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EXPLORING THE REASONS FOR STUDENT ETHNIC GROUPINGS: THE
CASE OF CHINESE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

by

Jicheng Jiao

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Faculty of Education in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Education at the
University of Windsor

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to explore the reasons of the common phenomenon that Mainland Chinese international students on a Canadian university campus are always seen staying within their own culturally homogenous circles with very limited communication with other students from different cultural backgrounds. A qualitative research approach was employed to ascertain the reasons for this phenomenon.

Ten Chinese international students from Mainland China studying at the University of Windsor participated in this study. They were interviewed in Mandarin individually over a period of seven weeks, each interview being taped, translated and transcribed.

The findings derived from this study include language difficulties, cultural divergence, evaluation criteria, understanding of institutional administration and corresponding response, and the inertia of dependence on compatriot groups.

This study adds to existing literature on Chinese international students' sojourn experiences on Canadian university campuses. A portion of the findings of this study lends support to the findings of some previous research on the sojourn life of Chinese international students in Canada. A considerable portion of the findings, however, disputes the conclusions of some existing research on related issues. Some unexpected themes were also generalized through data analysis.

DEDICATION

To

my dearest daughter, Cheng Zuo, and beloved husband, Aiguo Zuo,
who provide unconditional love, support and trust

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to my daughter. It is the love for her that encourages me to reach out and have a look at another world. I see, I hear, I learn, and I am trying to tell her all what I am feeling of this land, where one day she will be exploring with the assistance of my understanding of my Canadian experiences.

I owe the completion of this thesis to my husband. It is his everlasting affection that backs me up and affords me enough courage to overcome those hardships that often depress me on the way to my goals. I fell, I hesitated, I hurt, but I never feared, because I know wherever I go I am never alone.

I express my thanks to Dr. Nombuso Dlamini, whose caring eyes and patient supervision always made me feel warm in the world of ice and snow. It is her support from the very beginning of my sojourn and faith in me led me through to the completion of this thesis. Her breadth of knowledge and strong professional ethics made my Canadian experience impressive and valuable.

I express my thanks to the ten participants of this study, for the generous help they offered with my study and their trust in me. It is my honor to be entrusted with their expectations, which I wish to deliver, through this thesis, to thousands and thousands of Chinese learners who are in and will be coming to Canada.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

In this study I investigated and identified the social interaction difficulties encountered by Mainland Chinese international students at a Canadian university. The research documented and described the sojourn experiences of ten Chinese international students from Mainland China selected from undergraduate, Master's and doctoral programs of the University of Windsor, Canada.

There is a considerable amount of literature that recognizes the fact that Chinese international students in Canada have been facing difficulties in adjusting to the new learning as well as living environment (Nie, 2005; Minichiello, 2001; Chow, 1997; Chen, 1996; Su, 1995; Grayson, 1994; Grayson, Chi, & Rhyne, 1994; Lee, 1994; Mickle, 1985; Coelho, 1981). While some existing literature does investigate the problems that Chinese international students on Canadian university campuses have serious difficulty social interactions (Nie, 2005; Minichiello, 2001; Chow, 1997; Su, 1995; Grayson, 1994; Mickle, 1985), literature focused on inquiring the concrete causes of this difficulty is limited. More limited is research on the reasons of Chinese international students' compatriot groups on Canadian university campuses. To examine these reasons, a qualitative research method was employed in this study. Ten Chinese international students from the University of Windsor were interviewed in an open atmosphere, in which the participants and the researcher had frank, intimate, and unreserved conversations about their sojourn experiences in Canada.

The objective of this study was to add to the existing literature on Chinese international students' sojourn life in Canada. The study was specifically aimed at

assisting Chinese international students to better understand their situation in social interactions with others and the causes leading to this situation - so that they can achieve a more satisfying learning outcome through Canadian sojourn experiences. The study was also aimed at presenting recommendations to Canadian university authorities.

Background

Beginning from the second half of the 1990s, international education has been developing into “an internationally traded commodity” (Altbach, as cited in Nie, 2005, p. 2). As one of the world’s major host countries for international education, Canada attracts a tremendous number of foreign students every year, with the annual foreign student flow of around 69,000 in 2002 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003). In the past few years the number of foreign students has risen even sharply, with more than 100,000 international students from over 203 countries having arrived in Canada, and there continues to be an increase in the number of international students coming to study in Canadian universities (CBIE, 2005).

Put differently, in the last few years, with international students being an attractive option for enormous profit, Canadian universities have been “attracting foreign students in record numbers”, (“Universities deny”, 2004). In the University of Manitoba, for example, in just one year (from 2003 to 2004), the international students enrolment jumped by more than 40% (“Universities deny”, 2004). Similarly, the University of Windsor is planning to welcome more international students to its campus, where, currently, there are more than 1,500 international students (Greetings

from the International Student Advisor, 2006) constituting 11% of the 13,664 students currently enrolled (News Releases, 2005). Most recently, the President of Windsor University stated, “The university is proud of its commitment to international students. In fact, we are in the process of doubling our numbers over the next few years” (Greetings from the President, 2006).

Since 1980, when the Chinese government started to pursue the Open Door Policy on a large scale, there has been an upsurge in the number of Chinese students studying abroad. Steward (1989) reports that in the late half of the 1980s Chinese students from Mainland China constitute the largest number of graduate students in Canada. According to China Education and Research Network (1998-2000), the number of Chinese students studying abroad in 1998 increased over 20 times higher than those in 1978. This increase is confirmed by a report by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2003) which stated that in the year 2002 Chinese international students in Canada accounted for 16.56% of the total of international students enrolled in school programs at various levels.

As “one of Ontario’s leading academic institutions” (News Releases, 2005), the University of Windsor is attracting more and more foreign students from all over the world. According to the university’s Web site information released on September 28, 2005, “Windsor’s reputation as one of Canada's premier destinations for outstanding international students is reaching across the continents.” It says,

“Corlett estimates the number of international students at Windsor this year to be 950, putting the university close to its goal of 1000 some two years ahead of schedule. Increasing numbers of international students are coming to Windsor from more than 80 countries, with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China leading the way.”

This goal seems to have been achieved within a short time. According to a latest statistic figure (April 6, 2006) derived from the University of Windsor's registration office about visa student enrollment, international students currently studying at the university has been as many as 1,546. Among these students Chinese international students from Mainland China totals 474, taking up 3.5% of the whole student population and having the biggest representation among the international students of the university.

With the student population of Canadian universities becoming culturally diverse, it becomes an urgent issue to explore whether foreign students at Canadian universities are experiencing the quality education and satisfying learning outcome they envisaged while in their countries of origin. Many of Canada's leading universities have initiated some research to address corresponding diversity issues and this created a strong background for the present study.

Multicultural education has been recognized as an organized effort to accommodate and manage cultural diversity as an integral component of school system (Fleras, 1992). Canada's national policy of multiculturalism "invites immigrants and sojourners of different backgrounds into a country where acceptance of and respect for each other's culture is fundamental to government policy and the preservation of one's cultural heritage is encouraged" (Su, 1995, p. 108). Many of Canada's universities have made positive response to the national call for multiculturalism, one concentrated area of which is cross-cultural understanding (Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, 1990, as cited in Nie, 2005). The University of Windsor, for example, indicates through the greetings of the President

that “It is our strong belief that the ability to work globally and to interact with people of diverse cultures and backgrounds is central to the mission and mandate of a university” (Greetings from the President, 2006).

Despite the efforts made by the Canadian government and universities to create a welcoming, harmonious and comfortable environment for international students, there still exist some phenomena that are in conflict with these efforts, one typical instance of which is the challenge of culturally homogenous grouping or self-segregation of ethnic or foreign students on campus.

With the understanding that multiculturalism has been creating a welcoming, culturally diverse environment on Canadian university campuses, I investigated whether Chinese students in Canadian universities do obtain the admired and envisioned multicultural education experience and outcomes.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons for Chinese students’ compatriot groupings at the University of Windsor, with the goal to seek effective ways to help Chinese international students in Canadian universities to cast away their habitual dependence on their culturally homogenous groups.

This qualitative research was focused on Chinese international students’ social interaction situations in their learning and, in particular, living experiences at a Canadian university setting. By seeking comprehensive depictions or descriptions of their experiences at the University of Windsor, I was to illuminate the primary research question of why the Chinese international students at the University of

Windsor prefer to stay within the culturally homogenous circles or groups, which results in limited social interactions and communication with students from other cultural backgrounds.

This study was aimed at identifying ways of helping Chinese international students get more opportunities for enjoying cultural diversity and get more opportunities for intercultural communication with students from other cultural backgrounds. A better knowledge of their present sojourn experiences on a Canadian university campus can facilitate understanding of their actual situations and corresponding coping methods they have adopted to handle difficulties they encountered in their sojourn.

This study was also aimed at providing recommendations to University of Windsor authority on constructing a more effective and attractive learning environment for all students. By looking at the Chinese international students' view on the learning and living environment on the campus, I hoped to offer new ground for action or dialogue in the potential bilateral efforts to facilitate the administration of the university into "greater heights".

In addition, from a long point of view, this study was attempted to provide guidelines for the practice of those professionals intending to assist the international students to achieve more productive and satisfying sojourn experiences in Canada. Therefore, this study was engaged to address the questions: 1) To what extent are Chinese international students at the University of Windsor socializing with their compatriot fellows and other students respectively? and 2) Why do the Chinese

international students at the University of Windsor socially fall into culturally homogenous groups?

Rationale of the Study

The decision to make an investigation into the perceived issue was primarily based on two factors: research interest and personal motivation.

First, through learning experiences in Canada I have realized that with more and more Chinese as well as other international students coming to study in Canada what these students are actually experiencing in this country has become a live research topic. That is, interest in related issues is found to be on the increase. On one hand, a lot of research has indicated that Canada's policies regarding international education have been beneficial to the whole Canadian society (CBIE, 2005; Chen, 1996; Mickle, 1985). On the other hand, however, a significant amount of literature in the past decades has shown that international students have been experiencing many difficulties in their sojourn lives in Canada (Nie, 2005; Minichiello, 2001; Chen, 1996; Mickle, 1985; Boonyawiroj, 1982; Hull, 1981, 1978; Neice & Brown, 1977; Alexander, Workneh, Klein & Miller, 1976). Much of this literature suggests that among the hardships confronting these students, difficulties in social interactions with other students stand out to be the focus of their adapting problems. Attempts to explore and then improve the learning and living environment for international students in Canada have positive and far-reaching impact on both international students' sojourn experiences and Canada's future development.

Second, this study was in the meantime an outgrowth of my own sojourn experiences at the University of Windsor, a typical Canadian educational institution that enjoys a good reputation in China. As a learner who admires a multicultural learning environment, I came to Canada and have studied at the University of Windsor for one and a half years. Through my experiences at the university I noticed a campus phenomenon that greatly surprised me and aroused my curiosity - students usually stay within their own culturally homogenous circles with very limited communication with students in other cultural circles. After heart to heart talks with some Chinese international students at the University of Windsor, who had the same impression and awareness of the student ethnic groupings on campus, I was deeply touched by their profound regret for lack of communication with other students and felt it meaningful to initiate an investigation into this phenomenon. Based on the awareness that heavy dependence on compatriot groups hindered Chinese international students' social interactions with other students and, more importantly, prevented these students from obtaining expected educational outcomes, I engaged in an investigation of the problem, hoping that through listening to the Chinese international students' experiences and views about campus life, I could seek vivid, and comprehensive portrayals of what they experienced and then find out the essential reasons for their preference to stay within the culturally homogeneous groups. I hope that the findings of this study will help Chinese students at the University of Windsor, current and prospective, to get more opportunities to understand, appreciate and share diverse cultures, and eventually obtain a more satisfying learning experience.

Importance of the Study

Although previous research has obtained some results on Chinese international student grouping, individuals, especially those within Chinese student circles on a Canadian university campus, may have different version of such phenomenon. By examining how Chinese students in a Canadian university socialize and what they feel about the learning and living environment on campus, this study initiates an inquiry into the factors that might explain the Chinese students' preference to stay within culturally homogenous circles. Although common sense often ascribes such grouping phenomena to natural or unconscious inclination for comfortableness, many individuals especially those within Chinese student circles may have different version of the reasons for such groupings. Comprehensive analysis of the Chinese students' social interaction situation at a Canadian university setting will help both the present and prospective Chinese international students better understand those problems that are and will be affecting their sojourn lives, and then assist them to effectively solve those problems.

From the data collected, the study provides recommendations for the authorities of the University of Windsor, which accommodates Chinese students that make up 3.5% of the student population, to construct a more efficient learning environment so that Chinese students, current and prospective, can obtain more opportunities to achieve expected and satisfying learning experiences. The study will be helpful to the authorities of this university, including the administrative, personnel, and teaching staff in understanding the Chinese international students' social

interaction situation and the barriers that prevent these students from integrating well in the campus community. As well this study will be useful to Chinese students and school authorities in other Canadian universities.

In addition, this study can be of benefit to Canada in the long run. With Chinese students becoming major clients of the international education market, research on problems related to their sojourn lives will be helpful in improving the educational quality of Canadian universities and this will be advantageous for Canada to attract more international students to its post-secondary institutions. From an even longer-term point of view, this study will be constructive in building Canada to be a better place for people who arrive with a strong belief in the country's policies on appreciation for cultural diversity.

Limitations of the Study

There are two limitations in the present study. First, Literature about the perceived problem is inadequate. Despite that some research has been done into the self-segregation of ethnic students in North American schools, literature about the compatriot grouping of Chinese international students on Canadian campuses was found limited. This to some extent limits the angle of the view from which the researcher approaches the perceived problem.

Second, the number of the participants is small. Due to the difficulties of covering a large number of Chinese international students at the University of Windsor, only ten voluntary participants were recruited as interviewees. Opinions of

a small number of participants may therefore be taken as representative of the whole Chinese population at the university.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of the present study, some words are used with certain implications that do not convey the commonly known meanings. They are used as terms to express narrower understandings which should be comprehended by prospective readers as explicit in referring to corresponding subjects in special circumstances.

Chinese international student in this study refers to an individual with Chinese cultural and racial origin coming from Chinese Mainland studying at the University of Windsor as international student. In this study this phrase does not include students of Chinese cultural and racial origin who are from parts of the world other than Mainland China.

Foreign students in this study refers to students of any other cultural or racial origins than Chinese studying at the University of Windsor. It is a phrase that is used interchangeably with “other students”.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present scholarly literature related to the issues investigated in this study. The review of literature is categorized under six subheadings: literature regarding the concept and practice of multicultural education; international students' general experiences in social interactions; Chinese international students' experiences in social interactions; Chinese students' compatriot grouping; factors relevant to Chinese students' isolation; and impact of social interactions on sojourn life. Of these six subheadings, emphasis is on the factors relevant to Chinese students' isolation. This chapter will end in a chapter summary.

The Concept and Practice of Multicultural Education

This study emphasizes the concept of multicultural education, whose objectives include promoting intergroup harmony, fostering genuine equality for ethnic minorities, and improving intercultural sharing, understanding, and communication (Fleras, 1992). Although a blanket term that encompasses a wide variety of approaches to advocate ethnic diversity within the school system, multicultural education focuses on the construction of a learning environment where administrative policies, academic programs, and classroom practices reflect and are associated with awareness of cultural diversity, cultural preservation, intercultural sensitivity, and cross-cultural communication (Powell & Caseau, 2004; Korn & Bursztyn, 2002; Leistyna, 2002; Schoem, Frankel, Zuniga & Lewis, 1995; Fleras, 1992). Other researchers (Dickson, 2000; Pope-Davis, Liu, Nevitt, & Toporek, 2000)

emphasize that a multicultural learning environment is expected to be an ambience where both the faculty and staff are equipped with multicultural competence and are able to work effectively with students from different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Multicultural education in this study does not refer to an older version that confines its objectives as “to promote intergroup, and especially interracial, understanding and to reduce or eliminate stereotypes”, but to a new one that more comprehensively “addresses cultural diversity and equality in schools” (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002, pp. 29-30). Gollnick and Chinn’s (2002) understanding of the concept are based on the assumptions that included 1) cultural differences have strength and value; 2) social justice and equality for all people should be of paramount importance in the design and delivery of curricula, and 3) educators can create an environment that is supportive of multiculturalism (p. 30). The characteristics of a school that is multicultural, according to Gollnick and Chinn, would at least include the following aspects: the composition of the faculty, administration, and other staff would accurately reflect the pluralistic composition of the population; the school curriculum would incorporate the contributions of many cultural groups and integrate multiple perspectives throughout; cultural differences would be treated as differences, rather than as deficiencies that must be addressed in compensatory programs; students would be able to use their own cultural resources and voices to develop new skills and to critically explore subject matter; the faculty, administrators, and other staff would see themselves as learners enhanced and changed by understanding, affirming,

and reflecting cultural diversity. Educators in multicultural schools should be concerned with helping all students achieve academically, socially, and politically.

Based on the literature on multicultural education in both Canada and the United States, it is safe for me to argue that a multicultural educational environment should accordingly be a place where students from diverse backgrounds can easily get access to opportunities for experiencing, understanding, and sharing different cultures, and consequently benefit from cultural diversity.

Although multicultural education as an instrument for advocating diversity in schools has been widely endorsed in Canada, programs oriented by multicultural education have been constricted to relatively peripheral aspects of school programs (Fleras, 1992). As Su (1995) states, Canada's policy of multiculturalism invites immigrants and sojourners of deferent cultural backgrounds into a country where acceptance of and respect for each other's culture is fundamental to government policy and the preservation of one's cultural heritage is encouraged, however, there is also the recognition that newcomers have been marginalized because of their cultural differences. Grayson conducted a study (1994) among more than 1,000 first year students at York University to determine how students of different races were satisfied with the outcome of their first year experience. Grayson concluded that "It is fair to say that when considering the situation of non-white students in Ontario's universities the common assumption is that, as in the United States, such students are at a disadvantage" (1994, p. 8). Chen (1996), after a study into the adjusting process of Chinese secondary school students in Saskatchewan, concludes that Canadian classrooms, which are usually composed of students from a great variety of cultural

backgrounds, call for implementing the principles of multicultural education such as fostering pride in minority cultures, helping students from minority groups to gain insights into their own as well as other cultures and combating prejudice and racism. Although Chen's conclusion is based on a study of Chinese secondary school students in Canada, it is reasonable to understand that similar implementation should be made at the college/university level because in many aspects the diversity of student population is similar.

More recent research has indicated that a discrepancy exists between the designed goals and concrete practices of multicultural education (Powell & Caseau, 2004; Korn & Bursztyn, 2002; Leistyna, 2002). In response to today's heterogeneous student population, a number of Canadian educational institutions did make efforts to offer more comprehensive and innovative programs to integrate ethnic students into the Canadian school system, and to provide a more inclusive and multicultural environment (Grayson, Chi & Rhyne, 1994; Lee, 1994). For example, the Vancouver (School) Board took active measures to create a better environment for international students including providing increased staffing in its school with a ratio of 1:15 for them, and some schools in Toronto arranged professional development days especially devoted to understanding students from Hong Kong and discussing their problems (Lee, 1994, p. 9, & p. 32). However, despite that much effort has been made by Canadian schools to facilitate multicultural education, there still exist in many Canadian universities some phenomena that conflicts with the multicultural concept, one typical example of which is the self-segregation or culturally homogenous grouping of ethnic or foreign students.

International Students' General Experiences in Social Interactions

As mentioned before, Canada has become one of the major host countries for international education in recent years. A considerable amount of literature has shown that Canada's policies in international education have been beneficial to the whole Canadian society (Chen, 1996; Mickle, 1985). As recognized by Mickle (1985), international students

“...form an important group of consumers in Canada. They also contribute in less tangible ways, by adding to the knowledge of students and professors as well as to society as a whole. In addition, they act as a bridge from Canada to their home countries.” (pp. 1-2)

In contrast with the profit Canada has gained from international education, however, a lot of research indicates the many difficulties international students confront in adapting to new lives in Canada, especially in social interactions with local people and people from different countries, and of these students' dissatisfaction with their sojourn experiences. That is, many researchers have indicated that when adapting themselves to Canadian environment international students endure hardships in their social associations with host people or people from other countries (Nie, 2005; Heikinheimo, 1984; Perry, 1983; Boonyawiroj, 1982; Neice & Brown, 1977).

Boonyawiroj (1982) carried out a case study of nine international graduate students at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (O.I.S.E.) and found that these students had difficulties in making friends. Perry' (1983) survey at the University of Toronto on student experiences confirmed Boonyawiroj's findings. Perry reported that 56% of visa students had difficulties in social interactions with others and felt alienated.

Heikinheimo (1984) conducted a study of the adaptation of Southeast Asian and African students at the University of Guelph. According to the amount of interactions they had with Canadians and their attitudes towards their social adjustment in Canada, Heikinheimo categorized Asian students into four groups - isolated, isolated and dissatisfied, somewhat integrated, and merged. It was found that even the relationships between the students who could be counted as mixed well with Canadians were not free from tension. When feeling lonely they would not prefer to stay with Canadians because they thought they could not be understood.

In the 1990s social interaction situation for international students in Canada did not change. In some research (Chen, 1996, as cited in Nie, 2005) international students are described as “lonely islands” (p. 149) in terms of their social interactions with others, especially local people.

Some earlier research conducted in Canadian educational institutions provided similar findings in terms of international students’ difficult situations in social interactions. For example, a survey on international students studying in Canada conducted by Neice and Brown (1977) for the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) showed that 22% of the participants reported no friendship at all with Canadians.

Some American researchers have also identified the difficulties experienced by international students in their sojourn lives. Alexander, Klein, Workneh, and Miller (1976) have found that isolation is a fact of life for international students and that warm, intimate cross-cultural contacts are the exception rather than the rule for international students on a large American campus. Some other American researchers

make similar indication that the major portion of international students lack social contacts with Americans and are not satisfied with the quality and amount of interactions with local people (Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Lee, Abd-ella, Burks, 1981). These researchers found that international students almost exclusively socialized with students from their countries of origin.

Chinese International Students' Experiences in Social Interactions

In as early as the 1970s, a survey (Neice & Brown, 1977) conducted for the CBIE found that Chinese students - most of whom came from Hong Kong at that time - appeared to experience the most problems in adjusting to Canadian universities; 54.6% Hong Kong students expressed dissatisfaction with their sojourn experiences. The findings of this survey were confirmed in the 1980s by Perry (1983), who carried out a study at the University of Toronto and found that 56% foreign students, many of whom were Chinese visa students from Hong Kong, felt alienated in terms of social association.

In her research on the adaptation of Hong Kong students to Canada, Mickle (1985) also found that a high number of the research participants reported experiencing difficulties in their sojourn lives. The participants of her study expressed that their Canadian experience was stressful; they experienced a higher incidence of loneliness and depression than other students, and had difficulties in making friends with Canadians. Half of the participants "felt isolated even among friends" (p. 19).

Greater concern about Chinese international students' loneliness and isolation appeared as early as in 1988, when a report from CBIE (as cited in Lee, 1994)

reported that over 80% of Chinese visa students experienced severe loneliness during their stay in Canada. Janet A. Rubinoff, in the introduction to Lee (1994), ascribes the loneliness to the following factors: 1) sense of isolation in a new society; 2) pressure from parents who place high expectations, which enhances their loneliness; 3) language deficiency; 4) cultural values constraining them from seeking help from authorities; and, 5) problem of racism or discrimination (p. 10).

Research conducted in the 1990s had similar conclusions. Grayson (1994) made an investigation into the experiences of first year students at York University to examine the extent the Canadian institution met the needs of a heterogeneous population. Similarly, he concluded that “students of Chinese origin encountered the greatest difficulties in making friends” (p. 5).

In the same vein, a lot of American studies also indicate the difficulties Chinese students have encountered during their student lives in North America. Some researchers (Alexander, Workneh, Klein & Miller, 1976; Yek, Chu, Klein, Alexander & Miller, 1979, as cited in Mickle, 1985) found that isolation is an everyday situation for these students. They have social interactions almost only with co-nationals.

Chinese Students’ Compatriot Grouping

Of international or immigrant students in Canada, Chinese students seem to be most frequently found to tend to form their own co-national peer groups and do not mix well with other students (Minichiello, 2001; Chow 1997; Mickle, 1985).

Literature that is specifically concerned with Chinese students’ co-national groups in Canadian schools is limited and mainly discusses Chinese students at the secondary school level. Minichiello (2001) carried out a study at a large secondary

school in the Vancouver School District to investigate the adjustment issues of Chinese-speaking visa students. One of the findings of her study is that for most of the participants friendships were only with co-nationals or Chinese speakers. Although some of the participants did realize the importance of forming Canadian friendship and would like to have interactions with students out of their co-national groups, many difficulties diminished their desire to do so. One of the participants said, "...at first I really wanted to make friends with other ethnic groups but it's kind of hard, so it's easy to shift to Chinese people" (p. 84)

In his study investigating the adaptation experiences of Hong Kong immigrant students in Metro Toronto, particularly those at the high school level, Chow (1997) finds that Chinese students adapted better academically than their Caribbean counterparts, while the latter were found to be adapting better culturally, socially, and linguistically. Chinese students, according to Chow, seemed to socialize primarily with Chinese-speaking friends from Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan, and having close friendships with Canadians appeared to be difficult.

Literature concerning college or university Chinese students' grouping in Canadian schools seems to be similarly insufficient. In her study of the social interaction patterns of nine graduate students at the University of Toronto, Su (1995) finds that four of the participants, who had no or limited contact with Canadians, associated only within Chinese student social network. Although she mentions in her literature review that most researchers have recognized foreign students' interaction within the co-nationals as a supportive resource for students in their adaptation since it provides a primary group relations in which psychological security, self-esteem and

a sense of belonging are obtained and anxiety, feelings of powerless and social stress are reduced (p. 9), however, at the same time she says many researchers have different opinions about this recognition. More regretfully, Su did not make further examination into the concrete reasons why the isolated students in her study only socialized within Chinese co-nationals.

Mickle and Chan (1986) investigate the cross cultural adaptation of Hong Kong Chinese students at Canadian universities. They report that Chinese students are often found standing off from other students. They write firmly that due to stress from high family expectations, language differences, cultural inhibitions with respect to self-expression and respect for teachers, and the feeling of discrimination, Chinese students often find it less stressful to remain within their own group because it provides the security and support needed in a new environment. Unfortunately, however, they do not explain the reasons why these students feel insecure and lack support, and finally choose to turn to their own group to release stress and depression.

Now that I have established the literature of Chinese students' compatriot grouping, in the following section I will present the factors that I have identified from the literature that are relevant to their isolation.

Factors Relevant to Chinese Students' Isolation

Since Chinese students are a component of the international student population in North America, this section will begin with a short review of literature addressing the factors relevant to international students' social isolation in general.

Discussing international students' groupings inevitably involves the problem of adjustment. In the literature exploring ethnic minorities' adjusting course to the new environment there seems to be a strong inclination for the vital role culture plays. Through the search of related literature for this study, it was found that many researchers refer to culture as the most critical factor affecting international students' adaptation to a new environment. Oberg (1954) coined the term "culture shock" implying that a person in a new cultural environment experiences confusion and disorientation due to having lost all familiar signposts and landmarks of social interaction and, most importantly, the linguistic ability through which people are able to orient themselves within the social-cultural fabric. He likened an individual entering a strange culture to "a fish out of water" (p. 2). Coelho (1981) re-examined the "culture shock" phenomenon among international students and expressed a similar opinion that a sudden immersion in the host culture may be too much to expect for an incoming foreign student. Diaz-Rico and Weed (2001) reinforce this claim by indicating that an ethnic person's reaction/adaptation to a new culture falls into three stages - "euphoria, cultural shock, and adaptation" (p. 208). They warn that some students may show cultural shock as withdrawal, depression, or anger. The concept in these research studies, however, does not seem to be consistent with the finding of the study conducted by Chen (1996), who discovered that the participants in her study did not experience feeling of amazement when they arrived in a new cultural environment.

The earliest literature found about the influence of cultural backgrounds on international students' adaptation to a new cultural environment is Beck's (1963)

study on international students in the United States. Beck uses the phrase “culture distance” hypothesizing that social interaction will be more difficult for students from home cultures that are very different from the host culture and easier for those students from cultures that are similar to the host culture. This hypothesis is supported by a large number of researchers in the succeeding decades (Ward & Searle, 1991; Mickle, 1985; Dunnett, 1981; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Hull, 1978; Bae, 1972), who indicate opinions in a similar vein. For example, Ward and Searle (1991) conducted a study on the impact of value discrepancies and cultural identity on the adjustment of sojourners. They concluded that those students who were with a stronger cultural identity were less willing to adapt to the local customs and traditions, and would accordingly encounter more difficulties in their social interactions with local people than those with less reluctance.

The notion of culture distance well explains the recognized phenomenon that Chinese students at Northern American schools are often found to have the most difficulties in social interactions with others (Minichiello, 2001; Chow, 1997; Grayson, 1994; Mickle, 1985; Perry, 1983; Yek, Chu, Klein, Alexander and Miller, 1979, as cited in Mickle, 1985; Neice & Brown, 1977).

Some previous literature has focused on a certain specific aspect of culture like people’s preference or interest in leisure activities. Several researchers (Jackson & Burton, 1989; Kelly, 1989, as cited in Hsu, 1998) make assumptions on ethnicity and leisure activities that an individual’s cultural values will influence his/her choice of leisure activities the individual takes. They suggest that leisure is thoroughly ethnic, in and of particular cultures, and people’s motivations and decisions for activities for

leisure are different from one ethnic group to another. This point seemed to be variant from one of the findings of Hsu's (1998) study, who found that the motivations between Chinese and Americans for choosing outdoor non-natural and active recreation activities do not appear different.

Since existing literature that specially attempts to explore the reasons for the phenomenon of Chinese student compatriot grouping on Canadian campuses is found insufficient, the search for literature related to the perceived issue of this study was focused on factors relevant to Chinese students' isolated social situation. As for the factors relevant to Chinese international students' isolation, previous researchers have shown various opinions. Their opinions are generally inclined to ascribe these students' isolation to the following major factors: cultural differences, language proficiency, pre-learning experiences, parents/family expectations, number of Chinese students in a certain setting, and racism or discrimination.

Cultural Differences

Su (1995) initiated a study focused exclusively on Chinese graduate students' social interactions with Canadians at the University of Toronto. In the part of literature review she summarized that background and other situational variables affect social interaction. She indicated that language proficiency, nationality, age, previous cross-cultural experience, motives of living in a new culture and future living arrangement were the variables that were most widely studied in the literature, but "with sometimes contradictory results" (p. 11). In her own study, Su examined the strategies Chinese students employed in developing and maintaining relationships and how they created, responded to and resisted the opportunities to interact with

Canadians. She found that nearly half of the participants had limited or no social contact with the Canadians and lived in a socially isolated state. Su stated that cultural differences “have been found to have a negative effect on Chinese students in their social activities and social relationships with Canadians ... (and) were at the heart of all the barriers to Chinese students’ social interactions with Canadians” (pp. 103-104). Sue’s study shows a life picture of how hard these students struggle to better socialize with people in the new environment, unfortunately, however, it still cannot appropriately explain the questions of this study because: 1) the participants of her study were exclusively graduate students who were comparatively older and newly-arrived Canadian immigrants; and 2) her study was conducted in more than a decade ago, when general conditions of Mainland Chinese students were quite different from those of today.

In a very recent study conducted with eight Chinese females who suffer serious depression in Canada, Guo (2003) found that cultural factors, especially traditional Chinese ethic codes, contributed greatly to these Chinese women’s psychological morbidity. The Chinese women studied significantly suffered from depression as they felt that what they were trained to value and focus on in their lives was ignored by those around them. Guo’s study strongly supports the notion that culture affects an individual’s adjustment in a new environment.

Language Proficiency

Many researchers have referred to language proficiency as a major factor relevant to Chinese students’ adaptation difficulties in a new environment. Kim (1988) suggests that effective communication with the host environment is the vital part of

successful adaptation. To adapt to a new environment, according to Kim, a stranger has to develop three host cultural competences, among which host communication competence - the ability to speak the host language well, takes the first position. This pattern is supported by many other researchers (Minichiello, 2000; Chow, 1997; Chen, 1996; Grayson, 1994; Lee, 1994) who have found language an important factor affecting Chinese students' socialization.

Chen (1996) conducted a study among Chinese middle school students in Regina to examine their adjustment to Canadian education. Chen indicated that all Chinese students entering the Canadian classroom were placed in an all-English school environment where their problems in understanding and expressing themselves in English not only resulted in difficulties getting decent marks (in English) but also in disorientation in their social lives because of their inability to function effectively in the sphere of language and culture (p. 17). Chen cited an example of a participating girl who said that because of her poor English she was once so depressed and felt so much stress and loneliness that she was ready to give up her study in Canada. Chen seemed to be considering inadequate language skills as a major adjustment problem encountered by Chinese Students. Chen's indication confirms the opinion of Lee (1994), who assumes that "It appears that one of the greatest problems faced by Hong Kong (Chinese) visa students is their competence in the English language" (p. 34).

Chow's (1997) study in the adaptation experiences of Chinese and Caribbean immigrant middle school students supports Chen's (1996) and Lee's (1994) points. Chow found that Chinese students adapted better academically but worse culturally,

socially and linguistically than their Caribbean counterparts. In terms of social life, he summarizes, the major problems encountered by the Chinese students appeared to be the lack of close friends and the boredom of life; these students' close contacts with friends from their places of origin were found to be related to their inadequate command of English and making friends with Canadian students. He indicates that for the Chinese students "Language barrier has been regarded a critical factor (p. 167)", and "The fact that Chinese students tended to be less active in community or extra-curricular activities can be explained by their inadequate command of English and the "mismatch" between their interests and those of Canadians (p. 168)". Chow's study seems to be ascribing Chinese students' willingness to socialize within their co-nationals primarily to language deficiency. He also mentions that racial discrimination was a problem encountered by these students.

Although these studies have linked language proficiency to Chinese students' social interaction situation and help understand Chinese students' not mixing well with other students, it may not well explain the current social situation of today's Chinese international students in Canada, who have English learning experiences much different from those of students years ago.

Pre-learning Experiences

Some researchers view different learning experiences as a factor affecting Chinese students' adaptation to a new learning environment. Research shows that Chinese students have distinct learning characteristics which are quite different from those of Western learners (Lee, 2004; Salili, 2001; Chan, 1999; Jin & Cortazzi, 1993; Flowerdew & Miller, 1992; Ballards & Clanchy, 1991; Yee, 1989; Liu, 1986). Their

characteristics manifested in aspects like learning approaches, classroom behaviours, values in education, and understanding of the teacher's and student's roles are often variant with Western academic culture and conventions (Kirby, Woodhouse, & Ma, 1999). Some research has more specifically observed that Chinese students are reluctant to present opinions or ask questions (Yildiz & Bichelmeyer, 2003; Chan, 1999; Biggs, 1996; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995). Yildiz and Bichelmeyer's (2003) study, for example, indicates that Chinese students studying in Western schools may feel uncomfortable with the shift from teacher-centred to student-centred learning. Based on this literature, it seems to be reasonable to assume that Chinese students exposed to a Western educational system can be confronted with many difficulties in integrating themselves into the new learning environment.

Some literature also suggests that students from Confucian-heritage culture countries are apparently identified with different learning characteristics that are incompatible with those of Western students. Bourke, Crooks and Ramsden (as cited in Walkins and Biggs, 1996) associate these characteristics with low cognitive level learning strategies and poor learning outcomes. Many other observers like Murphy, Bradley and Bradley, and Samuelowicz (as cited in Walkins and Biggs, 1996) frequently complain that Confucian-heritage culture students are prone to use rote-based, low-level cognitive strategies both in their own culture and overseas. This literature is liable to generate an impression of these students as clumsy or dull-witted, which enforces the common surmise that pre-educational experience in rote learning environment at home leads to Chinese students' difficulty in integrating themselves into the student community in a Western-styled leaning setting.

The validity of these studies, however, is strongly queried by other researchers (Biggs, 1996; Chow, 1997; Ogbu; Stevenson & Stigler; as cited in Chen, 1996) who suggest that Chinese students cope very well with versions of Western style education and often outperform their Western counterparts academically. Biggs (1996) clearly indicates that sophisticated in the strategies they use, Chinese students tend to be extremely able at adapting their learning strategies to cope with the problems of studying and varying assessment and teaching methods both in a Confucian-heritage educational environment and overseas. Therefore, this latter set of literature seems to suggest that students with former learning experiences in traditional Chinese schools have the abilities to integrate themselves well into a new, Western-styled learning environment.

Parents/Family Expectations

Some other researchers have put more emphasis on parents/family expectations as a barrier in Chinese students' successful integration into a new environment (Chen, 1996; Mansfield, 1995; Xue, 1995; Bolton, 1993; Sun, 1993; Wang, 1990). Parents/family expectations are perceived as obstacles mainly from two ways. First, Chinese parents are usually thought to put very high expectations on their children's academic studies, and these expectations often cause their children's pressure, which eventually decreases the possibility for them to conduct social interactions with peers. Second, Chinese parents are usually thought to make strict demands on their children for maintaining Chinese traditions like values in family, conserved moral standards, respects for superiors, and so on. This makes Chinese students experience more conflicts when coping with new educational and cultural

environments while trying to keep up Chinese culture, which ultimately affects these students' integration in Canadian school community.

Chen (1996), for example, mentions that teachers often see Chinese students in the library or computer room and they are less involved than their peers in extra-curricular activities or other after-school programs. Chen implies that core Chinese family values in education, parents' high expectations on their children, and Chinese students' loyalty and strong commitment to do well at school so as to achieve and excel may to some extent be able to shed light on their comparatively solitary behavior. Sun (1993) also indicates that traditions and habits such as those reflected in parents' educational expectations for their children and their input in their children's education are highly relevant factors bearing on the rate of Chinese students' integration into Canadian environment.

Racism or Discrimination

In addition to the factors mentioned above, racial discrimination is frequently cited as another factor obstructing international or immigrant students' successful integration into Canadian society. In their study of school system communication with second language parents in three Alberta urban senior high schools, Gougeon and Hutton (1992) found that second language students feel alienated from Canadian born peers and suggest that racism and discrimination contribute to student loneliness, loss, and isolation. Su (1995) found that some Chinese students were inhibited by perceived discrimination from Canadians in their social interactions, and the discrimination partially distributed to these students' avoidance of association with Canadians. In her study of Hong Kong Chinese students at the University of Toronto

and York University, Mickle (1985) found that 55% of her respondents reported experiencing discrimination in Canada and she cited discrimination as an important factor related to these students' adaptation problems. Some other researchers also refer to racial discrimination as a problem facing Chinese students in their adaptation process (Chow, 1997; Perry, 1983).

Multiple Factors

More comprehensive research in Asian students in Canadian school environments indicates that there are multiple factors that hinder these students' adaptation. In a study conducted in the 1990s by Shaw, Michalles, Chen, Minami, Sing, Gougeon, Hutton, and Xue (as cited in Minichiello, 2001), language, education environment, family expectations, peer relations, racism, discrimination are reported as concerns contributing to these students' isolation. Their points are confirmed by Khoo, Abu-Rasain and Hornby (1994), who additionally identify mental-health problems as another concern. Minichiello (2001) conducted a study concentrated on Chinese students' adaptation to Canadian secondary schools and concluded that language, peer relationships, cross cultural concerns, education and the school environment, and mental-health concerns emerge as the main concerns for these students in their adaptation. These studies provide a good platform to view from a wider angle Chinese students' sojourn experiences in Canadian educational institutions, however they may also be limited in explaining Chinese student grouping on Canadian university campuses, because they are primarily concerned with the adaptation problems confronted by Chinese students in Canadian secondary schools.

It is worth mentioning that of the literature found for this study, research on the adjustment experiences of Chinese students attending post-secondary Canadian institutions seems surprisingly sparse in view of its complexity and importance. Research focused on Chinese international students' social interactions or isolated situations has been found even sparse. Although a few of the studies mentioned above are concentrated on Chinese students' experiences in higher education institutions, the experiences they have studied are those of the Chinese students studying at Canadian universities at least a decade ago, which are quite likely to be different from what the newly-arrived students are experiencing. Due to the recent changes happening in their home country, where these students have completed twelve years regular education, many different variables related to economical, political, or educational factors are involved in these students' experiences. Therefore, it seems to be unsuitable to use the findings of these studies to explain what is happening to the Chinese international students currently studying at Canadian universities.

It is also worth mentioning that during the searching process for related literature, some research that addresses the grouping of other ethnic students was found. For example, *Dialogues for Diversity* (1994) interprets that ethnic student grouping can be the result of a reality that ethnic differences are not respected and valued. Tatum (1999) supports this interpretation by arguing that grouping is a choice ethnic adolescents make to protect themselves collectively against bias and hostility when they begin to more clearly realize that their identity is labeled as ethnic or inferior. This literature offers a useful framework for understanding what is happening with student groups identified by black identity, but may not be able to

fully explain the grouping of students with Chinese cultural background, for in many aspects there exist differences between students with Black and Chinese heritage.

The literature displayed above demonstrates international or ethnic students', especially Chinese international students', social interaction situation in a culturally different environment. The following section will present the findings of some existing research addressing the impact of social interactions on international students' sojourn lives. These research findings provide good argument for the necessity and importance of the present study.

Impact of Social Interactions on Sojourn Life

Regarding the critical influence of international students' social interactions on these students, many researchers have common recognition that social interaction experiences at the university have important influence on an international student's attitude towards his/her educational outcomes and the host country and its people, on his/her growth and development during the university years, and on some personal choices in future life as well.

Chang (1973, as cited in Mickle, 1985) acknowledges that the attitudes Chinese students towards the United States are positively linked with the degree of their contact with Americans. Hull (1978) assumes similarly that international students who feel more comfortable with their interactions with local Americans and with some involvement with Americans during their sojourn not only report broader and more frequent contact with Americans, but they are also more likely to express more general satisfaction with their sojourn and about Americans generally. He says,

“It is not a matter of hospitality. It is a part of education with the potential to permeate widely throughout the experience and attitudes expressed by the sojourner.” (p. 188)

Hull develops this assumption and proposes in his more recent study (1981) a “modified cultural contact hypothesis”, in which he argues that

“...those foreign students satisfied and comfortable with their interactions with local people and the local culture during their sojourn will report not only broader and more frequent contact in general, as could be expected, but will also indicate more general satisfaction with their total sojourn experience, academically and non-academically.” (p. 19)

Astin (1993), based on his observations of tens of thousands of students from hundreds of different institutions, concludes that “the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (p. 398) and “next to the peer group, the faculty represents the most significant aspect of the student’s undergraduate development” (p. 41).

Su (1995) emphasizes the effect of social interactions on the sojourn lives of students from other cultures. She suggests that “Social interaction fosters students’ social, cultural and academic adjustment and is positively related to students’ satisfaction with their sojourn experience” (p. 20). She assumes, “students who were isolated from Canadians or had limited interactions with Canadians seemed to experience more adjustment problems and to be less satisfied with their life, especially their social life in Canada than students who had Canadian friends and relatively permanent relationships with Canadians.” (p. 105)

Grayson (1994) indicates that among university environmental variables that are considered to have an important impact on various outcomes, social involvement, together with academic involvement, has been found to be the most important. He

puts extraordinary stress on students' first year experience by confirming that the first few weeks of the first year of university life are a crucial period in the transition from high school to university. He agrees that if strong links are not forged with (or within) the institution during this period, it is unlikely that they will develop later; as a result, the likelihood of some undesired outcomes, such as low levels of achievement, is increased.

Researchers have also pointed out that constrained social experiences have negative affect on students' life in both short and long run. Zuniga and Nagda (1995) suggest that a climate that poses serious limitations for positive intergroup interactions among students of different cultural backgrounds on multicultural campuses hinders instructive and constructive intergroup relations among college students. Su (1995) supports this idea arguing that too much interaction within the circle of co-nationals will restrict the individual from interacting with host nationals, and inhibit learning the language, the values and customs in the new culture so that it will enforce a sense of alienation in the long run. Romo and Hurriett (1997) also identify that the lack of positive relationships among students with different ethnicities has negative effect on student performances. They appeal that promoting positive intergroup relationships can further students' willingness to learn, and promote academic achievement.

Summary of the Chapter

Although existing literature gives a clear description of the difficult situation Chinese international or immigrant students have encountered in their adaptation

experiences in Canada, and therefore provides useful theoretic information that helps to discover the reasons why these students fall in socially isolated situations, it is not applicable to well explain the problems perceived in this study. There is a lack of concentrated research on Mainland Chinese international students' social interaction experiences, especially on the reasons for these students' preference and habits of compatriot groups.

Built on these findings, this study, which was conducted with ten Chinese international students from Mainland China who were studying at a Canadian university, will carry forward the research on this issue by achieving findings that may either confirm or diverge from the existing research findings. It will also suggest new questions that need further studies.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This is a qualitative study in which qualitative methods, specifically, phenomenological methods, were applied.

General Approaches

Qualitative research refers to investigations conducted on individual's lives, stories, behaviors, social relationships and other life experiences and is often contrasted with quantitative research, which reaches findings by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Qualitative research derives findings through a nonmathematical analysis procedure, that is, an interpretive procedure of "coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Qualitative research methods, according to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), are generally supported by the paradigm interpreted by the researcher, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and everchanging. Qualitative researchers avoid simplifying social phenomena and instead explore the range of behavior and expand their understanding of the resulting interactions. Throughout the research process, researchers will uncover some of the complexity.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors causing Chinese students' isolated situation in a culturally diverse social circumstance. Since social interaction always involves various, complex factors which are difficult to measure in quantitative ways, qualitative approaches were considered to be suitable for this study. To identify the extent of Chinese students' social interactions with others and the

reasons leading to their situations, I needed first to understand what they experienced at the multicultural space and how they felt about the circumstances. Qualitative methods are advantageous since they enable researchers to approach the participants, go into their worlds, observe their situations in depth, and learn about their experiences, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and responses to their experiences (Patton, 1990). This advantage helped me obtain a special kind of understanding of the problem as perceived by the people involved in the study, and uncover what lied behind the particular phenomenon of Chinese students' compatriot grouping at a Canadian university.

Qualitative research takes place in natural settings, so the researcher often goes to the site (home, office) of the participant to conduct the research, and this enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2003). This advantage enabled me to obtain research data with high authenticity and credibility. It contributed to building rapport between me and the participants, and to achieving a deeper observation and knowledge of the participants' real world and their feelings.

The specific qualitative approaches adopted in this study are phenomenological methods. The phenomenological method is one that "involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience." (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). According to Moustakas, because all knowledge and experience are connected to phenomena, things in consciousness that appear in the surrounding world, inevitably a unit must exist between ourselves as knowers and the

things or objects that we come to know and depend upon. The phenomenological methods are advantageous in that essences are brought back into the world, enrich and clarify our knowledge and experience of everyday situations, events, and relationships. As Creswell (2003) suggests, phenomenological methods help researchers identify the essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon as described by participants in a study. Deeply interested in the question why monocultural grouping phenomenon exists on culturally diverse Canadian university campuses, I chose phenomenological methods in order to “explicate the perceived phenomenon in terms of its constituents and possible meanings, thus discerning the features of consciousness and arriving at an understanding of the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 49). In this study I approached ten Chinese international students at the University of Windsor, listened to their descriptions of their experiences, and achieved an understanding of the essence of this grouping phenomenon as it reveals itself in the experiences of these students.

Recruitment of Participants

Upon receiving the approval letter from the Research Ethics Board of the University of Windsor (Appendix A), I started the process of recruiting participants. The recruiting steps included sending out recruitment letter, selecting participants among respondents, informing selected participants of detailed activities to be involved, and fixing the interview time and place.

For the first step, that is, sending out the *Research Participants Recruitment Letter* (Appendix B), I took two channels: asking the director of International Student

Center to send out by e-mail the recruitment letter, which was written in both English and Chinese, to international students at the university through the contact network they had established; and putting up the recruitment letter on the bulletin board at the International Student Center. The response to the recruitment letter was quick and encouraging: more than twenty Chinese students sent e-mails indicating their interest and willingness to participate in this study. More impressive was that two Chinese female students responded to the letter within an hour after the letter was sent out. The students who responded expressed following reasons for their decision to participate in this study: the wish to talk about their sojourn experiences; a belief in the benefits of this study for Chinese international students as themselves; an interest in the North American style research procedure; and their willingness to offer help to me - a Chinese international student studying at the same school.

The second step in the selection process involved selecting participants among respondents, that is, contacting the respondents individually by e-mail or telephone, and determining their nationalities, school years, gender, and the departments and academic programs they were at. Among the twenty-two respondents some were Chinese students coming from other countries than China like Malaysia, Sweden, Singapore, and so on. After consideration about their conditions, seven students from Mainland China who had been studying at the university for at least one year were selected as the participants of this study. The selection of these seven students as participants was basically based on the consideration that the department/faculty affiliation would be as various as possible to ensure field of study diversity and representation, and that a balanced ratio between male and female would be kept.

Since graduate students were few among the respondents, another three participants were located through acquaintances who introduced their friends to me. The determined participating group was composed of ten Chinese international students from Mainland China studying at faculties/departments of Education, Business Administration, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Computer Science, Engineering, and Communication Studies, four being at undergraduate level and six at graduate level, and six being female and four male. Their ages ranged from nineteen to thirty-one years old.

The third recruitment step was informing selected participants of detailed activities to be involved. Through e-mail I sent the selected participants a *Letter of Information for Consent to Participate in Research* (Appendix D) to ensure that every participant would have good knowledge of the purpose of the proposed study, the procedures, the duties they would be expected to fulfill, their rights to withdraw at any time, the access to prospective research results, and so on.

The last step of recruitment of participants was fixing the interview time and place with each of the selected participants. When preparing for the interviews I consulted with the participants individually to ensure that the interviews would be conducted in a time that would be most convenient to him/her and in a setting where he/she would feel relaxing, comfortable, and uncontrolled.

Data Collection and Recording

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was interviewing. As Taylor and Bogdan (1984) indicate, “The hallmark of in-depth qualitative

interviewing is learning about what is important in the mind of the informants: their meanings, perspectives, and definitions; how they view, categorize, and experience the world.” (p. 88). Through interviewing, participants’ feelings, opinions, and reactions to what they have been experiencing can be found out and a good understanding of their points of view can be achieved. In this study one on one face-to-face interviews were conducted respectively with each of the ten participants in a natural setting such as the participant’s room, graduate student office, a quiet classroom at night, and the backyard of the house where I lived. Following Moustakas’ (1994) suggestion that “Often the phenomenological interview begins with a social conversation or a brief meditative activity aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere” (p. 114), I proceeded each interview with a casual conversation, which covered a width of everyday experiences including housing, eating, school things, recent activities, and so on. This was helpful in building a rapport between me and the participants and in obtaining open, honest and unreserved responses to the questions to be asked. Then the participant was given a printed copy of *Letter of Information for Consent to Participate in Research*, form of *Consent to Participate in Research* (Appendix C), and form of *Consent for Audio/Visual Taping* (Appendix E).

After the participant read and signed the information letter and consent forms, I began to ask the participant questions listed on the *Interview Questionnaire* (Appendix F). Twenty-nine open-ended questions were asked during the interview. To ensure that questions and answers would be fully comprehended by both the interviewees and me, and that participants would be able to express themselves as

clearly and fully as possible, Mandarin was used in the interviews. All the interviews were conducted in a free and friendly atmosphere, in which frank, intimate, and unreserved conversations occurred.

Every interview was audiotape recorded. While the interview was being recorded, notes about the participant's behavioural responses like nodding, shaking head, smiling, confused expression, and so on were also taken (and these notes were marked with the number of the questions being asked at that moment). The interviews averagely lasted around eighty minutes each, with the shortest one completed within fifty-five minutes and the longest one lasting over two hours. The process of interviewing lasted seven weeks, from early November to late December of 2005.

Although the interviews were conducted following a pre-designed questionnaire, conversations between the participants and me were not only confined with the frame of the questions. During the time before and after the interviews participants spoke of many other aspects in their sojourn lives than those mentioned in the questionnaire. One of the participants, for example, talked wide and handsomely, and the whole interview process lasted more than two hours. The participants' extensive description of their experiences provided abundant, valuable data, which assisted me to achieve an in-depth understanding of their experiences and achieve the goals of this study. Moreover, modifications to the questionnaire were made in the process of interviewing. For instance, in light of the necessity to know how the participants perceived the advantages and disadvantages of the grouping, related questions were added to the questionnaire after the first interviews.

To examine in a full scale the participants' sojourn experiences on a Canadian university campus and their attitudes towards their experiences, the interview questions were designed covering three major aspects closely relevant to their sojourn lives. They were in three groups: Question Group A (6 questions): Pre-entry Characteristics; Question Group B (15 questions): Campus Factors; and Question Group C (8 questions): Outcomes/Satisfaction with the University Life.

In addition to the data collected through the interview questions and casual conversations before and after the taping of interview questions, information from the University of Windsor's Web site related to international students was also collected. This helped me to gain better knowledge of the efforts the university has made to construct a better learning environment for the international students it accommodates.

Data Coding

The process of data coding started when the first three interviews were finished. The decision to start the coding at this time was based on the consideration that necessary adjustment could be made to the interview questionnaire so that the participants' social interaction situation could be observed in a more comprehensive way. Since the interviews were conducted in the Chinese language, the first step for this stage was to translate the audio taped interviews into English. To ensure that bias from the researcher would be reduced, the translation/transcription of the raw data was entrusted to a doctoral student knowledgeable in both the Chinese and English languages. The process of translation/transcription lasted for two months, from late November of 2005 to late January of 2006.

When translating the audio taped interviews, the translator occasionally met with puzzles that were caused by indistinct utterance or ambiguous implication by the participants. Usually I could explain those puzzles according to the memories of the interviews, while sometimes I had to contact the corresponding participants for a clearer or exact explanation. For example, one of the participants mentioned in the interview that he would generally prefer the registration office to International Student Center for information needed. During the interview I did not notice that the participant spoke of the words “registration office” in an indistinct voice, and after the interview I could neither remember what office the participant referred to. To make sure the data was accurately translated, I contacted the participant and managed to get a definite answer.

Member Checking

Upon the completion of the transcription of the recorded interviews, the transcribed manuscripts were sent respectively to each of the participants through e-mail. This step was conducted in order to check for the accuracy and credibility of the transcription. Responses from the participants were received soon after the sending of the transcripts: nine of them confirmed the accuracy and one made a small correction regarding the name of St. Denis Centre, where the participant regularly went to do yoga.

Data Analysis

After the completion of the transcription of the audio taped interviews, the

organization of data for analysis started. In this study the methods and procedures of phenomenological analysis were adopted. Following Moustakas' (1994) suggestion that

“The procedures include *horizontalizing* the data and regarding every horizon or statement relevant to the topic and questions as having equal value. From the horizontalized statements, the *meaning or meaning units* are listed. These are clustered into common categories or *themes*, removing overlapping and repetitive statements. The clustered themes and meanings are used to develop the *textural descriptions of the experience*. From the textural descriptions, structural descriptions and an integration of textures and structures into the meanings and essences of the phenomenon are constructed” (pp. 118-119)

the present study conducted the data analysis in the following specific phenomenological data analysis steps:

Horizontalization

After reading the ten transcribed manuscripts as a whole for several times, I began to work on each of them following the steps of re-reading the manuscript, listing the statements relevant to the topic, and grouping these statements in a preliminary way. To put specifically, statements relevant to the topic were first drawn out and taken down on a list, then these statements were grouped into categories titled Extent of Social Interactions and Reasons of Compatriot Groupings. In this step, every statement relevant to the topic was recoded as constituents having equal value. It is worth noticing that for one of the participants' manuscript, as many as thirty-two items related to the topic were drawn out.

Reduction and Elimination

To determine the invariant constituents, statements or expressions that were unnecessary or insufficient for understanding the participants' experience or those that were impossible to abstract and label were eliminated from the list of

horizontalized statements. Those overlapping, repetitive, and vague statements were also eliminated. The statements that remained were then recorded as the invariant constituents. At the end of this step, a sheet on which invariant constituents generalized from each of the participant's transcribed manuscript were listed was attached to his/her manuscript. On each of the lists, meaning units labelled as Relations with Peers and Teachers, Former Learning and Socializing Experiences, Pre-expectations on Sojourn, Canadian Classroom Experiences, Knowledge of Campus Services, Language Proficiency, Cultural Factors, Family Expectations, etc. were itemized.

Clustering and Thematizing

On the basis of the meaning units, I clustered the invariant constituents that were related to each other into a thematic label. At the end of this step, a list of themes distilled from the invariant constituents was derived for each of the participant's transcribed manuscript. On each of the ten lists, there were averagely six core themes abstracted, the least being five and most being nine. When analysing the ten transcribed manuscripts as a whole, except the theme titled Extent of Social Interaction, five other core themes were derived through clustering the invariant constituents into the category of Reasons of Compatriot Groupings. They were Language Difficulties, Cultural Divergence, Evaluation Criteria, Understanding of Institutional Administration and Corresponding Response, and The Inertia of Dependence on Compatriot Groups.

Individual Descriptions

After the core themes were determined, I composed a sketch for each

participant's transcribed manuscript that 1) described his/her experience and situations related to social interactions, and 2) provided a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience. This sketch enabled me to have a clearer understanding, in a visibly easy and quick way, of the meanings and essence of the participant's factual experiences and situation as well as his/her feelings, thoughts, and other reflections of the circumstances he/she was situated.

Composite Description

At the end of the data analysis stage, based on the total group of individual descriptions, a composite description of the participating group as a whole was composed. In this description the general experiences and situation of the participants' social interactions were depicted, and the major reasons causing the phenomenon being perceived were determined.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully considered from the initial stage when I started preparation for conducting this study. An application for ethics review was submitted in late September 2005 to the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board, from which a written granted approval (Appendix A) was received on October 12, 2005.

In addition to identifying in advance for the participants the research problem, the purpose and benefits of the study, I implemented ethical considerations in following specific ways:

1. At the beginning of each interview, provide the participant with *Letter of Information for Consent to Participate in Research* (Appendix D), *Consent to Participate in Research* form (Appendix C), and *Consent for Audio/Visual Taping* form (Appendix E) for his/her signature;
2. Determine the interview time and place according to the participant's preference to ensure that the participant shall feel comfortable and relaxed;
3. Keep collected data in strict confidentiality with no possibility of disclosing them to any others than myself, translator, and research supervisor; and plan to destroy the data in two years after the date of the last interview;
4. Use pseudonyms for all the participants to protect identities;
5. Send the interview transcript to each of the participants to ensure that it is accurate; and inform the participants of the access to research results;
6. Record, translate, and interpret the collected data with honesty, with no intention to suppress, falsify, or invent findings.

The Position of the Researcher

As the investigator, I identify my position in this study first as an observer. Determined to find out the true reasons why Chinese international students stick together in a completely different cultural environment I made efforts not to mix my personal feelings with the study. During the interviews I listened as much as possible to the participants' narration about their experiences and made minimal comments on the topics being discussed. I entrusted the work of translating the audio taped

interviews with a doctoral student and did not interfere with the translating process. When doing data analysis I reminded myself frequently of my role as a researcher, with full awareness that if my personal emotion or preconceived opinions were reflected in the analysis my study would be compromised and somehow prejudicial. The efforts I made to remain neutral in this study not only helped me obtain relatively objective data but also enabled me to derive credible findings, which are different from the original assumptions I had made at the initial stage about the probable research results. At the initial stage of this study, specifically, at the end of literature review stage, based on the findings of existing literature, I was led to believe that factors like parents/family expectations and racial discrimination would be, to a great extent, responsible for Chinese students' failure to mix well with other students. At that time, based on my own experiences at the university, I also blamed the hardships Chinese international students' encountered at their beginning days at the university on some flaws in the administration of the University of Windsor, and I made another assumption that the ineffectiveness of student service programs at the university should be another major factors leading to Chinese international students' isolated condition. The discrepancy between my original assumptions and study findings justifies the value of this study because it shows that the findings are outcomes of an honest, responsible research conducted in authentic and specific environmental conditions and with strong academic ethics.

As an international student coming from Mainland China myself, I at the same time identified my position in this study as an "insider". I had similar cultural and educational background as the participants and had similar social interaction

experiences as well as same feeling about the experiences. I understood well their expectations, current dilemma, their regrets, and their wishes to improve future situations. My identity as a Mainland Chinese international student at the university and my sympathy for their concerns enabled me to obtain honest, open-hearted answers from the participants. Furthermore, the cultural links between the participants and me enabled me to have better understanding and make in-depth interpretation of their narrations, which often included implications that would have been very difficult for an outsider to comprehend.

Brief Introduction to the Participants' Background

For the purpose of helping prospective readers better comprehend the participating Chinese students' present social interactions in Canada and the causes of this pattern of interactions, a brief introduction to these students' background is offered. In this section, concise "stories", which are actually crafted profiles of the participant's experiences, are presented. It is important to note that to protect the privacy of the participants all the names to be used are pseudonyms.

Wang

Wang was a female graduate student studying under an MED program. She came from a big city in Northwestern China. Before coming to Canada she had obtained a Master's degree and had worked at a well-known Chinese university as an English teacher for one year. As many English teachers in China, she wished to study in an English-speaking country to improve her English skills and also to get more knowledge about Western cultures and advanced pedagogical theories and strategies.

She explained for her decision to study in Canada, “I was attracted to Canada by its cultural diversity. Every body knows that Canada is an immigrant country. [I thought] To study here can not only improve my English level, I can also experience various cultures.” One of her big wishes was to make a few foreign friends. After having studied here for one year, however, Wang felt that she was far from her goals. Except for several Chinese girl friends she did not have any friends of other ethnic origins. She said that although the University of Windsor was a place where there were a lot of international students, the scale where Chinese students socialized was too narrow.

Qin

Qin came from Beijing. He was a third-year undergraduate student majoring in Business. As the son of a couple who were dispatched abroad for postgraduate study under the sponsorship of the Chinese government, Qin had had more opportunities to study and live in foreign environments than other youth at his age. Before arriving at the University of Windsor, he had studied in Europe and the United States. In terms of handling foreign situations, he looked more experienced and confident than other participants. Although he had studied English for over ten years both in China and overseas, his English proficiency, when compared to that of Canadian born students, was also low. Qin had a cheerful nature, outgoing, humorous, quick-minded, and good at conversation. He liked to associate with people, and had intention to make friends with foreigner students. His social network, however, was only within Chinese circles. He had many Chinese good friends but did not have any close friends from other ethnic groups. He used the word “strangers” to describe his relation with other students.

Zhu

Zhu was a female doctoral student. She came from a big city in Central China where she had finished her undergraduate education and worked for three years as an English teacher at a college. She arrived at the University of Windsor to pursue a Master's degree in education and completed the Master's program in 2004. After receiving the Master's degree she continued her studies at the university under a doctoral program. An optimistic, intelligent, sociable, and strong-willed person, Zhu had her sojourn going well, and felt rather satisfied with her academic studies at the university. For the good of a promising future she was resolute to obtain more knowledge of Canadian culture and a higher level of English proficiency. She had clear awareness of the importance of interactions with Canadians and also took initiatives to make friends with them. Zhu claimed Canadian friendships but her relationships with them were, as she said, "very, very superficial" while her relationships with Chinese fellows "very, very close".

Ma

Ma was a third-year undergraduate student majoring in Communication. She came from the biggest city in Southwestern China. Before she arrived at the University of Windsor, she studied at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University for one year as an ESL student. Ma was a young lady with calm nature and keen observation. She appreciated friendship and cared much for her studies. When she studied in Vancouver she made several friends, who came from Korea, Mexico and Morocco, and she still kept contact with them. Although she had successful experience in making friends with ethnically diverse peers she felt it

difficult to make similar friends in Windsor. This failure to make friends with ethnically diverse students in Windsor was not something that she had anticipated. Her relation with other students seemed to be unsatisfying. She said, “It seems that I know many people, but there are not true friends... We say hello when meet. The relation between us is very superficial”, and as a result, she always missed her home. Ma thought that people in Windsor, in both the university and the town, were “local in terms of their ways of living and thinking.” She lived with her Chinese friend in a house close to the campus and often talked to her friends in China through the internet or the telephone about her problems.

Chen

Chen was the only participant who was married and had kids. She came to Canada to join her husband, who studied at the University of Waterloo as a doctoral student. Before she started her Master’s study at the University of Windsor, she had lived in Canada for more than one year. Chen was a hardworking, persistent student who aimed her study primarily at future development in Canada. Her expectations on her study were to “make some friends, learn more about Western culture, and get integrated into the society”. Chen tried hard to take an active part in class discussions with peers and to have frequent contacts with them after class for study thing but she often had problems to obtain good communication results between her and her non-Chinese classmates. She thought the problems lied in language barriers and different ways of thinking. Chen managed to achieve excellent academic records and was awarded the International Graduate Student Scholarship in 2005.

Yu

Yu was a male undergraduate student majoring in Computer Science. He came from Eastern China and had been studying at the University of Windsor for more than three years. Yu had achieved very high academic standing and was accepted as a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society. He had relatively good English ability and worked as a teaching assistant (TA). Because of his academic excellence and his TA position he got more opportunities than other participants to converse with professors and foreign students. In addition, for some personal reasons, he did not have much intention to contact Chinese acquaintances and preferred to develop more relationship with foreign students. His social interactions with other students seemed to be better than the rest of the participants: He had one close Canadian friend. Yu expressed that he was satisfied with his student life at the University of Windsor.

Shen

Shen was an MBA student in his early thirties. He came from Beijing and had been in Canada for years before he started his study at the University of Windsor. Shen was focused on academic study, achieved excellent grades, and was awarded the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) in 2004. Even though, because of his living experience in Canada, his English abilities were good enough for both academic study and social interactions, he still felt that there were some language problems. He said, "Sometimes when you need to speak in class, you feel yourself much weaker than others". As a business student Shen had frequent contact with other students in his department but their relationships were "very superficial". He said, "we don't

have any interaction with each other after class.” When having problems he “undoubtedly” turned to Chinese students, usually those who had better English skills or earned higher grades than himself, for assistance.

Lu

Lu was a graduate student who came from Northeastern China. When interviewed she had almost completed her Master’s study at the University of Windsor. She majored in English during her undergraduate studies in China and had worked as a college English teacher before she came to Canada. The purpose of her coming here to study, as she said, was “to communicate with students from various cultural backgrounds so as to broaden the view”. Lu was a clever, pleasant, warm-hearted person who had frank, bright, considerate, optimistic characters and strong abilities in social interactions. Lu’s social network, however, was only within the Chinese circles. She had made many friends here but none was of other ethnic origins than Chinese. She thought that for her “there’s no social life at all within the school” in terms of social interactions with students of other origins.

Hu

Hu was at the end of his first year undergraduate study when interviewed. He came to the University of Windsor right after his graduation from high school. One of Hu’s motivations for studying in Canada was doing some preparations for future immigration to this country. Among the participants of this study Hu was the youngest and seemed to have the most serious problem in the English language. Largely because of language inefficiency he experienced difficulties in academic studies, especially in the first months after he arrived at the university. Hu lived in the

school residence and planned to move out at the end of the residential contract. Although living in a same building with many other students, Hu felt lonely and lacked communication with them. He thought that Canadian students had no interest in socializing with international students and “It’s difficult [to develop relations] with Canadians”. When confronting emotional problems he usually talked to his parents in China by telephone; when having problems related to studies, he turned to other Chinese students who had been in Canada for a longer time. Hu felt unhappy with his sojourn experiences in Windsor, in both academic study and social life aspects. He thought the reality he was experiencing was far away from what he had expected.

Xin

Xin came from a province in Southwestern China. When interviewed she had just received her Master’s degree and was going home to reunite with her parents. Xin studied ESL Education during her undergraduate years in China. To acquire more knowledge of ESL education and have some learning experiences in an English-speaking country, Xin quit her job in a high school where she had worked as an English teacher. Although she had been an English learner for years and had one year English teaching experience, Xin still felt that language was a big problem for her sojourn in Canada, and language deficiency hampered her from achieving a better academic achievement and developing good relationships with other students. Xin felt somewhat satisfaction with her study but expressed regret for her lack of interactions with other students. She felt that in terms of social life there was “a great discrepancy” between what she experienced at the university and what she had

expected before she arrived at the university. Xin's social activities were confined within the Chinese circles and she did not have any friends of other ethnic origins.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter I will present the findings that have been obtained from the collected data. This chapter will start with a description of the extent to which the Chinese international students at the University of Windsor socialized with fellow students of Chinese and other ethnic origins, particularly Canadian born students. The second section of this chapter will display in detail the concrete reasons that lead to Chinese international students' preference or choice of staying within compatriot circles or groups on campus.

Extent of Social Interactions

The findings of this study suggest that the Chinese international students at the University of Windsor are isolated in terms of their social interactions with students of other ethnic origins as well as their instructors.

Seven of the ten students interviewed reported to socialize only within Chinese fellow circles. Nine of them reported indifferent relations with their non-Chinese peers. When asked to use a word to describe the quality of their interactions with students of non-Chinese origins, all the participants, including the two who reported Canadian friendship, responded "superficial" or "very superficial". When asked the question "How many non-Chinese friends do you have?", eight answered "None". Of the ten participants, seven felt completely dissatisfied, two expressed satisfaction with their social interactions at the university, while one explained that he had not made any expectations at all on friendships on campus so it was not an issue

for him whether or not he was satisfied. Nine participants expressed that when confronted with difficulties they would definitely only turn to Chinese classmates or friends for help, with one participant indicating that he would seek help from nobody but himself because “It’s no use consulting others about your own matters. They don’t understand you. You’ve got to do your work by yourself.”

When answering the question “How often do you participate in collective classmate activities, for example, classmate gatherings, holiday activities, eating out with classmates?”, eight participants used the word “rarely”. When mentioning their contacts with non-Chinese peers, all participants, including the two who expressed satisfaction with their social interactions at the university, indicated that the contacts were only confined within study matters. The participant who did not care about social interaction also reported no friends outside Chinese circles.

It is worth indicating that before coming to Canada the ten participants had common expectations that they would make some foreign friends during their stay in Canada. For some of the participants, to make Canadian or other non-Chinese friends at a Canadian university had weighed a lot in their decision to go out and study in Canada. They believed that through experiencing friendships with these students they would achieve good understanding of other especially Northern American cultures, and such experience would help them excel in their future career in Canada or their homeland, where the influence of globalization has been penetrating into every aspect of the society. Their actual social interaction situations in Canada, however, were overall regarded as disappointing. Of the ten participants seven reported no social life

with non-Chinese students, and the lack of interactions with these students caused general dissatisfaction with their student life here.

It is also worth indicating that the participants of this study were all individuals who had sufficient capacity to perform normal social interactions with others. As a matter of fact, a few of them, according to their narrations and the impression they left on the researcher, had the necessary interpersonal skills required to engage in social interactions. One of the participants Lu, for example, was an impressively smart and sociable person with natural affinity. In addition, backed up by an experience as an English teacher for one year in China her English language ability was sufficient enough for ordinary interactions with other students. Still, however, she reported neither non-Chinese friends nor any social life with non-Chinese students.

Isolation seemed to be an overwhelming trend among the participants. In this study, to explicitly present their general isolated situation, they are categorized into three types according to the degrees of isolation.

First, seven (Chen, Hu, Wang, Xin, Shen, Ma, Lu) of the ten participants experienced most serious isolation. They reported no friendship or close relationship with non-Chinese fellows. They socialized exclusively within Chinese compatriot circles, feeling completely outside of the campus community. Accordingly, they felt quite disappointed about their social experiences at the university.

These seven participants included some who had come to this university with a strong wish to learn something that can help them get integrated into the Canadian

society. Chen, for example, spoke of her original expectation on her study at the university:

...I hoped that through my study at the University of Windsor I could acquire more knowledge, make some friends, learn more about Western culture, and get integrated into the society...I hoped to have harmonious relations with my teachers and pretty intimate interaction with my classmates. I didn't want that classmates would be strangers or seldom talk to one another.

However, the factual situation was obviously out of her expectation. When asked about her relationship with her classmates, she answered:

[They are in] Two groups. (Laughing) The most [impressive thing] here is that I've made some Chinese friends. As for foreign classmates, we don't have deep relation, sometimes we say hello to each other, sometimes we don't even say hello.

Chen expressed her feeling about her isolated situation on campus, "I feel, and it's also a fact, that I am still not getting into the Western culture. There's no opportunity and it's difficult to have interaction with White people."

When asked the question "Is what you are experiencing at the university what you expected before you came here?", Chen answered:

No. (Laughing) At that time I expected to mix with foreigners and learn about their cultures. But the result is that we're still within the [Chinese] group and there's no contact with foreign cultures. I feel [the environment at] the University of Windsor appears not much different from [that in] China. (Laughing)

Other participants expressed similar feelings about their social experiences on campus. Wang, for example, when asked about whether she had taken peer relationship into consideration when making the overseas study decision, she responded, "Yeah, of course. Before I came here, I hoped to make some foreign

friends and have mutual understanding with them.” When answering a question about her feeling about the campus cultural atmosphere she said:

I feel somewhat disappointed. I feel...various races are together [on the campus] but there aren't many opportunities to come together to, for example, have understanding of each other's customs. Interaction in this aspect is limited.

Second, even interactions of the participants who were relatively more comfortable with their social status were, in reality, very shallow and did not involve details of life challenges. Among the ten participants Zhu and Yu seemed to be rather distinct from the majority because they were the only two who reported friendship with other students. At first glance they seemed to have successful experiences in their social association and felt quite satisfied with their sojourn life, but towards the end of the interview the reality of their relationships with other students emerged as disappointing.

Zhu, the only participant who expressed satisfaction with her social interactions with other students and reported having more than two Canadian born friends, said, “I feel the relation between my Canadian classmates and me is very, very superficial. We're only classmates. In class if we sit together we would talk a little. After class there's no opportunity to be together.” Comparing her relationships with Chinese peers to that with her Canadian peers, she said, “In general my relation with Chinese classmates are very, very close. As for foreign classmates, we may be classmates for one whole term but perhaps the sentences we talk will be no more than ten.”

When asked whom she usually turned to for help when encountering difficulties, Zhu said:

I should say I still go to consult my Chinese classmates, because they know better about my situations and have sympathy with me in these affairs. Then they can analyze for me...So when you don't know whom to ask for help you go back to your own group.

As a person who was impressively optimistic and had a strong character, Zhu had actively tried hard to integrate herself into the new environment from the very beginning of her university life here. In order to improve her knowledge of Canadian culture and English language ability, she moved out from a house where she had comfortably stayed for two years with several Chinese students and moved into a White Canadian woman's house that was much farther away from the campus. To be better involved in communication with her Canadian classmates she intentionally had more contact with them. For example, she would often choose to sit next to foreign students in class, or stay in the graduate student office as long as possible, to find more conversation opportunities with her foreign peers. Although through great efforts the relation between her and her classmates, as she said, "became much deeper", at the late part of the interview she still expressed with emotion that "I am on intimate terms with my Chinese classmates. We have common language, the same concerns and can discuss over common problems. But with Canadian classmates I feel we only say hello." Zhu's experiences exemplify the fact that situations for those Chinese students who did make efforts to improve their social interaction situation still faced isolation.

The experiences of another participant, Yu, illustrated in a similar way the gravity of the isolation of the Chinese international students at the University of Windsor. A top student in his department, Yu was accepted as a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society for excellence in academic studies. As a

TA he had frequent contact with other students and his instructors. He was also very active in participating in other campus activities like sports. Compared to other participants of this study Yu had higher English ability and, more importantly, a very positive attitude towards his sojourn and was more satisfied with his student life at the university. Of the ten participants Yu was the only one who claimed very close relationships with Canadian born students. In the later part of the interview, however, he made comments about his interactions with these students which seemed to be somewhat contradictory with his claim of close relationships with them. He said that his contact with these students “is only confined in study” and that “Frankly speaking my interactions with the classmates seldom involve any other things than academic study, so there’s not such a thing as relation between us.” Yu’s experiences seem to suggest that even Chinese international students who have relatively more interactions with other students still have shallow relationships with them.

When asked how many non-Chinese close friends he had, Yu said there was only one. As for other Canadian students, they were “only casual (*fanfan*) acquaintances”. He explained, “We know each other, and we speak to each other, but we don’t have heart-to-heart talks.” When asked whom he usually consulted for help when confronted with difficulties, he said:

Whom can you consult? It’s no use consulting others about your own matters. They don’t understand you. You’ve got to do your work by yourself. You cannot leave them unfinished just because you are in a low mood.

Third, the participant who had extensive overseas living and learning experiences was found to be confronted with the same isolation problem. The experiences of Qin, a Chinese student who had studied in Europe and the United

States, more clearly reflected the difficulties Chinese international students encountered in their social interactions in Windsor. As the son of a couple who were China's second-generation government sponsored graduate students, Qin had much more opportunities to study and live in foreign environments and seemed to be quite skillful in social interactions with people of other origins. He is a young man with a sunny disposition, brilliant conversation gift, good sense of humor, and an open mind. In addition to these characteristics, which are generally favorable for developing friendships, he also had a strong willingness to develop friendships with Canadian born students. He said:

I did hope that I would make many foreign friends. Having foreign friends not only helps you improve language ability but also helps you integrate into the [Canadian] society. If you want to stay in this society you must get into it. Through making [foreign] friends you can get some knowledge that you cannot get in some other ways. [Foreign] Friends are resources [of knowledge].

All his five close friends, however, are exclusively Chinese students. During the interview Qin mentioned that he had a few non-Chinese "friends" with whom he seemed to have a closer relationship. He said:

I've three or four [foreign] friends with whom I'm relatively closer. Three of them come from Africa, countries round central Africa. They're people of simple goodness and a bit older than us, about 27 to 30 years old. We often play basketball together. Another [foreign friend of mine] is White. She's ever been to China and stayed in China for one year, so she has a good impression of Chinese people. Since she stayed in Dalian and I also once stayed there for a long time, we have much in common to talk about. She often asks me questions about things like food.

But unfortunately when I asked him whether they were his close friends, he thought seriously and said "no" and that they were only "classmates". What is even

more revealing is that when asked to use a word to describe his relations with his non-Chinese classmates, he used the word “strangers”.

As a consequence of the lack of contact with Canadian born students, dissatisfaction with their social interactions on campus was a common sense among the participants. Most of them expressed obvious dissatisfaction with their social lives.

Wang, for example, said with disappointment:

I should say not satisfied [with my social life]. [I] Only have personal interaction with Chinese peers and too little with other students. The scale where we socialize is too narrow. This is a school where there are a lot of international students, but I haven't made any friends with students from other countries. Yeah, I feel regretful for this.

Dissatisfaction with their social lives caused these students' dissatisfaction with their whole sojourn lives. Those students who expressed dissatisfaction with their learning experiences in Canada linked their dissatisfaction with their student life to their lack of interactions with other students, even though some of them had obtained very good academic achievements. Qin's evaluation of his learning experiences at the university exemplified their feeling:

I just feel that it's somewhat like a “losing proposition”. You see, I come to a foreign country, but I'm still staying with Chinese guys all day long - my English has not been improved, I'm still out of the [Canadian] society, and I've learnt little about other cultures. I feel it a “losing proposition”, you know, to spend so much money to study abroad. (Laughing) I think I should have made at least one or two foreign friends.

To more fully understand the social interaction situation of these Chinese international students, questions regarding teacher-student relationships were also asked during the interviews. It was found that as for the relationships with their

instructors, the participants were less disappointed, although according to their narrations they had similarly very indifferent relationships with their instructors. This could be explained by the Chinese teaching and learning philosophy, which is based on a Confucian perspective, that students should unconditionally respect and obey their superiors (Liu, 1986). In the traditional Chinese classroom, where the teacher tends to keep a distance from the students to show that they can control and manage the class (Salili, 2001), the relation between the students and teacher is strongly hierarchical. A traditional idea has been fostered among Chinese learners that nothing more than absolute respect for the teacher is expected to exist between the teacher and the students. In China there is a proverb saying “A teacher for even one day should be respected as a father for a whole life.” Unconditional respect for instructors generally causes Chinese students to put few expectations on teacher-student relationship and discourages their intention to develop close relationships with their teachers. As Qin commented during the interview, “As for teacher-student relationship I didn’t have any expectations, because I know professors are walk-in and walk-out people. If you have questions you go and ask them; if not, just do your own work.” Xin expressed similar expectation on teacher-student relationship. She said, “Frankly, I have always been on ordinary terms with my teachers; I will not try hard to be close to my teachers.” In addition to traditional ideas regarding teacher-student relationship, deficient comprehension and conversational English abilities also discouraged these students to consult their instructors for advice or other help when facing study problems, since, according to them, speaking in a faltering manner to the teacher was a disgrace.

To conclude, the findings of this study display a picture of an isolated sojourn life of Chinese international students at the University of Windsor. These students have indifferent relations with their non-Chinese peers and instructors. Their socialization was confined within a very narrow space, with little social interactions with students of other cultural origins. Most of them, for various reasons, stayed in or withdrew into their own co-national groups, having no opportunity, or losing the attempts, to communicate with Canadian born peers and teachers. Their preference or choice of staying within the compatriot groups led to the existence of “conational enclave” (Su, 1995, p. 116) on the campus, which was a far departure from the desired sojourn environment that they had expected before coming to Canada. Their socially isolated situations to a considerable extent affected their satisfaction with their sojourn life at the university and, most importantly, would quite possibly leave negative impact on their overall educational outcomes.

Reasons of Compatriot Groupings

At the end of the data analysis process, through clustering the invariant constituents that were related to corresponding themes, five core themes revealed as the major causes of Chinese international students’ co-national groupings at the University of Windsor: language difficulties, cultural divergence, evaluation criteria, understanding of institutional administration and corresponding response, and the inertia of dependence on compatriot groups. Although the participants varied in perspectives regarding the causes leading to their preference or final choices of compatriot groupings, there were some common themes underlying the differences in

the causes. This section will present in detail the concrete reasons for these students' compatriot grouping, which are categorized in the five core themes mentioned above.

It is important to note that the ordering of these themes differs from person to person. A major influential factor in one participant's eyes, the language barrier for example, may be found to be only a minor one in the eyes of another. The themes are listed in an order according to the frequency they were referred to by the participants in the interviews, the one with the most frequency being presented first.

Language Difficulties

Common to all participants in this study were the language difficulties they experienced during their sojourn life at the University of Windsor. Of the ten participants, eight, whatever university levels they were at, referred to deficiency in the English language as a major, if not the biggest, barrier in their social interactions with other students. This seemed to be amazing because before they came to the University of Windsor most of the participants had either attended special language training programs both in China and Canada, or had English teaching experiences at secondary schools or higher educational institutions in China. In addition, as known to many people who are concerned with related problems, these participants, like any other Chinese students graduating from any high school in China, had studied the English language as a required course for at least six years on a daily basis before coming to Canada. Moreover, some of them had very high TOEFL scores - one participant's TOEFL score being as high as 650. Qin's comment was somewhat representative of the general condition of the participants' language proficiency. Qin said:

I had been studying the [English] language for more than 10 years [before I came to Canada], since the primary school. But I didn't feel good...[My] Abilities in listening and speaking in English are rather low. Reading [ability] is just so-so, and writing [ability] is also rather low. [I] know lots of words and phrases, but [I] don't know how to use them. Since the English language teaching methods in China are different, I don't understand them [Canadians] when they speak.

The Chinese students' low English proficiency was verified by Xin, another participant who had English teaching experience in a Chinese secondary school. Xin said:

Although we have studied English for many years, and have passed the Level-8 Examination, but there are still big problems [here], since the English teaching in China is too bookish and the textbooks are outmoded. And, the colloquial usage [is a problem]. You understand every word they [foreign students and teachers] say but you just don't understand what they mean.

Language deficiency hampered Chinese international students' interactions with other students in an all-round way. Viewed from a broader angle, it formed obstruction in academic involvement and daily communication with other students.

Obstruction in academic involvement

Language deficiency obstructed Chinese international students' academic involvement in the classroom. It hampered their academic involvement in two specific aspects: classroom discussions, and group presentations and other teamwork.

Hardships in struggling for better adaptation to the Canadian classroom strategies proved to be an important factor that led to Chinese international students' isolation or dissociation. These students' poor performance in class, which was generally seen as reticent or even asocial, negatively affected their participation in academic activities as well as their cooperation and interactions with other students.

As revealed in the analysis of the collected data, these students' poor performance in academic activities was primarily due to their low English proficiency.

1. Classroom discussions

Classroom discussions are common in Canadian classrooms. During a classroom discussion, students are required to express their own opinions regarding the topics initiated by the instructor. In the interviews the most frequently mentioned difficulties related to academic studies were classroom discussions. This problem was particularly serious with Chinese graduate students, since classroom discussions are a dominant way of teaching at this level. For graduate participants, class discussions seemed to be the first aspect they had difficulty to get used to about the Canadian classroom. According to their narrations, lack of fluency in spoken English led to this difficulty and often discouraged them from participating in class discussions. Some participants indicated that they usually adopted avoidance strategies in class discussions, that is, they did not speak in class unless they had to.

The general explanation for not participating in class discussions seemed to be fear of embarrassment. Some participants indicated that they were afraid other students would laugh if they spoke English inappropriately or failed to express themselves clearly. Out of such considerations, they usually chose to avoid speaking in class discussions. Lu, for example, explained her performance in class: "I'd try to avoid speaking or speak as little as possible. Sometimes I'm afraid that if what I say fails to convey the idea the others would not feel well and would laugh [at me]." Some other participants adopted similar strategies to handle such situations. Even Ma,

who had been studying in Canada for more than three years and had comparatively better English capacity, said that in most class discussions she chose to not speak.

Shen, a top student and a winner of the OGS, had similar feelings about the difficult situation in class caused by English deficiency:

Sometimes when you need to speak in class, you feel yourself much weaker than others...Generally we do well in written work, but in the aspect of oral expression we lag much, much behind...[We do] Even worse than [Eastern] Indians [in terms of oral expression].

Some participants did make efforts to improve their performance in class discussions, but the results were not as good as expected. When asked how much she took part in class discussions, Zhu said, "Not very much. At the first year everyday before every class I told myself to join in the class discussion, but in class I could only muttered a couple of words. I felt very shy to speak before the whole class."

Low language proficiency discouraged Chinese international students to take part in classroom discussions in an active manner. The adoption of avoidance strategies often caused them to behave as reticent in activities that required a lot of oral expression. This naturally decreased these students' involvement in classroom activities. Moreover, their quietness was apt to leave other students with an impression that they were unwilling to cooperate with others, or were simply hard to work with. As a result of this, other students would gradually choose to leave them alone in class discussions and thus reduced opportunity for Chinese students to have interactions with other students. This partially contributed to their isolation. Some students did indicate that in class discussions they often felt isolated. Chen, for example, described her isolated situation in class where she had little interactions with her non-Chinese classmates:

Yes, very little [opportunity to communicate with other students]. In class discussions, foreign guys discuss in a circle, and Chinese guys discuss in a circle; if there's no other Chinese student except yourself in the class, you discuss with yourself. (Laughing)

Xin's narration verified Chen's feeling of isolation. Xin reported that because listening and speaking in English are difficult to her, classroom discussions caused big pressure on her. She said, "...looking at those foreign students talking so eloquently, I feel isolated and lonely."

2. Group presentations and other teamwork

Like classroom discussions, presentation teamwork is also a common strategy adopted in the Canadian classroom. For presentation teamwork, students are required to fulfill allotted share of the whole piece of work assigned by the professor and then present the result in front of the class. Through the interviews it was found that the participants had big difficulty in doing oral presentation, and doing presentation brought the participants much pressure and anxiety. Most of them spoke of doing presentation as a big source of their academic stress. When asked where her academic pressure mainly came from, Lu said;

...for almost every course you're asked to participate in class activities and do presentations, and these weigh a lot in evaluation. As for us Chinese international students, English is not our mother language, so we have difficulty in expressing us [in English]. When speaking before the class we generally feel rather nervous. I know in North America students from their childhood have had such class styles as presentation, and they've had much exercise. But for us we have seldom had such class speech even if at universities. So we feel we're foreign-language-speaking children speaking before mother-tongue-speaking adults. Sometimes we feel rather embarrassed.

Because of language deficiency, doing presentations became a big difficulty for Chinese international students. This difficulty affected not only their academic

involvement but also their cooperation as well as their interactions with other students in teamwork. In the interview, Zhu once mentioned that there was a Chinese undergraduate student who exclusively responded by saying “I agree” to his team partners whatever they said to him. The consequence of this was that he seldom put forward his own opinions and contributed little to teamwork, therefore little communication actually occurred between him and his teammates.

Additionally, Chinese students’ lack of self-confidence in their English language abilities put a premium on their choice of less interaction-related involvement in group work. Qin said, “For group work I often do the part I’m good at, for example, I’d like to do some computer work like information search.” This means that Chinese students preferred to take an easy part of the teamwork, which resulted in their not being challenged enough through the academic activities.

Chinese international students’ interaction with other students for academic studies was not only affected by their language deficiency itself, but also by negative reception from first language speakers of English, which could be caused by contemptuousness to the Chinese students’ deficiency in the English language. This was undoubtedly negative for Chinese students’ performance in teamwork and further discouraged their attempts to have more interactions with other students. Zhu mentioned an unpleasant experience she once had:

I remember once I was arranged for to do presentation with another [Canadian] classmate. She felt quite pissed-off to be my partner and had little discussion with me. We did a poor job in the presentation. After that class, I talked to the professor and asked if I could make up by doing another presentation. The instructor said yes. Then I did a presentation before other classmates came for class.

The misunderstanding that Chinese students were hard to cooperate with, as well as an impression that they were clumsy with these activities, bolstered up other students' reluctance to partner up with them during these activities. Consequently, Chinese students generally chose to conduct teamwork only with Chinese peers and thus their isolation was aggravated.

In addition to class discussions and presentation, some participants were found to have difficulties in participating in some other class activities because of language difficulties. Hu, for example, mentioned that due to poor listening English ability he was not even clear about the experiment principles in a laboratory tutorial class and therefore had no teamwork with non-Chinese students:

Researcher: (Laughing) Well, you said that you are not clear about the experiment principles...

Participant: Yeah, because they speak very fast.

Researcher: Why not ask the professor or TA if you are not clear?

Participant: If I ask, they still speak very fast [so I'm still not clear]... Then I sit together with a Chinese guy. He's stayed in Canada for 2 years and he's much better than me at listening to English. I consult him when having a question.

Hu's experiences explain well the phenomenon why Chinese students are often seen sitting together with their compatriot fellows in class.

Obstruction in daily communication

Language deficiency obstructed the Chinese international students' daily communication or interactions with other students. Due to the traditional English teaching methods prevalent in China, which has been focusing on written ability training, Chinese students generally measure even lower on a scale of verbal abilities. Their poor abilities in oral expression and comprehension in the English language hindered their communication with other students.

Yu, who saw language deficiency as the most influential obstacle in Chinese students' normal interactions with other students, commented:

You don't understand what foreigners say, [so] they'd not like to communicate with you; or you cannot express yourself in a clear way, and that would lead misunderstanding. [So] I think the basic reason for this problem is the [English] language. And the language problem is hard to solve.

Chen, who had stronger desire for good relationships with local Canadians for some future development plan in Canada, had a similar opinion about the negative impact of language deficiency on developing social relations with Canadian peers. With efforts to learn more knowledge about Canadian culture, Chen attempted to develop deeper relations with Canadians but she found her language proficiency often limited her from reaching her goal. Although having been in Canada for three years she still did not have non-Chinese friends, and the estrangement between her and her non-Chinese peers exacerbated her willingness to seek help from her Chinese peers when facing difficulties in daily life, including studies. Her remarks gave clues to why Chinese students usually prefer seeking help from co-nationals instead of other students. She said:

As a matter of fact, I'd like to ask help from local Canadians, [because] regarding the courses they have Western concepts which are similar [with the professors'] and closer to their requirements. But, the relationship...I'm not familiar with them, so basically I seek help from Chinese students especially those in higher grades.

Due to the lack of daily communication or interactions with other students, there was little possibility for these Chinese students to build up friendship with other students. The estrangement with non-Chinese students and intimateness with Chinese peers formed pushing and pulling forces, which simultaneously aggravated Chinese

students' isolation from other students and their dependence on compatriot groups. As a result, it became very much difficult for Chinese students to establish regular, stable, or close relationships with other students, let alone develop deep personal friendships with them.

This kind of estrangement from each other formed a breeding ground for a misapprehension - that is, both sides eventually made judgment that the other side was fundamentally inaccessible. This seemed to be more discouraging in developing mutual interactions. Qin, for example, finally gave up the attempt to make friends with non-Chinese students after putting great efforts and yet repeated failure in doing so. As a result of this failure, he concluded that "In fact there're few who really tend to make friends with you." On the other hand, students of other origins were also influenced by such an impression. Zhu mentioned that one of her Canadian classmates named Mike had similar misunderstanding. She said; "He [Mike] said it's strange that Chinese guys are always together with their own fellows and don't like to communicate with others." The misunderstanding that Chinese students dislike communicating with others could naturally discourage other students' attempt to associate with them.

To conclude, Chinese students' limited proficiency in the English language, especially their low level of listening and speaking English abilities, largely hampered their communication and interactions with students from other ethnic backgrounds. Their language deficiency formed a major obstruct in their communication in classroom and other academic activities with their foreign peers as well as instructors, and prevented them from establishing close personal relationships with their peers

and teachers out of the classroom. In a sense language difficulties largely contributed to the indifferent relationships between Chinese students and their non-Chinese peers and instructors. The estrangement from each other, in turn, aggravated the isolation, depleting the both sides', especially the Chinese students', will to develop mutual relationships.

Cultural Divergence

Apart from the language difficulties, divergence between Chinese culture and other cultures were frequently referred to as one of the major causes of these Chinese students' preference for compatriot groupings.

Since the term "culture" is defined in numerous ways, the present study adopts a most recent definition made by Diaz-Rico and Weed (2001):

Culture is the explicit and implicit patterns for living, the dynamic system of commonly-agreed-upon symbols and meanings, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, behaviors, traditions and/or habits that are shared and make up the total way of life of a people, as negotiated by individuals in the process of constructing a personal identity (p. 197).

To more explicitly explain the influence of cultural divergence on the Chinese students' association with students of other cultural origins, the findings of the present study regarding this impact will be summed up in a way that puts more attention to the concrete activities related to everyday living and learning experiences. They are divided into two sub-categories: 1) sharp contrast in living styles and habits, and 2) difference in ways of thinking.

Sharp contrast in living styles/habits

During the interviews and some other casual conversations the participants

mentioned many aspects reflecting contrast between Chinese living styles or habits and those of other students. These contrasts, which reflected in three aspects, functioned, by osmosis, as another kind of force that separated these students from other students.

1. Daily life

First, the participants were interestingly found to live with Chinese compatriot fellows. Zhu was an exception because, at the time of the interview, she had just moved out of the house where she had lived together with Chinese students for two years. The purpose for moving out was to improve her English language skills and Canadian cultural knowledge. Another exception was Hu. He lived in the university residence but was also planning to move out to live with some Chinese students at the end of the residence contract. Living exclusively with Chinese fellows naturally decreased these students' chances to have contact with students of other cultural origins. When talking about the preference to live with compatriots Chinese students generally referred to similarity in living habits as the most important consideration. The participants all stated that Chinese people had many good living habits such as quietness, house hygiene, daintiness about eating, consideration for other housemates, and so on. Some of them did have experience in sharing a house with students of other origins, but for a variety of reasons they finally chose to live with other Chinese students. The most frequently mentioned reasons for making this choice were that other students were too "noisy" and that students from some South Asian countries cooked food with very strong smell of spices. They contrasted this to White students'

way of living which was said to involve frequent parties at weekends and the playing of music very loudly.

2. Interests in leisure or recreation activities

The participants had common feeling that Chinese students had quite different interests in regard to leisure or recreation activities. The participants expressed that the activities they were usually fond of were quite different for those of other especially Canadian students. Playing basketball or table tennis, for example, was one of the most favourite sports for Chinese students, while for Canadian students the most popular sports activity was hockey or baseball. As for recreation activities, Chinese students enjoyed playing poker, singing Karaoke, watching DVD, shopping, or trying new restaurants, while Canadians, according to the participants, were fond of drinking in bars or going to the casino. These differences made it inadvisable for these Chinese students to join other students in leisure or recreation activities, and therefore made it even less possible for both sides to have mutual communication.

For example, when asked the question “What factor(s) do you think seriously prevent(s) you from developing close relationships with non-Chinese people around you?”, Shen said:

Em, I feel...language is one factor. Communication needs language. Another is cultural background. [Different] People are interested in different things. Chinese guys enjoy playing poker together, eating together or such kind of things. Foreigners like to going out to pubs, drinking, chatting or dancing, and these are unacceptable [for us].

Similarly, Qin stated:

...[For White students] There're parties, bars and various activities. But to a Chinese student these activities are no fun. First, I don't love to party; second, I don't go to casino; third, I don't drink alcohol in

bars. So, how can I get together with them while what they enjoy playing is not what I do?

In talking about White Canadian way of doing things, Chinese students were also quick to pass judgment and to position their culture as better than that of fellow White students. Qin's comment, for example, implied some criticism on Windsor University students' taste in terms of leisure or recreation activities. He drew a comparison between students at the University of Windsor and students in Vancouver, and expressed his disagreement with Windsor University students' interest in leisure activities:

I think they should have more "healthier" social activities. I once stayed in Vancouver for a while and [I found that] they [Canadian students there] go playing bowling to fill the blank hours instead of doing something so silly as drinking alcohol in bars or going to casino.

Some female participants similarly linked their failure to develop close friendships with non-Chinese people to different interests in leisure or recreation activities, or conversational topics. When answering the question "What factor(s) do you think seriously prevent(s) you from enhancing your interaction with non-Chinese people around you?", Ma commented, "I think the biggest factor is culture. Cultural backgrounds are different, and what we are interested in doing is also different. I don't like some of their living ways...As a result I don't communicate with them." Lu had the same viewpoint as Ma. She made it clear that the major factor preventing her from developing close relations with non-Chinese people around her is "There are no common topics [between us]".

3. Beliefs and values

Also, the religious beliefs of students were mentioned by the participants as an

aspect related to cultural differences between Chinese and other students. Although the participants, who regarded it a virtue to refrain from commenting on other people's beliefs, did not refer to this factor as immediate cause of their not developing deep contacts with other students, in some aspect, it seemed to effect their choices such as choosing residence places.

Finally, some other cultural differences were also mentioned by the participants in the interview or in casual conversations before or after the interview. For example, when talking about the ideological differences between Chinese youth and Canadian youth, Ma said that she somewhat felt Canadian students lack moral restraint in terms of their attitude towards the relationship between sexes. She thought that in this aspect they were too casual. Although they did not simply ascribe their deficient interaction with Canadian students to these cultural differences, it seemed that they also affected them in finding common conversational topics with these students.

Difference in ways of thinking

Another factor related to cultural divergence that affected Chinese students' interactions with other students is difference in ways of thinking. This difference was found to exist in two major aspects: ideas of making friends, and angles to view and discuss classroom topics.

1. Ideas of making friends

Apart from the differences in living styles or habits, the participants also expressed that Chinese and Canadians had different ideas on making friends. This seemed to be another factor that hindered their association with Canadians students.

The participants felt that in China it was much easier for people to become friends, and the distance between a person and another was not as big as in Canada. Qin, who found it very difficult to make friends with Canadians, made interesting comments in this respect:

According to my understanding of western culture, they [Canadians] make friends in such a way: today he gets to know you, but he doesn't say anything to you; after one or two weeks he says a little to you; three or four weeks later he speaks to you a little more; and after five or six weeks he talks more. One year would have passed when he invites you for dinner for the first time; two or three years later he could be your friends; in the fifth year he might become your close friend; and twenty years later he might become your best friend. This is different from the Chinese way. Chinese people are quicker in making friends. Foreigners keep space between each other and this makes you walk a long, long way before you get into a friend circle.

The participants also felt that Chinese-style friendship seemed to be more stable, reliable, and durable. Ma, although she had been in Canada for three years, often talked by phone or E-mail to her high school friends in China and Vancouver about her problems or difficulties. For her, friendship was something she could rely on. An extreme example in this aspect was Qin, who asserted that "True friends are those you made at primary school and junior middle school".

It can be argued that the attachment these Chinese students felt for Chinese-style friendship is obvious because these students had spent more time in China than they had in Canada. Additionally, early childhood seems a natural way of making friends. The following comment from Qin, however, challenges this perception:

...almost everybody has their own friends, and it's better for them to socialize in their own circles than to make friends with Chinese guys because it's easier for them to understand each other. Once a circle is formed, it's very hard [for an outsider] to get in...And what's more, even if you have a foreign friend you may not necessarily get into his

friend circle. It's difficult for us to get into their circles while in the meantime it's difficult for them to get into our circles.

Qin's comment seems to suggest that Canadian students did not have much intention to make friends with other students. Hu had a similar impression of his Canadian classmates. When asked if his Canadian and other foreign classmates had the interest or wish to associate with Chinese guys, he said; "I feel they don't. They have their own circles and there's no need for them to associate with us."

The impression that Canadians had no intention or wish to communicate with Chinese students seemed to form another obstacle in these Chinese students' social interaction with them. According to Chinese convention, if a person insists on his/her effort to make friends with someone who does not have the same intention, he/she loses face. To lose face is similar to the North American concept of public humiliation, which is regarded as a big disgrace to an individual according to Chinese convention. Therefore, fear of losing face discouraged Chinese students' initiatives in establishing personal contact with Canadian peers from the very beginning of their sojourn life, and eroded their attempts to develop further relationship with them. Hu spoke of his experiences:

When I was still in China and also on the beginning days here I thought we would get close to Canadian students, play together and have communications with them. After the first weeks I began to find that the situation was not as I expected, so I felt low-spirited. Later I found all of them are like this and all students have their own circles, then I felt nothing serious.

Based on his experience Hu' formed an impression that "They [Canadians] are not interested in your culture. The communication [between them and us] is on very casual occasions." His conclusion was "It's difficult [to develop relations] with

Canadians.” As a result, Hu did not take the initiatives in making friends with Canadians.

2. Angles to view and discuss classroom topics

Another difference mentioned by the participants that related to cultural divergence was the angle from which they viewed classroom based topics. They indicated that in daily learning activities like classroom discussions they often found that the angle from which they viewed a problem was different from that of other students. In addition to language deficiency and unfamiliarity with class discussions, this formed another barrier in their participation in classroom activities and their interactions with other students were thus hindered.

Many of the participants indicated that sometimes they did not participate in discussions only because they felt confused of the way other students talked about the topic. They often felt that other students wandered too far from the topic being discussed. Wang expressed her impression of class discussions:

[The instructors] Wonder far from the subject. The students also wonder far from the subject. You feel that you **want** to say something but what you want to say is not the same as what they want. I think this is why we don't say much in discussions...I am wondering if this is because my understanding goes amiss or a problem related to their culture. Sometimes I really want to join in the discussions but I don't know what to say.

In the same vein, Zhu expressed her impression about the class discussions she experienced, “In discussions I always feel we cannot talk in a same way. I don't know why they talk about problems from that angle and what they are talking about when discussing daily affairs.”

Chen indicated that the class discussion was a major source of the pressure she suffered. She said that she felt embarrassed and depressed when she had nothing to say in a class discussion. When asked why she did not participate in the discussions, she explained that was because “Sometimes what you think about the topic is different [from that of others]”. She also had the opinion that the angles from which other students thought about a problem were different from those of Chinese students.

Different ways of thinking negatively affected Chinese students’ participation in class activities. When thinking they had nothing same to say in class they tended to choose to say nothing. A direct result of making few comments on topics being discussed in class was little participation in class activities, and little participation in class activities eventually led to little communication with peer students and teachers in class - a place that the participating students reported as the location where most of their contact with other students occurred. This again resulted in other students’ misinterpretation that Chinese students seemed to prefer to be quiet in group discussions, therefore, they would, again, leave the Chinese students alone, which further decreased the opportunities for communication. As a result, Chinese students’ isolation was deepened.

To sum up, divergence between cultures has been found to be another major factor that affected the Chinese international students’ social interactions with other students. Despite their attempts to establish contacts and then develop deeper relationships with others, they usually failed to reach these goals largely due to cultural divergence, which was reflected in concrete everyday life as differences in living styles or habits, interests in leisure or recreation activities, religious beliefs,

views on relationship between sexes, ideas about making friends, and angles to view a problem. In addition, their impression that their Canadian peers had no interest or intention to communicate with Chinese students discouraged their initiatives in establishing personal contact with Canadian classmates and eroded their attempts to develop further relationship with these students.

Evaluation Criteria

Another major difficulty related to academic studies for the participants was their struggle to adapt to the evaluation criteria, which are very different from those blanketing Chinese schools. Under the educational system of China (which is often called an “examination-oriented education”), high schools and universities still use the prevailing evaluation methods that concentrate in examining how much students know about the contents teachers have instructed them through lectures in class. For the majority of the participants, how to adjust themselves well to a different evaluation system was a source of the stress they suffered. Of the ten participants at least six expressed clearly that different evaluation criteria added to their pressure. Some of them also felt that the evaluation criteria sometimes appeared unfair to Chinese international students because little was taken into consideration about the fact that they were ESL students. For the students at the graduate level, complaints were generally directed at the evaluation method that relied heavily on students’ performances in class discussions and presentation.

Adaptation to the different evaluation criteria brought high pressure to these students. Zhu, for example, expressed obvious stress caused by the different

evaluation methods. She said; “Sometimes I may feel uncertain or anxious, for I am not sure about what my teachers expect of me and how they will evaluate my study. Different teachers have different evaluation criteria.” Despite the difficulty, Zhu managed to obtain admirable, high academic grades during her Master’s studies and had been accepted as a doctoral candidate in the department where she had successfully completed her Master’s program. Based on the fact that these students were concurrently confronted with many other difficulties, like those mentioned in the proceeding sections, it should be reasonable to assume that to achieve excellence in academic studies Zhu must have sacrificed a sufficient amount of social time away from her classmates, which was desirable to her since she has an outgoing personality.

Yu also viewed academic study as the center of his sojourn life. When asked how much pressure he felt about academic studies, he said; “...Let me say like this: I never go to bed before 2 o’clock.” In explaining where the pressure exactly came from, he said: “The pressure is caused by myself. If you want to get a high mark for every course and maintain in a high level, you feel stress.” When asked how often he would participate in collective activities in his department he answered, “I have no time”.

Yu’s focusing on high academic achievements seemed to explain why he did not have more than one Canadian friend. As mentioned before Yu was a student with top academic excellence and a member of the Golden Key International Honours Society. He had good conversational ability in the English language and was very willing to associate with other students. His social interaction network, however, was actually not big. When asked how many non-Chinese friends he had he answered

only one. The reason for this, according to his own explanation, was that his interactions with his peers was “only confined in study”. Studying seemed to take most of his time.

It is worth mentioning that complaints regarding evaluation criteria were concentrated in the assessment method depending heavily on performance in class discussion and presentation. Most of the graduate students felt that some of their instructors put a lot of emphasis on this in assessing students’ achievements. Such an evaluation method was considered unfair to foreign students who speak English as a second language. Lu, for example, expressed her opinion when asked for comments on the grading criteria of her instructors:

Different instructor has different grading criteria. Some instructors take class participation and presentation as the major component [of evaluation]. Thus, Chinese international students are put in a somewhat inferior position [in terms of grading matters]. They probably don’t take into much consideration that different students come from different backgrounds. Reasonable adjustment should be made according to our specific conditions, and the criteria should not be so rigid.

Chen offered similar point of view:

I mean they should take it into consideration that we’re ESL students, right? We come from a foreign country, it should be take into consideration that our [English] language cannot be so good as the locals and that our culture is also different.

Undergraduate students were also concerned about similar problems. Ma, for example, expressed a similar opinion when asked the same question. She said, “I feel when marking the papers the professors don’t take it into consideration if the writer is a native [English] speaker or not.”

Since these participants regarded achieving high academic grades a pride and worthwhile, they paid much efforts in reaching this goal. Under a totally unfamiliar evaluation system that was quite different from that in their homeland, they doubled their efforts to obtain satisfying achievements, which meant that they were left with very little time and energy for social association.

Understanding of Institutional Administration and Corresponding Response

Another crucial finding of this study is that the participants seemed to have a common feeling that the university administration was somewhat indifferent to Chinese international students. As a result, except for the gratitude to the university for offering them the opportunity to study, they generally had no other feelings towards the university that could be described as intimate or emotional. This is different from the situation at universities in China, where students commonly hold deep feelings for their alma mater (to which they often refer using the term *muxiao* which means “mother school”). Their conclusions about the university’s attitudes towards them were found to come from three basic factors: unfamiliarity with campus services, insufficiency of organized activities, and lack of Chinese-origin support staff members. These conclusions to some extent affected these students’ social interactions, especially in the aspect of help-seeking.

Unfamiliarity with campus services

It was found that the participants had little knowledge of the campus services that could have been helpful to their sojourn life here. To examine how much help these students got from the university in handling their problems, the researcher designed an interview question, “How often do you make use of the student services

at the University of Windsor?” In the interviews the participants appeared to know no other campus services than Leddy Library, the gym, and the International Student Centre (of which they seemed to have a generally poor impression). When asked the question “What do you think of the function of peer counseling or buddy system?”, nine of the ten participants looked confused and answered that they did not know there were such services at the university. One participant even asked the researcher if they were some medical services provided by the university. Even the participants who had been studying at the University of Windsor for three years had no idea about the buddy system at the university.

Zhu’s narration exhibited the awkward predicament she experienced due to lack of necessary information about the university’s assistance services:

I don’t know how to seek help. Nobody tells you whom you should go to and ask. We all just don’t know whom. We have to grope your way yourself. Only until you butt your head against a wall do you know you’ve taken a roundabout course and you should go in another way. So it’s very, very hard. So we generally turn to Chinese guys in a higher grade for help. This is a very good method.

Unfamiliarity with campus services contributed to these students’ isolated position in three ways. First, little knowledge of the student services on campus caused them disorientated at the beginning stage of their student life. During their first days, when help was most urgently needed, they generally felt completely lost due to a lack of important information. This was why many Chinese students chose to seek contact with their compatriot fellows from the very beginning of their sojourn lives. Second, ignorance of the student services fostered a misunderstanding among these students that foreign students were treated with indifference by the university, and therefore the best or only way to seek help was through their own fellows. This

misunderstanding in the meanwhile enhanced their sense of isolation. Third, the cognition that little institutional assistance was provided expanded and somehow justified these students' reliance on compatriot groups. As a result of this, the isolation was aggravated.

Insufficiency of organized activities

A general feeling was found among the participants that on the campus there were few activities organized for students to have intercultural communication. Although the university accommodated a large number of international students, opportunities for these students to acquire understanding of other students' cultures were reported to be limited. Of the ten participants eight ascribed their little communication with other students largely to the insufficiency of organized institutional activities on the campus.

Most of the participants thought that positive environment for communication was dispensable for social interaction among students of different origins. Qin, for example, commented:

...you can do nothing without an environment. What's more important, making friends is usually through activities, healthy activities. Or, the school can organize some cultural festivals. For example, some activities like exchanging cookery, giving lectures on students' own countries, etc., or something like "chat group". There're many chat groups in the States.

Wang's opinion was similar to Qin's in this aspect. She said:

I think there are not activities or relevant events organized in the school for us to communicate. There are not such opportunities...This gradually makes it difficult for us to develop personal friendship between us. If the school doesn't provide such opportunity it is very difficult for us to have association [with other students].

Although it is not necessarily appropriate to blame these students' lack of association with other students on the university's deficiency in organizing related activities, the students did convey an understandable identity of views that the university could have done better in creating more opportunities for intercultural communication among the students. For the Chinese students, who were used to collective activities and placed high expectations on organized activities to develop association with other students, lack of such activities did lessen their expected chances for making friends.

Lack of Chinese-origin support staff members

Another common feeling that was found among the participants was about the lack of Chinese-origin support staff members on the campus. To further examine why Chinese students always tended to turn to their own compatriot fellows instead of related administrative staff for help, the question "How many Chinese origin/Chinese-speaking support staff members have you approached at the University of Windsor?" was asked during the interviews. Regarding this question, eight of the ten participants reported none, while one reported seeing some in the cafeteria of the residence building where he lived, and the other one reported a retired employee called Dr. Wei (pseudonym) at the International Student Center. Some participants mentioned that although there seemed to be a few volunteer Chinese girls working at the International Student Center, "they were all CBC (Canadian Born Chinese)". According to the participants, these volunteers could neither speak Mandarin nor understand Chinese conventions. In a sense they were not regarded as

“Chinese” at all. Qin made such a comment about this, “Except for physical appearance they [CBC] have nothing common at all with us.”

The lack of Chinese-origin support staff members did affect these Chinese students’ attitude towards the university. To put it clearly, the fact that few Chinese-origin employees worked at the university left them an impression that they were neglected, and this impression then prevented them from generating positive feelings towards the university. It also affected these students’ decision of whether or not to participate in activities held by some campus organizations. Ma, for example, indicated her reluctance to join other students in activities organized by the International Student Center:

Personally I feel they are not paying much attention (*zhongshi*) to Chinese culture. Every time when I go there I see many Indian and Pakistani guys there. The employees there are all Indians and Pakistanis, so I don’t like to participate in their activities. I often go to the health center because I have yoga there.

Having little positive feelings towards the university administrative staff seemed to generate these students’ reluctance to seek help from the university services. As a matter of fact, very few participants regarded the staff as the first source of help when confronting various problems; instead, they always looked for help only within their own co-national circles. When asked the question “Whom do you usually turn to for help when you have difficulties?”, nine participants referred to Chinese peers, and no one mentioned the university’s support staff.

The insufficiency of organized activities and lack of Chinese-origin support staff members not only directly reduced the opportunities for the Chinese students to get involved in the school community, they also caused feelings of estrangement with

the university. This partially explains these students' isolated situation, since, as Zhu concluded, "So when you don't know who you can ask for help you go back to your own group."

The Inertia of Dependence on Compatriot Groups

Another impressive thing found among the participants was that they had very strong consciousness of grouping attachment, that is, a strong sense of belonging. When mentioning their compatriot fellows they generally used such terms as "our Chinese students" or "our own group". Their use of these terms left the researcher with an impression that they had intimate relations within their groups, and their trust in group members was a sharp contrast towards other students. Judged from another angle, the participants' strong consciousness could also be comprehended as a reflection of their heavy, habitual dependence on their compatriot groups, which indiscernibly led them to self-segregation and eventual isolation.

Although the researcher did not ask the participants a direct question on how much they relied on their groups, these students' heavy reliance on their groups were frequently reflected in their narrations. The fact that they seldom thought of seeking help from peers of other origins, faculties, or support staff members, and that they always chose to try to solve almost all their problems within their own compatriot circles most obviously reflected this reliance. From their narrations it was frequently felt that for them the collective strength of their fellow groups was at the same time their individual strength. Qin, for example, revealed such feelings in the interview. When asked whom he usually approach for assistance when confronted with

academic studies, Qin answered “By self-reliance”, which the researcher at first misunderstood as by himself. Then, the conversation continued like this:

Researcher: Have you ever thought of asking your classmates for help?

Participant: Yes. By “by self-reliance” I mean “by ourselves” - my Chinese friends in our circle. We can clear off almost all problems by ourselves.

Qin also showed his affection for his fellow group. He said, “[We] Lean upon each other, and help those out who have difficulties. And, if you have any worries you can talk to your [Chinese] friends.”

Heavy reliance on co-national groups caused negative effect on these students’ attempts to associate with students of other origins. Some of the participants did realize the disadvantages of this reliance in developing wider social interactions. Zhu said; “...since you are always together with a group, you don’t think of making any other efforts, [because] you feel it’s already comfortable enough.” She especially mentioned Chinese graduate students’ situation in this aspect:

[Chinese] Graduate students are very lonely. They have little contact with others. For academic affairs, they approach the supervisor; for daily life affairs, they approach [Chinese] friends. So, gradually the [social] circle gets smaller and smaller, and [they] become reluctant to go outside [of the circle]. At last they give up [interaction with other students].

Zhu’s opinion was similar to Qin, who made such comment on Chinese students’ dependence on fellow groups:

The disadvantage is that you therefore cannot get into other circles since you have had too much reliance on your own circle. The reliance also dulls your ambition. You feel it’s nice to stay with Chinese people and to eat Chinese food.

The habitual dependence on compatriot fellows helped form Chinese students’ isolated situation. It gradually obliterated these students from attempts to associate

with people outside of their circles and eventually decreased the amount of their interactions with other students. The final result of this was, as Ma viewed on the disadvantages of the dependence on groups, that “Chinese students cannot get into this society in neither the studying nor living aspects.”

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will start with a brief conclusion of the findings. Following the conclusion is the section of Discussions, where the conformity and nonconformity of the findings with previous literature will be explained. The third part of this chapter will present the implications of the present study for Chinese international students in Canada, Canadian university authorities, researchers as well as professionals who have attempted to assist international students in Canada in achieving a desired overseas educational experience, and the whole Canadian society. The chapter will end by offering some recommendations for the University of Windsor authorities.

Conclusion of the Study Findings

The findings of this study provided answers to the two research questions: 1) To what extent are the Chinese international students at the University of Windsor socializing with their compatriot fellows and other students respectively? 2) Why do the Chinese international students at the University of Windsor socially fall into culturally homogenous groups?

First, the present study ascertained the extent to which the Chinese international students at the University of Windsor socialized with their Chinese and non-Chinese peers respectively. Through data analysis it was found that the Chinese international students at the University of Windsor were basically isolated in terms of their social interactions with students of other origins. They socialized within their own compatriot circles or groups, living isolated sojourn lives in a very narrow space

with little social interactions with students of other cultural origins. In a sense they seemed to be living in a Chinese enclave that is located in a country far away from their homeland. They lived together with their Chinese peers, spoke the Chinese language, ate Chinese food, watched Chinese movies, participated in games popular in China, and shared strategies for solving problems. Most of them stayed in or finally withdrew into their own co-national groups, socializing only with their country fellows, having no opportunity or attempts to communicate with their foreign peers and teachers. They seldom thought of seeking help, even during times of crisis, from their foreign classmates, seeing their co-nationals as the only and most effective sources of comfort and support.

Most of these participants, even those who had rather good English abilities, excellent interpersonal skills and strong desire to have intercultural communication with other students, failed to achieve satisfying social interaction experiences. Their socially isolated situation resulted in dissatisfaction with their sojourn lives. Most of the participants, including the ones who had achieved excellent academic results, expressed dissatisfaction with their student lives. What they were currently experiencing at the university was reported to be far apart from what they had expected on their sojourn in Canada. Further, based on the findings, it is reasonable to claim that the Chinese international students' dissatisfaction with their social interaction experiences on campus may quite possibly leave negative impact on their overall educational outcomes.

Second, the findings of this study addressed the question why the Chinese international students at the University of Windsor socially fall into culturally

homogenous groups. Through data analysis, five core themes were determined as major causes leading to Chinese international students' compatriot groupings at the University of Windsor. They were language difficulties, cultural divergence, evaluation criteria, understanding of institutional administration and corresponding response, and the inertia of dependence on compatriot groups.

Discussions

The findings of this study support some previous research addressing international students', in particular Chinese international students', sojourn experiences in Canada. At the same time the findings question the validity of some related assumptions. This section will present discussions about the conformity or nonconformity of the findings with existing literature. It will start with a discussion on the general extent to which Chinese international students socialize with others at a Canadian university environment. Following this section will be discussions about the concrete grouping reasons that are linked to corresponding existent literature. This section will end with discussing other findings which have not been presented in Chapter Four.

Extent of Social Interactions

The present study provides answers to the first research question about the extent Chinese international students socialize with their compatriot fellows and other students respectively. Through data analysis the participants in this study were found isolated in terms of their interactions with student of other origins. This finding is coherent with a lot of research affirming the brutal reality that international students

endure hardships in their interpersonal interactions with locals and other people when adapting themselves to the North American environment (Minichiello, 2001; Lee, 1994; Mickle, 1985; Perry, 1983; Boonyawiroj, 1982; Hull, 1981; Lee, Abd-ella, & Burks, 1981; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Neice & Brown, 1977; Alexander, Klein, Workneh, & Miller, 1976).

This finding gives strong supports to Mickle's (1985) study on the adaptation of Hong Kong students to Canada in which results indicated that a high number of the participants reported experiencing difficulties during their sojourn lives. In a similar way, this finding supports the results of Perry's (1983) survey conducted at the University of Toronto in which nearly 60% of visa students, many of whom were Chinese students from Hong Kong, report feeling alienated.

It should be noticed that the present study differs from one of Mickle's conclusions that those Chinese students who are flexible, friendly and mix easily with people generally tend to have more friends from the host community. In this study even those participants who had these characters reported no Canadian friendship at all. In fact, this finding is similar to the description given by Boonyawiroj (1982) in his case study of nine foreign graduate students at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in which he described the difficulties of these students in making friends.

In this aspect, the finding is also in accordance with some American researchers like Alexander, Klein, Workneh, and Miller (1976), who found that isolation is a fact of life for international students and that intimate international contacts are the exception rather than the rule for these students on a large American campus. Some other American researchers make similar conclusions that the majority

of international students lack social contacts with Americans; they almost exclusively associate with students from their home countries and are not satisfied with the quality and amount of interactions with locals (Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Lee, Abd-ella, Burks, 1981).

This finding also confirms the results of some research conducted almost three decades ago. For example, it agrees with Neice and Brown's (1977) survey on international students studying in Canada. Their survey showed that a high percentage, that is, 22%, of the participants did not have Canadian friends. They found that Chinese students (from Hong Kong) appeared to experience the most problems, and about 55% of them expressed dissatisfaction with their sojourn lives.

It is worth mentioning that this finding also proves the legitimacy of Heikinheimo's (1984) categorization of Asian students in terms of social interactions with locals. Heikinheimo categorizes Asian students into four groups - isolated, isolated and dissatisfied, somewhat integrated, and merged, indicating the amount of interaction they had with Canadians and their attitudes towards their social adjustment in Canada. Heikinheimo's categorization is applicable to demonstrate the serious isolation degree of the participants of this study, most of whom could be exactly classified as isolated, and isolated and dissatisfied, with no single one as merged.

Language Difficulties

An overwhelming majority of participants in the present study reported deficiency in the English language, for one reason or another. When, at the end of the interview, they were asked what probably most seriously hindered them from better

interactions with other students, eight out of ten cited low language proficiency as the root of the problem.

The finding on the importance of language effects on forming relations confirms a lot of research that has cited language as an influential factor in international or immigrant students' adjustment to the host environment (Gougeon & Hutton, 1992; Heikinheimo, 1984; Lee, Abd-ella, & Burks, 1981; White & White, 1981; Selltiz, Cook, Christ, & Havel, 1963). This literature strongly suggests that language capacity has considerable impact on international or immigrant students' social interactions with nationals and people from other countries, and is closely related to the extent to which these individuals get integrated into the new environment.

With regard to the role language proficiency plays in the foreign students' social interaction experiences, the present study provides substantial support for previous literature assuming that positive correlation exists between language proficiency levels and socialization degrees (Mickle, 1984; Dunnett, 1981; Hull, 1981). Of the ten participants, eight cited difficulties in the English language as a major obstacle in their social interactions with Canadians and other students and claimed no friendship with students from other origins. Two of the participants, who had comparatively higher English proficiency, claimed closer relationship with Canadian peers - although the number of close Canadian friends they had made was a single individual. The one who seemed to have the most serious difficulty in socializing with non-Chinese students as well as his teachers was exactly the one who was found to have the biggest language problems. Based on the data analysis results

and a general impression of the participants gained during the interviews and casual conversations, it was found that the amount of participants' contact with non-Chinese students was proportional to their English language capacity.

This study confirms the research findings of Gougeon and Hutton (1992) and White and White (1981), who argue that poor language proficiency forms a barrier in the adjustment of students with various cultural backgrounds to the Canadian environment. It also agrees with Heikinheimo (1984) who makes special mention of oral or conversational English as critical in Asian and African students' social interactions and caused adjustment problems.

In regard to the importance of conversational English in foreign students' adaptation to the host environment, the related finding in this study supports some writers in their suggestion that the relation between language fluency and social interaction is most likely a reciprocal one with greater language confidence leading to greater participation in social interaction that in turn leads to improved command of the host language (Selltiz, Cook, Christ, & Havel, 1963). In the present study the experiences of the participants in terms of language proficiency demonstrate that the better a participant spoke English, the more willingly and frequently he/she would like to use English to communicate with others and the higher his/her English level would become. On the contrary, the lower a participant's English level was, the more reluctantly he/she would like to interact with others, and as a result, his/her confidence in English language became less and less and finally his/her English level remained the same. For many of the participants, the feeling of not being able to speak English well discouraged them from taking the initiative to associate with

Canadians as well as other students. Staying in or withdrawing into a completely Chinese-cultural environment reduced their chances for developing higher English proficiency, which in turn exacerbated their isolation at the English-speaking campus.

It is important to mention that in regard to the importance of oral skills among the English language abilities, the related finding of the present study contradicts Lee, Abd-ella and Burks (1981) who reported that the least important English language skill cited by international students was oral English. All the participants of the present study had the opinion that speaking English well mattered much for their sojourn lives in Canada; fluency in oral English meant more easiness in achieving higher academic results, and in communicating with others and then developing mutual understanding and friendships. One participant, for example, said that she experienced higher degrees of loneliness and other difficulties during the first two years of her student life at the university. Situations turned better for her in the third year, because through persevering in hard work and unremitting efforts, she improved her spoken English significantly and became much more confident in socializing with non-Chinese classmates. In order to practice her oral English on a daily basis, as mentioned before, she moved out of the house where she had comfortably lived for two years with some other Chinese students and went to live with a Canadian woman whose house was located farther away from the university campus. What is more impressive is that many of the participants mentioned in casual talks that when they first arrived in Canada the most usual warning they received from older Chinese peers was “Don’t live together with Chinese guys because you would lose opportunities to practice English”. Unfortunately, however, it seems to have become a common

phenomenon that Chinese students generally prefer to live solely with their compatriot fellows, which is actually directly opposite to their original wishes.

Lee, Abd-ella and Burks' (1981) opinion, however, may be considered accurate if examined from another angle, that is, from the angle of students' academic grades. A fact revealed in this study was that many of the participants received rather high grades for their academic study although they had difficulties in oral English. Despite their comparatively poor performances in class activities such as class discussions and presentations - which involved much oral expression, many of them did quite well in their studies and achieved high marks. A common opinion of the participants was that when doing assignment they preferred written work, and their written assignments usually received very good marks. Based on this finding, Lee, Abd-ella and Burks' (1981) report that the least important English language skill cited by international students was oral English is reasonable.

Apart from its support for literature that links language proficiency to international or immigrant students' general adjustment to the host environment, this finding reaffirms some research that specifically relates to the effects of language proficiency on the lives of Chinese international or immigrant students. The finding is in accordance with one of the findings of Minichiello's (2001) study, which cited the poorness of language ability as a major adjustment issue for the Chinese secondary school students interviewed in her study. Minichiello suggested that these students' inclination for such peer relationships could be ascribed to the fact that they were confronted with some language problems, one of which was "their (English) vocabulary was so limited that expressing it was far easier in their native tongue" (p.

83). According to the explanation of the participants of the present study, one of the major reasons why they generally chose to seek help from compatriot fellows instead of other peers was that they could make their meaning absolutely clear in just a few Chinese words or sentences.

The finding is in agreement with Chen's (1996) study on the experience of Chinese youth adjusting to Canadian education in that English language proved to be a huge, staggering problem for Chinese students at Canadian schools. According to Chen, these students generally take six to seven years to catch up to the grade norm in academic performance in English. Apart from the difficulties they have to overcome in terms of academic studies, these students experienced more hardship in their social lives due to the lack of good English proficiency. Chen indicates:

“All Chinese students entering Canadian classroom were placed in an all-English school environment where their problems in understanding and expressing themselves in English not only resulted in difficulties getting decent marks [in English] but also in disorientation in their social lives because of their inability to function effectively in the spheres of language and culture.” (p. 17)

Chen exemplifies this point by telling the story of a participating girl who reported that because of poor English skills she was once so depressed and loneliness that she even thought of giving up her study in Canada. This girl's experience accurately reflects the hardships the participants of the present study went through during their sojourn lives at the university, in particular the hardships they experienced during the first months on campus. Similarly, this finding supports Chow (1997) and Mickle's (1985), who suggested that in regard to Chinese students' separation from other students language barrier has been regarded a critical factor.

Finally it is worth mentioning that this language proficiency finding is in agreement with some research conducted as early as the 1970s on Chinese students' learning experiences in the United States and Canada (McCalla, 1973; Sue & Frank, 1973; Watanabe, 1973; Weisman, Snadomsky, & Gannon, 1972; as cited in Mickle, 1985). These researchers found that Chinese students experienced great difficulties with the English language. In a more specific way, Wong (1977) pointed out that of the English language problems the interviewed Chinese students encountered the first problem was listening comprehension, which was followed in the order of difficulty by verbal expression of ideas and writing. The present study is in accordance with Wong's findings in that most of the participants regarded comprehending and speaking English as the most difficult aspects of their language problems. As a matter of fact, a few of the participants' abilities in reading and written expression in English seemed to be quite high. For example, one of the participating graduate students even got A⁺ for one of her courses which were rather demanding in terms of English writing skills (with all of her other courses being graded no lower than A⁻), while she reported considerable difficulty in oral English.

In terms of the reasons why Chinese students have the most difficulties in the English language, the related finding of the present study confirms the notion of previous research that Chinese students' difficulties in the English languages are largely due to the radical differences between the Chinese and English languages. Wong (1977), for example, points out that all Chinese learners of English must adjust to a radically different stress and intonation system and a new orthography which is alphabetic instead of ideographic. These differences make English a very difficult

language for a Chinese speaker to learn. On the other hand, the finding supports Chen's (1996) criticism against the English teaching methodologies in China. Chen writes:

Chinese teaching methodology usually lacks the emphasis on communicative competence which Western language teachers consider essential for effective second language learning...Although English has long been part of the elementary and secondary school curricula in China, the results are mediocre" (p. 16).

To sum up, in terms of the English proficiency, the present study has found that the participating Chinese students were generally confronted with big difficulties in the English language, in particular in comprehending and speaking English. This finding raises a future research question as to how Chinese international students manage to obtain higher academic grades while they have big troubles in the use of the English language, which is involved in every single aspect of their student lives in Canada.

Cultural Divergence

The earliest literature that was found for this study about the influence of cultural background on an individual's adaptation to a new cultural environment is Beck's (1963) study on international students in the United States. Beck hypothesizes using the term "culture distance" that social interactions will be more difficult for students from home cultures that are very different from the host culture and easier for those students from cultures that are similar to the host culture. This hypothesis is supported by a large number of researchers in the succeeding decades (Grayson, 1994; Ward & Searle, 1991; Mickle, 1985; Perry, 1983; Dunnett, 1981; Klineberg & Hull,

1979; Yek, Chu, Klein, Alexander and Miller, 1979, as cited in Mickle, 1985; Hull, 1978; Neice & Brown, 1977; Bae, 1972).

With one of the most ancient cultural heritage in the world, the participating Chinese students were experiencing dramatic cultural contrasts at this Canadian university - a typical occidental-cultured educational institute in a country that has only a very short history. Many difficulties experienced by the participants were perceived as derived from their different cultural background. Difference in aspects like food, values in friendship, recreation and leisure activities, interest or hobbies, living habits, relationships between sexes, and so on, do form barriers in Chinese students' association with others. In addition, differences in ways of thinking were reported by many of the participants as a barrier in their communication with other students. This result is consistent with one of Mickle's (1985) research findings that of the students having difficulty in making friends with Canadians the majority (72%) cited difference in ways of thinking.

Foust (1981) indicated that language is not the only factor involved in cross-cultural communication. This means that language ability on its own is not the only skill that one has to demonstrate in these interactions. Culture, how one speaks, and how a person acts culturally, is also equally important. Following Foust's observations, it is reasonable to conclude that some of the misunderstanding and disagreements that occur between Chinese international students and Canadian peers resulted from differences in cultural performances. This conclusion is to some extent supported by the present study, which found that the participants who had good conversational ability still failed to develop good or deep relations with Canadians,

even though in the meanwhile they had strong desire for intercultural friendships. As Wang, a participant of this study, commented:

They would think you should be like this or like that, but in many aspects it doesn't reflect the fact. Hearing these (referring to what they say) you will become upset and then you'll feel they don't know us. Then you feel in your heart some resentment, and you don't want to go on with association with them.

In regard to this point, the present study also supports Roland's (1996) indication that misunderstanding and dissonance would occur between different races due to the lack of knowledge towards different cultures.

The present study offers different views from some researchers about how culture works for Chinese international students in Canada. The first view contradicted by this study is offered by Ward and Searle (1991), who states that students who have a stronger cultural identity are less willing to adapt to the local culture, and they accordingly encounter more difficulties in their relationships with local people. This explanation does not seem to fit the general fact found in the present study because almost all the participants had great expectations and strong desire for deep interactions with the locals and later integration into the Canadian society. The second view that the present study questions is some researchers' assumptions on ethnicity and leisure activities. These researchers argue that to a great extent the leisure activities that an individual takes will be influenced by the individual's cultural values (Jackson & Burton, 1989; Kelly, 1989, as cited in Hsu, 1998). It is true that the participants of the present study did express different interests in leisure or recreation activities from their foreign especially Canadian peers, but it is the popularity of the activities rather than the culture per se that made these students

choose them. For example, Chinese students prefer sports like basketball, table tennis, or badminton just because these sports are popular in China; their love for Karaoke is for the same reason.

Differences in Classroom Strategies and Evaluation Systems

A large amount of literature has shown that big differences exist between Chinese and Western educational philosophies and practical systems. According to Chinese traditional ideas, the teacher is considered as a distributor of knowledge while the students the passive receivers of the knowledge; the students are expected to master what the teacher has instructed them. Marks in examinations, which are usually composed of questions requiring objective answers, are considered as the most important, if not the only, criteria to measure a student's learning results. Since "The entire process of education is shaped by the culture within which it operates" (Ballards & Clanchy, 1991, p. 21), Chinese students who have received twelve or more years school education in China have special, unique learning characteristics, which are quite different from those of Western learners (Lee, 2004; Salili, 2001; Chan, 1999; Jin & Cortazzi, 1993; Flowerdew & Miller, 1992; Ballards & Clanchy, 1991; Yee, 1989; Liu, 1986) or often variant with Western academic culture and conventions (Kirby, Woodhouse, & Ma, 1999). The present study gives general support to these literature in that differences do exist between Chinese and Canadian students' views on teaching and learning, and that the participating students did experience difficulties in adapting themselves to the Canadian educational models, especially in the aspect of classroom performances and evaluation criteria.

The finding of this study that Chinese students' were unaccustomed to Western classroom culture and were reluctant to participate in classroom activities such as discussions and presentations reaffirms some research that has more specifically observed that Chinese students are reluctant to present opinions or ask questions (Yildiz & Bichelmeyer, 2003; Chan, 1999; Biggs, 1996; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995).

The fact that the participants generally felt great pressure from these activities is in tune with the findings of Yildiz and Bichelmeyer's (2003) study, which indicates that Chinese students studying in Western schools may feel uncomfortable with the shift from teacher-centred to student-centred learning.

While the findings of this study provide support to prevailing literature stating that Chinese students lack original or critical thinking (Ballards & Clanchy, 1991; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Chan, 1999), it is interesting that some of the participants' experiences in class discussions at the same time support Biggs and Watkins (1996)'s opinion that Chinese students are not at all deficient in critical thinking. According to Biggs and Watkins, when responding to the teacher's questions or discussion topics, Chinese students are used to responding closely to the questions or topics instead of skipping far from them. This could explain why some of the participants often felt confused during class discussions by other students' wandering far off the point being discussed, and this also prevented them from actively participating in the discussion because they thought the discussion was somewhat worthless and did not necessarily address the topic as intended.

This study presents disagreement with Flowerdew and Miller's (1995) explanation of Chinese students' reluctance to present opinions and ask questions.

Flowerdew and Miller indicate that a possible explanation for Chinese students' reluctance to put forward their opinions and questions is that they are afraid of criticism from the teacher and of losing face if they give wrong opinion or ask silly questions. This explanation seemed to be limited, because it consorts with the fact that Chinese students spoke little in class primarily because of some other factors like unfamiliarity with class activities involving much oral expression, deficiency in the English language, and difference in ways of thinking.

This disagreement, however, could be caused by the different sites where Flowerdew and Miller's (1995) study and the present study were conducted. In Hong Kong, where Flowerdew and Miller's study was conducted, class activities and student-teacher relations are still more or less influenced by traditional Chinese conventions. According to Chinese convention, if a student gives a wrong answer to the teacher's question in class, it is a disgrace or at least something that disappoints the teacher. Flowerdew and Miller's opinion could well explain why Chinese students in a Chinese cultural school context seldom actively answer questions or put forward their own opinions in class. To the participants of this study such worries as being criticized by the teacher or loss of face were comparatively minimal.

As for the findings related to these students' difficulties in adapting to Canadian evaluation criteria, literature about this issue is limited. It is worth noticing, however, that Chinese students were found to have experienced considerable difficulties in adjusting themselves to the Canadian assessment systems. Concurrently, driven by some other motivations like desire for excellent academic achievements, the struggle for better adaptation to the Canadian-styled academic evaluation criteria,

to some extent reduced the time and energy they spent on social interactions with other students.

Another point worth indicating is that the participants' general attitudes towards the advantages of Canadian evaluation criteria are affirmative. Most of the participants expressed that the Canadian assessment methods are helpful in inspiring students' luminous ideas and fostering their ability to solve problems independently, although at the same time, they felt the methods that heavily relied on performance in class discussions and oral presentation were somewhat unfair to Chinese students. In light of the contradiction, efforts to explore assessment methods that could be both instructive for these students' development and fairer in grading their study should be worthwhile.

Peer and Teacher-student Relations

Researchers have found that international students' attitudes towards the host country and their sojourn life are positively associated with the degree and quantity of contact with locals (Mickle, 1985; Hull, 1981; Alexander, Workneh, Klein, & Miller, 1976). The present study supports these researchers. Since indifferent peer and teacher-student relationships have been mentioned as major aspects of the participants' isolation and related discussion has been presented in the section Extent of Social Interactions, the following discussion will focus on the viewpoint that links Chinese students' relationships with locals.

In the present study seven out of ten participants expressed dissatisfaction with their student life at the University of Windsor primarily because of their rare or no social interactions with local Canadian peers, even though a greater part of them

achieved admirably high academic achievements. Two of them, based on the fact that they had comparatively more frequent contacts with Canadian peers, claimed more satisfaction with their student life at the university.

This finding supports Su's (1995) and Mickle's (1985) studies, which found that students who were isolated from Canadians or had limited interactions with Canadians seem to be less satisfied with their student life, especially their social life in Canada than students who had more Canadian friends and relatively permanent relationships with Canadians.

In a similar way, this finding supports Hull's (1981) "Modified Cultural Contact Hypothesis", which suggests that foreign students who have more interactions with locals are more satisfied with their total sojourn experiences, both academically and non-academically, than those who are withdrawn in their own national or ethnic groups.

Another finding of this study that is related to peer relations is that Chinese students' interactions with other students were mainly confined within academic studies. This finding is consistent with the result of the research by Alexander, Workneh, Klein and Miller (1976) who found that the activities Chinese students carried out weekly with host people are only conversations about classes or daily events.

The Inertia of Dependence on Compatriot Groups

Interviews and casual conversations revealed that all the participants had a strong sense of belonging and affection for their compatriot groups. The participant who indicated that he did not care about social interactions was also found to have

intimate relationships with his Chinese peers. Like many of the Chinese students at the university, he lived in a house where all the residents were Chinese. The thought of belonging to a group of friends seemed to bring these students much comfort and confidence. In a sense the Chinese circles or groups seemed to be the source of all that is needed for learning and living in this foreign environment. It was found that soon after his/her arrival at the university a newly arrived student would try to find and approach some other Chinese students, and once he/she got into a fellow circle, he/she became less inclined to look for outside associates, because, as some of the participants stated, staying within the fellow circles was comfortable enough. Moreover, the fact that, as one of the participants indicated, they could clear off almost all problems by themselves discouraged their efforts in expanding their social networks.

This finding is consistent with the results of some previous studies discussing the reasons of co-national groups. Some researchers indicate that individuals gravitate to co-nationals because of the security that is provided through social interactions with people from their home countries (Popadiuk, 1998; Mansfield, 1995; Su, 1995; Oberg, 1954). Feelings of homesickness, loneliness, frustration, and loss decrease with social contacts with compatriot fellows. Coelho (1981) points out that a sudden immersion into the host culture may be too much for an incoming foreign student, so the relationship with co-nationals can be valuable for his/her adjustment especially during the initial stage. For this point of view, the findings of the present study provide support, although it cannot explain why most of the participants still confined

their social interaction within Chinese circles even if some of them had stayed in Canada for more than three years.

The situation that, as one of the participants indicated, there were a lot of Chinese students at the University of Windsor seemed to have gradually limited Chinese students' attempts to have more contacts with other students because socialization within the Chinese circles had already met their need for a sojourn life, both psychologically and in terms of everyday life. This finding is consistent with the study of Minichiello (2001), who found that one of the reasons for Chinese students' alienation in the Canadian secondary school setting is the large number of Chinese speaking students. The experiences of the participants of this study fit in well with Minichiello's explanation that in a school accommodating a large number of Chinese co-nationals Chinese students are buffered and protected by their home culture within the new educational and cultural contexts.

Another reason concluded by Minichiello (2001), however, seems to be unsuitable to explain this study's participants' failure in their social interactions with students of other origins. Minichiello ascribes Chinese students' unsuccessful integration into the new environment partially because, as she states, they did not see the need since many of his participants saw their stay in Canada as temporary, they had no intention of integrating into the Canadian environment and yearned for the time they would return home. According to the findings of the present study, all of the participants, no matter where they would like to live after graduation, indicated strong intentions to integrate into the Canadian society either for a future development in Canada or better qualification for good career prospects in

economically westernized China. All the participants had a clear awareness of the disadvantages of the dependence on co-national groups. The participants expressed that dependence on Chinese groups decreased their opportunities to improve their English language abilities, to learn Canadian culture, to associate with other students, and eventually, to mix within the community.

About Other Findings

At the end of the data analysis process, some themes that had been estimated as major factors hindering Chinese students' social interactions with other students were found only to be minor or immaterial. Among these themes are parents/family expectations and racial discrimination.

Parents/Family expectations

Some researchers have referred to parents/family expectations as a barrier in Chinese students' successful adaptation to a new environment (Chen, 1996; Mansfield, 1995; Xue, 1995; Bolton, 1993; Sun, 1993; Wang, 1990). These researchers suggest that high expectations from parents or family - which often cause great pressure on Chinese students, and traditional Chinese values - which make Chinese students experience more conflicts when coping with a new environment, affect these students' integration into Canadian school community.

The findings of the present study do not provide support for the above-mentioned points. In this study parents/family expectations were found to have little effect on Chinese students' coping with the new educational and cultural environments. An impressive thing found among the participants was that all of them, from undergraduate level to doctoral level, felt high pressure from their academic

studies. These participants left the researcher an impression that to achieve good academic results they had to put every effort in studying. When asked where the pressure came from, most of the participants responded that it came from themselves, which means that as individuals, they had high ambitions about their academic studies. Among the ten participants of this study, none indicated that their parents put high expectations on their study. On the contrary, most of them said that what their parents expected and wished of them most was to be healthy and happy. In terms of expectations related to traditional values, they seemed to feel no stress from this aspect. Many of the participants mentioned that their parents often encouraged them to have contacts with other students, so that they could broaden their outlook and be well prepared for future developments. This could be possibly explained by the fact that most of the participants have parents who have higher education experiences and open minds for cultural disparity.

However, it is worth indicating that the incoherence of this finding with previous research could be because different study participants were involved. The studies mentioned above were all conducted with Chinese students at Canadian secondary schools, while the participants of this study were exclusively students studying at a Canadian university. Chinese parents often have high expectations on their children in terms of education, but their expectations may differ, or be lower, when their children shift from middle school level to university or college level.

Racial discrimination

Racial discrimination is cited by many researchers as a factor hindering

international or immigrant students' adaptation to Canada (Chow, 1997; Su, 1995; Gougeon and Hutton, 1992; Mickle, 1985; Perry, 1983). In the present study, however, racial discrimination was not perceived by the participants as a factor that contributed to their isolation. As a matter of fact, none of the ten participants reported such unpleasant experiences as related to racial discrimination. Although one participant did mention that someone once told him that the poster on a Chinese student's door was torn down and stepped on, no participants had personal experiences related to racial discrimination. On the contrary their general impression about Canadians is that they are nice and polite people. When asked the question "What do you feel as a student of Chinese origin?", all the students answered "pingchang", which means "ordinary", "usual" or "nothing special". It is reasonable to assume then that racial discrimination is not an obstacle hindering Chinese students' social interactions with Canadian students.

Implications

The findings of the present study have implications for present and prospective Chinese international students in Canada, Canadian university authorities, and, from a long point of view, they also have implications for the whole Canadian society.

First, this study provides a guide for Chinese international students who are currently studying at Canadian higher educational institutions. Through closely examining the participants' sojourn experiences in comprehensive angles, this study demonstrates a lively picture of the true world where Chinese international students

are being going through one of their most important life periods. Reading about the experiences of the participants of this study will help other Chinese international students better understand their own situations, and actively find strategies for survival in Canadian institutions. For perspective students coming to study in Canada, this study will be helpful in that it will provide them guiding information about sojourn life on Canadian campus so that from the very beginning when they plan for their studies in Canada they can better prepare themselves for the prospective Canadian sojourn and pro-actively avoid some unwanted experiences.

Second, the findings of this study have implications for the authority of the University of Windsor and other Canadian university authorities. It provides information about the needs, hopes, and perspectives of Chinese international students - who are becoming the biggest consumer group in Canadian international education market. University authorities will benefit from this study when they become aware of the problems and challenges Chinese international students face, their attitudes towards their host universities, and their expectations on their Canadian learning experiences. A better understanding of the factual situation of these students will help the authorities assist them, in a more effective way, in achieving a better sojourn experience.

Third, this study has implications for researchers as well as professionals who have the good intention to assist international students in Canada in achieving a desired Canadian educational experience. The findings of this study add to the literature addressing related issues and, more specifically, to the literature on Chinese international students' social interaction experiences in Canada, which to date is

unfortunately deficient. The findings of this study point to several directions for future research. There are areas where deeper understanding is needed: How do Chinese international students manage to achieve relatively high academic levels while facing a big number of difficulties in their sojourn lives? What are other especially Canadian students' perspectives in Chinese international students' social interaction preference and situations? Why, among international students, do Chinese-speaking students have the most difficulties in the English language?

Lastly, from a long point of view, this study may have implications for the whole Canadian society, where "Racial and ethnic differences are accepted as positive qualities that not only enhance the collective well-being of the population, but also promote the unity, identity, and prosperity of the country as a whole" (Fleras, 1992, p. 22).

Recommendations

Since the university benefits a lot by having Chinese international students, it is also critical that it addresses these students' needs for social interactions in the university community. It is the responsibility of the university to respond to students' needs and make related improvements. The findings of this study necessitate the following recommendations for the University of Windsor authorities:

1. It is clear from this study that Chinese international students value organized activities with peers of other origins. They regard organized activities the best and the most decent channels to approach, establish and develop relationships with others. To meet their needs, the university should purposely organize regular

campus activities in which students of all cultural origins can get easy access to each other and develop good understanding of different ways of being.

2. It is also clear from this study that the beginning days at the university are the most difficult for newly arrived Chinese international students, and, as a result of these difficulties, they are forced to turn to compatriot groups. Therefore, the university should strengthen the student service staff by, for example, setting up additional windows or offices where staff members who can speak Mandarin are available, or recruiting more Buddy System volunteers who come from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds as these students. The provision of such services has a lot of advantages: it can relieve newly arrived students' confusion and embarrassment (which are usually caused by low conversational English abilities) by making them feel supported and cared for by the university; and it can encourage students to take active steps to have interactions with others from different ethnic groups in the new environment.
3. This study has revealed that the deficiency in the English language often causes Chinese international students to choose teammates for group work only within their compatriot peers – which, in turn, decreases their opportunity to improve English abilities and further limits their academic involvement. This necessitates that instructors work out solutions for group work such as intentionally grouping Chinese students up with Canadian English native speakers.
4. This study has found that low oral English ability is a major problem for most of the Chinese international students, and that unfamiliarity with class activities such as group discussions and presentations affects these students' class performance

and eventually discourages their interest in academic involvement. Based on this fact, faculties should consider making certain adjustments in their evaluation criteria when assessing the academic achievements of these students. In addition, more flexible English language programs, that is, programs that can be attended with more flexible time schedules than formal ESL programs, should be placed on the docket.

5. As an institution where international students take up 11% of the student population, the university should ensure that host students, faculty and staff members are adequately prepared for international students' sojourn. A handbook that provides information about international students including where these students come from, why they have come, introductions to their countries and cultures, and the nature of the problems they experience in Canada should be prepared and made available to related host parties. This can help the host people in the university community have meaningful knowledge of the students they are studying with or working for, and remove communication obstacles which are usually caused by worries and fears of offending these students by improper expressions or behaviors resulted from ignorance.

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Appendix A



Today's Date: October 12, 2005
 Principal Investigator: Ms. Jiao Jicheng
 Department/School: Education
 REB Number: 05-176
 Research Project Title: Exploring the reasons for student ethnic groupings: the case of
 Chinese students at the University of Windsor
 Clearance Date: October 5, 2005
 Project End Date: April 26, 2006

 Progress Report Due:
 Final Report Due: April 30, 2006

This is to inform you that the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (REB), which is organized and operated according to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* and the University of Windsor *Guidelines for Research Involving Human Subjects*, has granted approval to your research project on the date noted above. This approval is valid only until the Project End Date.

A Progress Report or Final Report is due by the date noted above. The REB may ask for monitoring information at some time during the project's approval period.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. Minor change(s) in ongoing studies will be considered when submitted on the Request to Revise form.

Investigators must also report promptly to the REB:

- a) changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
- c) new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

Forms for submissions, notifications, or changes are available on the REB website: www.uwindsor.ca/reb.

We wish you every success in your research.

Dr. Maureen Muldoon
 Chair, Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. Nombuso Dlamini, Social Work
 Linda Bunn, Research Ethics Coordinator

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

Appendix B: i)

Research Participants Recruitment Letter

Date _____

Dear Chinese peers,

Thank you for reading this letter for recruiting participants in my Master's thesis research. I am a Chinese International student coming from Chongqing, China, and I am currently studying as a Master's candidate at the Faculty of Education of the University of Windsor. My research is on the ethnic student groupings on our university campus. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study and I am excited about the possibility of your participation in it. The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons for Chinese student groupings at the University of Windsor. It is aimed at seeking effective ways to help the Chinese students in Canadian universities to cast away dependence on the culturally homogenous groups, which to a great extent hampers our communication with students from other cultural backgrounds. It is also aimed at helping the Chinese students in Canadian universities to get more opportunities for enjoying cultural diversity.

The research model I am going to use is a qualitative one through which I am seeking comprehensive depictions or descriptions of your learning as well as living experiences at the University of Windsor. In this way I hope to illuminate or answer my research question why the Chinese students at the University of Windsor prefer to stay within the culturally homogenous circles or groups while having limited communication with students from other cultural backgrounds.

Through your participation as a subject, I hope to understand the essence of ethnic students groupings on Canadian university campuses as it reveals itself in your experience. You will be asked to recall specific episodes, situations, or events that you experienced in learning and other living activities at the university of Windsor. I am seeking vivid, accurate, and comprehensive portrayals of what these experiences were like for you: your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as situations, events, places, and people connected with your experiences.

You will be expected to do the following specific things if you agree to participate in my research: 1) attend a 60 minute, one on one face-to-face interview with me; 2) participate in a group discussion with other 9 subjects (if necessary); and 3) check the accuracy of the data provided by or related to you through e-mail.

I am looking forward to and value your participation in my study. If you are interested in my study or/and have any further questions before making the decision to participate, please contact me by e-mail: _____ (Please note that I am checking my e-mail box every single minute.)

With warm regards,

Jiao Jicheng

from the Faculty of Education of the University of Windsor

Appendix B: ii)

诚邀参与论文研究

招 募 信

亲爱的中国同学：

感谢您阅读这封邀请参与本人硕士论文研究项目的招募信。我是来自中国重庆的国际学生，现于温莎大学教育系攻读教育硕士学位。我的研究是关于温莎大学少数民族学生结群现象的。我珍视您对我的研究将会起到的至关重要的作用，热切期望您能参加我的研究。本项研究旨在探究中国学生在温莎大学校园结群现象的原因，它更大的目标在于寻求有效的方法帮助在加拿大大学求学的中国学子摒弃对单一（中国）文化小团体的依赖，因为这种依赖很大程度地妨碍了我们与来自其他文化背景的学生的交流。它的目标还在于帮助在加求学的中国学子获取更多的机会享受多元文化。

我将采用的研究模式属定性（qualitative）研究，运用这种模式我将尽力对您温莎大学的学习及生活经历加以综合描述。我希望通过这种方法来阐明或回答我所研究的问题，那就是为什么温莎大学的中国学生更愿意呆在单一（中国）文化圈子或小团体内，而非非常有限地与来自其他文化背景的学生交流。

通过您的参与，我希望弄清加拿大大学校园内少数民族学生结群现象的实质，而该实质在您的经历中可见一斑。我将请求您回顾您在温莎大学的学习及生活经历，而后尽力对您的所想、所感和所为等加以生动、准确和综合的描述。

如果您同意参加我的研究，希望您能参与下述具体事务：1）接受我约60分钟的面谈式的采访；2）和其他9位参与者参加一次集体讨论（如有必要）；3）通过电子邮件查验您所提供的信息是否被准确记录。

我真诚盼望您参加我的研究。如果您对我的研究感兴趣，或者在做参与决定之前有什么问题，请发电子邮件到jcyj@uwo.ca或jcyj@uwo.ca与我联系。（请注意我时刻查看我的电子邮箱。）

再次感谢！

顺颂

秋安！



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: **Exploring the Reasons for Student Ethnic Groupings: The Case of Chinese Students at the University of Windsor**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Jiao Jicheng**, a Master's student from **Faculty of Education** at the University of Windsor.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact **Dr. Nombuso Dlamini**, the supervisor of this study, at **253-3000 ext. 2331**.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons for Chinese student groupings at the University of Windsor. It is aimed at seeking effective ways to help Chinese students in Canadian universities to cast away their dependence on their culturally homogenous groups, which to a great extent hampers their communication with students from other cultural backgrounds. It is also aimed at helping the Chinese students in Canadian universities to get more opportunities for enjoying cultural diversity.

In recent years Canada welcomed more than 100,000 international students from over 203 countries around the world, and today there continues to be an increase in the number of international students coming to study in Canadian universities. Multicultural education, which openly acknowledges ethnocultural variation, attracts numerous students from China into Canadian universities every year. Out of admiration for multicultural education, myriads of Chinese students choose to go abroad to study in Canadian universities. With the student population of Canadian universities becoming culturally diverse, it becomes an urgent issue to explore whether international students in Canadian universities are experiencing a multicultural education, which is expected to bring them opportunities for sharing cultural diversity on campus. This study will investigate whether Chinese students in Canadian universities do obtain the admired and envisioned multicultural education experience, with its specific objectives focused on finding out the reasons for Chinese students' preference to stay within culturally homogenous groups.

Built on extant literature about student ethnic groupings, this study, which will be conducted with Chinese students at a Canadian university, will advance research on this issue by deriving findings that may either confirm or diverge the extant research findings. It can also suggest new questions and provide the basis for further research.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

1. **Read and sign Consent Form;**
2. **Attend a 60 minute, one on one face-to-face interview with the investigator;**
3. **Participate in a group discussion with other 9 subjects (if necessary);**
4. **Check the accuracy of the data provided by or related to you through e-mail.**

In detail: A one on one face-to-face interview will be conducted with you in a natural setting. You are expected to answer 29 open-ended questions during the interview. The interview will be about 60 minutes long. If necessary a group discussion will be organized after the interviews are completed. Through the group discussion the subjects can exchange opinions so that the investigator can better synthesize the subjects' multiple perspectives and obtain a comprehensive view on the two thesis questions. The interview and group discussion

will be audio taped and notes will be also taken about your behavioral responses. To ensure that questions and answers will be comprehended accurately, the Chinese language (Mandarin) will be used throughout the interview and group discussion. At the end of the data analysis I will send the transcription of the interview to you by e-mail for a response to determine whether you feel they are accurate.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is no possibility for involving risks, discomforts or inconveniences. The probability of possible risk, discomfort or inconvenience implied by participation in the research can reasonably be expected by the subjects to be no greater than those encountered by them in those aspects of their everyday life.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By studying the experience and perspectives of the Chinese students at a Canadian university, this study initiates an inquiry into the factors that might explain Chinese university students' preference to stay within culturally homogenous circles. Although previous research has achieved impressive attainments on the issue of ethnic student groupings — which is often ascribed by the public to natural or unconscious inclination for comfortableness, many individuals especially those within Chinese student circles on a Canadian university campus may have different version of such phenomenon. From the data to be collected, the study will provide recommendations for the Chinese students at the University of Windsor on how to obtain more opportunities to achieve expected learning experiences as well as satisfying learning outcomes. Participation in this study can also provide the subjects, especially those who have never experienced research before, opportunities to obtain some experience in doing research.

This study will also provide recommendations for the school authority of the University of Windsor, which accommodates as many Mainland Chinese students as 3.5% of the student population, to construct a more effective multicultural campus. It can also be useful to Chinese students and school authorities of other Canadian universities in understanding the reasons for ethnic student groupings and in acting to address corresponding problems. In addition, from a long point of view, this study can have much larger implication for the whole Canadian society, where ethnic differences are accepted as "positive qualities" (Fieras, 1992, p. 22).

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not be paid for participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain anonymity of subjects. Data will be kept secured and all files will be kept safely in my possession. As the interview will be audio taped, at the end of the data analysis I will send the transcriptions to you for a response to determine whether you feel they are accurate. After the study finishes, the files will be stored safely for 2 years before they are destroyed. Only I and the supervisor have the opportunity to get access to the data.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You also have the option of removing the data from the study.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

Emerging study results will be shared with the subjects. They will be sent to the subjects via e-mail for their review and comments. The results can also be entered on the REB website : www.uwindsor.ca/reb. I will also inform them that the copy of the study will be available at the Leddy Library, University of Windsor.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

Your data may be used in subsequent studies of a similar nature.

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I understand the information provided for the study **Exploring the Reasons for Student Ethnic Groupings: The Case of Chinese Students at the University of Windsor** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date



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Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix E



CONSENT FOR AUDIO/VIDEO TAPING

Research Subject Name:

Title of the Project: **Exploring the Reasons for Student Ethnic Groupings: The Case of Chinese Students at the University of Windsor**

ID# Number:

Birth date:

I consent to the audio/video-taping of interviews, procedures, or treatment.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that either the taping be stopped or the viewing be discontinued. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping and viewing will be kept confidential. Tapes are filed by number only and store in a locked cabinet.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and the viewing of materials will be for professional use only.

(Research Subject)

(Date)

Interview Questionnaire

问卷调查

(Question Group A: Pre-entry Characteristics)

(A组问题 : 先前情况)

1. Why did you decide to come to study at the University of Windsor?
你为什么决定来温莎大学学习 ?
2. What concerns did you and your parents or family have about your prospective university life in Canada before you came here?
来这里之前你和你父母或家人对你即将开始的加拿大大学生活考虑得最多的是
什么 ?
3. How emotionally prepared were you for the prospective overseas study? That is, were you happy, sad, eager, etc. to move abroad?
在情感上你对即将开始的海外学习准备得如何 ? 或者说 , 你为此感到高兴 , 难过 , 还是很期盼 ?
4. How academically prepared were you for the study at the University of Windsor in terms of language proficiency?
在语言方面你为温莎大学的学习准备如何 ?
5. Can you tell me how you expected the Canadian classroom culture to be like before you came here? (e.g., learning styles, teacher-students relationship, peer relationship, etc.)
能否讲一讲你来之前对加拿大课堂文化有什么期望 ? 譬如 , 在学习方式、师生关系、同学关系等方面你有过什么期望 ?
6. If you were to describe yourself, what kind of person would you say you were in terms of socializing with others at home in China?
从你在国内和人交往的情况来看你觉得你在社交方面的能力如何 ?

(Question Group B: Campus Factors)

(B组问题 : 校园现况)

(Campus Impression)

(校园印象)

7. In general, what do you feel about the campus cultural atmosphere at the University of Windsor? What notable phenomenon among the students of diverse ethnicities has impressed you on the University of Windsor campus?

你觉得温莎大学总体文化氛围怎么样？温莎大学校园内各种族裔学生云集，你对什么现象印象最深？

8. In general what do you feel as a student of Chinese origin at the University of Windsor?

总的来讲你作为华裔学生在温莎大学感觉如何？

(Peer climate)

(同学交往环境)

9. How do you describe your relation with your classmates?

你和同学关系怎么样？

10. How much do you know about your classmates regarding their cultures and vice versa?

你对同学的文化了解多少？你的同学对你的文化了解多少？

11. For academic assistance, for example, assistance in dealing with questions related to assignments, whom do you usually approach for advice and assistance?

在学习方面需要帮助的时候，比如说在完成作业方面遇到问题、需要帮助的时候，你通常找谁求助？

12. Could you describe for me if you have had any emotional or academic related difficulties here?

在情感或学习方面有没有遇到过困难？

13. Whom do you usually consult when confronting these difficulties?

遇到此类困难时你通常找谁商量？

14. What do you think of the function of peer counseling or Buddy System?

你怎么看peer counseling 或 Buddy System的作用？

15. How often do you participate in collective classmate activities, for example, classmate gatherings, holiday activities, eating out with classmates?

你多久参加一次同学集体活动 - 比如说同学聚会，假日活动，外出聚餐等等？

(Institutional facilitation regarding the social and academic involvement of students)

(校方在促进学生参与社会及学习活动方面的情况)

16. How often do you make use of the student services at the University of Windsor, for example, the International Student Centre, Community Legal Aid, Student Counseling Centre? How many services do you know are provided for international students?

你经常使用温莎大学学生服务设施吗？比如说，你多久去一次International Student Centre, 或者Community Legal Aid, 或者Student Counseling Centre？你知道有多少设施是专为国际学生服务的吗？

17. How many Chinese origin/Chinese-speaking support staff members have you

approached at the University of Windsor?

在温莎大学内你接触过多少华裔或能讲中文的工作人员？

18. What campus clubs have you joined in?

你参加了什么校园俱乐部？

19. How does your former learning experience affect your study in the Canadian classroom?

你以前的学习经历对你在加拿大的学习有什么影响？

20. Do you feel any academic pressure and, if so, how much?

你感觉到学习压力了吗？有多大？

21. What expectations do your parents or family have of your academic achievement?

你父母或家人对你的学习成绩有什么期望？

(Question Group C: Outcomes/Satisfaction with the University Life)

(C组问题：对学校生活的满意度)

22. To what degree are you satisfied with your academic achievement or results? (e.g., the grades you receive at the end of a term, A or B or C.) And what do you think is the biggest problem that prevents you from obtaining better academic achievement?

你对你的学业成就，或者说你的成绩等级满意吗？你认为是什么最严重地妨碍了你获得更好的成绩？

23. What comments do you have on the grading criteria of your instructors?

你对老师的评分标准有什么评价？

24. How do you think of your interaction with your instructors, teaching assistants, lab demonstrators, and support staff? If asked to use an adjective to describe the relations with them, which word would you use?

你认为你跟老师、TA、实验员以及教工的关系怎么样？如果用一个形容词来描述你和他们的关系，你会用什么形容词？

25. To what degree are you satisfied with your social life within the University of Windsor?

你对你在温莎大学的社交生活满意度有多高？

26. To what degree do you interact with students that are not of Chinese origin? That is, how many non-Chinese close friends do you have? And averagely how much time every week do you spend with them out of class?

你和非华裔的学生有多深的交往？或者说，你有多少非华裔的朋友？每周课外和他们相处的时间平均有多少？

27. What factor(s) do you think seriously prevent(s) you from enhancing your interaction with non-Chinese people around you? - factor(s) related to language proficiency, culture, learning styles/habits, racial estrangement, individual personality, or any other factor(s)?

你认为是什么因素严重地妨碍了你和周围非华裔的人的交往？是语言能力，还是文化、学习方式/习惯、种族隔阂、个人性格，或者其他方面的因素？

In your opinion, what advantages or disadvantages does Chinese students' habit/preference of compatriot groups have?

你认为中国学生结群习惯有何利弊？

28. Is what you are experiencing at the university what you expected before you came here?

你现在在校园内所经历的是你来之之前所期望的吗？

29. Do you have any other advice that you would like to share with me about the current research problem?

关于现在我们所研究的问题你还有什么建议愿意和我分享？

VITA AUCTORIS

Jicheng Jiao was born in 1966 in Sichuan, the People's Republic of China. She completed her undergraduate education at Chongqing Normal University and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in the English Language and Literature in 1987. She had taught English as a foreign language at higher educational institutions in China for years before she came to the University of Windsor to pursue a Master of Education degree. She specialized in Curriculum Design at the Faculty of Education.