver for citizenship purposes. The Participant’s results,
however, were included due to a few contributing factors. First, the length of time in Canada prior to her post-secondary studies was less than 2 months (only as an infant); afterwards, she resided in Hong Kong for 17 years. As Participant 12 expressed, she “[considered herself] an international student [because she]...was never in Canada until first-year university, so it's actually just my birth certificate that says I'm domestic” (Participant 12). Second, she never returned to Canada other than for post-secondary purposes – Participant 12 completed both elementary and high-school in Hong Kong. For these discussed reasons, the data collected from Participant 12 was also included in the analysis.

3.5.2 Recruitment

Participant recruitment entailed posting advertisements at various post-secondary institutions situated throughout the Lower Mainland. After appropriate approval from the institutions was given, either by email correspondence or approval from their respective ethics board, the list of post-secondary institutions included the University of British Columbia (UBC), Simon Fraser University (SFU) (Burnaby Campus), Vancouver Community College (VCC) (Downtown and Broadway Campuses), and Langara College. The posting of flyers yielded three eligible participants. Social media services, including Facebook and Craigslist were also used to market the study; these services yielded one participant. Five eligible participants became available through contact with Orient Star Media, an organization that volunteered its services to help in the recruitment endeavours of this study. Finally, three eligible participants were made aware of the study through the snowball technique – participants and personal acquaintances of the researcher initiated contact and advertised the study to other individuals. All participants self-initiated contact with the researcher via email, and in order to determine their eligibility, they were screened to ensure that they met the inclusion/exclusion criteria. All of the interviews
were conducted in English, and participants were reimbursed with a gift card valued at $15.00 for their participation.

### 3.5.3 Participant Demographics

Table 1: Participant Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>18-34 (mean = 22.6 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range for Length of Residence</td>
<td>11 months to 5 years (mean = 1 year, 8 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provinces/Territories of Birth in China</td>
<td>Hong Kong [4*]; “In the Mongolian Province” [1]; Hebei [1]; Anhui [1]; Quandon / Canton [1]; Hubei [1]; Hunan [1]; Tianjin [1]; Xinjiang [1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* includes Participant 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td>Single [8]; In a relationship [2]; Engaged [1]; Married [1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td>Student Status [7]; Volunteer [2]; Part-Time [1]; Research Assistant [1]; Mandarin Instructor [1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Institution</td>
<td>University of British Columbia [8]; Simon Fraser University [2]; Vancouver Community College [1]; Langara [1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Status</td>
<td>Undergraduate [7]; Graduate [4]; Diploma [1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosen Fields of Study</td>
<td>Food Sciences, Commerce, Psychology, Environmental Sciences, Land and Food Systems, Psychology and Sociology, Economics (undergraduate program), Masters of Arts in Economics, Master of Arts in Leadership, Masters of Arts in Adult Learning Education, Masters of Education in Language and Literacy Education (with a focus on Modern Languages), and a Diploma in Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Educational Background</td>
<td>Bachelor’s in Accounting (China) [1]; Bachelor’s in Food Science (China) [1]; Bachelors of Science (China) [1]; Bachelor’s in International Trade and Masters in Marketing [1]; Bachelors and Masters of Arts in English Education (China) [1]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 outlines the profiles of all 12 participants of the study. Of the 12 participants, nine were female and three were male. The age range was from 18 to 34 years old, with a mean age of 22.6 years, a median age of 21.5 years, and a mode 19 years old. The length of residence in Canada ranged from 11 months to 5 years, with a mean of approximately 1 year and 8 months, a median of 12½ months, and a mode of 1 year. In relation to the Province of Birth, four (including Participant 12) identified as being from Hong Kong, while the remaining eight participants were born in the following Provinces of China: “In the Mongolian Province,” Hebei, Anhui, Quandon/Canton, Hubei, Hunan, Tianjin, and Xinjiang. With respect to the relationship status of the participants, eight reported as being “single,” two reported as being “in a relationship,” one reported as being engaged, and one reported as being married; none of the participants reported having children. The employment status of the participants included seven who identified as “Student Status,” two who discussed their volunteer work, one reported on part-time employment, one detailed her position as a research assistant, and one expressed her occupation as a Mandarin instructor.

Regarding the attended post-secondary institutions of the participants, eight currently attend UBC, two are at SFU, one is at VCC, and one is at Langara. Seven participants identified as undergraduate students, four as graduate students, and one as a diploma/certificate international student. The chosen field of studies included the following: Food Sciences, Commerce, Psychology, Environmental Sciences, Land and Food Systems, Psychology and Sociology, Economics (undergraduate program), Masters of Arts in Economics, Master of Arts in Leadership, Masters of Arts in Adult Learning Education, Masters of Education in Language and Literacy Education (with a focus on Modern Languages), and a Diploma in Accounting. Finally, of note is the educational background of several of the international students who
received degrees prior to attending a post-secondary institution located in the Lower Mainland: one received a Bachelor’s in Accounting (China), one completed a Bachelor’s in Food Science (China), one received a Bachelor of Science (China), one attained a Masters in Marketing (United Kingdom) as well as a Bachelor’s in International Trade (China), and one received a Bachelors and Masters of Arts in English Education (China).

3.6 Data Collection

Data collection for this study involved 12 one-on-one interviews and email follow-up regarding participant feedback. The length of time for the interviews ranged between forty-five minutes to two and a half hours; the interviews and the subsequent transcription became the data source. Prior to each scheduled interview, participants were sent an electronic copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix B). When the researcher and participant met, the consent form was first reviewed to ensure that the purpose of the study, confidentiality and its limits, and the participant’s rights were understood. Afterwards, the participant signed the document and they were given an additional copy to be retained for their personal records.

The initial face-to-face interview was conducted using a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix A). The protocol was broken up into five domains: contextual information, critical incident section, wish-list items, additional questions, and demographic information. The interview followed a semi-structured protocol along with basic interviewing skills that included empathizing, clarifying, paraphrasing, reflecting and summarizing. In relation to the addressed domains, participants first discussed personal reasons for deciding to cross-cultures, their experiences in the Lower Mainland and more specifically at the post-secondary institution of their choice, and their personal definitions of “doing well.” Afterwards, the participants reported on helpful and hindering events that impacted their cross-cultural transition, as well as wish-list
items that would have been helpful to them had they possessed or had access to them. The interview concluded with additional questions that addressed the participant’s abilities to handle change.

Participant interviews took place in two locations: UBC and a personal office space. They were all video recorded, and written notes were compiled throughout each initial interview. The interview and interview transcription were completed by the researcher. Note that while the first eight interviews were transcribed in their entirety, the interviews for Participants 9-12 utilized a “targeted transcription” approach. The “targeted transcription” process represents a recent development in relation to the use of ECIT (Amundson, 2013, p. 6). This proposed development maintains the suggestion of using initial interviews until the point of saturation; afterwards, a more targeted process is utilized during the interview itself (Amundson, 2013). In particular, there was the inclusion of a formal summary of all the facilitating and hindering incidents, as well as wish list items, conducted at the end of the interview; this discussion, in turn, facilitated an elaboration on any missed information from the participant. The intention of this technique was to “transcribe the summaries of interviews after saturation has been realized” and to conduct additional interviews in order to lend further confidence to one’s findings (Amundson, 2013, p. 7). Finally, follow-up was completed via email contact with the participants.

3.7 Data Analysis

Analysis consisted of organizing the raw data from the transcribed video interviews, and began with extraction of CIs and W/L items. In Flanagan’s (1954) original conception, critical incidents were seen as any direct, observable behaviour that adhered to established criteria. For the purposes of this work, it also became clear during interviews, much like in the work of Kane
and Millar (2002), that critical incidents could also entail the thoughts, perceptions, and feelings of the participant during “critical” moments. As a result, during the initial analysis of the transcripts, any event or experience deemed as associated with helping or hindering the post-secondary transition process were first extracted. Incidents were then carefully reviewed by the primary researcher, and in order to be included in the study, they needed to meet the following conditions: 1) the incident was clearly stated as an experience related to the activity in question (cross-cultural transition process), 2) the incident had an explicit beginning and end point (completeness), 3) the incident was stated with sufficient detail that outlined the experience (i.e. the participant discussed the meaning of the source and included facts such as people, time, place, specific behaviours as well as thoughts, feelings, and perceptions), and 4) the consequence of the event was linked to the focus of this study (i.e., a positive or negative experience that affected the participant’s cross-cultural transition process). As outlined in the Interview Protocol (Appendix A), incidents were organized around the main headings of source, event and event significance, and outcome on a blank Word document.

Initial extraction of CIs and W/L items occurred from the first eight participant interviews. These interviews were randomly slotted into three batches: two batches consisting of three interviews, and one consisting of two. CIs and W/L items were first extracted from the first three interviews in Batch 1, and the emerging patterns, themes, and similarities among the CIs and WL items were categorized (Butterfield et al., 2009). The remaining two batches (Batch 2 and Batch 3) were examined, and CIs and W/L items were identified and organized into existing categories. During this process, new categories surfaced, and they were also subjected to amendments and mergers. In addition, there was also the consideration of participation rates. Specifically, the 25% participation rate established by Borgen and Amundson (1984) (as cited in
Butterfield et al., 2009) was also used to account for categories and the placement of incidents and W/L items. Once the final list of categories was created, the defining features and operational definitions were given to each category.

The remaining four targeted transcripts were placed into Batch 4, and additional CIs and W/L items were extracted; no new categories or sub-categories emerged from these four interviews. The emergence of categories is listed in Appendix C.

3.8 Trustworthiness / Credibility Checks

In total, there are nine outlined credibility checks that strengthen the trustworthiness of the approach (Butterfield et al., 2009). A discussion of adhering and meeting the nine checks is provided.

**Audiotaping Interviews:**

The first check involved the utility of audio-recording devices during the interviews (Butterfield et al., 2009). The presence of audiotapes, and the subsequent transcripts, demonstrates that the participant’s own words are accurately represented, and that work is done directly from this source so that descriptive validity is established (Butterfield et al., 2009). All twelve initial interviews were video-recorded (with audio) and transcribed by the researcher.

**Interview Fidelity:**

Second, one needs to demonstrate “Interview Fidelity” by eliciting an expert in CIT to listen to every third or fourth taped interview (Butterfield et al., 2009). For the purposes of this study, Dr. Norm Amundson (thesis supervisor) was selected to ensure that Interview Fidelity occurred, and there was adherence to the interview protocol established (see Appendix A). Dr. Amundson reported that interview fidelity was achieved and that the study adhered to the ECIT research method, there were no leading questions, and that the interview guide was followed
Independent Extraction of CIs:

The third process, “Independent extraction of CIs,” was completed by Carson Kivari, a Registered Clinical Counsellor with knowledge of the ECIT. Following a discussion of his independent extraction, 4 additional facilitating incidents, and 2 additional hindering incidents were included for data analysis.

Exhaustiveness:

“Exhaustiveness,” involves demonstrating that all the categories are derived, and for ECIT, research indicates that this feat is achieved after no new CIs or WL items are reported by the participants (Butterfield et al., 2009). As indicated in Appendix C, exhaustiveness was achieved after the fifth transcript was reviewed and sorted, and no further categories emerged.

Participation Rates:

Fifth, there is a report on “Participation Rates” so that one is able to demonstrate both credibility behind the categories, and the relative strength of a particular category (Butterfield et al., 2009). Participation rates were calculated by assigning the number of individuals to every CI or WL item, and then determining the percentages (Butterfield et al., 2009). The generated percentages and tables corresponding to facilitating, hindering, and W/L items are presented in the Findings Section.

Independent Judge:

Sixth, an independent individual took the CIs and WL items and placed them into the created categories (Butterfield et al., 2009). Twenty-five percent of the incidents were randomly selected and presented to an independent judge who placed the incidents into the devised categories. The agreement rates between the researcher and the independent judge consisted of
the following percentages: Helping Categories (84%), Hindering Categories (81%), and Wish-List Categories (100%). All of these rates adhered to the proposed match-rate outlined by Butterfield et al. 2009 of at least 80%. Moreover, 1 item was added to the helping categories, while a hindering sub-category was merged after it was discerned that there was a lack of distinction between the other categories listed.

**Participant Feedback:**

The seventh check was to elicit participant feedback through a feedback interview after the original data has been coded and analyzed (Butterfield et al., 2009). This act invites confirmation, review, and reformulations of the initial results with the participants themselves (Butterfield et al., 2009). All participants were contacted regarding feedback via email, with eight out of twelve participants responding and providing additional insights. One participant added an additional facilitating incident, and contact regarding further verification and clarification was completed regarding the event. All of the participants who responded indicated that there was 100% agreement with respect to reported CIs and W/L items.

**Expert Opinions:**

The eighth check involved the participation of two experts who determined whether the finalized version of categories is representative, or whether there is something missing (Butterfield et al., 2009). In this research, two experts from the field of Counselling Psychology were selected due to their research and personal counselling work with the international student community: Dr. José Domene (University of New Brunswick) and Dr. Dan Zhang (Vancouver Community College). Each expert was required to answer the following three questions: “1) Do you find the categories to be useful? 2) Are you surprised by any of the categories? and 3) Do you think there is anything missing based on your experience?” (Butterfield et al., 2009, p. 278).
Both experts agreed that the generated categories were useful and “[conceptualized] the experiences of the students” (J. Domene, personal communication, December 21, 2014). Of note, however, was that there was confusion in relation to two generated categories for Dr. Domene in the area of “Supportive Others” and “Supportive Strangers.” As a result, this confusion was addressed by rewording the category name (Supportive Others in Institutions) and supplementing the operational definition of the category to indicate that it was in reference to individuals within a specific context (i.e., institutional settings). With respect to surprises, while Dr. Zhang did not report any, Dr. Domene expressed one area of surprise in the apparent applicability of the generated categories towards international students of various cultures, and not simply unique or endemic to the population of Chinese international students. None of the experts reported anything missing from the generated categories, and both offered further insights into how there may be a possible hindering category in relation to “Actual or Perceived Parental Conflict” with international students, such as between one’s personal desires and one’s parental desires. Although incidents related to this aspect did not readily emerge in the interviews themselves, this category remains an area for possible further exploration (see Discussion Section). Finally, Dr. Zhang shared her awareness into additional areas of facilitating or hindering experiences as well as a wish-list item. These included the following possible incidents: validation of one’s personal and professional knowledge as a facilitating experience, lack of acknowledgement or recognition of professional and educational background as a hindering experience, uncertainty about future career or life while completing post-secondary studies, and a desire for ongoing and continued support and relationships with the international students themselves. All of these events and wish-list item were reported in some capacity by the participants in this sample.
**Theoretical Agreement:**

The final check is to establish “Theoretical Agreement” (Butterfield et al., 2009). This check consists of two phases: 1) stating the underlying assumptions of the study and reviewing the scholarly literature, and 2) determining whether the created categories are supported by relevant literature (Butterfield et al., 2009). For the purposes of this study, one current underlying assumption is that the Chinese international students from China are capable of understanding and articulating their experiences. Another assumption, like the one suggested by Butterfield et al. (2009), is that the participants are not to be blamed for their challenging experiences because the environment plays a role in shaping the outcomes. In relation to the second phase of Theoretical Agreement, this portion will assist in helping develop the literature. Specifically, the categories generated about the participants need to be compared to the present literature on international students (Butterfield et al., 2009). This comparison will be expanded upon in the Discussion Section of this work.
Chapter 4: Findings

Upon analysis of the data from the participants, a total of 273 incidents were identified: 135 helping incidents, 102 hindering incidents, and 36 wish-list items. The incidents and items were categorized into 9 helping categories, 7 hindering categories with 1 sub-category, and 4 wish-list item categories. Note that an incident or item described by a participant could belong to more than one category.

4.1 Helpful Critical Incident Categories

Table 2 outlines the categories and the placement of the 135 identified helping incidents; it depicts the results beginning with the greatest number of participants who reported on helping incidents in relation to each category.

Table 2: Helping Critical Incident Categories (N = 135)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>% of Helping Incidents</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Family / Friends</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host-Cultural Learning</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Others in Institutions</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Structure</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Strangers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Factors</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “Home” Presence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom and Flexibility</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category: Supportive Family and/or Friends

The category of Supportive Family and/or Friends contained responses from all 12 participants. It was the second largest category that included 28 reported incidents (20.7% of the total percentage of helping incidents). The category depicted the importance of the presence of family members and friends, particularly upon arrival. Additionally, these individuals appeared to offer reassurance, became a source of knowledge, as well as acted as individuals with whom to establish connections within the host culture.

Two participants discussed the significance of the immediate presence of family members and friends upon arrival. For one participant, her aunt’s availability in helping her move on the first day of arrival generated a sense of care and support within a foreign context. In particular, the participant reported how her aunt met at the airport and assisted in moving luggage, which in turn, distributed the responsibilities of the transition. Likewise, the presence and accompaniment of another participant’s sister on the first day appeared to promote settlement and generated a sense that he can “adapt and transition is better, for my sister, already settle down, settle everything for me. So when I came over…she managed the things for me.” He continued: “[when] I just came here, I don’t know where is supermarket, where is the school, then she brings me everywhere…I know where the places for entertainment…I know where to do sports, to gym, and I know where to buy groceries…[this] is very important for having a good lifestyle.” The participant appeared to feel relieved as issues such as housing and transportation were addressed in advance of his arrival by his sister. Moreover, his sister’s accompaniment to specific locales appeared to encourage the nurturance and development of his awareness towards life within the host-culture.

For one participant, having the opportunity to continually turn to trusting relatives and
friends regarding issues beyond school matters appeared to illustrate a sense of being welcomed and nurtured in the city of Vancouver. As she described:

[No] matter what I would ask them, they would try to give me the answer because they know…maybe they are the only one I can trust, and maybe they’re the only resource I can ask. So they would try their best to help me and they really…made me feel warm…and…because they’re here...I feel I enjoy the life here.

Through the expressed unwavering support of her relatives, the participant appeared to possess a continual network of individuals who would be available to address challenges alongside her. This support, therefore, seemed to lend itself towards a perception of life satisfaction in Canada. These sentiments were echoed by another participant who discussed the presence of flatmates or roommates upon returning to her dormitory, which illustrated that there was always someone to “turn to at the end of the day and to share with” regarding issues faced. In this instance, it seemed the participant felt supported as well as grounded by the knowledge that a roommate would be consistently available when she returned home.

Another participant reported on witnessing the persistence of a peer and fellow international student in relation to finding work within a foreign context. She observed that there seemed to be a shared struggle in this endeavour, and it appeared to contribute to a sense of personal encouragement because she was not alone in her challenges. As she reported:

[A] really close friend, she recently moved…and she’s trying to find a job here. For one year, she’s still not really settled down, but she’s still trying…and it makes me feel, yeah, nothing to lose…And also you feel companionship, you know…I'm not...you're not alone…I'm not alone trying...even though I get jobless, I'm not alone.

The observation of a fellow international student’s determination appeared to provide personal
motivation as well as a sense of normalization regarding the challenges surrounding the search and acquisition of work. As a result, the participant reported feeling strengthened to persist in the job search endeavour in order to follow alongside the example modelled by her friend.

In addition to family members and/or friends acting as both companions and models, other participants reported on how they acted as knowledge providers. One participant discussed a network of peers and the decision to pool resources and knowledge with friends. These actions seemed to provide the participant relief from the potentially isolating task of tackling certain challenges or endeavours, such as job search. As she described:

I had a bunch of friends…we share information…if you’re looking for a job…and we can share information in common…if you know more people, then you would be provided with help…assistance in every single area.

The participant appeared to feel engaged and connected within a community of peers, and seemed to demonstrate a sense of overcoming the obstacles of limited resources and unawareness towards specific opportunities.

Similarly, another participant discussed the comradery generated within the research community, and how the openness of her peers at a research fair on campus helped nurture a sense of belongingness within the post-secondary community. She outlined the impact of this particular event for her:

[Our] department...would have a research day. It's an event for, uh, all graduate students...we would come together and share our topic and share our research and I think it's really helpful because, um, I really have many ideas and at the moment I learn from different [people], and I know what is...“oh what is problematic” and what's your interest

The sharing of knowledge, particularly in the academic realm, seemed to build-up the
participant’s connection towards the graduate student community as she became acquainted and enriched by the topics and ideas of her fellow peers.

This knowledge sharing also appeared to contribute to a sense of personal involvement within the host-culture. For two participants, the possession of knowledge disseminated by friends seemed to nurture their transformation towards being “Canadian.” As one participant expressed:

You know, like, being here, friends would tell me this, I could ask…just like what’s resources they have I could also get to know, even though I’m not qualified for it because I’m not Canadian…at least I could know it, right? It’s like I’m really living here in this society.

Having friends convey information seemed to mitigate feelings of exclusion from the host culture for the participant. The distribution and accumulation of information seemed to communicate a message that “I’m really getting involved here…live like everyday people…Canadian people live cause I have this sort of information.”

Similarly, another participant encountered senior international classmates willing to share their knowledge about aspects of the Lower Mainland, such as the Richmond Night market. This knowledge appeared to enhance his personal awareness and understanding of the city. For example:

Their knowledge was passed onto you, about certain locations or certain events…[and] in order to participate in these events, you had to learn how to get there, so you learned about the transit system, and you became familiar more with the city.

The knowledge shared by friends seemed to promote the participant’s desire to nurture his familiarity and comfort with the host-culture. Although not explicitly mentioned by the
participant, the information appeared to promote risk-taking towards venturing onto an unfamiliar transit system in order to reach points of personal interest.

Finally, within the realm of family members and/or friends acting as a source of knowledge, one participant reported on the ability of these individuals to challenge his opinions. Specifically, the participant reported on friends presenting contrary views in an informative manner, which in turn, seemed to promote an attitude of accounting for another person’s viewpoints and the awareness that his opinions may be incorrect. He outlined this analysis in the following manner:

sometimes I said some wrong words or said some wrong judgment to other people…they just told me that they have different opinions… but I don’t think it’s embarrassing to me because just my opinion…They just told me that they have different opinions, but I think that’s fine…I will realize to think about what they say.

For the participant, it seemed that he deemed his opinions were recognized by others and this acknowledgment subsequently generated a motivation towards hearing out different perspectives within the host-culture. As he further expressed, “in China maybe, I will hold on my opinion. Just like maybe more hard…but here, I would like to try to accept other people’s opinions to help me to analyze.” The participant seemed to value the information provided by his friends in the host-culture, and he interpreted their expressed opinions as instructive, as opposed to denigrating. As a result, it appeared that a sense of openness was cultivated for the participant. 

*Category: Host-Cultural Learning*

Host-Cultural Learning referred to sample members who acquired new knowledge and/or behaviours in relation to the host-culture. This acquisition contributed to a sense of mitigating sample members’ feeling of unfamiliarity with the particular “ins and outs” of Canada. The
category contained the largest number of reported incidents (30 or 22.2% of the total number of helping incidents) and was reported by 10 participants (83.3% of the total sample).

One participant described how he came to an understanding about culturally acceptable behaviours in relation to line-ups. This process seemed to be aided by the “eyes” of other people:

[It’s] weird because in China you have to…which one get the first so you get on the bus first…you don’t…need to queue and so everyone maybe the queue jumper…But in Canada, I…didn’t realize that…I went through there directly get on the bus, and everybody looking at me weird…Maybe…from their eyes, just want to warn you…it’s impolite…Maybe their eyesight just came from the question…a little bit weird and curious, it’s not just to blame you.

The participant’s interpretation of events appeared to demonstrate that he felt advised by the non-verbal cues given by the individuals around him – it was peculiar to cut in front of other people during a line-up. This conclusion seemed to be perceived as ensuring and safeguarding his well-being because he became aware that line-jumping may not be a culturally accepted behaviour in Canada: “from [then on] I’m much better, I was trying to keep the queue. It doesn’t mean I want to be a rude person…maybe different society have their own rules, so I have to obey the rules…I just want to keep me safe.” The participant seemed to garner an understanding that certain rules/norms were not transferable from his culture of origin, and that he would need to incorporate new contextual rules in order to thrive within the host-culture.

Another participant reported on acquiring knowledge regarding social connections amongst individuals in Canada. Specifically, she experienced a contrasting expression of social interactions – one rooted in a sense of connectedness and separate from influencing factors, such
as familial and financial status:

[In] Canada, we always talking about, “oh you have to extend your, your social network” right? But this social network, just depends on you know more friends, uh, maybe, just know each other, maybe your friend’s friend can, can introduce some, some good, like, job, um, uh position for you. But in China, our social system is…if your family have very strong background. Or … [it’s] based on money, or based on…our social system more focused on…you already have very high level

The experience of living in Canada appeared to redefine the participant’s notion of the phrase “social network” – it seemed to expand and to highlight the roles of friends and associates as opposed to one’s personal societal standing. A significance of this learning for the participant seemed to be the notion that pre-existing conditions did not restrict or limit interactions and relationships with others in Canada.

The knowledge about individual engagements with others also shifted for some participants. One participant reported on witnessing a family member engage in a conversation with an unknown individual for assistance. This action appeared to dispel an idea from the participant’s culture of origin that it was an unsafe practice to rely on strangers:

[You] witnessed her engage in a conversation with her neighbour to resolve an issue in her apartment. And so you realized that reaching out to other people for help was alright…it was safe to do.

For this participant, there appeared to be a lingering concept carried over from her culture of origin; namely, the necessity to remain vigilant regarding strangers. This vigilance, however, may not be applicable at all times within the host-culture of Canada. The participant, therefore, appeared to demonstrate a sense of becoming accustomed to the idea that at certain times of
distress, reliance on strangers or unfamiliar others may be an option in order to receive assistance.

Similarly, another participant discussed turning to family members as a source of information in relation to the culture, such as in the world of work. As she described, talking and discussing about life experiences in Vancouver appeared to nurture a sense of belongingness to the Canadian cultural context:

[Each] one would have their own story, and they would like to share with me that, maybe in their workplace, what happened, and how, how do they deal with their relationship with the local people, and they would share some experience with me…I think from their stories and their experience…I can know a little more…they made me feel I’m not excluded by the society.

The sharing of personal anecdotes appeared to help the participant feel included within the local community, and assisted in relation to how certain experiences were addressed by her friends and relatives within the host-culture. These actions seemed to inform her about the behaviours that may be appropriate within a given context in Canada.

Events associated with Host-Cultural Learning also occurred in the classroom for the participants. For some, it was related to an understanding about norms espoused by professors and lecturers, such as the issue of submitting assignments in a timely manner:

[Because] I always submit assignment late, so I always get 10% marked down or 5% marked down. So finally, I realized, ‘oh yeah, this is culture.’ Not culture, maybe it’s kind of the rules in Canada.

For the participant, having marks deducted for submitting an assignment late seemed to illuminate a dichotomy between practices within her culture of origin, and host-culture
behaviours; therefore, she desired to change the behaviour. In fact, she reported that “[now] I do everything on time and I have very clearly schedule, and I can finish everything quickly and very effective.” The participant seemed to integrate that a “rule” of Canadian post-secondary schools related to a significance/premium placed on timeliness and submitting assignments by the assigned due date.

Lecturers and professors also seemed to play a pivotal role on imparting knowledge about the host-culture practices for participants. The same previous participant described an interaction with a professor in relation to her apparent lack of participation during class time:

[After], he ask me, “why you didn’t ask me in the class? In the class, we have time. Why you didn’t ask me?” And I told him I feel so shy…I ask some question in front of other student, they will laughing at me. And, he says, “who cares? You pay the money to study here, and why you don’t want [to] use your right to ask question to me?”

Being informed that she had a “right to ask questions” in-class contributed to an apparent sense of empowerment for the participant. As she explained, “I realized he is totally right, why didn’t I just ask question, like any time I have some question, I just ask him directly. So after that, I checked a lot, whenever I have questions, I just ask it.” The participant appeared to eventually feel encouraged to ask questions in-class; previous fears of being judged by peers or having a sense of embarrassment for asking a “stupid question” seemed to dissipate through the learning of this particular right within the host-culture’s post-secondary classrooms.

By comparison, another participant discussed his reported struggles of expressing himself in-class and the application of previously held cultural norms affecting his behaviours. As he reported,

so I asked “excuse me sir, I just lost right now. Would you mind to repeat that again?”
in China, if you ask that question…your teacher will blame you…so here, I don’t have much guilty for that because I just really lost…it doesn’t mean I mean to [be] lost, right? The participant appeared to learn that professors may demonstrate a non-judgmental attitude towards questions. The participant further reported that he believed “they just focus on the answer…it doesn’t matter…it doesn’t focus on you, why you’re lost.” For the participant, there was a clear distinction from being seen as deliberating blocking his personal learning, and actually experiencing a sense of loss. As a result, he seemed to feel encouraged to try and adopt the culturally accepted practice of raising his hand to put-forth questions or thoughts because professors seemed to simply answer them, irrespective of the nature of the material being asked.

Finally, a notable lesson adopted by some of the participants related to interactions with professors themselves. One participant observed her cousin speaking with a professor, an action that appeared to demonstrate a right to have an open dialogue with one’s instructors. This idea was illustrated in the following paraphrase of the client’s reporting:

[The] experience itself was actually witnessing your cousin kind of fight for you to say that it was kind of an error on the professor’s side, that they didn’t [communicate]…and so there was a realization that it was your right to negotiate this type of circumstance for yourself…

Although the participant did not engage in the behaviour of conversing with the professor, she seemed to acquire an understanding that a reciprocal relationship with a professor could be possible within the host-cultural context, particularly as it related to certain academic issues.

Similarly, another participant illustrated the learning of the possible reciprocal-nature behind the professor-student relationship that could occur within the host-culture. As she explained:
So…we’ll argue each other a few times, and finally, I was thinking about maybe he will get mad at me, but no, it totally was not…I was very surprised…but nothing happened, and he still very friendly to me, and very nice to me…I think I get more right…I can help myself. Like I say something because I have some right, I can say something.

Within the host-culture, the participant learned that students appear to possess an inherent right to discuss their opinions and to speak out. The opportunity to express a differing opinion from the professor during a lecture, and being free from the prospect of being punished for this expression, seemed to redefine the professor-student relationship from authoritative to collaborative. This learning also appeared to motivate the participant to engage more so in classroom discussions and to promote her personal academic learning.

**Category: Supportive Others in Institutions**

The category of Supportive Others in Institutions represented individuals within organized settings (e.g., at the post-secondary school, or local church) who conveyed new information, developed relationships that could combat the sample member’s sense of loneliness, and/or contributed to a sense of safety and security for the participants. It contained 25 reported incidents (18.5% of the total percentage of helping incidents) and was expressed by 10 participants (83.3% of the total sample).

Several participants reported on interactions with lecturers/professors that aided in their transition process. For one participant, the chance to engage with a professor beyond the classroom setting seemed to give her an expanded social network aside from classmates. In addition, the interaction seemed to enhance her learning of material outside of the academic context. As she outlined in her description:

I feel very exciting because she can give us very useful information about life. It’s not
just about academic study, but she can give us very good suggestion about how to living in here…how to living in Canada.

The participant appeared to be able to interact with the professor in a different light, one where she reported feeling eager for the opportunity to exchange information, particularly on topics that may appear sensitive in nature, such as “dating preferences.”

These sentiments appeared to be similarly expressed by another participant who reported on attending a dinner gathering with professors from her program of study. The event occurred off-campus, and the participant, along with a small number of students from her faculty, attended and engaged in conversations with 3-5 professors during a faculty dinner gathering. The participant reported on the importance of this gathering as it appeared to “humanize” the individuals who were initially “put on a pedestal” and feared. The event itself seemed to bring about a sense of connection and alleviated the participant’s expressed fear of engaging with professors in a one-to-one situation.

Another participant noted the importance of encountering an ESL instructor who demonstrated a trusting and accepting attitude. These qualities seemed to permit the participant to openly express herself and to discuss her personal challenges while abroad and away from her culture of origin:

I was not afraid to talk to him and email to him even I couldn’t show up on time…I just wrote to him, honestly to say I couldn’t sleep, so I couldn’t go. So, every time he was patient to write a long letter, like how to relax yourself, like how to overcome some feelings, like, even my family stuff that days, like the day my dad passed away, I feel like I missed him too much, or something like that, he just like was very patient to…like encourage me.
For this participant, the sense of being understood regarding a personal tragedy appeared to alleviate her distress and preoccupation. The professor seemed to comprehend that contextual issues may be disrupting the participant’s studies / academic journey, and as a result, the participant appeared to perceive the professor as a continued source of help within the classroom.

Finally, the same participant also noted the importance of learning from professors about the appropriate academic style that fit the Canadian academic system. In particular, a teacher seemed to offer writing strategies and realistic expectations about the “correct format” to help alleviate any type of confusion in relation to academic writing in Canada. As she explained, “but this teacher is different. He just gave you some guidance, like, how do you respond to people here…I know clearly what kind of style the teacher want, and what kind of response…is good for this area.” The acquisition of knowledge regarding the “North American Style” of writing appeared to offer insights and an understanding for how certain professors may want written pieces of work to be presented. This knowledge supported the development of the participant’s academic skillset in relation to her progress within a foreign post-secondary context.

Aside from professors, some participants also reported on the importance of their graduate supervisors. For one participant, having a supervisor from China who discussed similar struggles seemed to alter the magnitude of the perceived issues. As she explained:

And she shared some stories, like, when she was in her Master’s study, she didn’t want to talk and she didn’t know how to make friends with her classmates… and she... had no idea about the knowledge, like the Western theories…and she can handle all of this….just let me realize that everyone would have the same problem. Everyone can handle it, like my supervisor…yeah, I build up my confidence, and I’m trying to experience all of this, and I think it’s not a big problem.
The fact that the participant’s supervisor encountered similar challenges that were faced and managed seemed to encourage the participant herself to address and meet her own difficulties. As she reported, she was no longer “scared about the problem” because another individual had acted as a model of success towards dealing with these identified transition issues.

Another participant reported on how supervisors, like other individuals within institutional settings, were available to disseminate resources to help address particular challenges. For the participant, having the opportunity to interact and connect with her supervisor, such as simply being provided with a space to talk, seemed to contribute to a perception of security and care at school. As she reported:

[He’s] the person who gives me very supportive, I mean attitude, conversation, dialogue…he actually introduce some people who can help me, or have a talk, or sometimes, to understand me better, make me feel not so alone…like people understand you, to help you in this process.

The participant seemed to feel relief from a sense of expressed isolation within a foreign context, and in addition, felt unburdened by an individual offering possible resources in relation to experienced stressors.

Other participants also remarked on the importance of additional resource providers within the school context, and how they reported feeling assisted by the information and advice that was provided. One participant described that having a readily available Career Centre advisor who offered information, practical tips, and possible suggestions in relation to finding work in Canada generated a sense of support and understanding. As she described:

I know nothing about the society here…I don’t know people really pay lots of attention about Canadian experience…So over there, they…give me a picture of how it really
is…trying to find a job here in Canada…and they say you better start from volunteer here, so just to accumulate experience of working in Canada, and maybe later, it would lead to a permanent job.

The advisor appeared to offer an experience of clarification and demystification that provided a sense of preparation to help the participant “navigate through” the Canadian system. As a result, the participant reported acquiring a sense of motivation to discover the experiences needed to participate within the working world in Canada.

Two participants noted the importance of meeting with course advisors, individuals who were able to share their knowledge and exchange information regarding course selection. One of the participants reported on the experience of booking and meeting with an Arts Advisor, and how the individual was able to convey information regarding courses that matched the participant’s program of choice. In the end, this process appeared to clarify the endeavour of “creating one’s own schedule,” and the participant expressed that she felt informed about what courses she was required to take and how to create a personal timetable.

The other participant similarly remarked that resource-providers who offered information about programs and program requirements contributed to a perception of openness and accessibility. Specifically, merely having on-campus advisors that were readily available to meet with students seemed to provide a feeling of gratitude. As she explained in relation to her endeavour of seeking advisors in relation to the teaching program:

[In] this building, the second floor, there's office about B. Ed program. I could actually go and ask them, sometimes they have workshops where they introduce their program. I went to there once, and they talk about the B. Ed and Teacher Certificate here. So I have the Teacher Certificate in China, so trying to ask them how to transfer, you know, the
past experience. So I don't have to do the whole program for one year and have to spend lots of money on that program, right.

This conveyance of information provided the participant with the potential options/pathways particularly in relation to a specific field (in this case, teaching). She expressed that this knowledge acted to “fill in the gaps, to see [my] shortage” regarding the requirements associated with particular programs and courses.

Another participant also remarked on the value of meeting with a counsellor on campus. In particular, during a period of reported distress in relation to missing home, feeling unmotivated, and being unaccustomed to the change in environment, she expressed that she was encouraged to visit a counsellor:

[My] cousin told me to go to counselling...to you know, talk it out, just see what they can help me with...I just talked out everything, and then that just made me feel better...I really liked my counsellor...I feel really comfortable telling her things...she also helped me, you know, sort out my thoughts, and just tell me why I shouldn't be thinking like that...she was really good at listening...and really good at, you know, giving me advice...I guess that really helped.

The participant also expressed that during a specific moment of distress, the counsellor and participant worked out the problem and possible actions to undertake:

One of the things I was really upset about was I couldn't follow my own schedule...so she suggested that, you know, I should make...just make my schedule easier...to follow...and set-up smaller goals, and she said also if I do need any help, like, if I really can't do anything at a time, like she could help me with like extensions and stuff.

Similar to the responses of sample members within this category, having an individual where one
was able to share intimate details about personal struggles seemed to offer a reprieve from the encountered transitional challenges. Interestingly, this participant was the only sample member who discussed the use of personal counselling, and how the counsellor possessed an ability to name underlying feelings and to encourage different strategies that facilitated an apparent sense of understanding and support for the participant amidst a moment of personal challenge.

Finally, two participants reported on the importance of community resource providers in helping their transition process. One of the participants outlined her interaction with a Canadian Health Inspector who appeared to offer assistance and clarification in relation to opening a business in Canada. The participant seemed to describe the process as illuminating:

I feel like support…I talked with the health inspector…they have a very good attitude to explain…just to show you to do the right things…If you cannot understand, they explain again and again…what I felt [was] she just come in to show me to do the right things.

She never give me trouble.

The information from the Health Inspector appeared to offer the participant a sense of transparency and she reported feeling grateful towards the endeavours of an individual attempting to show her how the “system” in Canada worked in relation to business practices.

The other participant reported on the formation and maintenance of a relationship with a local pastor, and having the opportunity to discuss personal challenges while studying abroad. As she described:

I tell him about my life, even my private...like really private stuff…It just feel this kind trust…makes me feel like I have an uncle...he's old enough to be my dad, and so it's like, so, when you...I think it's because he's a Pastor so when we talk, I really feel those trust…

Everything I could tell him...I could tell him everything, and then he give me
suggestions… It's interesting (laughs) because the other day I was chatting with my friend and then I told her…I told [Pastor] this, "blah, blah, blah," and then she said, "oh you told him that. I told him my life, and blah, blah, blah" And then we were saying, “oh [the Pastor] has so much burden on his back.”

The participant appeared to relay a burgeoning sense of security and safety that emerged from a supportive and caring relationship. Like the sample members who turned to other resource providers, she seemed to be provided with a perspective that was rooted with a local connection – one who seemed to offer timely suggestions and points of encouragements in order to face the issues that the participant encountered.

*Category: Classroom Structure*

The category of Classroom Structure contained 14 incidents (10.4% of the total number of helpful incidents) and 7 participants (58.3% of the total sample) reported events within this category. Classroom Structure was seen as a combination of the physical aspects of a classroom, as well as norms created and enforced by lecturers/professors and classmates. These characteristics seemed to contribute to school engagement and connectedness to the foreign post-secondary context amongst reported sample members, which in turn, facilitated the transition process.

A notable experience regarding the physical aspects of a Canadian classroom was the eventual opportunity to become involved in smaller class sizes. For one participant, the smaller class sizes (an experience that was not encountered within her culture of origin or during her first-year of undergraduate studies) seemed to appeal to her desire to connect and to establish relationships with others. Specifically, large class sizes at the outset of her post-secondary academic life could not reportedly facilitate or nurture closer relationships with peers. As she
reported:

Ok…because like in *(program name deleted for confidentiality purposes)*…the class is really big that it's really hard for you to know people. But then in *(program name deleted for confidentiality purposes)*, they have like a class with like, like a high-school setting, basically, so it's easy for you to know people through your class…So, and all of them are international student…they are so eager to know people. So basically it's so easy for you to, like, like say "hi," and then really know them...be good friends.

For the participant, the eventual experience of smaller class sizes as she continued through her post-secondary studies (ones described as intimate and closer) seemed to promote an expressed value of building deeper and richer relationship with others. This experience, in turn, appeared to influence and to contribute to the development of the participant’s social network within the foreign landscape and her connection to the school: “the class atmosphere is really good because it’s a small class…I feel so happy about, like, school, like ‘oh my god, I'm so excited about it.’”

In relation to established norms, one participant discussed the impact of a professor who utilized a variety of teaching styles. For the participant, this variety offered a contrary experience to the one she reportedly experienced in China; previously, she described that she was accustomed to a single style of teaching rooted in the “memorization of books.” In contrast, she expressed that various teaching and learning strategies offered by a professor appeared to ignite a desire to learn and to engage with her classmates:

[In] here, they have the different, like, group talking, and we have the presentation, and all professor always do some experiment, like some stuff for us…so like for us, it’s very interesting, because like in China, we don’t have this kind of activities during the class. So …we get a lot of new ideas from the different classmates, and we’re talking to the
teachers, and everything.
The reported activities conducted in-class by the professor appeared to nurture a sense of involvement for the participant and stimulated her connection to the course and lecture material. Additionally, she seemed fascinated by the different learning styles that could be present within some of her post-secondary classes, a characteristic she did not appear to experience in her culture of origin.

The same participant also reported on another novel experience of attending a foreign post-secondary classroom; namely, sustained and continual engagement with peers in collaborative group discussions during class. She noted the dichotomy between her culture of origin and her current cultural context in order to emphasize this point:

Like in China, if I did the presentation, maybe…I feel very nervous because I didn’t have a lot of chance speaking in front of other students. But in here, because we get a lot of practice, and we have a lot of presentation, now I feel very relaxed during my presentation.

The experience of a professor offering the space for continual reinforcement of a particular skill (e.g., public speaking) seemed to promote a sense of comfort with an area that was apparently not readily addressed within the participant’s culture of origin. This skill, therefore, appeared to be encouraged and facilitated due to the participant’s attendance within a foreign post-secondary classroom.

For another participant, a newly encountered norm was an instructor’s approach of having the option of choosing from multiple frameworks and supporting it through evidence. This approach seemed to alleviate the participant’s expressed desire of trying to “always find the ‘right’ answer” in the classroom. As he explained:
They didn’t mention…which [theory] is better…they just told me…which one maybe you can use more in other situations…[since] there’s no absolutely right [answer]…so I can spend more time to support my opinion that I choose, so I really don’t care the choices that I choose is right or wrong.

The participant appeared to experience comfort in the fact that his responses merited attention by professors and lecturers – there was no single response that was unequivocally right or wrong. In this sense, the participant reported that a previous experience of being consumed over finding the “right” response that derived from his culture of origin appeared to dissipate, and he expressed a learning style that seemed more akin to being process- or learning- oriented.

Another important norm experienced by sample members within Canadian post-secondary classrooms was the integration of technology and allowances for personal electronic devices. For one participant, this allowance seemed to facilitate her post-secondary experiences. As she explained:

I know in here, the professor, they will send the ppt to every student e-mail, and after …they…are…have a class…they just open the ppt and they can, like, take the notes. So, so for me, it’s very helpful. I was thinking if… in China, the professor can… teach the same way…is perfect. But to be honest, because in China, a lot of professors…they are very old, so they…even they do not know how to use the ppt.

The event of witnessing technology being used by students appeared to surprise the participant as she discovered another method to become engaged in-class. As she reported, “I know how to use iPad to take notes or anything…so it’s kind of very useful (laughs). In addition, the participant explained the importance of the role of this integration towards having the opportunity to follow along and consider points made by lecturers:
Participant: …you really cannot imagine in my [Chinese] university…you just focus on take notes, you cannot notice very clearly to think about it…because you busy for writing…

Interviewer: …is it accurate to say that it’s helped in terms of your attention to what’s going on in the class? You actually feel more engaged and interested. You can type up or you can use your IPad and follow along, and actually follow along with what’s going on in class.

Participant: Yeah, yeah!

A final notable example was the multi-cultural context, and the openness and genuine curiosity of peers towards a participant’s culture of origin. This aspect illustrated the combination of structure and norms established within the Canadian classroom setting that facilitated the transition for some of the participants. One participant described an incident that involved the sharing of her opinion about the 4 June 1989 incident in Tiananmen Square:

[They] ask me and they give me opportunity to talk in front of my classmates, just share my experience…they respect my experience because I am from China….And they give me opportunity and I tell them my opinion…maybe they didn’t agree with me, but they respect my opinion. I think, from this event, I realized that even we are from different part of the world…we carry different values, but we do respect each other, and we didn’t push ourselves to pretend to be another people. We just can retain our opinion, our background…and if you can respect others, and understand others…it’s enough for you to live with them.”

The opportunity to engage with culturally-diverse peers, as well as the permission to offer personal insights about a potentially sensitive topic matter in-class, appeared to contribute to a sense of resonance for the participant regarding her culture of origin. In addition, she seemed to adopt a richer connection with her peers, and most interestingly, she appeared to discover an awareness for the capacity to coexist with individuals who possess different perspectives and
different cultural backgrounds; this understanding was reportedly not made evident within the homogenous nature within her culture of origin and came to be fostered through her attendance in a foreign post-secondary school.

*Category: Supportive Strangers*

The category of Supportive Strangers was indicated by 7 participants (58.3% of the total sample), and was represented through 9 reported incidents (6.7% of the total number of helping incidents). The category concerns the interactions of participants with unfamiliar individuals within the host culture who demonstrated an assisting attitude, such as talking or engaging with the participants, and who helped develop a sense of safety and mitigated feelings of isolation. Supportive Strangers seemed to offer sample members knowledge development, behavioural growth, as well as the emotions of warmth and kindness.

As one participant described, the interaction with strangers increased her knowledge regarding aspects of life in Canada particularly as it related to the likes and dislikes of “local people.” The participant illustrated how her work and interactions improved through continual feedback offered by strangers:

I was telling them…ok I’m student here…and I know my English is not good, but I’m trying to serve you better. And a lot of…customers…they go buy a scone…or something like that, come here to show you, ‘people here like this kind of dessert. You can make it or you can buy it’ … I learn a lot.

As the example highlighted, having local individuals share their knowledge about what Canadians may prefer further developed her desire to connect with local individuals; her cultural knowledge and competencies of the host country expanded as a result.

Similarly, another participant noted that the opportunity to engage with strangers in
conversation during a volunteer opportunity provided insights and knowledge about Canadian
culture that extended beyond the post-secondary classroom. As she reported:

[The] way that people use their words…and the way that the information they give…is
actually a lot…[For] example, if I’m talking to this person…and then we talk about
different things, and then he says, for example, our topic is ‘housing in Vancouver.’ And
then I would know it’s incredibly expensive in Vancouver…So you get a lot of
information outside school…like those that you don’t read on a textbook.

For the participant, she appeared to feel informed about various topics, which in turn, stimulated
a desire to develop her personal expertise regarding Canadian life: to “be someone when you ask
[her] questions, she’ll be able to answer.”

Supportive Strangers were also represented through the diverse presence in Canada to
some participants. As one participant discussed, merely being immersed with distinct others on a
daily basis mitigated previous feelings of isolation and exclusion that were instilled by a previous
exchange program within another context. The participant noted the following:

[Because] of the immigrants, I think people won’t really look at you as alien. [The] first
sight, when they look at you, they’re not sure if you’re Canadian or not…if you’re
immigrants or not…It’s not like ‘ok, you’re yellow…you’re from China.’ … We could
be close as long as want to be…[if] we have the same value for life, we could be friends”

For the participant, the multi-cultural context of the host culture appeared to mitigate feelings of
being judged by the surrounding individuals, and she was able to evolve a richer connection to
others.

In addition, participants noted how Supportive Strangers encouraged them to continue
with certain behaviours, such as speaking in English in spite of their language limitations. As
two participants described, the experience of strangers who demonstrated both patience and
tolerance towards their purported English-language limitations promoted the sense of non-
judgment, and additionally, stimulated a desire to continue with their personal engagement
towards the broader culture in English:

Participant A: “I don’t have any burden because I cannot express myself, but he just ask
me, maybe once or twice, twice or third times, to getting [to] know what I’m saying…I
push myself to talk.”

Participant B: (regarding an interaction with a store personnel) “when I get stuck with
my English, and they are pretty patient…wait and then just listen…that definitely
couraged me to keep on trying…with my English.”

For both of these participants, the accepting attitude that appeared to be espoused by unfamiliar
others towards their personal deficiencies, such as language challenges, promoted a sense of
confidence to persist and to use the English language in order to develop their competencies.
Interestingly, Participant B also noted that the espoused characteristics seemed to deter isolating
tendencies, such as restricting interactions within a Chinese-speaking community. As participant
B continued in his anecdote:

If they are...if they're impatient and I would...I may not, uh, keep on shopping to that...go
shopping to that store. Or I may even, uh, just go to stores that have Chinese sales
person. But because they're very patient and they're very nice and they accept my, like,
my language problems, so, uh, I feel good about, uh, adapting.

The experienced patience of a stranger appeared to combat a sense of discouragement that would
have lingered for the participant with respect to his language challenges.

Finally, two participants recounted anecdotes where they felt nurtured and guided by
strangers. One participant illustrated how words of reassurance and support combated a felt sense of loneliness and isolation as it illustrated to her that kindness could be present within a foreign context. Specifically, the participant recalled a casual exchange with a coffee-shop attendant who simply inquired about her day and engaged with the participant in a small exchange. In that moment, the participant noted that she felt eased as well as hopeful about the prospects of living in Canada – a random individual seemed to care enough to ask about her day.

Likewise, another participant depicted an account where a stranger approached him to first offer direction when he appeared lost, and eventually, the stranger decided to lead the participant to his destination. This action promoted a sense of being acknowledged by others, including strangers, and promoted his feelings of safety and security:

[Because] in China…alarm always ringing on your mind. So I came here, a little bit insecure…and I can’t describe my question exactly. And that person helped me…let me realize that I trust him and follow him, it’s ok.

The helping actions of a stranger appeared to provide conflicting information to a previously held belief of the participant; namely, that all strangers who offer assistance may have an ulterior motive that may be rooted in danger. Instead, the contrary actions seemed to promote a new sense of understanding, and expanded the participant’s capacity to place his trust in others.

Category: Personal Factors

Personal Factors contained 8 helpful incidents (5.9%) and 6 participants reported events that corresponded to the creation of this particular category. The definition associated with Personal Factors was self-directed decisions that sample members carried-out and contributed to a sense of protection, and possibly preparedness, within the host-culture.

As one participant explained, she utilized the mental activity of “persisting” during
reported moments of despair and confusion. She explained her thought-process in the following manner:

I told myself I have my responsibility…I cannot just do whatever I want to do. I have my duty…my duty is I have to study here and I have to get my master degree, so I cannot [say] ‘oh, because I get homesick, I want to go back to China’…I cannot do it because I am adult, so I have responsibility to control myself and study hard, and study here.

The self-created refrain for the participant appeared to convey a sense of obligation to complete her pursuits and to not falter from the aspiration of attaining her degree within a Canadian post-secondary institution. In this manner, despite moments of experienced unpleasant emotions, it appeared that the participant remained vigilant in protecting her disposition and ensured that she redirected herself towards the development of a sense of determination.

Another participant discussed a similar strategy of utilizing self-talk in order to strengthen a sense of connection to the host-culture. Like the previously discussed participant, there was a decision to “stick with it” and to listen to conversations with English-speaking others despite not entirely comprehending the conversations; eventually, it appeared to demonstrate a sense of persistence for the participant. A paraphrase of his response exemplifies the participant’s approach:

[You] just…didn’t understand them…it was difficult to understand their speech, and the way they spoke. But what ended up changing was that you…had to make a decision of whether to hang-out with your own friends…talk with just the Chinese community, or have this opportunity to associate with people who spoke English as a first language…and you chose the latter eventually.

Amazingly, rather than surrender to the reported temptation of distancing himself from select
individuals, the participant appeared to feel inclined and chose to continue in his actions of associating with English-speaking others in order to better grasp the language and immerse himself with aspects of the host-culture. The decision, therefore, seemed to address an expressed fear of not being able to fully participate and understand others during conversations.

A final aspect in relation to the protective sphere of Personal Factors related to not possessing certain stressors that may be inherent for international students. For one participant, the decision to reside within the same residence during undergraduate and graduate studies meant a sense of stability and living permanency. A reported significance of this decision was that the participant felt grounded while on-campus and unconcerned with the stresses that could occur while moving, such as uncertainty with respect to living locations, unclear residency agreements, and costs for renting.

Personal Factors associated with the area of preparedness came in several forms for the participants, one of which was the act of exploration for the sample members. For example, one participant discussed her decision to explore and participate in novel activities in order to cultivate relationships. As she described:

[If] your friends invited you to events…even if it’s boring, ok, but you got to go because that’s where you see people, and you talk to people. You expand your social life…the purpose going there is not enjoy whatever that’s happening…maybe just go see people and talk to people…keep the friendship because you never know what’s going to happen in the future.

In this example, the participant appeared to reframe the purpose of attending novel activities in order to establish relationships and friendships with host-culture individuals, people who could potentially act as a future resource. The exploration and participation in local events, therefore,
was apparently conducive for the participant in acquiring knowledge and insights about life in the host-culture, and demonstrated a form of preparation towards greater host-culture fluency.

By comparison, another participant initiated the decision to explore and to venture around the city of Vancouver in order to become familiar with names and labels. As she reported, “I tried to travel around Vancouver and pay more attention about the name of this shop, and yeah, so I know some brand in Vancouver, and try to know…just understand what they would talk about.” Through the self-directed action, the participant seemed to acquire a sense of familiarity with her new landscape and developed a frame of reference for names linked to specific landmarks. In this way, the participant seemed to acquire a concept to associate with names or brands readily discussed by others in conversations.

Finally, one participant outlined her approach to stimulating a sense of preparedness by deciding to view media sources, such as TV programs, set in Vancouver prior to selecting Canada as a host-culture. Eventually, she seemed to develop an attraction to the area:

[At] that moment, I realize that Vancouver…this is open city…it’s really open, and it welcomes people from different part of the world, and people there can build their own social network because I realized that many Chinese people…would have their wonderful life in Vancouver…I have the concept about what is Vancouver.

While obtaining and maintaining an image/perception of Vancouver, the participant was able to build an impression of the city that appeared rooted in openness and warmth. Interestingly, she was able to utilize this knowledge in order to acquire a sense of preparedness for her experiences when she arrived:

When I came here, I know much about Vancouver…I do know…I know maybe just because I learned about Vancouver when I was in China. Even my friends ask me ‘how
to do it...how to deal with it...and how do you know that...and do you know something?’, such questions...I don't know why I know this...I just know…I can imagine how it would be and how it look like, and it's quite normal.

**Category: The “Home” Presence**

The “Home” Presence category accounted for 7.4% of the total number of incidents (10 reported) and was reported by 5 participants (41.7% of the total sample). It related to any aspect of the Participant’s culture of origin, such as the physical presence of Chinese signs and people, or the ability to communicate in a Chinese dialect, that helped to generate a sense of resonance with the Participant and garnered a sense of “common ground” within the host culture. Four notable areas where the “Home” presence was reported by the participants appeared within personal relationships, communication, signage, and food.

The opportunity to re-establish relationships with Chinese individuals for one participant appeared to meet her need to reconnect with her culture of origin within a foreign context. As she explained:

> I pushed myself too hard…I found, ok, I need to connect with Chinese people. I feel comfortable…I feel relaxed, I feel happy…we just have a very simple dinner, [and] I feel ‘wow, it’s so comfortable.’

The participant noted how she appeared to previously conduct actions that limited her engagements with people from her culture of origin; however, deciding to reconnect with Chinese people appeared to reignite a sense of familiarity and comfort that “came naturally” for the participant, even though she was not residing in her culture of origin. This event appeared to dissipate feelings in relation to loneliness and isolation, and she reported feeling supported and, ultimately, peaceful, amongst Chinese individuals in Canada.
Similarly, another participant noted how attending a small undergraduate class that had primarily Asian international students appealed to her due to a sense of familiarity with others from her culture of origin. The participant reported a burgeoning desire to “get to know” others due to a “similar background” of shared experiences, and she reportedly felt excited by the ability to readily establish “personal connections” with others who would eventually become a part of her social circle.

Beyond relationships, participants also described the opportunities to engage in conversations/dialogue through their native language. For one participant, the ability to speak and readily converse with others in Cantonese or Mandarin contributed to a perception that he could manage in Canada: “I can speak Cantonese or Mandarin… it’s a bit exaggerated, but I can say even I don’t know English, I can still live pretty well here.” The participant seemed to illustrate an ability to thrive within the foreign landscape of Canada despite not having a sense of fluency with the native language of English; this perception appeared to be nurtured by the presence of the Chinese population present throughout the Lower Mainland. As he noted, the primary consequence of this experience was that he was able to achieve what he desired:

[Maybe]… I just want a very simple thing, but because of my English, it makes things more complicated… I go find another… Asian face… and then I just directly [speak] in Cantonese, and then he understands.

The presence in Canada, and more specifically attending a post-secondary institution in the Lower Mainland, appeared to assist the participant’s transition process as he was able to communicate his needs fluidly by circumventing language barriers, which in turn, appeared to alleviate any distress and frustrations.

For other participants, the “Home” presence was represented by an open
acknowledgment of their culture of origin through the depictions of signs using Chinese characters. In one instance, the experience of seeing and viewing signs with Chinese characters, as well as encountering numerous Asians in the city of Richmond, appeared to deepen the participant’s connection to her country of origin. In particular, she reported feeling a sense of affinity for her home because pieces of it remained present even within a different cultural context:

[When] I went to Richmond for the first time, I was so excited, “ah it’s in China again.” … all Chinese people, and the characters, something…advertisements…It makes me feel I'm not that far from my country. Sometimes I feel, like, the world is really small...like global village, it's really small. So...it's not a big deal to being abroad.

As the example appears to illustrate, the presence of both people and signage from the participant’s culture of origin seemed to lessen the divergence from culture of origin and minimized the perceived distance between Canada and China. Comparably, the witnessing of Chinese signs and vibrant Chinese communities established in the host culture, such as in Richmond and China Town, exposed the “multi-national” characteristic of the city, and illustrated for one participant that he belonged to some of the nations that made-up the Lower Mainland. As reported by the researcher’s paraphrase of the participant’s response:

[Seeing] those Chinese signs, and seeing those Chinese communities here…contradicted the original opinion you had…you had a perception of it being like the ‘Old West,’ [and] then it changed after you saw this. And it not only changed, but it also helped you feel more involved.

The participant appeared to develop a sense of “fitting in” and became reassured that a part of his culture of origin was readily available for him to immerse himself.
A final area regarding the “Home” presence related to Chinese food. As one participant highlighted, he appeared to find the host-culture attractive because it contained the presence of food from his culture of origin and provided “emotional” nourishment: “I cannot eat Western or food out of my culture for every day…when I come to [eat] my own food, like Chinese food, I feel the sense of home and my own culture.” The availability of food seemed to assist in the transition process for this participant because food appeared to fulfil a desire/need to maintain his connection to his culture of origin. Additionally, another participant noted that she had the opportunity to eat food that, although available in her culture of origin, may not have been readily present where she was residing. Specifically, the opportunity to taste various types of food, including those from her native country, appeared to offer the participant “those little joys” that enriched her experiences in Canada. As she expressed:

> It’s like a food for all of the world. Like even those traditional Chinese food, I didn’t get a chance to eat when I was in China because I’m kind of limited [to] the South of China…you don’t eat it in your country and then you have it when you’re abroad…It just makes me feel happy…those little things make life really colourful…just something small

For the participant, it appeared that she felt overjoyed at being present in a foreign post-secondary context, since it meant that she would have access to particular aspects of her own culture that she did not readily have an opportunity to engage in while in China.

**Category: Freedom and Flexibility**

The category of Freedom and Flexibility contained 7 incidents (5.2%) as reported by 5 participants (41.7% of the total sample). Freedom and Flexibility pertained to an overall sense of liberation, particularly from an expressed rigidity within a previous cultural context, which arose
through attendance at a foreign post-secondary institution. Along with Freedom and Flexibility, participants addressed the associated consequences that accompanied this generated sense of autonomy.

Two participants reported on the experience of designing their own schedules and how this self-directed action offered a divergent experience from the systems that were reportedly in place from their culture of origin. As one participant described in the dialogue with the researcher:

Participant: Because in China, uh, schedule is here so you just follow that…you don’t have to think much about it.

Interviewer: But this is the first time you had an opportunity to actually choose your own courses…

Participant: It’s like the…it’s like totally first time for me to design my study life in Canada.

Interviewer: So what did you find helpful about that experience then? Creating, like, creating your own schedule…what did you find helpful about it?

Participant: Because nobody can help and you are totally different from other people, so you cannot just follow the other’s they choose, right? You have to design your own and to, uh, design the time and schedule so I think, maybe, I thought about lots than before (laughs).

…

Participant: …in Canada, you have to find your way and find what you [are] fond of, which class you like, and which one…you can devout more time to study…it’s totally dependent on you

The self-creation endeavour appeared to encourage a sense of ownership over the consequences that occurred within the courses, and the participant appeared to become engaged and involved in the process of his own academic trajectory. This event seemed to differ from his previous lifestyle of having prepared schedules without much personal input. Similarly, another participant expressed that the opportunity to design her own schedule illustrated that “everything
is up to me… I get to choose how many courses I want to do, and how tight my schedule to be, what I want to be involved in.” For this participant, it seemed that she felt appreciative for the opportunity to learn and to discover a schedule/timetable that fit her own lifestyle, and the associated challenges of attempting to find a sense of balance between the academic and personal spheres.

One participant in particular discussed the importance of understanding the consequences that were associated with the flexibility of timetables and the freedom to make certain decisions regarding one’s academic journey. He reported the following scenario depicting a situation from the province of his birth before reiterating his personal learning within the Canadian school system:

[One] of the universities in Hong Kong. Uh, cause... because one student is in a very big lecture hall, and then one student, uh, a few students were late. And then the prof. punished them to stand-up… Like they need to stand for the whole lecture, so it's kind of punishment. But this is very silly thing... we only do that in elementary school.

…

*(On being late for class at SFU)* [Even] I was late, or I skipped a class, the prof. won’t really care… I thought it was a good thing, but actually the grades come out, I’m not that good. Then I learned that if I skip a lesson or I miss something, it’s really important because I was late, then I won’t have good grades. Then the consequences taught me to actually [go] for every lesson… I just know I cannot skip class or be late anymore.

In this instance, the participant appeared to appreciate the freedom from being reprimanded by an individual within an authoritative position, and promoted his awareness for a new, proactive learning style that he was reportedly able to internalize. This different academic approach, one
that was not accompanied by punishment and a rigid adherence to particular rules, was apparently attractive to the participant’s personal learning style and encouraged his engagement within the school system.

In addition to the inherent sense of Freedom and Flexibility pertaining to personal decisions and schedules, another participant illustrated that the attitudes espoused by her peers offered an avenue to openly express her opinions and enrich her connection to her personal Chinese identity. As she explained:

They never cared about…just like someone just…I know some people just want to hear about something that they really agree with, but my classmates didn’t do it this way…I needn’t pretend to be [a] Western student and just, I could be a Chinese student…a Chinese.

In the presented example, it appeared that the non-judgmental and accepting attitudes of her peers perpetuated a personal connection towards being free to be authentic in front of others. A resulting consequence was that the participant reportedly expressed a sense of gratitude towards the opportunity to sustain her identity – one shaped by her culture of origin.

A final participant reported on the physical space surrounding the campus and how it appeared to deliver a sense of release. She noted the opportunity to engage and participate in outdoor excursions beyond the campus encouraged contrary feelings to the ones she appeared to experience in her culture of origin, ones that were reportedly experienced as “dense” and “confining” due to the large population size contained on a smaller land mass. Specifically, the participant described that “it was really refreshing…going out and just coming back, I feel much more energized.” The participant appeared to have nurtured a richer connection towards the host country, and to return back to her studies with a bolstered stance.
Category: Contribution

Although the category of Contribution accounted for the least amount of reported incidents (4 or 3.0% of 135 helping incidents) and the least number of participants (4 or 33.3% of the total sample), the category showcased the ability of some of the sample members to commit self-initiated actions in order to expand their identity within the post-secondary context. Contribution primarily related to a participant’s sense of belongingness that was influenced by personal actions of involvement within a specific context that built up his/her connection towards the larger host culture. Participants discussed how their relationship within the overall post-secondary institution, the larger city context, or the classroom changed in a beneficial manner due to the reported impact of being a “part of something.”

For one participant, participation and engagement within a UBC club seemed to promote feelings of satisfaction and connectedness to the larger UBC community, a system where there was the potential and fear of “becoming lost” amongst the vast population. As she reported: “Like, it’s not that significant overall, maybe compared to classes and stuff, but then…you feel like you have a job…you have, like, a lot of potential to really develop yourself…you have purpose in this campus.” The participant highlighted how the seemingly mundane activity of her involvement within a club was able to generate a purpose for being at UBC, one that seemed to exceed beyond merely being a student on campus. Becoming an active member within the club itself reportedly helped the participant find a sense of resolve where she was able to contribute her skills and resources – as she described it, she was able to discover and develop her “niche” on campus.

Likewise, another participant described how his involvement with a club as a volunteer leader developed his sense of connection towards the city of Vancouver. The decision to become
a group leader entailed the responsibility of conversing and interacting with group members on a continual basis in the dialogue of the host-culture: English. This action, in turn, appeared to increase the participant’s sense of confidence as it related to his speaking abilities and his ability to cultivate relationships with local or English-speaking individuals within the host-culture. The development of these skills seemed to demonstrate to him that not only could he become involved within the events of the host-culture, but he could also apparently become an influential member that assisted in the growth and development of other club members. It appeared that these actions assisted in mitigating the feelings of disorientation and exclusion due to a lack of understanding or rapport from host-culture individuals.

A final participant explained how actually hearing the word “contribution” developed her engagement within the UBC classroom setting. She expressed the following sentiments:

[The] one thing [that] really kind of [struck] me is…at the end of her sharing, she said, ‘ok, that’s my contribution for the discussion.’ And then I said, ‘oh yeah, people thinking it’s a contribution…you don’t have to give the correct answers, it’s just your contribution…it suddenly makes me realize people define discussion different here versus in China…and I would feel like I could contribute too, like I have so much to contribute too.

The participant’s witnessing of a classmate openly discuss the concept of “contribution” dispelled her fears of speaking openly in-class, and a moment of empowerment seemed to have occurred as she discovered how her previous held notions regarding in-class participation may not have been applicable within the current cultural context. Afterwards, the connection to the classroom context seemed to be strengthened as she “felt free to share” her opinions and thoughts with her peers, an action that illustrated her presence and involvement within the class.
4.2 Hindering Critical Incident Categories

Table 3 depicts the categories and the placement of the 102 identified hindering incidents. Similar to Table 2, it conveys the results beginning with the greatest number of participants who reported on hindering incidents in relation to each category.

Table 3: Hindering Critical Incident Categories (N = 102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>% of Hindering Incidents</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Strife</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncommon Ground with Host-Culture Locals</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Difficulties</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain Rules</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived or Actual Discrimination</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Transferable Cultural Practices</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homesickness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Parental Support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category: Personal Strife

Personal Strife was a category that was expressed by the largest number of participants (11 out of 12, or 91.7%) and contained the second largest number of reported incidents (18 or 17.7% of the percentage of hindering incidents). It concerned moments of individual struggle that generated feelings of ambiguity, worry, frustration, and/or embarrassment that is primarily directed towards oneself. Examples of reported incidents within this category primarily stemmed from personal encounters with others and/or unanticipated aspects of living within the
host-culture; therefore, many of the expressed incidents overlapped with events in other hindering categories.

For two participants, the inability to readily connect with others in the host-culture contributed to a disconnection from the moment. One participant in particular appeared to become troubled by unpleasant thoughts about her capabilities to live in the host-culture. As she expressed:

> You feel you’re a loser, you don’t know anything. Because in China, I feel I was [a] successful person…I work by myself, and in a good company. But here, I just feel, “ok, I’m stupid…I don’t know anything, what they’re talking.”

As the participant compared her former self to her current state, a sense of devaluing herself appeared to emerge due to the apparent loss of former competencies from her culture of origin; namely, an inability to readily connect with others and demonstrate her previous successes. In that particular moment, the participant appeared to deem herself as a failure. By comparison, difficulties building relationships on the first day of school for the other participant appeared to illustrate a sense of uncertainty regarding her capacity to nurture associations with people who were Canadian-born. As expressed in a summary response of the participant:

> [O]n Imagine Day…even though you introduced yourself, or others would introduce themselves, afterwards they would kind of go into their own separate groups…and it was difficult to kind of even communicate with them. And so, you began to question how you’re able to relate to people who are…born here.

For this participant, one instance of being unable to establish a connection with individuals from the host-culture seemed to generate an overarching concern over her abilities to develop relationships.
Alternatively, another participant discussed the impact of maintaining relationships with primarily international students. The lack of reported interaction with individuals beyond the international student community perpetuated a sense of “being stuck” without applicable knowledge to address encountered challenges. As she explained, “when our international students come together, we would have the same problem, we would share the same concerns, but no one can help us. And no one can give us the answer.” The action of associating with a select group of individuals apparently sustained a sense of frustration because the participant was seemingly unable to ascertain different perspectives or resolutions to encountered issues within the host-culture.

In another instance, one participant discussed an interaction with an acquaintance who discussed the topic of international students leaving Canada. The remarks appeared to bring about a moment of uncertainty regarding her future in Canada, since a different picture of life in the host-culture was presented for the participant. As she reported on the interaction:

[She] talked to me about “it's so hard here, you know, like I see people go back.” I was telling her my plan, and she would tell me hers...I know she's so much more experienced than me, and then she sort of told me “it's not possible for you to stay here, work, and get a life, you know. I see so many people went back”...when people tell you all the bad side of the, like, totally different from what I think about life...I start to question myself, “am I being naïve?” You know...“am I living in an imagined community?”

In the discussed scenario, the participant appeared to experience an overwhelming sense of discouragement at the prospect of living in Canada. The influence of the acquaintance and her remarks appeared to penetrate and distort the participant’s ideas about living within the host-culture as she questioned the veracity of her outlook.
Finally, one participant reported on the unanticipated consequence of encountering a different seasonal structure in the host-culture. As she reported, the unexpected seasonal changes during Fall/Winter appeared to disrupt her liking for Vancouver and the UBC campus:

[Yeah] cause every time I visited Vancouver was just summer, so sunny, happy...so I didn't expect winter to come that early and just never go away...I was…it was a bit different than I imagined it would be, and also I think...I think I might have a little bit of winter depression...cause when the weather is so bad, like, I'm not used to, you know...it's raining all the time, and I can actually feel a difference when I'm studying, and...when it's like the sky is blue, I can feel myself actually being happier...the weather really makes a difference...it became really depressing for me, and when I get depressed, I really don't do anything...just stay in bed...stay in bed all day, which doesn’t help cause I should keep going out, doing things, make myself happier.

Interestingly, this participant was the only individual to report on the seasonal changes impacting her enjoyment and ability to thrive within the host-culture. The example further appeared to highlight how the participant’s encounter with an unanticipated, and sustained, external context seemed to be adopted internally; specifically, an expressed dreary outlook appeared to affect the participant’s happiness and sense of motivation.

*Category: Uncommon Ground with Host-Cultural Locals*

The category of Uncommon Ground with Host-Cultural Locals accounted for the largest reported number of incidents (29 or 28.4% of the total number of hindering events), and was described by 10 participants (83.3% of the total sample of participants). It related to a sense of dissimilarity to host-culture locals in relation to ideas, practices, and behaviours, which in turn, promoted the feelings of separation and exclusion. The participants reported a sense of disparity...
from local individuals within the host-culture in a number of domains, including expressed values, discussion topics, and participated activities.

Within the realm of values, one participant reported on the importance she placed on her academic studies, and when this value was not similarly shared by a local Canadian friend, a conflict would occur. There was a reported belief for the participant that “this person doesn’t work hard…and so lazy.” As she further described:

[He] feel really uncomfortable...when I’m being here, I just like, discuss something...because we study together sometimes, and then I…feel I need to work on something, anything…but for relax, I didn’t really have a moment…just for fun…but he cannot understand...my friend just said, ‘ok…I just cannot understand you Chinese people…this is life, life you sometimes need relax and enjoy the life.

In the presented example, the participant appeared unable to tolerate the study habits adopted by another student, which in turn, contributed to tension in their relationship. For the participant, there was an apparent lack of connection over the values espoused by her friend in relation to enjoyment and relaxation.

Another participant similarly expressed her sense of disconnection in relation to the value she placed on friendships. As she reported:

I have friends...I feel like all my friends are just, you know, hangout...hangout friends...instead of, you know, sharing personal information, like really care for each other...maybe that's another thing about university friendship.

The reported difficulties connecting with local Canadians beyond a “surface level” presented a mismatch in terms of expressed values. For the participant, Canadians appeared to view friendships as “loose,” while she was previously accustomed to richer and deeper relationships.
As a result, she felt disconnected from local Canadian students and was unable to cultivate relationships with them to the degree she was previously accustomed in her culture of origin.

Within the realm of discussion topics, one participant expressed her struggles with introducing appropriate topics within the workplace setting. As she described:

[In] Chinese working place, like we talk about something out of work, but still in an office, so it’s like saying, “oh, what’s your favourite clothes,” or “how’s your brother going?”… it’s very common, but in here, some topic in the office is totally different…like you cannot say anything about religious, or something like people’s age, or you cannot ask people’s family if you don’t know him/her very well…so it’s very difficult to involve in this community.

The apparent difference between acceptable discussion topics in China and Canada conveyed the participant’s struggles in relation to becoming engaged within the workplace environment. The example demonstrated that she expressed the feeling of exclusion from the work context as she was reportedly unable to learn the “rules” of the workplace.

Similarly, several participants reported on the difficulty of discovering similar interests during interactions with local students. As one participant expressed:

I just feel like we don't have a lot of similarities…like the first time we met, they're talking about, like, skiing and stuff which I have no idea how to ski, to be honest, I only skied once before going to Whistler this year. So it's like I have nothing to talk with them. Like you can feel like you have no common topic at all...

The lack of experience with specific activities, and being unable to find commonalities or shared interests, contributed to a sense of disconnection from certain aspects of the host-culture for the participant. Another participant further reported that the apparent inability to connect with local
Caucasian people contributed to a source of irritation and concern; namely, that she could not connect with the majority population of host-culture individuals. As she discussed:

I just think we are different. Like me and White, we’re different…it’s kind of like that...like I’m supposed to be with Asian….I know that our conversation wouldn’t overlap…we wouldn’t have common things to talk about.

For this participant, it appeared that there was an internal conflict rooted in a bias towards interacting with those from her culture of origin, and there was obstacle in relation to connecting with individuals beyond Asians due to a lack of shared experiences.

Another participant further emphasized that during moments of discussion on topics beyond school, such as local TV shows or North American movies, there was a felt sense of disconnection from other group members. This disconnection was spurred “[because] I don’t know what they’re talking about, and then I just…I don’t want to listen to them.” For this participant, there was no expressed desire to engage in the conversation topic as she did not reportedly find it appealing and lacked the knowledge associated with the material.

Finally, in the realm of dissimilar activities, one participant described being unable to understand the conveyed enjoyment for a particular leisure interest amongst Canadians. This inability contributed to a seemingly pronounced sense of being “different” and an internal conflict – “I should be a normal person…I should go with them together…but I’m not really…involved here.” As she further described, “you know, physically, I’m attending in a group…but I wasn’t enjoying it…I didn’t get it…in the process, I feel ‘I’m not good,’ like, why we’re different?” The inability to relate to the feelings expressed by other participating group members seemed to contribute to a perspective of a diminished self-worth. As a result, within the group context, she reported feeling isolated for not “laughing along” with everyone else.
The same participant also reported on her inability to connect with group-bonding activities, which further appeared to increase her sense of being different within the host-culture. As she reported:

[Because] just different feelings…same game, like same thing we join in, but I feel different. I don’t have that feeling, like very happy...by comparison, if I’m being with a Chinese group, we play the games…I feel good, they feel good.

In the example text, the participant was unable to establish a shared sense of enjoyment amongst the group members, which in turn, contributed to an apparent lack of growth in terms of her relationships with the group members.

Another participant reported on her encounter with students engaged in drinking, and how the witnessing of this activity contributed to a perception of local students as “crazy.” As she further described:

I remember especially, like, at the night event, there's like a drinking party and stuff, and then...I never drink before and I don't know what...like I know what does drinking mean, of course, but then...I don't know what is the fun side of drinking. Come on. So I was, like, I was kind of lost there…I feel, like, local student are like so crazy, they're so rowdy...they're doing parties and stuff...they like to have parties, they drink, something like that...this is what, like, I perceive afterwards.

The example illustrated how the witnessing of local individuals participating in a particular activity contributed to a marked separation from these practices for the participant; in the end, it appeared that the participant possessed a biased perception regarding local students – a perception which reportedly influenced her ability to relate and to connect with host-culture locals.
Category: Language Difficulties

Language Difficulties were represented by participants who expressed struggles in being unable to understand the native host-culture language, as well as being unable to communicate or convey their ideas or needs during conversations or exchanges with others. The category contained 14 reported incidents (13.7%) and was expressed by 9 participants (75% of the total sample). Reported struggles appeared to centre on the nuances of the English-Language, and the inability to convey needs and desires seemed to be most prominently described within the academic and community spheres.

For two participants, the varying speed in which the English language was used by others appeared to present difficulties in comprehension and communication. As one participant noted, “because in the classroom, I was the best, I understand all the teacher’s talking, but out of school, in the church, in life, people talk very fast. It’s totally different than in the classroom…I couldn’t understand at all.” The expressed dichotomy between how communication occurred inside the classroom and in daily life, and in particular the expressed adaptations made by her lecturer, seemed to make it difficult for the participant to connect or to understand others. As a result, the participant seemed to feel frustrated and lost in the midst of contexts beyond the school setting.

Similarly, the other participant noted that she felt lost during in-class discussions when her classmates started to speak, particularly when her peers became excited about a particular topic and the speed of speech was reportedly increased. She reported her frustration in the following manner: “you don’t understand what people are saying in-class…their knowledge, right, that’s what I’m coming here for. I’m actually missing this.” For the participant, being preoccupied with following the flow of speech of her fellow peers contributed to a sense of distress over the potential loss of new information and content.
In addition to the increased speed in which English was used, two other participants reported on their challenges associated with their initial experience of attending classes spoken entirely in English. For one participant, the challenge appeared in terms of relating to and interacting with a professor who possessed an accent that reportedly made it difficult to understand the native host-cultural language. The following response by the researcher appeared to highlight the participant’s hardship:

[And] not just the fluency, but also learning their accents too, and trying to learn how to listen to the…way they spoke English. And what you found challenging was that you just didn’t understand English to begin with…it was the first time that you had all courses in another language altogether…it was a low point…during this time

The inability to relate to the English-language, as well as the reported struggle of understanding English expressed by a non-native speaker, seemed to constitute a sense of apparent disconnection from both the instructor and the course material. As a result, the participant reported feeling frustrated, and in addition, doubts appeared to manifest in relation to an expressed sense of despair over the decision to cross-borders and study within a foreign context.

The other participant relayed his struggle with his attempts to follow the speech of his instructor. As he expressed:

[The] first time I came to here, I choose the commercial law…Oh my god it’s a real disaster… I totally lost in the course because each course maybe get two hours or more, and I cannot get use to the style of that teacher… Maybe I can’t follow her …and so many words…and different situation have different definition.

For the participant, it appeared that the way his instructor spoke English, and being presented with vocabulary that was reportedly at a level beyond a conversational style, contributed to a
sense of disconnection as he was reportedly unable to understand and grasp new concepts. Taken together, the impact of this disconnection appeared to inhibit his ability to thrive in the course.

Furthermore, three participants reported on the experience of feeling blocked from conveying knowledge that they already possessed. For one participant, she reported on the sense of being obstructed from demonstrating her familiarity with academic material. As she expressed, “I have to remember all the new word…all new vocabulary, not like the knowledge…it’s more like recap the language not the knowledge….Sometimes maybe I knew…knew the question, probably hard to say it accurately in the answer.” The participant appeared to present a sense of annoyance as she apparently already possessed the knowledge; however, she was reportedly restricted and unable to correctly present it in English.

For the second participant, the experience of language obstruction appeared to be humiliating and embarrassing. As she reported, being unable to find the correct words in English to convey her knowledge and expertise within a subject matter to a professor appeared to convey a sense of unprofessionalism and foolishness:

I really know the answer, but I don’t know how to use English to say it, so this is terrible…she asked me very academic question about the Food Science, so I know how to say in Chinese, and I know the answer. But I cannot say it, so just say, ‘Oh sorry, I don’t know.’ … Language…bring a lot of trouble for me because I know a lot of knowledge in my major, but I cannot show-up.

The participant appeared to feel frustrated by her inability to translate her existing knowledge and to convey her expertise within a particular subject matter. As a result, it seemed to contribute to a devaluing of her abilities.
For the third participant, the presented English-language challenges and his reported inability to express his thoughts and ideas, particularly during an in-class group discussion, contributed to a sense of inferiority and embarrassment. As he reported:

[When] it’s my turn, I just put a lot of effort to express myself, but they still don’t understand what I want to say…what’s the point…That moment is, like, helpless…it’s a academic environment and I can’t use Cantonese.

Even though the participant attempted to express his thoughts and ideas in English, the lack of the “right” vocabulary prevented him from fully articulating and demonstrating his knowledge within an academic setting. Interestingly, he was the only participant who named the underlying feeling as being “helpless” and how he was unable to resort to his native language in order to articulate his ideas.

Finally, one participant relayed the difficulty of expressing his needs and the impression this challenge left on him. As he described: “we need to do shopping…we need to buy things that we want [but] I didn’t have the vocabulary [and] it really affects my life…life is not as simple…I need to put more effort to express myself.” This experience appeared to illustrate the participant’s awareness for the challenges he may endure as a result of not being entirely fluent in English. In the moment, the participant’s daily life was reportedly affected as “simple things” became challenging to acquire, particularly when he was placed in a situation where English was the only language to speak.

Category: Uncertain Rules

The category of Uncertain Rules contained 11 reported incidents (10.8% of the total percentage of hindering incidents) and was expressed by 8 participants (66.7% of the total sample). It related to a sample member’s expressed unfamiliarity with rules or norms that were
encountered in the host-culture, and appeared to generate a sense of being lost and/or confused. For the participants, spheres where the theme of Uncertain Rules came about were in the realm of academic matters, personal relationships, behaviours, as well as personal communications.

For one participant, she expressed her unfamiliarity with the practice of submitting assignments in a timely manner, and additionally, the experienced consequence of having marks deducted on assignments. The deduction of marks appeared to bring about feelings of misunderstanding and disbelief. As she reported:

[In] China, we don’t have due date…whenever you finish your homework, you just give it to the teacher, and maybe, like one day late or two days late, is totally fine…but here, all the professor and all the instructor, they are very serious…I know one day, the due date is on Friday, 2pm. And I give the instructor around 3pm, and he reduced 10% mark….So I was so shocked…why, okay, I just half hour late, why you reduce 10%?

It appeared that for the participant, the practice of having marks deducted for late assignments generated a sense of confusion and surprise because, for her, the assignment was eventually received by the professor; there did not appear to be a need to reduce marks for a submitted item.

For another participant, she discussed a potentially rupturing incident with another international student on-campus. The incident seemed to bring about a moment of confusion as she reported being unable to decipher another person’s feelings: “I’m not kind of sure if she’s mad at me or not.” She further described the experience in the following manner:

I find it challenging about friendship (…) if she’s Chinese, I directly ask her, “are you mad,” or I just assume that you would…cause I know how normal Chinese people would feel about this. But since she came with the different cultural background, I kind of can’t assume anything…I have no idea what it means to her in her culture.
The presented example seemed to highlight the limited knowledge for the participant in relation to interactions and engagements with culturally-diverse others. Specifically, the participant reported feeling lost towards the “proper” etiquette in relation to her interactions because the other individual was not Chinese.

Another participant discussed her interactions with others within a group context. In particular, she appeared to be hesitant to raise a new discussion topic; therefore, she decided to listen and be cautious in her speech, actions that led to an apparent perception of the participant as a “very quiet person.” She described her actions during one particular social encounter:

[But] naturally, I just follow their topic because…I’m very cautious to have a new topic because I don’t know if it’s good or not, so just kind of follow their topic. It’s like you cannot have your own personal characters because you concern something.

The discussed example appeared to highlight the participant’s sense of preoccupation with assessing the merits of personal interest topics, and as a result, she seemed to feel inclined to follow the actions of others. This reported tendency appeared to contribute to a sense of being blocked from being able to express genuine aspects from her personal history.

In addition, a participant reported on his perceived uneasiness about reciprocating behaviours when eye-contact with strangers was initiated. The participant expressed that he “[thought] it’s a little bit weird, you know…you have to smile to someone strange…I don’t know how to respond.” The participant seemed to convey his uncertainty towards host-culturally enacted practices and the appropriate protocol for such encounters. The participant expressed his confusion appeared rooted in the fact there was no prior relationship with the other individual to apparently warrant such behaviours: “I’m trying to catch their eyesight and to respect with smile, but it’s really hard for me.”
In the area of enacted behaviours within the host-culture, one participant noted the impact of observing the engagement of individuals conducting a particular behaviour; specifically, there was a reported difference in the assigned cultural meaning with the behaviour of crouching down in public. As he reported:

[In] Hong Kong…we look down on people who do this…But over here, some of the Caucasians or local people they do this as well….It’s confusing and I don’t know whether I should do the same, or should I not do the same.

In the example, the participant was unable to discern the reason certain actions, such as crouching in a public space, were tolerated. He appeared to hold a specific meaning towards this behaviour, one that was represented by disdain or disapproval; however, this disdain was not similarly shared and did not manifest with other individuals in Canada. As a result, there was a sense of confusion for the participant regarding appropriate enacted behaviours in public.

Finally, in the realm of personal communications, two participants expressed their sense of puzzlement within the host-culture due to the experience of unresponsive contacts. For one participant, the unresponsive communication from potential workplace employers appeared to generate a sense of insecurity regarding the fit between her experiences and the work she sought. Similarly, the other participant expressed that the lack of responses to written communications, particularly as it related to job applications, brought about an expressed unfamiliarity with the “Canadian style” of written language. As she reported:

When I write my cover letter, I don’t know how to write about this…I don’t know what’s the Canadian style…I’m not sure if they write it in a formal way, or they would just like people interact with others.

For the participant, there appeared to be confusion in relation to how to appropriately utilize the
correct “Canadian” conventions in situations beyond conversations with other people. This sense of being lost appeared to be further exacerbated by the lack of feedback or any information from the recipients.

*Category: Perceived and/or Actual Discrimination*

The category of Perceived and/or Actual Discrimination reflected experiences of participants who reported feeling denigrated either through witnessing, interacting, or being targeted by others within the classroom or outside context. It contained 14 reported incidents (13.7% of the total number of hindering incidents) and was expressed by 8 participants (66.7% of the total sample).

For one participant, witnessing an apparent sense of differential treatment between the students in her ESL class constituted racial denigration towards Chinese people. The participant reported on the following incident in order to illustrate the perceived sense of discrepancy she observed in-class:

[She] late, and she…didn’t attend the class…she didn’t go to class, like on time, but she always get very high mark…one of the Chinese student, he get really sick. And he went to the hospital, and he bring the doctor document to, to my teacher. And my teacher said, “Oh, you didn’t come to class three days, so you, you failed.” It’s uh, kind of, “why?” yeah, it’s like very different between China and [different culture of origin, censored for privacy]. So, so at first we, we didn’t put this kind of things, like, the, racist, but after we realize…

The participant specifically named the actions of her instructor as “racist” and deemed them as mistreatment and denigration towards members from her culture of origin. In the end, the participant reportedly became preoccupied with noticing and highlighting the actions of her
instructor in order to determine whether her perception was accurate.

Another participant commented on observing how physical dissimilarities from the people in the host culture contributed to a sense of discrimination. This remark came about after the participant was not selected for a particular job, and as a result, she reported a sense of prejudice or bias. As she described:

[If] you go to (name deleted) people are not going to hire you...every girl there is blonde, so if you're Asian face, and you go in there, nobody is going to hire you because (name deleted) or (name deleted) and those places, they only hire White people with blonde hair, or brunette… And also the way that you speak and act is different, so you're just entirely excluded...you can't work there because I have Asian face...I have black hair.

For the participant, there was an expressed belief that her appearance, actions, and additional attributes fostered exclusion from specific opportunities within Canada. In particular, the participant expressed a perception of discriminatory practices that emphasized the selection of individuals from the majority population within the host-culture.

Another participant expressed two examples of isolation and exclusion within class when others seemingly ignored her alongside other international students. Firstly, she reported that within a larger group/classroom context, she felt discounted by a select group of students, which prompted feelings of resentment and lack of security in-class. The lack of inclusion of the “small group” within the “big group” appeared to stimulate a retaliatory response: “sometimes, when you feel like they’re ignoring you, you don’t want to input any values into their discussion…you’re not valuing my opinion…why I need to pay attention to you guys?” The experience of exclusionary practices within the larger class prompted the participant to apparently disengage and detach from the people and the class. It seemed that an “us versus
them” mentality was established.

Secondly, the inability to connect with the other students in the larger class stimulated a mental activity of attributing her lack of successful relationships onto her English abilities. As she reported:

So I feel like they didn’t value my opinion…is it because I didn’t speak really well…like I can’t communicate with them…or is it because of my accent, or something like that…so I felt like, ‘ok, I’m not going to speak a lot in the class’.

The participant’s confidence in her speaking abilities appeared shaken and, consequently, she expressed that the development of her oral capabilities was, for a period, disrupted due to a perceived lack of involvement and a sense of separation within the classroom context.

Furthermore, several participants reported on spoken comments from professionals acting as a source of Perceived and/or Actual Discrimination. For one participant, the interaction with an advisor in relation to course planning, and hearing a comment that her “English was bad” stimulated an immediate sense of disengagement from the conversation. As she described:

“Oh, how can you complete your Master's degree, your English is so bad.” I was like, shocked, and hurt...and when she said that, I just feel...I couldn't hear anymore what she's talking. I just feel, "what?" and it's actually a bad experience because in my school, never happened. And especially now, I'm becoming better than before, like [my English] a lot...like a lot better than before, and I didn't say anything wrong

The example illustrated the impact of a remark that judged the English language-speaking abilities for the participant, and in particular, how she reported feeling hurt and how she began to question her English capabilities. The participant also described that she went into her head to assess the merits of the comment, constituting to a detachment from the other individual. She
continued the story and illustrated that she offered her own personal judgments about the advisor. As she reported:

[Because] she grabbed my paper back, [and said] I shouldn’t know anything, so I stand up, and I didn’t say anything…but I just walk away…because I could not stand…I was even thinking she’s Japanese? Because you know the story, Japanese and China, right? …then I was angry, upset, out of her office…And then I walk away. And then I feel so disappointed

The comments and actions of the advisor were apparently deemed as rude and hurtful, and they also directed the participant towards judging, and enacting profiling behaviours in order to assess whether there was an act of racism committed and directed towards her. She reported feeling distrust and a sense of being let-down by a helping professional after the meeting.

Similarly, two participants discussed the impact of hearing phrases that highlighted their differences while in the host culture. For one participant, the phrase “you don’t have Canadian experience” contributed to the following reported assessment: “it kind of being labelled as not Canadian, really makes me feel I’m limited…I’m limited in this society, like things I could do are limited.” A sense of being judged as an outsider seemed to permeate the participant’s thoughts in that particular moment, and the distinction from Canadian citizens became pronounced. For the participant, there was an apparent restriction placed on her due to her status as an international student from China.

The other participant discussed the experience of not being able to receive the right information in relation to attaining a SIN card for employment purposes. This restricted access highlighted a sense of being `different and emphasized the participant’s differing status from the local individuals within the host-culture. As she further reported:
And that makes me very depressing because they did have that [form]…because I think that I’m not the only…international student that works for them, right? … they should have knowledge, experience in how to deal with this problem, but I asked them, they said ‘no’…so I feel not wholly belong here.

Being denied the necessary information contributed to an overwhelming sense of sadness for the participant because she was denied access to resources within the Canadian society – resources that reportedly should have been originally available to her.

Another participant discussed the remarks made by her ESL instructor, one of which was being asked at the outset of a class if “she was from China.” As she reported:

And the first class…she asked me if I’m from China, and I say “Yes.” And she…she didn’t say anything, and…I can feel, like, she doesn’t like us…because when, like during the class, when she asked something, and…we want to answer the question, but she never asked the Chinese student.

The participant appeared to feel branded, as well as judged and marginalized by the actions of her lecturer. These reported feelings culminated in a sense of disconnection from the lecturer and the class material itself. In addition, overhearing reportedly disparaging comments made by the instructor directed towards the participant’s culture of origin, such as “I really cannot understand all the Chinese people’s when they’re [speaking] English,” contributed to a sense of hurt and isolation for the participant. Ultimately, it became difficult to concentrate and attend lectures due to a perceived sense of being judged for her culture of origin and a preoccupation with the remarks made by the instructor.

Finally, a participant expressed the hindering experience of overhearing remarks directed towards the representation of her culture of origin within the host-culture. As she expressed:
I'm not saying people being racist, but it's just sometimes people give labels…We give labels to all kinds of people, so sometimes, when I teach Mandarin, my student would say “oh Chinese girls are like this, blah, blah, blah…” Something very negative, say "why most of my friend, they were saying, if you have something like a good car...you can always have lots of Chinese girlfriends, and say Chinese girls are being so materialism…it makes me feel bad. Like, how my group… are being labelled by people.

Overall, the experience contributed to a sense that the participant’s culture of origin was, at times, being devalued by others in Canada. The participant made a note of acknowledging that the representation of her culture of origin may simply be erroneous beliefs, rather than individuals acting in a racist manner; therefore, she expressed feeling motivated to “show you that I'm not like that. I could show you my group is not like that by my behaviour...like my behaviour.”

Category: Non-Transferable Cultural Practices

A closely related category to Uncertain Rules was the category of Non-Transferable Cultural Practices. It contained 7 reported incidents (6.9% of the total percentage of hindering incidents) and was expressed by 5 participants (41.7% of the total sample). This category pertained to the retention of acceptable or appropriate behaviours from the culture of origin that were no longer regarded as applicable within the current cultural context. These practices could generate a sense of embarrassment and intensify the sense of being different from others for the participants.

Several participants reported on the dichotomy between host-culture and culture of origin practices within the classroom. This difference was apparently prominently displayed by a lack of in-class participation which affected their post-secondary studies. One participant noted her
sense of dread at being told she was “too silent” in class. As she expressed:

[For] Chinese students, normally we don’t just stand-up and tell people my idea. I need to make sure I’m not wasting your time and my ideas are correct…because we always have so many people, it’s not possible for everyone to stand-up and share their ideas, share examples, to tell jokes…But when I arrived here…I don’t get use to this kind of…seminar style.

A number of practices enacted from the participant’s culture of origin appeared to preoccupy her thoughts during discussions; namely, a reported fear of being judged by others and an entrenched sense of respect towards the time of others within the classroom. Consequently, she chose to remain silent, a practice that culminated in the apparent perception of the participant as a non-engaged learner.

Similarly, another participant expressed retaining a similar idea of not approaching professors with questions in-class, an action that seemed to prevent the participant from promoting a student-professor relationship and contributed to a sense of being lost. There appeared to be a “perspective from before where it was…foolish to ask questions in-class…it was…embarrassing to do so, and so, you carried that forward and how it affected you was that you didn’t end up talking to your profs…it really impacted your grades as a result.” As demonstrated in a paraphrase of the participant’s response, asking questions within the culture of origin appeared to often illustrate a sense of disinterest towards the material and professor; therefore, she appeared to carry this cultural message into her classes, an action that contributed to a sense of being confused due to difficulties grasping and understanding presented material.

Another participant reported enacting culture of origin practices that seemed to affect his ability to complete homework assignments. He expressed a struggle in relation to adopting an
approach that stressed one’s academic learning and growth as opposed to “just writing down the answer.” As he further reported:

Homework is really challenging because…I don’t know why because in China I always want to ask some others to help me to write answer…just write down answer. But came to here, I realize that just writing down the [answer] is not enough… It’s like a challenge…you have to change your potential intention because you have to transfer your focus, uh, from the result to the procedure.

The participant appeared to express that he had difficulties completing assignments, since he was preoccupied and inclined towards acquiring only the results / answers in his work. This practice seemed to be a mismatch with the learning style espoused within his post-secondary classes in Canada.

Finally, a participant reported on the gaze/looks of others acting to indicate that he had endorsed certain social norms that brought about feelings of disconnectedness and isolation. He reported the following:

In Hong Kong, maybe it’s ok to talk in a phone pretty loudly, and then maybe here, the people may stare at you. They would think that, ‘oh it’s rude’ …from this incident, I know that the social norms are different, so I may feel that I may not adapt really that well.

The engagement in socially acceptable practices from the participant’s culture of origin, such as a louder volume used while speaking, were no longer apparently as accepted or tolerated within the host culture. The participant, as a result, appeared to infer that the attention he drew onto himself seemed to represent a sense of difference from others within the host culture, and that his adaptation skills were not properly cultivated.
Category: Homesickness

The category of Homesickness contained 4 reported incidents (3.9% of the total percentage of hindering incidents) and was expressed by 3 participants (25% of the total sample). It involved expressed desires to return home to the participant’s culture of origin, a desire that could be incited by internal or external reminders within the host-culture. The primary outcome for the participants was that Homesickness appeared to contribute to a sense of being alone and despondent while residing in the host-culture.

For two participants, the time of the year appeared to stimulate a desire to return home. As one participant reported, during certain times of the year, there were culturally significant events that contributed to a longing to reside and to participate within her culture of origin. She reported the event in the following way:

[In] China, Spring Festival is the biggest festival, but even all, all my friends they…go back to China to celebrate Spring Festival, but I didn’t go back…I just stay here by myself. Like…a lot of times…especially during the night, when I wake up, I really…I really wanted to like booking the air ticket and tomorrow I can just go back to China and see, see, see my family.

The Spring Festival event appeared to act as a trigger for the participant towards aspects that were left behind when she decided to cross-borders for post-secondary purposes, particularly her family members in China. This reminder, in turn, stimulated an apparent urgent desire to reunite with her parents and to celebrate the occasion together.

Similarly, another participant remarked on the onset of a desire to return home, particularly when her life was not as engrossed by other issues. As she stated:

[Normally] I feel ok, cause when I'm busy, like, I just focus, but when it's about festival,
about holiday... Chinese festivals, holidays, and when I go to T&T [a Chinese grocery store] I see them sell the moon cakes now… so kind of reminds me of home, so it's those, home-sick, I still have… just feel missing home and maybe I want to go back… like family being together.

Like the previous sample member’s reporting, the participant remarked on cultural reminders appearing to act as a stimulus for a desire to return home and to connect with family. For both participants, it appeared that it was not merely the desire to return home, but to return to one’s family. Interestingly, she appeared to observe the persistence of this desire for herself within the host-culture, and how it may appear to be present particularly during moments of respite in her daily life.

Another participant remarked on the seemingly debilitating nature behind thoughts and desires of yearning to return home, particularly after family members visit in Canada. As she expressed:

[Like] someday ago, like, um, I was at home by myself, and then because my family with me last few days, they went back to China, and then, I was by myself at home...I have a lot of things to do...I know because, like, some days I have to work or something, (...) but I just feel, at that moment I feel, "ok, why I'm doing this? I don't know?" Like, I'm here, where's my future, I don't know. So, that kind of feeling...it will kill you...you cannot do anything. If you are not strong enough, like psychologically, maybe because a lot of...like very dangerous things.

This apparent moment or sensation of being alone in the host country appeared to contribute to a perception of not belonging in Canada for the participant, and she reported the feeling of paralysis that prevented her from engaging in her daily activities or the completion of particular
Finally, one participant reported on the missed connections with friends and family acting as an apparent desire to return to her culture of origin. As she expressed:

**Participant:** ...I had really good friends back in China...I'm here, so...they get married and then, uh, they have their own family, or they're finding jobs there...they are doing, living their life there in China. Because we are kind of, you know, separated physically, so sometimes, really miss those kind of...those kind of...friendships

... 

**Interviewer:** So what have you found challenging about that missing friendship, then, so to speak?

**Participant:** Like life's there in China is also nice, you know... it's like when you choose two food...like if you think this one is good and this one is bad, then you won't have any problem about choosing this one right (*participant gestures*). If you find of those two are, kind of, inviting to you..."oh this one is good, but that one is not bad," maybe you kind of hesitant should I stay or should I go back.

The participant appeared to relay the mental activity of envisioning her life following a different trajectory, one that depicted her life in China had she not left to pursue her academic studies. It seemed that observing her friends progressing through life in China contributed to an internal conflict for the participant because it seemed to convey a sense of China also presenting attractive outcomes for others.

**Sub-Category: Lack of Parental Support**

Lack of Parental Support was a subcategory within the overarching category of Homesickness. It was represented by 3 participants (25% of the total sample) and contained 5
reported hindering incidents (4.9% of the total percentage of hindering incidents). The sub-category pertained to the experienced change of not having a readily available parent who can convey advice or share in the experience of crossing cultures. This sub-category, therefore, illustrated influencing factors that contributed to a participant’s sense of loneliness and lack of security.

Two participants expressed the impact of the absence of their parents as apparently affecting the dynamic of their interactions or conversations. For one participant, the physical separation from her parents prevented an open dialogue during exchanges and check-ins, and contributed to an apparent sense of a stilted conversation. As she reported:

I come home and something that made you really sad you’re crying, but then, you don’t want to cry in front of your parents because they’re going to ask you what happened and you don’t really wanted to bother them with that question…this is really hard…there’s a struggle going on.

An internal conflict seemed to arise for the participant as she desired to express her concerns and connect with her parents, yet she appeared to feel obligated to withhold information in order to present herself in a pleasant demeanour and to lessen any sort of worry from her parents.

Likewise, another participant reported on how the physical separation from her parents seemed to illustrate a block in terms of communicating openly and genuinely about her experiences in Canada. This notion was illustrated by the following paraphrase by the researcher: “they’re not here…and there’s an actual separation and you don’t want them to worry about you, so there’s a block in terms of the communication with what you tell them.” The two participants appeared to have communication styles that were not natural to their previous ways of communicating with their parents; therefore, the sense of continued nurturance and support appeared to be limited.
Another participant reported on missing the presence of her parents. In fact, the experience of being away from both immediate and extended family members, as well as the emergence of witnessing incomplete and disconnected families in Canada, seemed to contribute to a sense of despair and loneliness for her. As she reported:

I’m not sad about the family structure here…it’s because this is what happened here, it made me want to go home so bad because I know the family that I have is…it’s very rare, so I wanted to appreciate [it], and I don’t want it to break apart.

The participant’s encounter with different family structures appeared to stimulate her memories, and in particular, the attachment she possessed towards her family structure within her culture of origin. She appeared, therefore, to yearn to return home in order to reconnect with her immediate family.

The same participant also discussed the experience of witnessing her homestay family bonding during a family event. In this moment, the participant reported feeling left-out when her homestay family members came together as a unit because there was a sense of non-belongingness: “I feel like I’m excluded, and I don’t want to go into that circle because I feel like I should be with my parents.” The participant further described her experience:

I heard their laughs downstairs…and I just stopped there. I felt so sad that night because I couldn’t reach out to my parents…it sometimes make me doubt…that the decision that me coming over here is wrong.

For the participant, it appeared that her desire to return home became exacerbated and doubts began to enter her mind in relation to the decision to cross-cultures and pursue post-secondary studies in an international context.

Finally, another participant discussed the fact that separation from his parents, in terms of
both physical distance and the time difference, seemed to prevent him from readily connecting with his parents and generated a sense of holding onto “weight.” As he described it:

I really miss [living] with my parents…and because there is a time difference, so they might be working, and they might not have time to chat with me, or maybe when I want to chat with them, they’re sleeping…when I face difficulties over here, I want to share with them…I might want to ask them any solutions for me or suggestions…but because still we’re separate…it’s not as good as when I was living with them in Hong Kong.

The participant seemed to express that he felt blocked and he was saddened because he was required to negotiate challenges in isolation, as well as schedule a time to speak with his parents, instead of possessing the immediate access that was previously available.

4.3 Wish-List Categories:

Table 4 illustrates the categories and the placement of 36 reported wish-list items. Like Tables 1 and 2, it depicts the results starting with the greatest number of participants who reported on particular on wish-list items in relation to each category.

Table 4: Wish-List Categories (N = 36)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>% of Wish-List Items</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring and Possessing Host-Culture Characteristics</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrival Support</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter- and Intra- Cultural Associations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with Local Individuals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category: Acquiring and Possessing Host-Culture Characteristics

Acquiring and Possessing Host-Culture Characteristics contained the largest number of reported wish-list items (12 items or 33.3% of the total wish-list items) and was reported by 8 participants (66.7% of the total sample). The category was in reference to the development and acquisition of aspects from the host-culture (in this case, Canada), particularly in the areas of skills, values, and knowledge. This acquisition, consequently, would help to generate a sense of connection and fluency within the host-culture.

The primary skill coveted by the reporting sample members was English-language fluency. For one participant, being able to converse in English fluently, particularly as it related to job-search and academic discussions, would appear to convey a marketable quality. As she explained:

I really want to... speak English very fluently and I can use English as a, like, become my, my skills. Like, I can use English and Mandarin to... find some, uh, job... because I can speak both language... [W]hen I was young... some people who can speak two, two kind of language, I, I just give me very good impression, like, “Oh they’re awesome, they’re very smart, they can speak two, two kind of language.”

In the presented discourse, the participant appeared to wish for the ability to possess fluency in the native language of the host-culture in order to integrate and to utilize alongside her personal native language. For the participant, host-language fluency would appear to nurture a sense of prestige due to the possession of this attribute.

For another participant, fluency in English would appear to facilitate the ability to comprehend and enhance his connection with others. As he described:

[If] like English is my first language, then I won't have... this much struggle. It's like, the
reason why I feel like depressed or lonely...is because I cannot have friend yet, so like if I can speak, like, English fluently at first, then I might...get a lot of new friends...building connections...like during the class, it's like at first I don't understand what instructor is talking about...if English is my first language, I'm more easy to fit-in in these courses, and in this group as well.

A longing for the mastery of the English language for this participant appeared to illustrate the possibility of lightening the initial difficulties of forming relationships with others. Additionally, there would be an inherent ability to comprehend his instructors, and there would not be a needed intermediary process of translating material in his course work – he would be able to, at the very least, comprehend the spoken language.

A third participant expressed the wish for knowing about the language abilities required to meet the academic standards established in the post-secondary context. As explained in a summary of the participant’s response:

[The] other wish-list was in terms of developing your language skills. You mentioned how you were able to meet the academic standard that was required (for admission), but you mentioned how that was not enough to get by here. And so, this would help in terms of building up your reading skills...writing, reading, listening, speaking, all those areas that involve language...and the circumstances you would find this most helpful was during exam-prep, mid-terms...writing essays, assignments.

Of significance for the participant was an understanding for the differences underlying language “admission” requirements and the actual fluency demands placed on post-secondary students. Thus, greater fluency would appear to lessen some of the encountered struggles in relation to the completion of assignments and exams.
Within the area of values, one participant spoke about the importance of having a medium where individuals from China and individuals from Canada could exchange their perspectives, particularly in relation to academic and degree selection. As she explained:

[They] need to, like, exchange the value perception… if I know I'm staying in Canada, I won't choose [selected program] (laughs). But when I choose this major, because I, uh, maintained the Chinese value perception… here, so, you know... you realize in this society what fit for this society...what kinds of skill you need to have.

For the participant, the desire appeared to be an assessment of whether degrees or program selection were driven by the “Chinese way”, or if it was more in-line with a “Canadian” framework. This distinction would be able to emphasize the unique differences in terms of the emphasis within a particular culture, and therefore, appear to assist in the prevention of wasting resources, such as time, while studying in the host-culture of Canada.

In the realm of knowledge, one participant discussed the importance of bringing awareness back to China with respect to information about different degrees. Specifically, the participant desired to dispense information about her major/area of interest in order to build a stronger and deeper understanding of the material within her culture of origin. As she explained:

[Like] for the Food and Nutrition stuff in Canada…they have a lot of…[advanced] knowledge. Like, uh, in Canada, they have “fat-free food,” they have “gluten free food.” To be honest, in China, we don’t really have this kind of food. So, which means, like in here, uh, Food System is more enrich…uh, it’s more rich than China.

The expressed desire for the participant was to alleviate the disparity in knowledge and understanding between China and Canada, particularly in relation to the participant’s area of interest. As a result, aspects from the participant’s culture of origin would become further
strengthened in the process.

Another participant expressed desire to acquire knowledge in relation to academic-related matters. In particular, she wished for students to understand that participating in-class did not denote the same style as in China. As she explained:

**Interviewer:** ...one that you mentioned in the beginning was just that idea, or that knowledge that “contribution” in-class doesn't necessarily have to be a brilliant idea or a right answer. So how would that have been helpful for you?

**Participant:** It's like, uh, you don't have to be stressed out to say something silly. That's a big help for me (*laughs*). Like I can say anything, yeah

**Interviewer:** And that's contributing

**Participant:** Yeah, like, you...I'm being more free...I'm feeling free to share and not scared, it's not scary, it's not...no one is judging you, yeah

**Interviewer:** So you're open to express an opinion freely

**Participant:** I think once people try...once I tried to express myself for several times, then I actually feel better and better. Because it shows me that what I said it actually means something...people actually do respond to what I said.

The participant appeared to express a desire towards understanding that Canada held a different approach and connotation behind in-class participation. Consequently, this awareness would appear to alleviate personal fears of being labelled or judged by peers over comments made in-class. Moreover, the participant explained the facilitating nature behind such an experience, including the strengthening of in-class engagement and involvement.

Finally, two participants discussed a wish for knowledge in relation to the city landscape. One participant appeared to desire information and awareness for the transit system in the Lower Mainland. Having TransLink resources available in different languages, particularly at prominent Skytrain stops, would facilitate in terms of helping the international student community build familiarity with the city, as well as understand how an important transportation
mode in the Lower Mainland operated. The other participant discussed the importance of knowing about different cultures prior to entering a multi-cultural context, such as the host-culture of Canada. As she explained, understanding “different kinds of culture” could assist in terms of “[knowing] how to deal with the different country’s people.” Due to the homogenous nature of the participant’s culture of origin, exposure to other cultures was not as prevalent and interactions with individuals from differing cultures of origin were limited. Thus, a foundational awareness towards different cultures, for the participant, would appear to nurture a sense of respect, particularly in relation to forming and connecting with others in Canada.

Category: Arrival Support

Arrival Support contained 12 reported incidents (33.3% of the total percentage of wish-list items) and was expressed by 7 participants (58.3% of the total sample). The category referred to physical amenities or individuals capable of offering assistance upon arrival for participants to the new host culture. This provision appeared to contribute to a sense of security and familiarity, as well as mitigated the feelings of isolation and loneliness for the sample members who discussed desires within this category.

One participant expressed a wish to possess or have access to a vehicle when he arrived in the host-culture. In particular, he explained the importance of having a car in the host-culture:

[It's] more convenient to transport to different places, and then, I can first familiarize with this city, and know more about this city… Second thing, other than familiarize or explore, second thing would be having a more fruitful living style… I can have more time cause...I don't need to spend the time for commuting...for transporting, then I can spend those times in, maybe, social with friends, and uh, watch movies, and then, or I can play sports.
In the presented example, the availability of a vehicle appeared to facilitate further self-exploration of the city, as well as minimized the amount of travel time consumed through other modes of transportation. This minimization, in turn, could provide the participant an apparent sense of freedom and flexibility as he was not bound by schedules, such as transit times, to address his expressed needs, including social engagements.

Other participants reported on the significance of having specific individuals accompany them to the host-culture. For example, several participants reported on the value placed on having parents or friends with them in host-culture. As one participant described:

**Participant:** …I wish my parents were here...if my parents were here, it resolves anything.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and what would you find helpful about your parents being here then?

**Participant:** Then, then I wouldn't felt that I'm always lonely, I have to do everything on my own, you know. I felt somebody is at my back when I fall…

**Interviewer:**

**Participant:** …I don't mind how hard it is, but if I felt that there was going to be somebody waiting for me at home, I would be fine because I guess all the troubles comes that...

The participant in the presented example appeared to desire a shared sense of responsibilities with immediate family members. In this sense, the transition process, particularly the initial aspects, would not be tackled alone. The sharing of burdens and struggles, along with the physical presence of her parents, would therefore guard against the feelings of isolation and the prospect of being unsupported.

Another two participants similarly expressed the desire for select individuals to be present, specifically when they returned home. For one participant, it was her parents: “also the feeling, like when I come home, if there’s some people waiting for me, it’s more like a home.” The other participant wished for a roommate:
[If] I have a roommate, maybe we could explore life here together, more...you know, normally, when I…try to find resources on campus, when I try to do this, when I try to do that, I'm all kind of by myself. Sometimes I would go to show my friends what I found out and they would share with me what they found out. But maybe it might be more helpful…if I had a roommates who are kind of exploring life here together with me.

The availability of a family member or friend at home would reportedly mitigate initial feelings of loneliness and isolation – an individual would not return to an empty house. Like the wish-list responses of previous participants, the transition process would also become a joint-endeavour, as opposed to, at times, an isolating experience.

Another participant described a desire to possess relationships that would be in-place upon arrival. For example, family members or relatives (already established in the host-country) could act as a source of information for participants. As the participant described,

[If] I ever had somebody here with me, I wouldn't be here talking to you all those things...because, if you have any problems, just go to that person and he will tell you exactly what you do, right? Like...for example, what would it be like when you go to the first day of class, he would probably give me a heads up, like what you would have expected on the first day of the class, or how it would be like, and what courses to take.

The established presence of a trusted relative or other individual in the host culture would appear to guarantee an immediate support system for the participant. Additionally, their personal knowledge could act to stimulate an individual’s sense of preparedness towards possible circumstances and appropriate resources within the host culture, such as those related to academic issues.

Finally, two participants expressed a wish for information about post-secondary life in a
Canadian school. As both described, their own knowledge was primarily restricted to characteristics within their culture of origin. Thus, one participant expressed a desire for a mentoring-type program between senior post-secondary students and international students when post-secondary studies begin. As she explained:

I think that if you partner up a new student with a student that’s been here…[the partner] can give so much things to that person that just came here…where to go out of school for activities…hangout with your friends.

The established relationship at the post-secondary setting would apparently assist in the acquisition of knowledge and awareness towards aspects of the post-secondary landscape, thus, further stimulating a sense of readiness. By comparison, the other participant desired events that catered towards initial information-gathering: “We need events [like] ‘experiences the life in Vancouver’ before the academic year…before our study…before September…maybe we would know more about the life in Vancouver.” The creation of post-secondary events directed towards a focus on various experiences in the host-culture, including those beyond the school context, would appear to connect residents with international students, especially during the first year of studies. In this manner, knowledge and perspectives would be dispensed, and an individual’s awareness towards host-culture matters would seemingly increase.

**Category: Inter- and Intra- Cultural Associations**

The category of Inter- and Intra- Cultural Associations contained 6 reported items (16.7%) and was expressed by 6 participants (50% of the total sample). It pertained to cross-cultural events that can stimulate relationships and act to mitigate the sense of isolation or segregation of specific cultural groups, either on-campus or within the larger community. This socialization process also pertained to the recognition of experiences, events or practices from
the sample member’s culture of origin so that a connection was sustained while they lived in the host-country.

To promote interactions between individuals and groups of people on-campus, two participants expressed a desire to hold forums or events that catered specifically towards encouraging this type of relationship. One participant outlined a desire to have a club on campus that did not cater directly to a specific group; rather, it would attract the larger community and encourage conversations between local and international students alike:

**Participant:** [You] can see, like, a lot of groups in UBC, like, you know there's exchange student groups, and then, like, international student groups, local student groups, and stuff… I wish we can really mingle together…

…

**Interviewer:** …what would you find helpful about that?

**Participant:** …a lot more welcome here…because…in the world nowadays is ongoing globalization, which in the future, you probably need to work with all sorts of people, and I feel like if you can really…know people from different parts of the world, you can eradicate some stereotyping thing.

In the presented example, the participant appeared to believe that the promotion of an inter-cultural community on campus would ensure that diverse groups of people were able to interact with one another and to promote a richer, multi-cultural experience on campus that encourages a welcoming and accepting atmosphere.

Likewise, the other participant expressed a desire to hold multiple mingling events throughout the academic year so that participating members would have an opportunity to connect and to engage with one another. She explained that she wanted the following:
[Programs] to meet people...yeah, like, that's different from things like...particularly when school starts...it would be easier...to rely on each other, and you know, get comfortable before we start...going off our own way and stuff...cause you know it's just a big difference, you come here, you go to all your classes, and you have, to you know, really try to meet people in your classes, and you know, establish a connection, instead of having the opportunity to do so before.

The wish itself was expressed as a maintained platform for all students to intermingle with one another and to nurture relationships over time, as opposed to relying on one-off events at the start of the school year or the spontaneous nature behind relationships that emerge within the classroom. For the participant, having a specific purpose behind a particular event, one where relationships are meant to be cultivated, would appear to alleviate a sense of isolation and build-up her connections within the host-culture.

Another participant expressed a desire to encourage international students to participate in events that are already offered to international students, such as the Jump Start Program that is accessible to UBC international students only. In particular, the participant described her wish in the following way:

**Participant:** I wish I involved in the Jump Start Program...specific for the international students...it was two weeks before the university begins...what I saw is that students from Jump Start Program, they already knew each other well and become very good friends...

... 

**Interviewer:** [So] what you would have found helpful is that it would have acquainted you with other people, especially at the beginning too...

**Participant:** I was very surprised they know each other and I feel surprised, like...why
you know each other, it's just like the first week of university...they said 'oh we came two weeks before the university start'

For the participant, encouraged attendance at the program offered by UBC would appear to assist in cultivating and nurturing relationships with the international student community prior to the start of the school year. Like the previous participant’s desire, an expanded social network would take root and address a perceived sense of loneliness.

Finally, one sample member expressed a desire for a greater access and recognition of his culture of origin. The significance of having “more” attention was explained in the following manner: “connect to my home, my own culture… maybe it helps sense of belonging… for I may not feel really [like] an outsider...I not feel really… unfamiliar…” For the participant, the deliberate and on-going acknowledgment of certain cultural aspects, such as Chinese food and particular celebrations (including ones beyond Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival), would appear to assist in easing a sense of being in a minority position. Specifically, there would appear to be a greater sense of tolerance and acceptance actively being demonstrated within the host culture towards his culture of origin, and therefore, the participant would be able to maintain an on-going connection to his home.

*Sub-Category: Engagement with Local Individuals*

Engagement with Local Individuals was a sub-category that concerned the wish for interactions and/or development of relationships with host-culture local individuals, thereby enhancing one’s cultural meaning and understanding. It was reported by 5 participants (41.7% of the total sample) and contained 6 wish-list items (16.7% of the total of wish-list items).

Like the participants discussed in the main category, one participant expressed a wish for an event directed at the specific inter-mingling of host-culture local students with the
international student community. As the participant explained in terms of her personal engagements with others:

I really have many friends from China here, but I haven't have friends from Canada, so I really want to make friends with them… maybe I can say I have some friends but they are my classmates, I don't know if I can define them as my friends, but what I want is…to be closer…Maybe we can go out to…go some shopping…maybe we can share some ideas about the style of the dress, then we can know each other more. So I think we would have the platform for us to make friends with each…I just want to know more about the people who are not from China, and know more about the people here, and understand them, and I'm not going to pretend to be one of them, but at least I understand them, I know how to talk to them, like you know, maybe that would be helpful.

The participant in the presented example appeared to desire on-going relationships with host-culture nationals, particularly beyond the classroom. For her, it seemed that the classroom provided only a microcosm of how Canadians lived and behaved in the host-culture; therefore, the continued involvement in the lives of Canadians could contribute to an evolving understanding of host-culture locals for an individual from China.

Another participant stressed the rationale for possessing a “Canadian” friend and reiterated the importance of connecting with host-culture locals. As reported by the participant:

Canadian friend...probably he/she can help me, like, show around how Vancouver goes...like, actually do some sight-seeing (laughs)...and more like study stuff, cause I have some hard time to study, just like the translation part, probably the Chemistry that I learned back in China before, but at this time, maybe everything...the equation I know but how to say that I don't know, so if I have learning partner probably can be better.
The relationship nurtured between an individual from the host-culture and the participant appeared to stem from a desire for familiarity and awareness towards her surrounding context (in this case, the Lower Mainland). More importantly, the individual could also lend him- / her- self to act as a resource in terms of interpreting academic information.

In addition, another participant described a desire to simply be engaged with host-culture locals. He discussed his wish in the following way:

[Get] more friends to help me, not even just my English, maybe, I want to get to know more about culture… I don’t want them to specifically tell me what the country is…I just follow them and having fun with them, I can realize that… what they’re performing, so I can learn from their actions, maybe, their thoughts, and that’s what exactly I want to do… Just a little bit like observation. I just want to figure out by myself… not just someone told me what they think.

For the participant, there appeared to be a wish towards active participation in relation to building relationships with host-culture locals, as opposed to simply listening and talking about them. Interestingly, the participant discussed an inherent desire to promote his learning about host-culture locals through several means: witnessing, modelling and personal involvement.

The same participant also discussed the possibility of participating and engaging in an open dialogue with local youth. As he explained, “I want [to] try… to get them…have some conversations… Yeah, maybe more fresh ideas… the younger people get me the ideas. Maybe some new words.” In the sample quotation, the participant appeared to desire to stimulate growth and learning through the means of an open-dialogue; specifically, for the participant, the younger local population appeared to possess the capacity to impart knowledge that was beyond the academic setting. As a result, the participant would be helped in terms of nurturing
additional perspectives and the possibility of novel thoughts.

4.4 Contextual Information

Throughout each interview, participants were asked about their decision to cross-borders, as well as their personal definitions surrounding “doing well” in relation to their cross-cultural transition. At the end of the interview, participants were also asked to report on their perceived abilities to address the changes that they encountered in the host-culture.

4.4.1 Decision to Cross-Borders

For several participants, aspects from their culture of origin seemed to influence their decision to study abroad, and in particular, the level of competition present throughout China. One participant described the competition in China as follows:

[It's] very competitive environment in Beijing, and especially, like my coworkers, they…have higher degree, even have doctorate degree…so, I feel “ok, I was capable to do a lot of things, but for promotion, it's very limited.”

It appeared that within her culture of origin, the credentials of fellow co-workers, particularly in relation to the attainment of academic degrees, continued to rise. As a result, the participant seemed to desire to nurture her personal resume and status within her culture of origin through further education in order to be considered for work-place advancements.

Similarly, another participant described the seemingly daunting nature of the competition within China:

[The] competition in China is huge…my parents don't think I'm going to survive…especially when you go to the university in China, only the good ones, I would say only the top 5 would ensure that you have a good job afterwards…and then in China, a university graduate is not something…everybody have a university degrees… So, if you
only finish…Bachelor, it doesn't really pull you up. Like you don't really stand-out in a
group of people

For the participant, the competitive nature appeared to stimulate a fear from her parents
regarding her wellbeing. In particular, it seemed that there was the promotion of an idea that her
future prospects would be bleak in China. Additionally, the participant reiterated the apparent
commonplace aspect of attaining an undergraduate degree in her culture of origin.

Another participant discussed the effect of being unable to enter into a post-secondary
context due to the competition present in home province:

Cause like I can't get into the university in my hometown, it's quite...competitive… So,
like, I have no choice, and I do want to keep…studying, so yeah, that's why I go abroad
to...all the way to Canada to keep studying.

It seemed that for the participant, the inability to be admitted into select universities in China
meant that studying abroad was the lone option available to him.

A final participant directly described the structure and framework of the post-secondary
system as seemingly being unattractive as a result of the competition present in China. As she
reported:

[Now] China has so many people in China, and also it's so many people in one
university…so many people in one class and the probably the prof. won't take that much
care of you… also in China, the grade is more important than how, how you get that...so
some people like cheating, or do those stuff.

The potential for an unsupported academic setting, as well as possible systemic issues that were
associated within her culture of origin (namely, reported cheating to earn higher grades),
illustrated unattractive qualities towards the post-secondary options available to the participant.
For other participants, there was an apparent fear towards the world of work within China. One participant reported that she felt unprepared for employment after a life-altering decision to change her undergraduate degree. As she highlighted:

I didn't think I was well-prepared for employment in China…I didn't think so because when I graduate...from my undergrad school, and...because I change my major, at that moment, I realized that I didn't want to, uh, go straight to employment… I wanted to change...then I made this decision to…go abroad for study, and at the same time, change my major.

Similarly, another participant stated that “if I’m not keep studying…my parents…require me…to go out and work, and I don’t want to do it yet.” The two participants appeared to convey the idea that they felt unequipped to enter the workforce given their academic history; therefore, there was an expressed desire to continue with their academic progress in order to nurture their sense of preparedness for entering the workforce.

Moreover, three participants reported that their decision to attend school abroad was influenced by a desire to enhance their English-speaking abilities. Remarks that illustrated this expressed desire included the following from participants: “I quit my job, come to here is just for English”; I want to…improve my oral English”; and “I think [Vancouver] offer me more opportunities to speak different language.” For these participants, the dominant presence of the English-language in Canada seemed to present the opportunity to develop and nurture their English-language fluency.

In addition, others chose the Lower Mainland because of present family members and/or friends. For one participant, the presence of extended family appeared to improve her wellbeing: “in Vancouver, I have my relative here, so it’s kind of like…it’s kind of a safe place for me to
explore.” Another participant reported that “my aunt's family are actually living here, they immigrate here...So they live here, and...my cousins here...and she think, like, Canada, Vancouver, like UBC, is a better, um, atmosphere for me...for academic[s].” A third participant reiterated the idea of present family members conveying a sense of prestige associated with the names of certain universities: “UBC is a really, like, famous university, which kind of attracts me to come here too...I know some of my relative, their daughters and sons, they graduated from here...so it's kind of like a good school.” For these participants, the presence of existing family members appeared to stimulate a sense of security. There also appeared to be a strong notion delivered by some relatives that attendance at a post-secondary institution, such as UBC, would be able to enhance one’s societal standing.

Several others reported on a desire to utilize their international status for immigration purposes. In particular, one participant remarked that “Canada is very easy...more easy to immigrate”, while another decided to “choose Canada...like, some immigration policies, maybe, better for...different people.” Certain select policies within Canada appeared to facilitate the change from an international student status towards an immigrant status.

Finally, other participants described attractive qualities of the city itself. One participant discussed the “multi-cultural” aspect of a diverse city as an attractive component, while another reported the facilitating nature of having “so many Chinese people here, I think it’s maybe much better for me to adapt a new environment.” Another participant appeared to enjoy the relaxed demeanour to the city:

Yeah, like, people are relaxed (laughs), you know...you don't pressure, maybe people do, but for me, I feel like I don't have to give myself that much stress... you feel the peace...for me, I could feel the peace inside...
Additionally, two participants discussed their attraction to the climate and landscape. One participant stated that she “love[d] the weather here, it’s really nice during the winter.” The other participant discussed an attraction towards the freedom of movement that the city seemed to provide in contrast to her home province:

[We] have always liked Canada cause like, the city, like during summer…I like a lot of outdoor activities, and you don't get much of that in Hong Kong, like I like, you know, I can just go anywhere in the nature.

4.4.2 Definitions of “Doing Well”

Prior to the exploration of critical incidents and wish-list items, participants were asked for their personal definitions of “doing well” in relation to their cross-cultural transition. Two participants conveyed that the notion of “doing well” in the host-culture appeared to be connected to their academic results. One participant discussed that “maybe get, get, ‘A.’ Uh, yeah, I mean get a good mark…this is the first thing”, while the other participant reported that “doing well” meant that “at least I have the feeling of I can control the things…I can manage the things…I mean in terms of academic, um, at least I can…I have good grades.” In both instances, the participants appeared to place a premium on achieving the highest grade possible, and that their perception of “doing well” was, at least partly, connected to their academic standing at a foreign post-secondary context.

Several other participants linked the concept of “doing well” to their personal happiness and level of comfort in the host-culture. For instance, one participant reported the following:

I would say that you're happy, that you're comfortable here then you would be transitioning well, cause, um, have you found, like, friends, and if you're doing well in school, then I guess that's part of the definition…I wouldn't like just want to go back
home right away when I get here.

In this instance, the participant appeared to associate “doing well” in relation to a number of life domains, including sustaining relationships, maintaining academics, and possessing a personal affinity towards the host-culture. Likewise, another participant expressed the following idea:

I am not going to be the Canadian, I am not going to be, like, other people...the majority people in Canada, but I just want to feel comfortable...to live here and to have...if I have my friends, I mean, friends, um, I have my network, I think it's enough

This example illustrated the participant’s definition was associated with personal distinctiveness alongside her own described level of comfort to live within the host-culture. In particular, her definition appeared closely associated with the relationships she was able to develop and nurture in Canada.

Another participant also reiterated that her definition was associated with personal comfort. As she described:

[You] need to treat this place as, like, your comfort zone...you feel really comfortable around here, and then, like, you want to know more things...like it's a university, you want to like study more, you want to know more things here...but not like, “oh my god, I was discriminated by others” ... you won't have this kind of negative thought in here. So I would say that...and also, like...you will find your niche in here...

Instead of merely discussing the concept of comfort level, the participant also appeared to relay the idea that comfort could promote the discernment of one’s purpose within the host-culture. Through this discernment, the participant appeared to illustrate that one could redirect focus away from unpleasant thoughts, and as a result, contribute to a sense of “doing well.”

While the previous participants discussed the idea of comfort, one individual echoed the
sentiments of a desire to remain in the host-culture. In particular, she expressed the following sentiments:

Right now, if you ask me do I want to go back, I would say I want to stay. That's how I define success...it means I enjoy it here… Yeah, like I want to continue my study and my work here, so, which means, like, I can't say I'm successful than others...at least I'm satisfied, and I feel hope. I think that's the most important thing.

“Doing well” for this participant appeared to be related to her level of connection towards the host-culture – the greater the connection, the likelier that she would personally perceive herself as “doing well.” More importantly, this participant was the only individual who discussed the notion of hope and how this feeling would be related to her ability to thrive within the host-culture.

In addition, two participants discussed the importance of attaining a different outlook or demeanour while living within the host-culture. This demeanour, in turn, appeared to contribute to their personal definitions of “doing well.” One participant described the following:

I didn’t mean that I look down on Chinese part, but I think it’s really better for me because I can think in different experience…in different experience with different perspectives… I think maybe my thought may be more peaceful, yeah (...) I think it’s Canada…I have no idea why because maybe the people here, their emotional is really…is not very upside down…just very normal.

Although the participant appeared unable to comprehend the source of his perception of tranquility, an apparent contributing factor seemed to relate to the people present in the host-culture. The second participant appeared to elaborate more so on this latter point:

And then, in terms of… living style…I quite like this living style over here… I'm more
adapt to the living style here, cause maybe it's also related to my own personality because I'm more peaceful and less hustle and bustle.

It seemed that the apparent slower pace and the encountered individuals within the host-culture contributed to a different disposition for the two participants; namely, they were able to attain an apparent sense of internal harmony that was not previously achieved within their culture of origin.

One participant described “doing well” or his ability to thrive as related to his health. As he described:

**Participant:** … health is one of the…component of…adapting well. I think my health is getting better when...when I start living here…

...  

**Interviewer:** So you mean physically you're ok. So the physical health part has actually helped you do well over here…And that's being promoted through the environment

**Participant:** Yes

Fascinatingly, he was the only participant of the twelve to relate aspects of his physical well-being towards his ability to thrive in the host-culture. It appeared that for the participant, certain host-cultural characteristics contributed to an apparent healthier lifestyle that promoted his ability to flourish.

Two participants appeared to emphasize the importance of being able to communicate and connect with others in order to succeed in the host-culture. As one participant discussed, “at least I can communicate with people by using English.” The participant seemed to convey the notion that “doing well” meant that he would no longer exclusively rely on the language of his culture of origin; rather, he would begin to utilize the native language of the host-culture.

Similarly, another participant relayed the importance of no apparent language boundaries:
[You] have to be able to deal with all kinds of people… for me…it would be communicate well…have no language boundary, and you can just get a job as easy as a citizen here, right? Um, just pretty much, you will find a good job afterwards...after you graduate...and you will be able to afford your own house and everything...just like you would have your life in China.

For this particular participant, it appeared that “doing well” was likened to being able to achieve the amenities that perhaps would have been attained had she not left her culture of origin. In particular, these features would be facilitated through her language capabilities, as well as the ability to interact and nurture relationships with others.

Finally, one participant remarked that her definition of “doing well” was closely associated with personal satisfaction. As she related:

I'm satisfied by myself… really, uh, contributing that stuff, and I pay attention to that and I work hard. Even maybe the result not really that good, but I'm satisfied with the procedure...the whole period.

The participant seemed to convey a perspective that was inclined towards process-orientation; although the experienced consequences may not be able to reflect her own personal definitions of “good”, the apparent act of attempting and working earnestly indicated her ability to succeed in the host-culture. For this participant, the definition of “doing well” appeared oriented towards the larger scope of her transition process, as opposed to being defined solely by single events or experiences.

4.4.3 Ability to Handle Change

The final set of information collected from the participants related to their ability to handle change. While there were some shared aspects throughout the interviews, the participants
also emphasized and highlighted different qualities that contributed towards their capacity to adapt.

Several participants discussed personal characteristics they believed influenced their ability to address encountered changes. For one participant, it was in relation to “will power” and her sense of persistence, defined as “sometimes, when you want to give-up and then you, you just tell yourself you shouldn’t, you should keep doing.” The participant appeared to relay the importance of positive self-talk and the promotion of actions, as opposed to preoccupation with unpleasant feelings, such as resignation.

Similarly, another participant expressed that she “took more courses and be more hard-working...Just don’t think that much...I mean not worry too much...just keep on doing.” While the participant did not explicitly describe her ability to address changes as a sense of persistence, it seemed there remained a desire to not become engrossed by particular thoughts, and instead be inclined towards simply acting.

Two other participants appeared to reflect the sentiments that addressing changes was their only option. One participant expressed the following: “because I know that for me, this is the only option. If you don't deal with it, I don't have a choice...I have to deal with it in my case.” For this participant, it seemed that she possessed the characteristic of being inclined to address the encountered changes, and redirect her focus towards overcoming obstacles.

Likewise, one participant expressed a similar idea in the following manner:

Because like I have no choice at the first point, and like the second point is like, I would learn something in the end. So yeah, that's the reason I feel like I'm ok with that because, like, I would learn something at the end even like at first it's struggling, and...maybe you'll feel tough or something, but like at the end, you would learn something
This participant appeared to feel compelled to address changes as well, particularly hindering experiences. More importantly, he seemed to view the process of change as an opportunity for growth and learning.

One other participant seemed to share the perspective that growth accompanied changes. As she stated:

What happened I would do to change it...I would firstly, I'm kind of emotional people...person...so at first, I would feel sad, and then maybe after that period, I would start to think why I can't transition well...what's a difference...like what makes me feel so hard to adapt to the new environment...to find the gap, and then maybe to think about what should I do, and then just to do it

Change for the participant appeared rooted in first determining her underlying feelings; afterwards, she would assess her situation, figure out and address the challenging aspects that were associated with the issue, and pursue a particular course of action. Ultimately, she believed that “maybe I need those challenges so I could meet them.”

Finally, two other participants discussed the importance of utilizing past experiences to inform their present encountered change. One participant discussed how previous grade-level changes influenced her current ability:

I mean I went to, like, um, I went to, like, primary school, which is different to grade 6, and that's another school for three years, and then another school for three years, so um, yeah I've been to, like, I had like a few fresh starts so...it wasn't too bad for me… maybe cause I would find people that I connect with.

The participant appeared to realize that a common aspect in relation to changes was connected to relationships with other people. Thus, she seemed to carry over this strength in order to help her
tackle the transition process. The other participant discussed sentiments carried over from her past:

[Mostly] I get a new environment around me, but I'm kind of always think about the...the old environment… I find it hard to get in the new class…I realize, ok, I made a mistake at that time...I can't make the same mistake at this time.

The opportunity to change through the process of transitioning to a foreign post-secondary context seemed to illustrate an ability to rectify a reported past error of being fixated on a former perspective or mindset. As a result, the participant appeared to value the change she encountered, which in turn, nurtured an ability to address the transition process.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question “What facilitates or hinders the cross-cultural transition experience of Chinese Post-Secondary Students from China who self-identify as successfully adapting in Canada?” Twelve international students were interviewed and a total of 273 incidents were identified (135 helping incidents, 102 hindering incidents, and 36 wish-list items). The goals of the study were the following: 1) to emphasize a holistic perspective of international students by highlighting facilitating and hindering experiences, 2) to bring attention to a specific sup-population of international students (i.e. Chinese students), 3) to portray the population of international students as possessing the capacity to thrive by selecting individuals who identify as “doing well”, and 4) to support researchers and clinicians in developing their understanding of the transition process of international students. Each of these goals will be addressed throughout the discussion section, which proceeds by underscoring Theoretical Agreement, additional categories, personal observations, practical implications, limitations and ethical considerations, future directions, and concluding remarks.

5.1 Theoretical Agreement

As previously discussed in the methodology section, a second phase to Theoretical Agreement is the comparison of generated categories to current literature. This additional review helps in determining consistency and support for shared strengths and stressors, while also highlighting unique resources and challenges that are endemic for the population of interest (in this instance, international post-secondary students from China). Key themes emerged from the findings and warrant analysis according to the literature; however, there remains limited work in relation to the transition process of international post-secondary students from China within
Canadian institutions. This section, therefore, is primarily guided by the works of three studies: Moores and Popadiuk’s (2011) study on the positive qualities of international student transition, Gu and Maley’s (2008) study on Chinese students and their experiences in the United Kingdom, and Yan and Berliner’s (2011) study on Chinese international students in the United States. Additionally, general literature on the international student population will be referenced, with attention awarded to the Self-Validation Model (Ishiyama, 1998).

5.1.1 Positive Qualities

Findings from this research appear to align with several of the helping categories outlined in Moores and Popadiuk’s (2011) study on the positive aspects of the transition for international students. One area of note was the category of social support/building relationships with peers. The researchers found that peers, particularly from the international community, signified an important source of help and comfort for international students in relation to the foreign post-secondary transition process (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). Thus, the magnitude of these relationships appear to be represented by the fact that all twelve participants (100%) in this current study expressed events related to establishing and nurturing relationships with family members and peers present in the host culture. Additionally, the participant’s sense of support and comfort appeared to be addressed through ongoing relationship-building with peers that extended “beyond the classroom”, as well as the accompaniment of present family members in order to encourage settlement within the host-culture. Moreover, sense of belonging appeared best represented by participants who were able to re-establish relationships or recognize aspects of their culture of origin in the host-culture of Canada. The importance relayed by several participants regarding the visibility of Chinese characters, or being able to engage and be included amongst Chinese individuals, deeply generated a sense of being “back home.” Not only
did members report feeling connected within the host-culture, but it seemed to address aspects related to homesickness because members were able to “nourish” themselves, both in terms of actually eating Chinese food, as well as connecting with other aspects and people from their culture of origin.

Moores and Popadiuk (2011) also observed that international students may possess the propensity towards *learning to navigate the host culture* as demonstrated by their sample members’ ability to express experiences of traversing and learning about cultural and academic differences. In the current study, this theme became evident in several reported experiences, such as learning about the “timeliness rule” of assignments, and the different meaning placed on “participation” within the classroom by lecturers and instructors. Several participants noted the importance of learning to adopt a different paradigm, particularly in the classroom, as former ways of addressing academic-related matters, and relationships with professors, were no longer seen as applicable within the host culture.

In addition, several participants in this study illustrated their ability to have *enjoyable activities outside of schoolwork* through the expressed intention of participating and engaging in clubs or volunteerism. As one participant described, the engagement in matters beyond school nurtured a sense of “purpose in this campus.” Thus, the act of “contributing” appeared to offer several participants a greater sense of self – they viewed themselves as being more than simply an international student and they were able to have a richer identity within the host-culture.

*Supportive Faculty and Staff* was clear amongst several participants who expressed their appreciation for lecturers and instructors who offered additional support, both within the classroom as well as beyond it. Whether it was related to acting as a source of cultural knowledge regarding topics such as dating and social relationships, demystifying the sense of
authority that professors possibly possess within their relationship with students, or simply informing students that they have a “right to ask questions”, it is apparent that institutional members were seen as invaluable assets to several of the participants and facilitated their transition process. Faculty members appeared to enliven the classroom context, such as when a member expressed her enjoyment at being able to participate in multiple learning activities. They also served as another integral part of the participants’ support system, such as the participant who felt her transition challenges were normalized through the shared struggles of her supervisor.

Gu and Maley’s (2008) study described additional positive qualities that appear to be specifically applicable for the Chinese international student population. A stronger sense of independence in learning was aptly connected with participants who reported on novel experiences such as generating personal timetables that met their own schedules, and having a sense of personal investment in their own academic trajectories.

The authors also argue that personality and maturity appear to be an important influencing factor in relation to an international student’s transition process (Gu & Maley, 2008). Thus, when participants were asked to describe their ability to handle change, the members discussed qualities such as “will power,” “persistence,” and “perseverance.” They also described their perspectives on the transition process, such as acknowledging the potential for growth and development in spite of the struggles, as well as learning from past transitions in order to better inform the current process.

5.1.2 Shared Challenges and Struggles

Gu and Maley (2008) argue that the Chinese international students within their study underwent Learning Shock, a phrase highlighting the distress that is experienced when arriving
and studying in a new learning environment. This factor appears applicable across several categories from this research, specifically in relation to experiences of uncertainty or unfamiliarity, as well as non-transferable practices enacted by participants. For some of the participants, it appeared that understanding certain aspects of the “Canadian style” remained elusive, and this lack of familiarity impacted several domains, including social interactions, written and electronic communications, and the classroom context. Moreover, it seemed that many of the challenges stemmed from difficulties in adopting a different learning model that fit the host-culture, such as the open discussion format of post-secondary classes, or the ability to approach and interact with professors on a reciprocal basis. The enactment of specific social norms also highlighted a sense of being different for some participants, and an acknowledgment that while these practices were observed within their culture of origin, people within the host-culture may in fact “stare at you”, contributing to undesirable attention.

Throughout the literature, it is emphasized that while difficulties in English-communication contribute to hardship/challenges for all groups of international students, it appears more prominent for those whose culture of origin hails from parts of Asia (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Heggins & Jackson, 2003; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Yan & Berliner, 2011). Not surprisingly then, nearly all the participants (75%) experienced events that were associated with language challenges. Participants expressed difficulties in terms of relaying their thoughts during social and academic contexts, being unable to understand and follow along during discussions and lectures, as well as becoming preoccupied by fears of being judged for not mastering the English-language or possessing a distinct accent that seemed to highlight their lack of proficiency. There was also the apparent devaluing experience of several participants who were unable to “come across” as knowledgeable experts, an experience that
arose from an inability to “find the correct words and show-up” during their interactions with others, such as relaying academic knowledge to professors. Overall, these language challenges appeared to culminate in the unpleasant feelings of confusion, frustration, and/or foolishness that could be readily evoked when discussing or reporting on these events.

Existential/life struggles are seen as difficulties in terms of relating with others as a result of different traditions, values, and expectations that give rise to emotional or psychological distress (Gu & Maley, 2008). Within the current study, these struggles appeared to manifest in terms of relating with host-culture locals. As participants reported, when engaging with others beyond the school context, there was often a lack of familiarity with topics related to “Canadian culture” (such as celebrities or musical preferences), as well as the experience of dissimilarity in terms of issues such as work ethic, appropriate conversation topics, or definitions of friendship. Taken together, it seemed that many of the participants in this study (83.3%) appeared to experience hardships as a result of “uncommon ground” and the inability to relate and connect with host-culture locals, thus contributing to a sense of loneliness and isolation. As one participant aptly described, “it’s difficult to get deeper relationship with Canadian because of the difference.”

McLachlan and Justice’s (2009) identification of Homesick, lonely, and isolated was represented by participants who were unable to connect with culture-of-origin attributes and people. This appeared to become particularly evident when reminders from the participant’s culture of origin became pronounced, such as the celebration of Chinese New Year, or the prominence of mooncakes during the Mid-Autumn Festival season. It seemed that for the participants, while the celebration of these events within the host-culture acknowledged their culture-of-origin, it also prompted a desire to return home and to celebrate “properly”,
particularly with their own loved ones. In addition, the Homesickness category represented the expressed isolating experience of being away from immediate or extended family members; the previously accustomed attribute of having readily available caregivers who provided ongoing nurturance and support no longer became present for several of the participants. As a result, some members openly expressed that they “really miss [living] with my parents” or that “I should be with my parents.”

Finally, Schmitt et al. (2003) argue that while actual discrimination has its own set of negative consequences, perceptions of discrimination constitutes a number of psychological costs, some of which include a disturbance in physical and mental well-being. Importantly, half of the participants in this study (6 out of 12) reported either being targeted or perceiving a sense of discrimination directed towards them or their culture of origin. A number of sample incidents serve as examples of this type of perception: witnessing differential treatment towards students by an instructor, remarks heard that were construed as damaging (such as “your English is bad”), or the belief that one was not selected for a particular job because the individual possessed an “Asian face,” a perception reinforced by the fact that there was not a visible Asian minority within the selected employment context. All of these reported experiences seemingly influenced a sense of denigration that furthered the feelings of distaste as well as anger: “it makes me feel bad. Like, how my group…are being labelled by people.”

5.1.3 Wish-List Agreement

Support for the wish-list categories appears to come from several sources within the literature. Yan and Berliner (2011) emphasize that a prominent wish amongst their sample of Chinese international students was greater contact with host-culture nationals, a desire that is often obstructed from an inability to find the means to initiate these relationships. This current
sample of participants also desired to develop and nurture relationships, not only with individuals who reside in Canada, but with the majority population of the host-culture as well. Several participants described a desire to have a social network that included “local people” because these individuals are seen as being able to serve as a gateway into supporting the development of a “Canadian life.” As one participant emphasized, having relationships restricted towards individuals from one’s culture of origin, or solely within the international student community, can perpetuate a sense of “being stuck because we all have the same problems.” More importantly, the desires for both inter- and intra-cultural connections sparked ideas in terms of how these relationships could possibly be cultivated; these issues will be addressed in the following Implications section.

Additionally, Gu and Maley (2008) argue that the potential for Chinese students to thrive within a foreign post-secondary context appears to depend on a deeper level of change that extends behind linguistic competence, subject knowledge, and adapting to a different academic style. They termed this ability *Enjoy Loneliness*, a phrase that was seen to conceptualize the ability of their sample participants to cope with profound psychological stressors (Gu & Maley, 2008). This ability, therefore, appears to connect with the participants in this current study who openly expressed a desire to nurture their awareness and mastery of host-culture characteristics. While language mastery was conveyed by several respondents, such as a desire to converse fluently in English, the other characteristics described by several of the participants included development of their multi-cultural competencies, and knowledge about resources that are applicable to individuals within the host-culture. Of note is that these participants seemed to desire to incorporate host-culture characteristics into their current cultural framework. This idea stems from the wish-list item of some of the participants who wanted to exchange values
between the host-culture and their culture-of-origin. There appears to remain, therefore, a desire to retain aspects from their culture-of-origin while also incorporating host-culture characteristics in order to lift a sense of unfamiliarity and nurture the change needed to continue to thrive within the host-culture.

5.1.4 Self-Validation Model

The categories generated within this research also lend support to the Self-Validation model, a framework utilized to conceptualize the challenges that may accompany the transition process (Ishiyama, 1995). A premise of the model is that people are determined to find self-validation sources, that is, to recognize and affirm one’s personal existence and “sense of who they are” (Ishiyama, 1995, p. 264). Attaining these sources (i.e. validation) is able to promote psychological well-being, while the experience of undervalidation and cultural dislocation contribute to distress (Ishiyama, 1995). Validation is seen to be achieved along five thematic components, and it is within these themes that the generated helping and hindering categories within this research align. As argued by Ishiyama (1995), the thematic components in the Self-Validation model include the following: a) security, comfort and support vs. insecurity, discomfort, and abandonment; b) self-worth and self-acceptance vs. self-deprecation and self-rejection; c) competence and autonomy vs. incompetence and helplessness; d) identity and belonging vs. identity loss and alienation; and e) love, fulfillment, and meaning in life vs. lovelessness, emptiness, and meaningfulness. It becomes evident that the helping categories within this research are associated with the attainment of self-validation sources, while the hindering categories support the experience of undervalidation. For instance, the thematic component of “security, comfort, and support” underscores helpful categories such as Supportive Family and/or Friends, while “insecurity, discomfort, and abandonment” can account for the
hindering categories including “Uncommon Ground” with Host-Culture Locals and Personal Strife.

In addition, the model promotes the idea that as time progresses, one is able to personally define a “validation network” (Ishiyama, 1995, p. 264). This network includes prominent relationships, activities (including cultural practices), objects (symbolic and practical), as well as places and landmarks that become meaningful sources of validation (Ishiyama, 1995). Well-being is further fostered through the strengthening of these particular sources, while major transitions, such as crossing-cultures for post-secondary purposes, can interrupt and endanger one’s validation network (Ishiyama, 1995). Thus, it becomes clear that the hindering categories within this current research can be associated with the threatening experience to one’s validation network, such as the loss in the relationship with one’s readily available parents (Lack of Parental Support), or the inability to enact culture-of-origin practices because they are no longer accepted or tolerated (Non-Transferable Cultural Practices).

A final noteworthy component of the Self-Validation model relates to its explanation of cultural dislocation and its association with the undervalidation of self (Ishiyama, 1995). Specifically, the model contends that cultural dislocation relates to the endangering of one’s self-validation system stimulated by the encounter of instability, unfamiliarity, uprootedness, and homesickness (Ishiyama, 1995). Hindering categories within this research, therefore, can be seen as dangers to one’s self-validation system brought about by the process of crossing-cultures and relocating to a foreign host-culture such as Canada. For instance, the Self-Validation model’s definition of “Homesickness” pertains to not only a longing for one’s home, but can also include the desire of being validated within a familiar cultural environment within a personally significant way (Ishiyama, 1995). Thus, the importance of categories, such as the “Home”
presence, appears to take on greater significance because these categories can be seen as an inherent desire to attain some semblance of a previously embedded validating source. Ultimately, it appears that individuals within this current research seem to have been able to mitigate some of the threats to their validation system, and to nurture validating sources that helped to promote their psychological well-being and ability to thrive within a foreign landscape.

5.2 Additional Categories

As previously discussed in the Methodology section, one expert expressed that he was surprised Parental Conflict did not emerge as a hindering category for the sample members (J. Domené, personal communication, December 21, 2014). The literature also supports this assertion, specifically in relation to Asian international students studying within foreign post-secondary contexts. For example, Yang, Haydon, and Miller (2013) found that Asian international students, and in particular those who have cultural values rooted in filial piety, hierarchical relationships, and restrained displays of affection, may undergo conflicts with parents as they grow independently and become better acquainted with the cultural values displayed in the host-culture. Bodycott (2009) also noted that the desires of parents and desires of students with respect to studying abroad may not correspond with one another. Interestingly, while several participants in this current research expressed a sense of restricted communication with their parents (e.g., “you don’t want to cry in front of your parents” while communicating via Skype), only one participant in this study openly expressed an area of conflict with her parents. Specifically, since her parents decided that she should pursue undergraduate studies within a foreign context, she at times believes “that the decision that me coming over here is wrong.”

The participant’s expressed uncertainty highlights the possibility that there may be an underlying conflict between personal desires, and the desires of her parents; however, the fact that the
majority of participants did not report this aspect to be an issue may indicate the unique qualities of this selected group of international students.

Another notable area regarding international students is Personal concerns related to marginal status. Yan and Berliner (2011) observed that their sample of Chinese international students experienced distress over their restricted status, especially in relation to job-seeking aspects, such as reduced number of working hours and ineligibility for on-campus positions, as well as financial concerns, such as exclusion from student loans. Indeed, some sample members reported distress in relation to limitations of work opportunities, as well as being unable to attain particular positions resulting from a “lack of Canadian experience.” That said, several participants further reported that while initially blocked, they were able to utilize their awareness and “bridge the gap” so that they could “navigate my way through” the obstructions. Perhaps this particular attribute of overcoming barriers is what continues to influence the sample members’ ability to thrive within a foreign post-secondary context.

Two final surprises were that Immigration concerns and Dating and marriage challenges did not readily emerge as categories for this sample of participants. Yan and Berliner (2011) observed that although their sample of Chinese international students desired to remain in their selected host-country of the United States, they ran into constraints in relation to acquiring a permanent resident status. In contrast, several sample members in this current study expressed that they specifically chose Canada as a result of different immigration policies that were seen as less confining than those observed in the UK, and the United States. As Madgett and Bélanger (2008) emphasize in their research, Canada appears to fair better in terms of a selection choice for immigration than the United States or the UK because the other nations have increased their domestic security as a result of political and societal issues related to the war on terrorism; these
issues have consequently made it difficult for individuals to immigrate into these respective host-cultures. The differing policies in Canada, therefore, may have accounted for the non-emergence of this possible hindering category.

In relation to forming intimate relationships, Yan and Berliner (2011) stated that there seemed to be apprehension and frustration as a result of their sample members’ difficulties in finding a suitable Chinese boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife. Although purely speculative, this concern may not have arisen for this current sample because individuals from their culture-of-origin are readily visible and available for relationships within the host-culture of Canada, and more specifically, the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. As one participant described, it “maybe much better for me to adapt a new environment here because so many Chinese people.” That said, one participant suggested the possibility of marital discord with her husband, and in particular, the suitability of her marriage: “he want to keep marriage, he like me, but yeah, still like now, I'm confused now.” Although an isolated incident, this expressed challenge emphasizes the possibility for implicit relational concerns that may emerge for Chinese international students while studying abroad.

5.3 Personal Observations

One primary observation of importance was that facilitating events in general outnumbered hindering experiences for this study sample (135 identified facilitating incidents vs. 102 reported hindering incidents). While the findings from this research are not meant to be generalizable, this reflection highlights the possibility for Chinese international students from China to recognize the positive qualities associated with their transition process, and to not have their transition solely engrossed by challenging events. Moreover, while incorporation of facilitating experiences raises awareness for differing positive aspects, the inclusion of
challenging events validates these hindrances and emphasizes the ever-present potential distress that Chinese international students from China may encounter while studying abroad. It is evident that even though this sample identified as “doing well,” they confronted a multitude of challenges, some of which remain unaddressed or unresolved (such as the inability to connect with “local people / Westerners”).

Another observation was the capacity for the participants to capitalize on institutional supports. 10 out of 12 students reported on utilizing resources that were available throughout their respective campuses, such as advisors, counsellors (both personal and career), and additional resource providers (e.g., pastors). This information appears to stress that while Chinese international students from China may appear less inclined to utilize specific services due to previous connotations or beliefs, such as mental health services (e.g., Moores & Arthur, 2004; Yan & Berliner, 2011), the ability to initiate and to seek out resources seems to remain present for post-secondary international students from China. While this sample supported the literature in that only two participants discussed utilizing the counselling services available on-campus, more than one individual nevertheless appeared to turn to trusting others, such as pastors, focus group members, or supervisors, in order to tackle their personal concerns. The participants sought help to address challenges such as the experience of loneliness or the experience of language difficulties. As a result, even though the overall majority of this sample may not have turned explicitly to an individual within a mental health setting, several participants resorted to developing relationships with individuals who not only provided support, but also offered interventions, resources and a sense of normalization that helped to address their challenges.

A specific observation with respect to the generated categories was the unique finding of
Supportive Strangers. Over half of the participants (58.3%) reported on experiences where they felt encouraged and/or safe as a result of their interactions with an unfamiliar individual. Thus, support for this sample not only included family, peers, or individuals within institutional settings, but it was also comprised of individuals within the general population who offered assistance. As the literature (e.g., Gu & Maley, 2008; Yan & Berliner, 2011) outlines and one participant described, receptivity and openness to the help of an unknown other contrasts with acceptable culture-of-origin practices because “alarm bells are always ringing”, and there is an implicit cognitive process of determining the intentions behind the individual offering support. It appears that for several sample members in this research, the transition process facilitated the capacity to trust unknown others within specific circumstances.

While the literature highlights that there is often a desire to nurture relationships with host-culture or local individuals (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Gu & Maley, 2008; Yan & Berliner, 2011), the sample members also expressed the need to remain connected to aspects and individuals within their culture-of-origin. The decision to study and to reside within a context where Chinese individuals are highly visible, as well as to have Chinese characters and celebrations respected and honoured, appears to have acted to further facilitate their transition capabilities within the host-culture for several students. Although these cultural reminders were attributed to helping and hindering experiences (e.g., nurturing a sense of connection to one’s culture of origin, while also encountering the feeling of loss and the reaffirmation of one’s separation from family members), the ability to readily connect with culture-of-origin attributes and people not only generated resonance for the participants, but it was also apparently helpful in establishing a sense of belongingness within the host-culture.

The desire to connect with “Westerners” / local people also still remained present for the
sample members. Their wish, however, was supplemented with possible suggestions to address this need. For instance, one participant described a “buddy” system that pairs international students with local students, while another participant discussed the need for a platform for various student groups to interact, as well as events to sustain relationships so that participating members have an opportunity for continual engagement with one another. In this instance, the sample members demonstrated their capacity to problem-solve and to derive possible solutions for the purported barriers/obstructions, particularly with respect to relationship building.

Aside from the statistical observation of facilitating events outnumbering hindering incidents, a final prominent reflection pertained to the relational quality behind many of the reported experiences, and subsequently generated categories, in this research. For instance, within the helping categories, it appeared that the described facilitating quality was cultivated through participant interactions with other individuals, whether they were strangers, institutional others (e.g., counsellors and lecturers), peers, or family members. Even events discussed within helping categories such as Freedom and Flexibility, Contribution, and Personal Factors often involved a dimension of interacting with others that promoted the psychological well-being of the participants. Similarly, within the hindering categories, it seemed that the root of distress was often centered on poor exchanges, such as being denigrated by others, or the loss of specific relationships, such as the unavailability of one’s parents. Finally, incidents within the wish-list categories also possessed a relational feature behind the expressed desires, such as greater fluency in order to promote communication and better connections with others within the host-culture. It seemed, therefore, that a relational theme was often infused in many of the discussed incidents. This general observation is supported by the work of Arthur and Popadiuk (2013), researchers who stress that aspects of the cross-cultural transition process (such as academic and
career success) are heavily influenced by the quality of the interactions with members within the host-culture, as well as members within one’s culture of origin. It becomes apparent, therefore, that what promoted either a positive or negative cross-cultural experience for the participants in this study was largely shaped by interactions and/or relationships with people.

5.4 Practical Implications

The findings generated from this study illustrate implications within the areas of therapeutic practice and program support for international students. For example, just as Positive Psychology encourages practitioners to highlight client strengths and successes in-session, practitioners working with international students may benefit from exploring the specific rewarding experiences encountered during one’s cross-cultural transition. Several participants described the value of this endeavour as it readily conveyed how far they had grown and developed since their initial days within the host-culture. This practice also helps international students who may remain preoccupied by distress; by highlighting successful moments, one is able to offer a contrasting perspective to that of being mired solely by challenges. Although there may be an inherent bias due to the population selected for this work, all of the participants in this study were able to conceptualize facilitating events and successes regarding their cross-cultural transition. This general finding appears supported by other studies focusing on the overall experience of international students (e.g., Gu & Maley, 2008; Yan & Berliner, 2011). Acknowledgment of these events, therefore, can serve as a launching point in therapeutic work with international students as counsellors are uniquely positioned to explore the significance behind these particular experiences, and in addition, may emphasize the rewarding aspects of crossing cultures.

Furthermore, the personal anecdotes and resources relayed by the participants can be
shared in work with other international students, particularly those whose culture of origin is from China. As one of the participants emphasized in the findings, hearing the shared struggles of her supervisor (who also originated from China) normalized her experiences, and more importantly, imparted the awareness for the possibility of navigating these distresses. It becomes apparent that the sharing of experiences can possibly ignite motivation towards success during the cross-cultural transition.

Counsellors also appear aptly suited towards being a conduit of information for the international student community. Many of the participants reported that they desired information regarding the different meanings between aspects from their culture of origin and the current host-culture, such as in-classroom behaviours, as well as navigating relationships with host nationals and other international students. Counsellors, therefore, can assist in at least two ways. The first is a collaborative approach with other resource providers - one can direct international students to existent programs that assist in the development of host-cultural competencies, such as the Excellence in Cultural Experiential Learning Leadership (EXCELL) program devised by Mak, Westwood, Barker and Ishiyama (1998). This program is currently implemented within certain post-secondary institutions, such as UBC and VCC, and it seeks to validate qualities from the sojourner’s culture-of-origin, while also building-up the resources and behaviours within a group context in order to promote academic and occupational success in the host-culture (Mak & Baker, 2004). The second, experiential/hands-on approach is for practitioners to nurture their personal knowledge and skillset by improving upon their multi-cultural competencies. This feat can be accomplished by becoming familiar with the socio-cultural disparity that can exist between varying cultures, such as participating in Socio-Cultural Competency Training (SCCT), the framework behind EXCELL. This training can contribute to practitioners becoming more
familiar with the international student community, and in addition, situate them to better assist this population because they can become another source of cultural knowledge regarding intercultural issues. In fact, they can serve as cultural brokers in order to demystify uncertainties and to enrich the competencies of international students.

Finally, practitioners and counsellors working within post-secondary settings are positioned to advocate the ideas that international students propose. In particular, resource providers can assist with enacting and implementing the notions that can possibly improve the transition process. As outlined in the findings, one of the participants expressed her desire of initiating a mentoring-type program that partners international students with senior and/or host-national students. This format appears to address several needs of the international student community; specifically, a sense of validating his/her culture of origin, a redefined role on-campus beyond the student status, as well as relationship building with host nationals. Practitioners, therefore, can explore these wishes and uncover ways to actually implement them within the post-secondary context. For example, at VCC, there was also an expressed desire amongst the international/immigrant populations to create a mentoring-type program. After a counsellor heard this desire, the PEERS program was created; this endeavour seeks to pair incoming international/immigrant students with other members within the VCC community who have resided within the Lower Mainland for several months or years. The PEERS facilitate the cross-cultural experience by bridging cultural gaps through the provision of personal insights and knowledge, and they have the added strength of being able to communicate in specific native languages that can accurately convey the information to incoming students (e.g., a particular Chinese dialect). It becomes evident that counsellors can further collaborate with the international student community, since these members possess a wealth of ideas that can improve
upon and support the large student population. It also emphasizes that instead of simply studying international students in order to gather and generate findings, engaging with them through inclusivity illustrates the likelihood of deriving personally significant solutions and best practices.

5.5 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The foundational framework behind ECIT, CIT, has been criticized in several areas, and as a result, several methodological limitations need to be addressed. First, CIT may focus on the activity and neglect emotional aspects (O’Driscoll & Cooper, 1996). This limitation, however, was mitigated through the use of active listening skills throughout all interviews, and in particular, where emotional responses were addressed and highlighted through the use of empathy. Another limitation of CIT relates to the presence of a single researcher. Although the work underwent critical scrutiny, some of the findings may be misinterpreted due to the fact that only one researcher primarily examined the data. As Callan (1998) argues, the interviewer “can filter, misrepresent or unconsciously misunderstand the respondent” (p. 96). Consequently, there may be concerns in relation to the validity and accuracy of the incidents, WL items, and categories that arose from the research question and methodology. Fortunately, this limitation was mitigated through the credibility checks established by the ECIT approach, including participant feedback, independent extraction, and an independent judge. Additionally, the inclusion of experts and their opinions helped to bolster the confidence in the findings that occurred from this work.

There were also some limitations with respect to the criteria established for this particular study. First was the sample size, which illustrates that the data was not representative of all Chinese international students from China. The data, however, was not meant to be
generalizable because ECIT is designed to be exploratory, rather than explanatory (Butterfield et al., 2009). Second was the requirement for the participants to speak only in English during the interviews. Although this requirement facilitated the researcher and expedited the research endeavour, it constrained the amount of information that was presented by the participants. As many participants reported throughout the interview process, they at times could not find the “correct words” to relay the information they wanted to convey. Additionally, while the use of active listening skills facilitated the communication process (e.g., participants would respond with the affirmative when a paraphrase was accurate), some details may still have been lost or missed because the words/phrases were filtered through the researcher’s vocabulary, as opposed to the participants themselves. A third limitation related to time and the interviews. As stated in the literature, there is a negative relationship that exists between length of residence and psychological distress (Wilton & Constantine, 2003). By confining the data collection within one primary interview and one feedback session, and not incorporating a second interview some time later, some other potential events that could relate to facilitating or hindering the transitional process may have been missed.

The study was also open to all individuals who self-identified that they were transitioning “successfully.” Since self-identification rests on personal opinion and is inherently subjective, there remains the possibility that sample members may have merely perceived themselves to be adapting and thriving. While the component of asking for personal definitions of “doing well” may have mitigated this limitation, the lack of an operational definition to actually define “success” of the participants leaves this particular issue subject to personal bias.

Finally, there is a primary ethical consideration related to the diversity of participants. While advertisement occurred across various post-secondary institutions, and the selection of
participants was not limited to a primary year or program of study, the delimitation of choosing only Chinese international students from China restricted the ability to understand the perspectives of other international students, and it did not present a diverse population.

5.6 Future Directions

Given the limited attention on identifying facilitating aspects of the transition of Chinese international students, or international students in general, as well as examining individuals who identify as “doing well” with respect to their transition, there is a need for expanded research. This particular research study solely addressed the facilitating, hindering, wish-list items and personal definitions of “doing well” for Chinese post-secondary students from China. It is clear, therefore, that additional areas are worth exploring.

In the area of expanded research, the utilization of the targeted transcription approach allowed for further participants to be included in the study in a cost-effective and time efficient manner. It seems reasonable, therefore, to incorporate this approach while conducting ECIT research in order to a) attain a larger number of participants, and b) lend further confidence in the findings, such as the categories generated. In this current research, the prominence of particular categories was made apparent through the relaying of additional experiences once the targeted approach was used. Extending its use, therefore, seems prudent as the voices of more international students, or additional populations of interest, can be recognized and acknowledged. This avenue may be one method that can assist in offsetting the inclination towards the use of quantitative methodologies to study international student populations.

Another domain relates to further examining the qualities and attributes that contributed to a sense of being successful or “doing well” for Chinese international students. It was evident from the findings that while individual variation existed between participants in terms of how
they believed they handled changes, there were similar perspectives or viewpoints expressed, such as openness to experiences, the capacity to reframe personal struggles as necessary and beneficial, as well as an expressed desire to persist through struggles or challenges. These perspectives were shared across undergraduate and graduate students, as well as students from varying disciplines. This additional inquiry can illuminate personal characteristics that influenced the ability to thrive, and additionally, the researched qualities can perhaps be incorporated and instilled into support programs or guide clinicians in their work with Chinese international students, or other international student populations.

In addition, it seems that from the literature review, little research has extensively explored the facilitating qualities and desires of Chinese international students; the predominant focus remains on identifying challenges. Thus, understanding that the transition process can encompass additional positive qualities as well as wishes further distances the perspective of international students, and in particular Chinese international students, as an entirely burdensome group that consumes resources and support staff within institutional settings.

Extending beyond simply Chinese international students within the host-culture of Canada, further research can perhaps identify similarities and variations in facilitating, hindering, and wish-list items between other host-cultures where Chinese international students decide to cross-borders for academic purposes. As outlined in the literature, there appears to be extensive research on Chinese and other Asian populations in the United States (e.g., Poyrazli et al., 2004; Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Yeh & Inose, 2003), as well in other locations including the United Kingdom (e.g., Gu & Maley, 2008) and Australia and New Zealand (e.g., Pan, Wong, Joubert, & Chan, 2007). Conducting an analysis of the results across continents can possibly corroborate findings or identify unique qualities for this large
international student population.

It is also worth exploring the shared and contrasting post-secondary transition experiences between Chinese international students, and Chinese students who decide to remain within their culture-of-origin. This endeavour can constitute findings that may support and converge, and as a result, make it relevant towards a larger population of interest: post-secondary students from China. It may also further promote cross-cultural collaboration at the research level, as opposed to having isolated research groups within specific host-cultures.

Finally, the sole focus on Chinese international students highlights the possibility for variation to exist between subgroups and different populations. For instance, it was clear in this research that several participants held onto culturally prescribed definitions of “participation” in-class resulting from their culture-of-origin, and a consequence was restricted engagement and interactions while attending lectures. Sharing the knowledge that there exists a different connotation behind “participation”, therefore, can greatly assist other Chinese international students. Other minority groups, however, may not submit to these same definitions, and consequently, they deserve attention from research in order to discern experiences, and subsequent meanings, that may be endemic to them. In this manner, there is the development of multi-cultural competencies and awareness, as well as the potential to further inform clinicians and practitioners about culturally-specific interventions.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

Although continually identified throughout the literature as an international student population with greater vulnerability towards psychological distress, this research appeared to demonstrate the strength and potential of Chinese international students to thrive within a new host-culture. These participants shared stories that offered insights into facilitating experiences
that included establishing and nurturing a new support network, forming an integrated identity within the host-culture through self-directed actions, personal development through host-cultural learning, as well as their ability to sustain a connection to their culture-of-origin while studying abroad. This group also illustrated that they possess the capacity to navigate through the post-secondary transition process, such as seeking and utilizing resources, and integrating new cultural awareness into their current framework. As one participant aptly described, the decision to cross-borders to pursue his academics in Canada was probably “better for me because I can think in different experience…in different experience with different perspectives.” It becomes evident that studying abroad can actually bring about joy instead of experiences mired by challenges and distress, especially for Chinese international students.

The participants in this study also illustrated that although they experience challenges that contribute to hardships, there may be significance behind these events. To reiterate a participant’s response from the findings, “I think it's a process...I still value my struggles you know.” The majority of the participants demonstrated the possibility for growth and learning to occur, and to persist in spite of their difficulties; it seemed that becoming preoccupied or hindered by unpleasant feelings was deemed as unacceptable in terms of their transition process. In addition, while the participants revealed their wishes, their additional personal insights and awareness provided possible avenues towards achieving these desires. They exposed, therefore, that they serve as a rich source of knowledge, and should be included in the process towards devising strategies and interventions in order to better assist other Chinese international students; after all, many participants expressed the longing to contribute and act as mediators between the two cultural worlds. In fact, one participant discussed the importance of utilizing her acquired experiences in order to better assist future students who endeavour to cross-borders for post-
secondary purposes. As argued by Popadiuk and Arthur (2004), increased awareness and insight from the international student community allows practitioners to nurture appropriate and relevant interventions in a collaborative manner.

Ultimately, if researchers and clinicians continue to strive to assist the international population, it seems prudent to alter the prevailing perspective of this large student group, and to understand an all-encompassing view of the experience. Instead of focusing solely on their distresses, there requires the recognition of their accomplishments and successes as well. More importantly, identifying patterns of success, and translating this knowledge only serves to better understand and assist specific international groups, as well as the general international student community.
References


Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Participant #: _______________________________________
Date: ________________________________________________
Interview Start Time: _________________________________
Interviewer’s Name: __________________________________

1. Contextual Information Section:

Introductory Remark: I am exploring the ways in which international post-secondary students from China have handled changes that affect their cross-cultural journey. This will be the first of two interviews, and in this preliminary interview, the purpose is to collect information about the changes you have experienced while in Canada, and additionally, the ways you are adapting well to them.

A) As a way to get us started, perhaps you could tell me about your decision to cross-cultures?
B) Please tell me also about your experience in Canada, and more specifically, UBC.
C) You volunteered to participate in this study because you identified yourself as experiencing cross-cultural changes and doing well with them. What does “doing well” mean to you?

2. Critical Incident Section:

A) What has helped you address the changes that have affected your cross-cultural transition? (Possible Probes: What was the incident/factor? How did it impact you?)

Example: Finding a friend

How has finding a friend helped you?
Can you provide a specific instance where finding a friend helped?
How did that help you do well in handling the changes affecting your cross-cultural transition?

The subsequent diagram illustrates the potential structure for exploring a facilitating event:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Event and Event Significance</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. What is the helpful event you wish to talk about?</td>
<td>a. Tell me what it was about [...] that you found helpful.</td>
<td>a. What was the consequence of the helpful event?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. What do you mean by *(the source)*?

b. What led up to the event?

B) What has not helped or made it difficult for you while you complete your studies within a foreign post-secondary context?

The subsequent diagram illustrates the potential structure for exploring a hindering event:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. What is the hindering event you wish to talk about?</td>
<td>a. Tell me what it was about [...] that you found unhelpful or difficult?</td>
<td>a. What was the consequence of the hindering event?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What do you mean by <em>(the source)</em>?</td>
<td>b. What led up to the event?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Following the discussion on both facilitating and hindering sources, a summary takes place prior to the transition into the section that addresses possible wish list items.

3. Wish List Section:

A) We have spoken about what has helped (identify them) and some things that have made it more challenging (identify them) for you during your attendance at a foreign post-secondary context. Perhaps you can also tell me about what else might be helpful to you that you have not had access to?

Alternative Question: Are there other things that would help you to continue doing well?

The subsequent diagram illustrates the structure for soliciting information on Wish List items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. What or who do you wish you had access to?</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. What does <em>(the wish list item)</em> mean to you?</td>
<td>a. How would it help?</td>
<td>a. In what circumstances might [...] be helpful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternative: Tell me about [...] that you find so helpful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Questions:

A) Have you always handled change well? Yes or No (circle one)

B) If not, when did this change for you?

C) What happened that caused you to begin handling change well?
4. Demographics Section:
   i. Number of months or years in the host country (Canada)
   ii. Chosen field of study (if applicable)
   iii. Age
   iv. Gender
   v. Country of Birth
   vi. Marital Status
   vii. Family status / parental status
   viii. Occupation / Job Status (if applicable)
   ix. Number of years in occupation (if applicable)
   x. Education Level

   Interview End Time: _____________________________
   Length of Interview: _____________________________
   Interviewer’s Name: _____________________________
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Study Title - A positive shift: Chinese post-secondary students who identify as thriving discuss their cross-cultural transition experiences in Canada

Principal Investigator: Dr. Norman E. Amundson, Professor
The University of British Columbia
Department of Education & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

Co-Investigator: Alexander Huang, M.A. Student
The University of British Columbia
Department of Education & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

This research is being conducted during the course of study for Alexander Huang (under the supervision of Dr. Norman Amundson). It is related to the completion of a Master’s of Art (M.A.) degree in Counselling Psychology at The University of British Columbia (UBC). The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis to be stored in the UBC library. It may be presented at conferences, and in addition, it may also be published in journal articles and books.

Purpose
You are being invited to take part in this research study because you have identified yourself as a Chinese international student from China who is adapting well to a cross-cultural transition. The purpose of this study is to help us learn more about how one is able to achieve a “successful cross-cultural transition experience” by understanding personal definitions of “success,” as well as exploring events that have been helpful, challenging, and if there are any additional resources that would have been helpful during your ongoing transition.

Procedures
If you respond “yes” to participating in this study, we will schedule a preliminary interview that ranges from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. During this first interview, we will ask about your cross-cultural transition experience. Moreover, we will explore how you have been able to cope successfully with the transition by asking you to discuss what has been helpful or facilitating during your transition, and to provide examples. We will also speak about what are some hindering events that have made the cross-cultural transition difficult and identify examples that contributed to these challenges. The interview will also explore “wish list” items that may be helpful and influence your cross-cultural transition. The final part of the interview will be the completion of a brief demographic questionnaire.

The preliminary interviews will be video and/or audio recorded to ensure the accuracy of the
information. The recordings will be transcribed and assigned a specific code name to ensure confidentiality. Upon completion of the final report of the study, the video and/or audio recorded files will be destroyed and/or erased.

A second, brief interview will be scheduled some time after the preliminary interview at a location and time that is convenient for you. This second interview will permit you to review, add, delete, or amend any of the information from the first interview to ensure that the information, and generated findings, accurately captures your experiences. If a face-to-face interview cannot be arranged, telephone, email, or Skype contact will be possible alternative methods to complete the second interview.

**Results and Reporting:**
The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis. It may also be presented at conferences and/or published in journal articles and books.

**Potential Risks of the Study**
There are no known risks in this study. Some of the questions we ask may appear sensitive or personal. Please let the researcher know if you have any concerns. You are not required to answer any question if you do not wish to.

**Potential Benefits of the Study**
There are no known benefits associated with this study, and it is not intended to be therapeutic. It may, however, be helpful as you will have an opportunity to discuss what has helped and hindered you during your cross-cultural transition. In the future, others may benefit from what we learn from this study.

**Confidentiality**
Anything that you speak about during the interviews will be kept in the strictest confidence unless you give written consent to share this information. Upon signing the informed consent form, your responses will be assigned a specific code to ensure the maintenance of your confidentiality and privacy. You will not be identified by your name or initials in any reports of the completed study. All research will be kept in a secure location within a locked filing cabinet in a locked room. All computer data files will be password protected and encrypted. All video and/or audio recordings will be erased and/or destroyed upon completion of the report of this study.

**Limits to Confidentiality**
Your identity and information will be kept confidential. The only exceptions are the following:

1) If you tell the researcher that you are going to harm yourself or someone else, the researcher is required by law to do anything that he/she can do to reasonably prevent this from happening;

2) The researcher is required by law to report suspected or potential child abuse/neglect to the Ministry of Children and Family Development or the police;

3) If a vulnerable adult is abused or neglected, a report may be filed with the appropriate
governmental agency;

4) A subpoena by a court of law requiring disclosure from the researcher or submission of researcher records.

**Payment**
For your participation in this study, we will provide you with a $15.00 gift-card.

**Contact for Information about the Study**
If there are any questions or concerns about what we are asking you, or you would like more information about this study, please contact either the co-investigator, Alexander Huang or the principle investigator Dr. Norman E. Amundson.

**Contact for Concerns about the Rights of Research Subjects**
If you have any concerns about your rights as a research subject and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance contact is needed, please email RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598. Additional resources include UBC Counselling services, located at Room 1040 Brock Hall, 1874 East Mall, and can be reached at 604-822-3811.

**Consent**
Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason and without any negative impact on your status as a student.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

____________________________________   ______________________
Participant Signature                  Date

____________________________________
Print Name of the Participant signing above

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.
## Appendix C

### Emergence of New Categories Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of CI/WL Extraction</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Date Categorized</th>
<th>Did New Categories Emerge?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>16 October 2014</td>
<td>All new categories emerged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>16 October 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>16 October 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>22 October 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>22 October 2014</td>
<td>6 new Helpful Category; 8 new Hindering Categories; 2 new Wish-List Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>22 October 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>27 October 2014</td>
<td>No new categories emerged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>27 October 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>2 November 2014</td>
<td>No new categories emerged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>2 November 2014</td>
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<td>30 October 2014</td>
<td>Participant 12</td>
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<td>1 November 2014</td>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>2 November 2014</td>
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