Identifying Behaviours and Attitudes that Contribute to a Successful Negotiation of International Student Experience in Canada

By

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INTERCULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Keywords: international students, acculturation, intercultural adaptation, cultural adjustment.

International students face challenges and barriers to successful educational experiences in Canada for various reasons. With pressure from the Canadian Federal government to increase international student enrolment, post-secondary institutions are challenged to meet the unique needs of this group. Cultural adaptation involves a complex process that encompasses learning new sociocultural behaviours, the negotiation of new and emerging identities for the international students, and developing intercultural communication skills to be able to successfully function academically and socially in their new environment.

For this thesis, I undertook primary and secondary research to examine how international students perceive their experiences and challenges, and also to identify attitudes and characteristics that international students suggest were helpful in negotiating their educational journey in Canada. International students from across Canada were surveyed using a structured online questionnaire. Follow-up interviews were then carried out with a sample of respondents. These interviews asked the students about positive and negative experiences they had encountered and how they resolved or synthesized these experiences. While the negative experiences varied greatly, from academic performance issues to the challenges of finding work opportunities in Canada, the positive experiences highlighted the importance of establishing meaningful connections in Canada, whether a professor, a teaching assistant, same-culture or host-culture friends. The students identified a number of behaviours and attitudes that they believed contributed positively to their experience including the willingness to try new ways of doing things, having a positive outlook, and also developing self-confidence. The emergent theme, overwhelmingly, was the complexity in the issues that the students faced and the complexity in the processes required to manage them.
Acknowledgements

Pursuing my dream of returning to study and complete a master’s degree was something that I thought might never happen. I wasn’t sure I was up to the challenge and I wasn’t sure how I would find the time or money, and whether or not I would be able to overcome my natural disposition to start things I don’t always finish. I would like to acknowledge my family, especially my mother Cath who was my cheering squad, nurse, occasional banker, motivational speaker, surrogate mother to my daughter and who kept the house running while I was chronically and systematically distracted and/or absent. I would also like to thank my daughter Gemma for being so patient and supportive during this process and forgiving me when I missed things that I shouldn’t have. Gemma, you were a child when I started this journey and a beautiful young woman as I finish. You are my sole inspiration and my soul inspiration. Also I would like to thank my brother, Paul and sister, Sarah, for their firm belief that I could do this. I would also like to acknowledge and show gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Deanna Binder, for her calm and considered support and her positivity, and also Dr. Zhenyi Li, for challenging me to present my best work possible. Finally I would like to thank Dr. Andrea Perrella, Director of Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy, for his patience and help with demystifying the quantitative analysis process.

I would also like to acknowledge and show appreciation to the incredible international students that I met during this study and those that I work with every day. I know how brave these students are to leave behind all that is familiar and comfortable to them, travelling thousands of kilometres to an unknown place that is sometimes welcoming, and sometimes not, carrying with them the dreams, aspirations, and sometimes the future, of their families.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Chris, who was always my greatest fan, and who is missed each and every day. Also to Ruoqi and Jingjun, who challenged what I thought I knew about international students and inspired me to always ask one more question and to trust my instinct.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBIE</td>
<td>Canadian Bureau of International Educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Canadian Experience Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Citizenship and Immigration Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DICM</td>
<td>Developmental Intercultural Competence Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNT</td>
<td>Face Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, Kurogi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>Intercultural Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>Intercultural Communication Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI</td>
<td>Intercultural Development Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISA</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCWP</td>
<td>Off-Campus Work Permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGWP</td>
<td>Post-Graduation Work Permit</td>
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<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Permanent Residence</td>
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</table>
SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 International Students in Canada - Background

More than 300,000 international students are currently studying in Canada, contributing over $8 billion (CDN) each year to our economy (DFAIT, 2012). These students provide a valuable pool of future immigrants and form an integral part of Canada’s immigration targets, as Canada’s birth rate continues to be lower than is required for population stability (HRSDC, 2012). Canada is a popular destination for international students for a number of reasons: safe environment, relative low cost of education, opportunity to gain work experience during and after studies, the identification of Canada as a multicultural society, immigration programs for international graduates of Canadian colleges and universities, and a positive overall international reputation (Humphries, Rauh & McDine, 2013).

International students face academic and social challenges in adjusting to their new environment, especially in the area of cultural adjustment to new norms and values and new ways of doing and being (Andrade, 2006). Compounding the challenges are homesickness, isolation, lack of support systems, ignorance of support services, financial challenges and very often, the complexity that comes with having to do all of this in a non-native language (Chirkov et al, 2007).

Recent studies of international students in Canada by the Canadian Bureau of International Educators (CBIE) confirm what those who work closely with international students already know – it is hard for these students to make friends with Canadians and to adjust to life in Canada (Humphries et al. 2013). In the Humphries study over 1500 international students studying in Canada were surveyed and found that fifty-eight per cent (58%) of the respondents reported having no or very few Canadian friends. While their overall perception of Canada is that
it is a friendly and welcoming country, 78% say they would like more opportunities to experience and learn about Canadian culture and family life. As we know with reports on internationalization on our campuses (Knight, 2011), simply having international students sitting beside Canadians students in Canadian classrooms does not result in intercultural learning and likewise, simply studying in Canada doesn’t necessarily result in a high degree of adaptation.

Assisting international students in successful acculturation is important to ensure they continue to come to Canada and are successful in meeting their academic and immigration goals (Cignac, 2013). Many international students in Canada have chosen Canada specifically for the opportunity to pursue immigration to Canada. These students may successfully transition from student to Permanent Resident, (PR) using the Canadian Experience Class program (CEC) and may eventually obtain Canadian Citizenship. There is a greater challenge then to Canadian post-secondary institutions as many international students are not merely visitors, but early arrival immigrants; that is visitors who arrive with the intention of becoming immigrants, if they are able to meet the Canadian work experience requirements.

International students arrive as visitors and are not able to access settlement services offered federally and provincially to new immigrants who arrive already with Permanent Resident status. The students are viewed as visitors and so there is no funding available for them for language skills development, career guidance or dedicated support services within the community. International offices and students services of colleges and universities become the de facto settlement services for these students, and for the most part, are inadequately equipped and funded for this task. The window of opportunity to nurture and support these students to become permanent residents and eventually citizens is often lost. Recognizing that the manner in which international students are received, welcomed and supported in their first years as students
here will dictate the kind of citizens they will become in the future, it becomes imperative then that post-secondary education institutions have the necessary information, training and resources in order to be able to carry out these tasks and ensure that the international students feel respected, feel their contributions are valued, are engaged in their communities and have the sociocultural and intercultural skills they need to be contributing and participating members of Canadian society.

When international students have negative experiences or are not supported to achieve to the best of their ability in their studies in Canada, we risk losing an important source of skilled (and Canadian trained, and English or French speaking) immigrants. Even if their intention is to return home after studies, what do they take back with them about their experience in Canada? Part of Canada’s richness is that it is one of the few countries in the world that enjoys an intimate and profound connection with every other country in the world through our immigration and diaspora. International students returning home after their studies in Canada become ambassadors for Canada, contributing to our reputation globally, for better or worse.

Studies of international students globally show that they suffer from social isolation, higher failure rates, less access to meaningful employment and a lack of opportunity to engage in their host community (Grayson 2008, Westwood & Barker, 1990). This has implications that are more profound than for domestic students as international students must meet certain requirements in order to continue to study and work in Canada. Domestic students may take time off, work while studying part time, access government and private sources of funding, and pursue their academics on their own timeline. However this is not an option for international students who must study full time in order to be able to access work options, both while studying and post-graduation (www.cic.gc.ca).
Despite many international students choosing Canada because of the immigration opportunities, as seen in the CBIE study in which 67% of respondents indicated that the ability to pursue immigration to Canada was very or essentially important to their decision to study in Canada, the most recent numbers available from CIC show that the numbers of international students who are obtaining PR through the CEC class are far lower than expected (Humphries et al. 2013). Introduced in 2009, the Government of Canada expected the program to grow from 5,000 applications (in total, including students and temporary foreign work applications) in 2010, to 26,000 in 2012. In the first two years of the program, just under 400 applications were received, with fewer than 2000 of them from graduated international students. In order to come close to meeting their original target, the government had to make major modifications to the work experience requirements for the program. For 2014, CIC issued an application cap of 8000 for new applications, however as of August 25, 2014, there have been only 2649 applications submitted in respect of that cap. It may be that CIC overestimated the number of international students that wished to pursue PR in Canada, but given the challenges of finding meaningful employment post-graduation, this is for many, the insurmountable challenge.

While there is the perception that all international students come from wealthy families, that is not the case. In the CBIE study, affordability and cost of education was identified by 66% of the respondents as being essential or very important in the decision to study in Canada. The international students may be wealthy where they come from, but parents and families are making sacrifices to send their children here, often, as is the case with Chinese students, they are the only child and the future economic security of the family is pinned on the ability of the student to complete their education and enter a career that will pay dividends on the investment for the family in their overseas education.
1.2 Research Intentions and Questions - Rationale

My objective in this study is to try to identify attitudes and behaviours that affect the ability of international students to navigate and manage their experiences and evolving self-construal, or identities, as part of their overall adaptation processes. Also, I looked to explore how the presence of these factors have a positive influence on the ability of international students in Canadian universities to achieve their academic and post graduation goals, in order to contribute to the understanding of international students’ experience at universities in Canada. Furthermore, I hope to generate another resource to assist those who design and deliver academic, orientation and acculturation programming in Canadian universities for international students.

In addition to being a ready source of future immigrants, international students are also important to the internationalization plans of Canadian higher education institutions, who bear responsibility for training Canadian students in global citizenship, preparing them for “an increasingly multicultural world” (Adams & de Wit, 2010). Studies on the adaptation processes and challenges of international students in Australia, Canada, the UK and USA have long established that international students face social and educational challenges in their host country (Grayson 2008, Westwood & Barker, 1990). These challenges result in academic underperformance and social disengagement (Campbell & Li, 2008). Providing support to these students is a complex and difficult task, encompassing factors, amongst others, that include intercultural competence, sociocultural awareness, language ability and identity negotiation (Arthur & Flynn, 2011, Grayson, 2008, Westwood & Barker, 1990).

Previous studies of international student adaptation challenges have emphasized the importance of language skills (Halic, Greenberg & Paulus, 2009, Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-
Mewett, Nyland & Ramia, 2012, Yang, Noels & Saumure, 2005), while in other studies that have controlled for language ability through test scores, years of formal English language education, etc., it is evident that equally important to language proficiency is the ability to navigate and synthesize new cultural norms and behaviours, the ability to gain the necessary “academic literacy”, (Campbell, & Li, 2008) and the ability of the international students to adapt their communication style to align with host style (Yang et al., 2005).

The aim of this study is to engage a group of international students studying in Canada in a discussion of their own experiences to examine the students’ perceptions of their ability to adapt and thrive in their new environment. The main research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1) What behaviours and attitudes do international students studying in Canada identify as helpful to their ability to negotiate their experiences?

2) What impact do negative or positive experiences, such as perceived racism, social support and interaction, for example, have on the confidence of the international student to meet their goals in coming to study in Canada (academic, social, career, immigration)?

1.3 Role and Motivations of the Researcher

While the research uses quantitative methods to gather primary data, the core of this research are the unique experiences of the students themselves. The ability to draw out those experiences from the students in an open and pragmatic way relied on both my experience dealing with international students, showing empathy and respect, and more, on the willingness of the students to share what were sometimes uncomfortable stories about their stumbles, embarrassments, disappointments, and thankfully, successes.
The curiosity for this subject came about as a product of my work for the past six plus years as a Senior International Student Advisor at a post-secondary institution in Ontario. I am fortunate to work in a place where there is a great commitment to supporting the success of international students, undertaking a pro-active approach by engaging in the acculturation process of the students and ensuring that there is programming available to help them. As much as possible we try to embed this support in their courses or residence life experience, to help them use their own existing resources to develop new skills and ways of doing things that will result in success and a greater satisfaction with their experience of studying as an international student in Canada.

As others in the same field may attest to, it was fascinating to me that upon meeting new students it soon became evident that even before the student had submitted a single paper or written an exam, there were students whom I identified immediately as those who would be successful, and those who would not. It was not usually based on language – we have plenty of unsuccessful international students who speak perfect English, likewise with domestic students - but more it was an attitude or confidence they possessed. I wondered that, if we could identify those characteristics, attitudes and behaviours of successful international students, could we develop, encourage, teach and nurture those behaviours and attitudes in all international students? The essential question of this research becomes then, language proficiency aside, why do some international students thrive while others flounder?
Figure 1.1 Enrolment of International Students in Canada
(From World of Learning, CBIE, 2013).
Figure 1.2 Source Countries of International Students in Canada
(From World of Learning, CBIE, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source country</th>
<th># of students (2012)</th>
<th>% of total IS population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>80,627</td>
<td>30.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>28,924</td>
<td>10.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>19,072</td>
<td>7.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>14,195</td>
<td>5.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>12,128</td>
<td>4.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>11,319</td>
<td>4.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>5,004</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>4,724</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2,918</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2,847</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2,806</td>
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<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2,648</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
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<td>Other source countries</td>
<td>36,584</td>
<td>13.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>264,812</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
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SECTION 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

The research for this thesis is primarily located in the fields of intercultural communication, intercultural competence and adaptation theory, specifically in the context of higher education. In engaging in my research, I looked at some of the salient theories in these areas, and used them as the framework within which I explored the experiences of the international students who participated in the study. Using primary and secondary research I examined what has been learned from post-secondary institutions in Canada, Australia, the US and UK in their experiences with international students.

For clarity, it is important to differentiate between cross-cultural communication and intercultural communication, as noted by Gudykunst (2002). Cross-cultural communication involves “a comparison of communication across cultures (p. 19)”, including within cultures, identifying how various cultures communicate and the psychology of their communication styles and patterns, whereas “intercultural communication involves communication between people from different cultures (p.19).” Intercultural competence then, is “appropriate and effective communication and behaviour in intercultural situations (Deardorff, 2009).” Cultural adaptation as an outcome of intercultural competence can be seen then as the process of acculturation, a process by which people acquire certain aspects of a host culture (Kim, 2002).

2.1 Intercultural Communication Theory

Intercultural communication is, at its essence, communication that takes place between people of different cultures (Gudykunst, 2002). The study of culture and the question regarding ‘what is culture’ is situated in the field of social sciences, most prominently in anthropology, philosophy and sociology. Culture is identified as the system of norms, values and behaviours which can be ascribed to a particular group (Geertz, 1973). Culture then involves how we
classify our experiences and is the so-called ‘lens’ (subjectivity) through which we view our experiences and the world around us (Lonner, Berry & Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede suggests that culture is learned, not innate, and is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another (p. 25).” He describes culture as the ‘software of the mind’.

In his early work, Hofstede was employed by IBM to study how cultural differences based on nationality manifested themselves in the workplace. This information was seen as essential to understanding how a company could create effective multinational working groups (Hofstede et al. 1991). Hofstede initially identified four dimensions of cultural differences:

- **Power Distance:** the tolerance of the culture towards power imbalances and the degree in distance of control and influence between lower power individuals and groups and higher power organizations or people. Low power distance cultures tend to be more democratic and focused on expert or legitimate power, exercised only when necessary, whereas high power distance cultures are more accepting of coercive power or a high degree of power of superiors over subordinates (Gudykunst & Mody, 2002).

- **Individualism vs. Collectivism:** the degree to which a culture emphasizes the power or importance of the individual over the collective. In individualistic societies the family is the main source of support, whereas in collectivist cultures there is a larger in-group that provides protection and support in exchange for loyalty and the forfeit of individualistic pursuits for the benefit of the group (Hofstede et al., 1991, Gudykunst & Mody, 2002).
• Uncertainty Avoidance: the ability of members of a specific culture to tolerate the unknown or to take risks. People from cultures with a high-uncertainty avoidance trait may desire clear rules and regulations, and there can also be a higher value placed on ‘saving face’, or not doing anything that risks losing one’s reputation or status in the society. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures have a greater tolerance for differences, place a higher value on innovation and have a greater acceptance of interpersonal conflict (Hofstede et. al., 1991).

• Masculinity- Femininity: identifies the gender roles and personal attributes that are traditionally ascribed to masculine traits (being assertive, tough, results-oriented) compared to traditionally feminine traits (compassion, nurturing, relationship-oriented). (Hofstede et al., 1991).

In later work, Hofstede added further dimensions, including long-term vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint (Hofstede et. al., 2010). As a caveat, Hofstede only proposed that these cultural dimensions worked on a macro or national level, but were not helpful when dealing with individuals. Simply put, for example, although a person comes from a country that has a propensity to be more individualistic in nature, other influences of cultural identities are at work - individual family traits, an aboriginal heritage or a queer cultural background. Thus Hofstede warns against applying his cultural dimensions on a personal level, as it could lead to stereotyping or false assumptions (Hofstede et al., 1991, 2010).

2.2 Intercultural Competence and Adaptation

Developing intercultural competence has been an emerging and multidisciplinary field of study as internationalization and globalization become axioms and pillars of economic and social development. Even prior to these trends, it was recognized that developing the skills required to
work effectively outside a person’s own culture was necessary for those working in the
diplomatic and foreign affairs sectors, as well as those working in international and humanitarian
aid programs (Deardorff, 2009). Early studies in this field looked at an inventory of
competencies identified in those who were working successfully as Peace Corps participants
(Smith, 1966, as referenced in Deardorff, 2009), and tried to establish an inventory of
characteristics and behaviours which resulted in a more satisfactory or competent experience in
working interculturally. Since that time, many models of intercultural competence have been
developed. These include Compositional Models, which consider lists of traits of characteristics
such as those originally identified in the Peace Corps workers (Deardorff 2009), and
Developmental Models, which focus on the acquisition of skills resulting from continued and
more complex intercultural interactions (Deardorff 2009, p. 10)

2.2.1 Developmental Intercultural Competence (ICC) Model

As Knight (2011) noted in her reflection on globalization in higher education institutions
(earlier noted by Allport, as referenced in Deardorff, 2009), having people from other cultures
together in the same place doesn’t necessarily mean the development of intercultural
competence. Interactions must occur with a mindful development of the awareness of difference
and a deliberate engagement in the processes of developing intercultural competence in learners
(Deardorff, 2009, preface). The Developmental Intercultural Competence Model (DCIM)
(Bennett, 1986) proposes that people acquire and refine intercultural competence through
engagement. This takes place over time, with individuals moving from a state of ethno-centrism
to ethno-relativism, or from being unaware of cultural differences, or having feelings of
negativity or ambivalence, to stages in which they are engaged and are mindfully synthesizing
their experiences of cultural differences. This model assumes that as people’s experience of
cultural difference becomes more complex, they gain a greater ability to synthesize differences and apply them to new experiences.

The DICM doesn’t seek to explain how intercultural competence is gained, so it doesn’t address the systematic cognitive processes used to develop intercultural skills. Instead it is intended to help learners, or those working with them, to identify where they are on the spectrum.

**Figure 2.1 Development Intercultural Competence Model**

![Diagram of Developmental Intercultural Competence Model](http://blog.culturaldetective.com/2013/10/15/developmental-icc)

In order to assess where an individual or group is as far as their orientation on the DICM, Bennett and Hammer (2002) developed an assessment tool called the Intercultural Development Index (IDI). Participants are asked a series of questions regarding their feelings toward cultural differences, and also about their own cultural identity. The outcome is a numerical score, which indicates on what level their dominant stage is situated. (Note that it is possible to be at two different places at the same time when encountering different challenges). Trained facilitators are able to use the IDI to provide feedback to participants on where they are situated on the DICM scale, helping them understand their own challenges in developing intercultural competence.
2.2.2 Facework-Based Model of Intercultural Competence and Identity Negotiation Theory (INT)

When approached as a scholarly area of inquiry, the concept of identity examines how humans as social beings form and view their individual placement within a society as a product of their cultural, familial, gender, ethnic, or other innate or self-construed characteristics and experiences. Either deliberately or subconsciously, humans are constantly negotiating their identities in order to function in a world that is dynamic and complex. (Deardorff, 2009)
In the Facework-Based Model of Intercultural Competence, Ting-Toomey and collaborator, Kurogi (1998) proposed that developing intercultural competence depends on the cognitive ability of the interactant to engage in “mindful reflexivity, taking multiple perspectives, analytical empathy, and intentional creativity (Deardorff, 2009, p.12).” This model is based on Ting-Toomey’s (1988) earlier work in Face negotiation theory (FNT). This intercultural communication theory proposes that the construction of identity develops from the context of cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1991, 2001) such as high or low power distance, or collectivist versus individualist tendencies, for example. These tendencies form the framework through which we negotiate our position when dealing with conflict and conflict resolution in an intercultural situation.

FNT explores how cultural dimensions, as suggested by Hofstede (1991, 2001) and Triandis (1995) influence how people’s actions manifest the concept of self, or ‘face’. Self-
perceptions are negotiated in order to preserve, recover, or establish a position, which can result in saving face when one of the participants in the exchange maintains their social position or, conversely, losing face, with the consequence that the person becomes or feels that they have become socially diminished. This interaction can also involve gaining status when the outcome or process has a beneficial effect on the social position or self-perception of the person involved.

Identity Negotiation Theory (INT), as first proposed by Ting-Toomey (1993), removed the external conflict focus from the discussion and looks instead at a broader range of identity-related issues, such as how the social and personal concept of self is formed, and how, in the context of intercultural interactions, mindful competence can be developed. This involves a self-reflexive process of examining what it means to feel accepted and understood. INT then provides a psychological theoretical framework in which to examine the subject’s sense of self and how that relates to how they communicate in an intercultural situation and also how successful they will be in their communication (Toomey, 1993).

In examining what it means to be a competent, intercultural communicator, Ting-Toomey (1993) explains how communicative motivations and identity coherence affects identity negotiation processes. She shows how, by engaging in a mindful application of knowledge and resources, people can diffuse the perceived risk and vulnerability associated with interactions with strangers, especially those from different cultures, leading to positive interactions and more finely honed communication skills. Other researchers, such as Zhang & Xu (2007) and Gargano (2008) have used INT as the theoretical framework in which to examine the attitudes of international students about certain aspects of their relationship with their professors in order to look at their ability to navigate intercultural interactions.
2.3 Higher Education Research – International Students

Successfully achieving academic goals is associated with satisfaction for international students, but doesn’t guarantee satisfaction with their overall international study experience. Many of the students in various studies reported disappointment in not being able to integrate with host nation students (Grayson 2008, Hendrickson, Rosen & Kelly Aune, 2010, Myles & Cheng, 2003, Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia, 2008, Yang et. al., 2005). This is not a new phenomenon, however, and continues to be a challenge in the cultural adaptation of international students (Sawir et. al., 2012). Studies at universities and colleges in Canada have shown that availability of specialized support services for international students makes a modest difference in quantifiable data, such as GPA scores and completed credits. However, even factoring in educational backgrounds of parents, socioeconomic levels, years of formal English language education, engagement in social and educational activities, for example (Andrade, 2009, Grayson, 2008, Westwood & Barker, 1990) there is a great difference in levels of success between some international students and others.
SECTION 3 – METHODODOLOGY

Following a thorough examination and analysis of the existing literature regarding the challenges faced by International Students studying in Canada and other host countries, I developed my research questions and designed my research methodology. I chose to collect and analyze data gathered through primary research with international undergraduate and graduate students from across Canada, engaging in mixed methodology research (MMR), in a pragmatic and ‘multi strategy’ enquiry (Bergman, 2008), involving both qualitative and quantitative research.

MMR allows the researcher to use both qualitative and quantitative research, resulting in a more ‘intuitive’ approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). MMR was identified as an ideal methodology for researchers who are practitioners and who recognize that “the practical demands of the contexts in which they worked called for both generality and particularity” (p.7). Despite there being residual controversy regarding the use of MMR, given that some researchers still question whether it is possible to use different paradigms in the same study (Evans, Coon & Ume, 2011), a strength is that, “when used in combination, qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other and allow for a more robust analysis, taking advantage of the strengths of each (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006, p 3).

Within MMR itself, there are a number of designs, falling into categories of concurrent or sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The design that I used is the Explanatory Design (p. 185) in which quantitative methods are used followed by qualitative research, in order to provide an explanation and to contextualize the qualitative data (p. 186). I believe that using an MMR framework enabled me to build a more complete picture of the experience of the undergraduate international student in Canada. A standardized online questionnaire was used to
gather data for the quantitative section of the research while telephone and in-person interviews involving open-ended, self-reflexive questions were used in the qualitative section of the research. The participants in the interviews had previously completely the online questionnaire.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Intercultural communication theory provided the theoretical framework for this study because its focus was on a group of people (international students studying in a Canadian university) undergoing cultural adaptation and adjustment. I specifically used Ting-Toomey’s Facework-Based Model of Intercultural Competence, because it engages the theories of both INT and FNT, and emphasizes the processes of acquiring intercultural communication skills through mindful engagement of the student as a cultural being. Thus the investigation examined perceived appropriateness and effectiveness, as well as satisfaction and adaptability (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

3.3 Participants

I collected data from international undergraduate and graduate students at universities across Canada selected by criterion sampling in order to identify the group that was most suitable for my inquiry. Students were selected who had completed at least one academic year of studies in Canada, as time in a foreign country has been identified as an important factor in studies that focus on acculturation processes (Mittal and Weiling, 2006, Sodowsky and Plake, 1992). Also, these students should have a greater sense of whether they are on track to meet their goals in coming to Canada or not, and would also be able to reflect back on their acculturation experiences having the advantage of at least one full academic year of studies in Canada. Only students in full time academic programs were sampled, as this indicates that they have the
requisite language skills to be in an academic program, rather than those currently enrolled in an English or French language program.

Initially I had decided to exclude those students for whom English is their first language. However, following my literature review, I decided to include these students as other studies regarding the cultural adaptation of international students that have controlled for language have identified that language, beyond proficiency necessary to meet the academic requirements, is not necessarily a major determining factor how competently they manage their adjustment (Campbell, & Li, 2008, Yang et al., 2005). Students who have, or are, accompanying family members, including spouses or children, were omitted from this study as they have the advantage of additional support here and may not have the same issues of loneliness. Students who completed more than one year of high school in Canada prior to attending university were also deleted from the sample, so that there is a similar experience of coming to Canada directly entering into university. Those under the age of 18 were not permitted to participate, due to the ethical considerations of dealing with minors and the complexities of gaining permission from guardians and parents who are probably out of the country or may not speak English.

3.4 Soliciting Participation

Calling upon my network of colleagues who do similar work as I do in International Students Service offices at universities across Canada, I emailed them to ask for their assistance in distributing an invitation to their international degree-seeking students to participate in an online survey. Through this method I was able to solicit 68 respondents to my survey, of which 41 met the criteria.

Once the student had chosen to participate by selecting a link to the online questionnaire, they were asked a series of questions which qualified them according to the sample criteria.
explained previously and only those students were able to continue beyond the demographic collection section.

Upon completing the online survey, students were asked if they would be willing to participate in a short follow-up interview to discuss their answers to the survey and to talk specifically about their experience as an international student in Canada. I received 12 positive responses to this request, and was able to complete 9 interviews; 7 by telephone, two in person.

3.5 Tools and Measures

The survey was delivered using an online Google Docs program. Students who agreed to complete the survey could click on a link from the invitation email and were directed to a consent statement, which they agreed to in order to continue.

3.5.1 Scales and Measures

The measures of inquiry were developed specifically for this study, using modified scales from other studies involving international students and youth that examine the following factors, which have been identified as integral to adaptation processes (Andrade, 2006, Gudykunst et al., 2003, Gudkunst & Hammer, 1984, Hammer, 1987, Kim, 2005, Ting-Toomey, 2005):

- Motivation (Goals for Study Abroad Scale - Chirkov et. al, 2006)
- Sociocultural Adaptation (Sociocultural Adaptation Scale – Ward & Kennedy, 1999)
- Self Esteem (Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale RSES – Rosenberg, 1965)
- Social Support and Social Skills (the Index of Sojourner Social Support, Ong & Ward, Furnham and Bochner, 1982)
- Perceived Discrimination ( Poyrazli & Lopez, 2010)

The survey was tested on a group of non-participating international students and then reviewed and revised to ensure that the questions were constructed in a way that was
comprehensible for the participants and that the responses met the goals of the inquiry. Sets of statements were presented using a 5-point Likert scale, asking the participants to identify whether or not a particular situation describes their experience, from “completely” to “not at all.” They were also asked to respond to a series of challenges, behaviours and characteristics by ranking them in order of importance or impact on their experience. The complete questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.

To classify characteristics and behaviours identified by the participants as useful for successful study in Canada, I used a priori codes of attitude, skills and knowledge, based on the mindful component of intercultural adaptation and communication theories (Deardorff, 2009, Ting-Toomey, 1993). Many of the 45 questions answered by the respondents were to gauge perceptions, repeated with an inverse response to test for reliability. Still there was much more data collected than I was able to use, and so the responses examined are those that provide the greatest alignment with the themes found in FNT and INT.

3.5.2 Statistical Analysis

Using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) the responses to the survey were exported from the Google Docs system as a data set, and then coded according to the information being examined in each variable. The data set was then examined to categorize demographic information, including time spent in Canada, program of study, institution of study and country of Citizenship. The data set was then analyzed looking at frequency in responses, looking at the mean, median and mode of responses to perceptions of discrimination, social interaction and connectedness, social support, student satisfaction, self-confidence and identification of behaviours and characteristics that lead to success for international students.
3.5.3 Qualitative Inquiry

During the phone interviews, the students were asked about their responses to the standardized questionnaire, especially where they indicated a high or low level of alignment to the statements or a high or low level of satisfaction with their experience, providing context to the data collected in the online survey. The data from the interviews was then coded using both inductive and a priori codes, anticipating that there may be a repetition in the themes of the responses, and also allowing for emergent themes, according to the procedure described by Crabtree and Miller (in Creswell, 2013, p. 185). Both the literature review I conducted and my professional experience working with international students were used to develop the a priori codes, which included codes for challenges, characteristics and behaviours.

3.5 Reliability

The dataset was checked for completeness and accuracy before and after it was transcribed. The data was then coded by an SPSS expert, who is both a faculty member at my workplace, and the head of the Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy at Laurier University. The statistical analysis of the data set was not reliable in terms of extrapolation to larger population groups due its small sample, but because it was for the purpose of triangulation with the qualitative data for the students interviewed, that was not a concern.

For the data from the interviews, detailed handwritten notes were taken during the interviews, and the responses from the students were repeated back to them to ensure accuracy. The notes were then transcribed into a digital format where it was then checked against the original notes for completeness before being coded.

SECTION 4 –RESULTS

Because I wanted to engage in an inquiry as to how the students perceive, synthesize,
manage and navigate their experiences, and what kinds of characteristics and behaviours the 
students identify as helpful in these processes I chose to use MMR methodology. I had identified 
potential themes that could emerge based on the theoretical framework and literature review, but 
it was important to me that the results were generated in an emergent way, allowing the 
participants to identify variables that they felt were important or relevant. The respondents 
completed a standardized online questionnaire, which provided baseline quantitative 
information. They were also given the opportunity to add in additional variables for some of the 
questions. This added a qualitative aspect to the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire 
that allowed for the inclusion of variables not identified in other areas, and thus for the students 
to share their own experiences, even if they did not then participate in a follow-up interview.

**Table 4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution and Geographical</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
<th>Ontario (Algoma, Brock, UGuelph, UOttawa, WLU)</th>
<th>Maritimes (UNB, UPEI, Memorial,)</th>
<th>West or not indicated (SAIT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Study</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Canada</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
<th>0-1.0</th>
<th>1.1-3.0</th>
<th>3.1+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the online questionnaire, the students were given the opportunity to identify challenges 
they faced because of their identity as international students in Canada, and also to identify
behaviours and characteristics they considered helpful in managing these challenges. The follow-up interviews were designed to explore these issues in more depth and to gain an understanding of how students arrived at their answers and points of view. Before starting the interview with each participant, I went through the process of obtaining informed consent by reading the release approved by the research ethics department at RRU, and I disclosed that I would be taking notes from their responses. I reviewed with interviewees the information that was given in their questionnaire, including program, institution, level and year of study. Then I proceeded with the interviews, asking the standard questions contained in Appendix B, following up with specific questions related to the individual student’s responses to the online questionnaire.

What emerged from the interview data was a complex multiplicity of issues being managed and negotiated in the experience of being an international student studying in Canada. This complexity in the answers from the respondents presented considerable challenges in identifying common themes and thus in coding the data.

I approached this challenge by referring to previous studies conducted with international students, both in Canada and overseas. These studies had identified recurrent themes within the framework of INT and FNT, looking at the need of the students to feel accepted and understood and how they perceived their success in adapting to their new environment. These themes were categorized as follows: social and academic adjustment, language and communication issues, and personal challenges. Other themes emerged during the interviews. However because of the small sample size, as much as possible, these were collapsed into the existing themes for ease of analysis. For example, issues of racism were classified within the theme of ‘social and academic adjustment’, to capture it as a perception or an experience that may hinder social interaction and therefore adjustment.
Social and Academic Adjustment

There are many barriers that international students face in adapting to their new environment (Sawir et. al., 2012), and it is important to gauge how welcoming this group feels their host culture is, in that it frames our understanding of how they perceive their challenges. The participants were asked in the questionnaire about their perceptions of racism, as a key indicator of how accepted or welcome the students felt. The result was that 7 out of 41 respondents showed agreement with the statement that ‘Canadians discriminate against those from other countries’. Twenty-seven participants indicated that they disagreed with this statement, showing that there is a very low perception of discrimination among this group of international students (Table 4.3.1).

Table 4.3.1 Perceptions of Discrimination in Canada
Canadians discriminate against people from other countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This attitude was echoed in the interview responses. Students seemed to indicate that their overall perception about Canada and racism or discrimination is positive, despite individual issues:

I don’t think Canada is racist, but there are sometimes things that happen that are racist, but overall it is not a racist country. I was in England and it was very racist. There is a lot of discrimination there. Canadians are much more polite and friendly. Canadians are
really nice and if they feel racist they don’t show it. They don’t usually show any negative behaviour – even if they feel it. (Hannah, China)

This perception of Canada as a very accepting country was shared by some of the other participants:

When I first came to Canada people were really interested in where I came from and what it was like there. I got asked all the time “where are you from” and it was nice that people asked about where I was from and they wanted to know different things. It made me feel welcomed that people were interested in me. Canada is multicultural and accepting. People are very helpful and accepting. You can express your own opinions here and choose how to live your life. (Hope, Vietnam)

This sentiment is reflected again with this student’s response:

Before I came to Canada I thought Canadians might not be friendly to international Chinese students and they might discriminate – maybe I would be discriminated against. I have found people to be friendly and helpful. Canadians are accepting of different people. (Stephen, China)

The participants were also asked if they believed their professors treated them differently because they were international students. Twelve agreed, while 26 disagreed (Table 4.3.2). The results changed somewhat, however, when they were asked about whether or not Canadian students treated them differently because they were international students. Twenty agreed that Canadian students treated them differently and 16 disagreed with this statement (Table 4.3.3).

Table 4.3.2 Perceptions of Attitude of Professors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I believe I am treated differently by my professors because I am an international student.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 41

Table 4.3.3 Perceptions of Attitude of Canadian Students
I believe I am treated differently by the Canadian students because I am an international student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 41

These perceptions of being treated differently by their Canadian peers continued throughout the responses in the questionnaire and were reinforced with data from the interviews. Respondents shared that they sometimes encountered behaviour which led them to believe that Canadians viewed international students as less able, or desirable to collaborate with, especially in group or partner work:

The part I don’t like at all is the labs. If I am sitting in a lab by myself, no other Canadian student will come and sit with me to be my partner. They are okay if I sit with them, they are friendly, but they won’t choose to sit with me. They look for their friends first. If they are my friend, that is fine, but I don’t feel like the Canadian students want to be my partner. If there is an odd number of people, I am often alone and sometimes the prof tells me to go and work with another group, but not always. I try not to show that it bothers me, but it does and I don’t enjoy the lab then – it is awkward. (Olivia, China)

One of the respondents also spoke about feeling inadequate in group-work situations:
I haven’t had a lot of negative things happen, but it is very hard to participate in group work – the Canadian students always have a lot of interesting ideas and it made me feel bad that I couldn’t contribute. (Stephen, China)

Another participant talked about her experience in the classroom around encountering negative or disrespectful behaviour:

In my first year in my first group work assignment I had two Canadian students and four international students and the Canadians weren’t very friendly. They were very worried about getting a good mark and so they told us our work wasn’t done properly. They didn’t value the work that the international students did. I thought the idea of teamwork was for the whole team to work together helping each other to do their best work. There was no trust or unity in the team. It was really a negative experience. There weren’t many international students in my program and so that experience made me feel bad. (Hope, Vietnam)

And another student identified her feelings on this topic very clearly: “The most negative experience I have had in Canada is with group work” (Maya, Vietnam). This experience of feeling unwelcomed or discriminated against by peers in the classroom is something that others discussed also, shown in this example by contrasting the behaviour of a Canadian professor to that of an international faculty member:

I have a very positive experience and a very negative one – both from professors. I have one Canadian professor who is very knowledgeable and passionate about his field and he is really great at answering whatever questions we have. We can call him at any time and he respects us and what we have to say and even if we are wrong, he doesn’t put us down. He treats us like we are colleagues (I clarified what he meant by “we.” He was referring to himself and his same culture classmates). I look forward to his classes and I feel good and comfortable in class with him. The negative experience I have had is with another professor who is from Palestine. He really favours the Canadian students in the class and is very friendly and helpful with them, but if we ask questions or he asks us to say something, then we get mocked and he makes us feel very bad. I hate attending his class and he always puts us on the spot. (Kurt, India)
In the questionnaire, the participants demonstrated high confidence in their academic ability compared to same-culture students (Table 4.3.4), but much less confidence when they were comparing themselves to the performance of Canadian students (Table 4.3.5). Many studies have been undertaken comparing international student academic performance to domestic, and it has been shown that international students progress at a slower rate, retaking more courses, with an overall lower GPA and higher drop-out rates (Grayson, 2008, Westwood & Barker, 1990). The lower levels of academic achievement seem to result in lower levels of self-confidence for the international students, especially when working with Canadian students. It may also create barriers to integration, as the Canadian students may see working with international students as a disadvantage.

Table 4.3.4 Perceptions of Academic Performance Compared to Same Culture Peers
I feel I am successful compared to other international students from the same culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 41

Table 4.3.5 Perceptions of Academic Performance Compared to Canadian Peers
I feel I am successful compared to Canadian students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in Table 4.3.6 shows that the participants have a positive outlook on the decision to study in Canada with 37 out of 41 students indicating satisfaction. The data in Tables 4.3.7 and 4.3.8 however, reveals lower levels of satisfaction with social and academic experiences in Canada. Twenty-seven out of the 41 students indicated they were satisfied with their social experiences here and similarly, 30 participants were satisfied with their academic experiences in Canada.

**Table 4.3.6 Satisfaction with Decision to Study in Canada**
I am satisfied with my decision to study in Canada.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.3.7 Satisfaction with Social Experiences in Canada**
I am satisfied with my social experiences in Canada.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3.8 Satisfaction with Academic Experiences in Canada

I am satisfied with my academic experiences in Canada.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 41

This discontent with their social experiences was supported in the interviews with many of the respondents expressing regret that they were not able to make more Canadian friends. Nearly all of the participants spoke very specifically about the challenges of making friends with Canadians:

I also find it hard to make Canadian friends. It is a cultural thing with some Canadian people. I find it is hard to get close to Canadians because they don’t have the same experiences as me and we have nothing in common – not the same interests- I can study with my classmates, but outside school we have nothing in common and it is difficult for me. It is a big challenge. (Stephen, China)

I also expected to make Canadian friends when I came here to study, but I haven’t made many. I made some though my interest in music, but it has been hard. I don’t have much interaction with Canadian students in general and I don’t really have any Canadian friends. (David, Pakistan)

I have only been in Canada three years and so compared to someone who has lived here all their lives, I haven’t watched the same movies, or listen to the same music, and I don’t know Canadian history or popular culture – I have been picking it up gradually, but it is hard. (Maya, Vietnam)

I avoid Canadians students and mostly hang out with my own Indian friends. There are a lot of Indian students in the program with me, so there is not much opportunity. Many of
the Canadian students just come onto campus for classes and then go home; they don’t really hang out at the school. (Kurt, India)

I don’t have the same knowledge about current topics, like Canadian music – it is because of our different cultural backgrounds. I can’t join in the conversation because I don’t understand what they are talking about. Popular culture is really a challenge and barrier to making friends with Canadians and understanding what they are talking about so I can join in. Like Canadians like movies that make them cry but I like action movies. (Olivia, China)

Recurring themes emerged from the interview responses, such as different cultural attitudes towards friendship and lack of shared knowledge regarding popular culture and current events. One of the respondents identified a cultural difference in friendships in Canada from what they were accustomed to:

In Pakistan, if I have a friend who I play football with, I might become friends with them and then do business with them, but in Canada, if I make a friend at a bus stop, for example, that person might never be more than a bus stop friend. Canadians classify friendships more. (David, Pakistan)

Some of the participants also spoke about their interactions with their same cultural peers and the challenges they face either because of their association with them, or the interactions from them. One of the participants spoke about the reaction they sometimes get when they hang out with their same culture friends:

Canadians are funny because they don’t like it when Chinese students go around in groups. I know that Canadians feel excluded and they are not used to it. We are used to it so it isn’t something that bothers us as much. I talk to my Canadian friends about this. (Hannah, China)

This sentiment was also shared by another participant:
When I am out and about, if I am in a small group of two or three of my Indian friends, we are treated okay, but if we are in a larger group, and we go into a restaurant or club or something, we draw a lot of negative attention, I feel. (Kurt, India)

Another student spoke about how she avoided hanging out with her same-culture peers as much as possible, but that for others, it is possible to still have a successful experience in Canada even without making Canadian friends:

During first year I avoided contact with international students because I had met many international students who had been here years and only had international friends and they didn’t speak English very well – I don’t understand the point of coming here and not trying to learn the culture and make Canadian friends. I see now that many of those people who never make friends outside their own culture are actually very happy here – they came here for an education and they are still successful in that, they still get what they want. (Cara, China)

Cara also spoke about the problem of being seen as trying too hard to fit in with Canadians:

I have worked really hard to try to adapt to Canadian culture and make local friends, but sometimes the Chinese international students make me feel like I am trying too hard to be Canadian. I dye my hair and I like to hang out with Canadians and party with them, but the Chinese international students don’t. Sometimes I feel like I am too Canadian now to be accepted by the Chinese international students, and too Chinese to be totally accepted by the Canadian students.

In her reflection, Cara identified a challenge that is common, but surprises many who are going through the transformative experience of cultural adaptation. Identity confusion and disorientation as identified by Bennett (1986) describes how, as people negotiate new cultural identities, they can have feelings of being distanced or disengaged from their native culture, especially seen as the person takes a more self-reflexive perspective, asking themselves “who am
I?” Bennett suggests that those who are able to manage these multiple identities most effectively are those who maintain “healthy self-concepts” (p. 193) so a positive attitude about inhabiting multiple cultures and their emerging identities.

Language and Communication Issues:

Students were asked in the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews what they had found most challenging in coming to study in Canada. While only 7 respondents in the questionnaire indicated ‘language’ as their first or second top challenge (Table 4.3.9), most of the interview participants spoke specifically about language and communication as a challenge.

Table 4.3.9 Challenges While Studying in Canada

(Selected from list, ranked as first or second biggest challenge)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biggest Challenge While Studying in Canada</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Expectations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the interviews, academic challenges were most often discussed in the context of language and communication. One participant explained how language affected her ability to meet her academic and vocational goals in Canada:

I have worked really hard on my spoken English because I knew I wanted to apply for Veterinarian College. I joined toastmasters and have really tried to improve. I didn’t get accepted into OVC (Ontario Veterinarian College) and when I spoke with the advisor who was on the interviewing panel and in charge of giving feedback, she told me my
spoken English wasn’t good enough. I don’t understand. I know people can understand me, my grammar and pronunciation is good – I get 95% on my presentations in classes. I speak with an accent, I know, but that is something I can’t really change – it is how I speak. It really affected my self-confidence. (Olivia, China)

Another student also talked about how language was an issue in academic success:

The first time I did a presentation in my tutorial and I got stuck on my words. I was prepared but I tried and couldn’t speak. My TA was very nice and encouraged me and then said to try again and again. He was patient and gave me as much time as I needed. I was really grateful. (Stephen, China)

Olivia also spoke about how communication issues can impact the ability to make friends, especially with Canadians, or to participate in class discussions:

My boyfriend is Chinese and his English is really bad. Sometimes he feels very uncomfortable around my Canadian friends and self-conscious. He wants to join in, but he knows that sometimes people can’t understand what he is saying and it makes him feel bad. When you feel that way, it is hard because you know things and you can think of things to say, like in class, but you don’t speak then – sometimes the professor talks and don’t get it. (Olivia, China)

Other participants spoke about this issue also:

There are some areas I need to work on, like communication – I don’t think most people here understand when I talk because of my accent. (Kurt, India)

And Stephen addressed this again:

The most challenging thing is language – it is hard to understand the native English language speakers, they use a lot of casual language that I haven’t learned and so I can’t understand it.

It was interesting that some of the students distinguished between language challenges that involved the mechanics of working in a second language, and the difference in communication styles. This was evident when one student spoke about her preferred mode of communication:
I talk in person to my TAs and Profs – I always have. I find it easier to explain by talking with them instead of writing emails. When they tell me to send them an email, I ask if I can come and see them instead. (Hannah, from China)

And another spoke specifically about the challenge of working in a second language and then about the difference in communication styles between Canada and her home country of Vietnam:

I have been here three years and sometimes I think people still don’t understand me. I have to find different ways to express myself and it is hard. Communication is a big challenge because you have to express yourself in a different way than you did before, especially communicating with other students, and sometimes I didn’t have the language skills or vocabulary to express myself well. To be successful as a student here you have to be able to persuade people to your way of thinking and be able to affect people’s decision making but I didn’t have the language style or vocabulary to do that. It was frustrating. In Canada you have to be able to express your opinions and to persuade. This is a barrier to me and limits my options and influences my decisions. It isn’t just the knowledge of the language; it is the manner that people use language and how they speak. (Hope, from Vietnam)

Another participant addressed the issue of embarrassment and language challenges:

The international students are scared about saying the wrong things and if they get laughed at a few times, they will stop trying and they will feel too ashamed to try again. If the Canadian students can let them know that they like the way they speak, and they are not laughing to be mean, and maybe tell the international students that they like how they think in a different way, the international students will feel more self-confident to keep trying and adapting. (Cara, from China)

In the responses from the participants, we can see how important it is for international students to recognize the difference in communication styles between their own culture and their new culture, and to be able to adapt their ways of communication in order to be more successful in their interactions, which demonstrates the ability to consider multiple visions and mindfulness.
in their self-reflexivity, both important aspects of FNT and INT (Ting-Toomey, 1993, Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

**Personal Challenges**

As noted earlier in Table 4.3.9, participants identified finances as being a significant challenge, as well as academic challenges. This was also reflected in the interview responses when students identified that financial challenges don’t just result in a lack of physical resources, but also limits opportunities to participate in social activities:

I have time management problems because I have never had to study and work at the same time but now I have two part time jobs at the same time as I am studying. I think Canadian students are much better at managing this kind of schedule but it is new to me and so I find it really hard. The conversion rate from Indian rupees to Canadian dollars is really bad and I have a student loan from India – my family couldn’t pay for my education. (Kurt, India)

One of the most common personal challenges that the participants acknowledged in the interviews was loneliness. The reasons for this loneliness are multi-fold; being away from family and friends in their home countries; not always having the time or resources to make friends in their new environment and as identified earlier, lack of knowledge of the local culture:

The biggest challenge to living and studying in Canada is loneliness. Intl students have to work harder to learn the material and do the readings and so I feel often that I am missing out on opportunities to socialize and make friends because of this. I know a lot of other international students have this same problem, especially in first year – it is so hard. I miss having family here; it is just not the same. When I broke my ankle last winter it was really hard. My roommates and friends were good and offered to help, but it isn’t the same as having your family here. When my Canadian friends are sick they go home so their mothers can look after them, and so I missed being able to do that. (Cara, China)
When I came here I had never been alone in my life. I always had family and friends around me. I was really depressed at first. (David, Pakistan)

Participants also identified that sometimes the isolation they feel is caused by different cultural norms:

In Vietnam we share personal information with our family and friends and relatives, but in Canada people don’t share a lot of information with other people. We are a more collectivist culture but in Canada I spend a lot of time on my own. That was unusual for me.

In these personal challenges identified by the students themselves, we see the same issues emerge as those identified in previous studies, (Andrade, 2006, Chirkov et al., 2007), especially homesickness, isolation, and financial challenges. We can also see that it is the student’s ability to manage these challenges that may lead to a more positive experience overall.

Characteristics and Behaviours

In the questionnaire, participants were asked to rank characteristics and behaviours that they felt were important to having a successful experience as an international student in Canada (Tables 4.3.10, 4.3.11, 4.3.12). In these questions, participants also had the option to add additional thoughts. Working hard and good time management are identified as the top two behaviours, although developing relationships follows closely as third in importance for these forty-one students.

**Table 4.3.10 Behaviours Believed to Contribute to Successful Academic and Social Experience in Canada**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Hard</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Time Management</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Relationships</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Involved in Campus Life</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Resources Offered by School</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(as selected as either most or second most important)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other behaviours that the students added in themselves were, in no order of importance: getting a job because no money equals no social life, knowing what works best for you, being open to new ideas, being resilient, acknowledging you will have more challenge than Canadian students in order to succeed, developing “Canadian soft skills”, having a good attitude and a cheerful demeanor, being thoughtful, teamwork skills, more extracurricular inside and outside school.

The responses to question regarding personal characteristics believed to contribute to successful academic and social experience in Canada seems to indicate that students considered all of the listed characteristics to be important. Of interest is that “going out of your comfort zone” was ranked most often as the first or second most significant characteristic for contributing to success.

Table 4.8 Personal Characteristics Believed to Contribute to Successful Academic and Social Experience in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Going out of comfort zone</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self confidence</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting making mistakes</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitting you need help</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(as selected as either most or second most important)

The participants also added in the following as other characteristics they felt were important: being understanding towards others, understanding the norms and values in Canada and how they are different than your own country, knowing the trends in society, friendliness, urge to learn new things.

In the interviews, most of the participants showed a great deal of self-awareness and self-reflexivity when asked about what international students needed to do or be in order to be successful in meeting their goals and reiterated the data from the questionnaire:
There is not one way to do things, you have to be flexible. It is important that people adapt well. There are many people in China who are closed minded and that makes it harder for them to adapt. (Olivia, China)

Taking risks and not being afraid of making mistakes is really important too. Intl students need to get empowered to join clubs and take leadership roles on campus so that there is more awareness of international students at the school. Intl students are a growing demographic in Canada and so they need to challenge themselves and make their voices heard. (Hope, Vietnam)

Intl students must have self-confidence and a positive attitude – if you are positive and open-minded, then people will talk to you and people can trust you and give you a chance. You cannot be successful if you have a negative attitude. You have to have an open mind. (Stephen, China)

I think a positive attitude and having confidence is the best way to be successful as an international student in Canada. Having confidence and a positive attitude will change the way people interact with you and respond to you. If you are not positive then you won’t be doing the right things to be successful. (David, Pakistan)

SECTION 5– DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The most challenging aspect of analyzing the data collected was the complexity of the responses of the participants and that is probably the emergent theme of this research – gaining a better understanding of how multilayered the transition processes are for international students as they negotiate their identities and experiences. In each of the answers and shared stories there was a complexity that almost defied coding. For example, in the shared story by Olivia about failing to achieve her goal of admission to OVC there were issues around identity and language (“I speak with an accent, I know, but that is something I can’t really change – it is how I speak.”), and perhaps perceived discrimination (“I know people can understand me, my grammar and pronunciation is good – I get 95% on my presentations in classes.”), and her own self-image.
(“It really affected my self-confidence”).

By examining the responses of the participants, in both the questionnaire and the follow up interviews, we can see that the international students are engaged in developing intercultural competence, showing those aspects of INT identified as “mindful reflexivity, taking multiple perspectives, analytical empathy, and intentional creativity (Deardorff, 2009, p.12).” As discussed earlier in the examination of Intercultural Adaptation and Communication theories, humans are constantly negotiating their identities in order to function in a world that is dynamic and complex, and we definitely see this in the responses of the participants.

When asked about personal characteristics that contribute to a successful experience as an international student studying in Canada, the responses that dominated were “positive attitude”, “self-confidence”, and “being willing to go out of comfort zone”. This is then reiterated in the interviews, not only in the identification of these specific traits by the participants, but in the stories that the students shared of their triumphs and challenges. The positive effect of self-confidence on international students was reinforced when Cara explained that greater acceptance by Canadian students would lead to increased self-confidence for the international students, which would then encourage them to persevere and adapt and conversely, “if they get laughed at a few times, they will stop trying and they will feel too ashamed to try again.”

In the Interaction Skills component of the FNT (Ting-Toomey, 1998), Facework Management is one of the components identified as important in managing intercultural experiences and developing competence. This is manifested in both the questionnaire and the interviews responses when the students were asked to identify attributes that contributed positively to their experience and consequentially chose attributes that strongly relate to positive self-identity. They identified positive traits such as being comfortable making mistakes or trying
new ways of doing things, being confident and admitting when they don’t know something – all characteristics that require a strong sense of self.

In Olivia’s story about her boyfriend being too embarrassed by his poor English to interact with her Canadian friends, we see how this lack of confidence and perhaps his need to ‘save face’ in order to avoid being socially diminished in these interactions, may reinforce Ting-Toomey’s FNT theory that cultural dimensions can form the framework when engaged in intercultural interactions (1988) and that being able to diffuse the risk of interactions with strangers can lead to more positive experiences. Conversely, for Stephen, who had to persevere in order to complete his first class presentation, he was able to manage his facework in that he did not let his embarrassment stop him from trying again and again. He was able to complete his presentation, and subsequently reported that he received a good mark. Olivia’s boyfriend chooses to avoid embarrassment, and presumably, doesn’t make progress in his acculturation because of this. The difference could have been motivation, in that getting a good mark in the class was a stronger positive force than embarrassment, but also having a TA that was sensitive to Stephen’s situation and who created a positive environment in which Stephen felt comfortable failing a few times before he triumphed.

Although most participants in the questionnaire did not speak English as their first language (75% indicated English was not their first language), most did not identify language as being one of the main challenges to having a satisfactory or successful study experience in Canada – only three ranked language first, whereas 13 indicated cultural adaptation and financial issues as most important followed by academic challenges. This may seem incongruous to the responses of those interviewed, most of whom identified language as a challenge. However often their identification of a language issue was in fact an issue arising from cultural differences in
communication styles. This is evident in Hope’s comments about language, where she states that, “it isn’t just the knowledge of the language; it is the manner that people use language and how they speak. “

In the questionnaire, financial challenges were ranked as equal in importance to cultural adaptation challenges. This is explained in the additional comments by the participants, and also in the interviews, in that lack of financial resources leads to a reduced ability to participate in social activities and reduces opportunities to develop friendships and support networks. Knowing that international students face barriers in finding employment, (Grayson 2008, Westwood & Barker, 1990), and when they do, it is often less lucrative than their Canadian counterparts, then financial challenges are reframed from being a physical challenge, in the lack of physical resources, to a social challenge, in the reduced opportunities to participate and integrate into their new environment.

When asked about behaviours that contribute to academic and social success, 26 questionnaire participants indicated hard work as most important. Good time management skills and developing relationships with classmates and other students followed in importance. Those who work advising international students will be familiar with hearing from struggling students that they feel they just need to work harder to be successful, and this may be due to cultural dimensions. As noted by Ting-Toomey (1988), when faced with conflict in an intercultural setting, cultural dimensions form the context for managing conflict and conflict resolution. This is the situation for international students facing different academic expectations based on cultural values, and so students who come from high-risk avoidance cultures, as identified by Hofstede (1991, 2001), may undervalue creativity or innovation when faced with conflict, instead believing that working harder, or doing much more of the same, is the path to success.
‘Mindfulness’ is identified as a necessary component for successful intercultural adaptation and communication (Deardorff 2009), and is present in a number of components of Ting-Toomey’s INT and FNT theory. This ‘mindfulness’ dimension is exhibited by many of the students who participated in the interviews, in their ability to reflect on their own behaviours and how others perceive some of these behaviours, for example, when Olivia states “there is not one way to do things, you have to be flexible. It is important that people adapt well,” or when Hope shares her belief that “taking risks and not being afraid of making mistakes is really important too,” we can see this reflection. Also, when the students comment about their challenges in making friends with Canadians, there is a great deal of self-awareness and awareness of other.

It is understood that those who volunteered to participate in the interviews may represent those who are most well adapted to their new environment, evident in their comfort answering questions about their experiences. Their responses to their challenges show an openness to novelty, an understanding of the need to adapt and do things differently than they did at home to be successful, and an ability to manage multiple visions – or the ability to see things from the perspective of both their own culture and also the perspective of their host culture. This analytical empathy, another component of FNT, is evident in in the pragmatic approach of the students in taking a practical point of view that does not seem in any way resentful of the need to do things differently and mindful creativity – taking new approaches and using a variety of personal resources in order to be successful.

What the data really reveals to us is that successful international students are actively engaged in their acculturation processes and are mindfully synthesizing their experiences of cultural differences. Following a self-reflexive process of examining what it means to feel accepted and understood, in the context of intercultural interactions, the students are
deconstructing and then reforming their identities, adapting to their new environment and integrating new ways of doing and being.

Benefits

International students who are able to successfully negotiate their experiences and synthesize their new identities are those who are able to effectively manage their acculturation processes. Those who push themselves beyond their comfort zone, adapting to their new environment by learning new ways of being and doing, and those who are willing to take some chances and make some mistakes, are those who seem to show the greatest confidence in meeting their academic and immigration goals in Canada.

If students are given the opportunity to develop a deeper cultural understanding of their host country and are able to find cultural navigators or interpreters, that is people who can explain the cultural references, especially in popular culture, they will be able to have more confidence in making friends with Canadian students and develop those support networks that are so vital to their success.

Many universities have peer mentor or buddy programs to help new international students, the administrators of these programs should make sure that the students acting as mentors or buddies are trained in cultural interpretation or understand their role as cultural interpreters, in addition to offering friendship and assistance in helping navigate the student through the institutional processes.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the study surveyed a small group, it did include students from eighteen different countries studying at different levels in six different provinces. Thus it presented a degree of diversity and breadth within the Canadian post-secondary situation. The small sample obviously
limited any conclusive findings with respect to the experiences, attitudes and characteristics of international students in their sojourn in Canada. It did, however, provide a place to engage international students in Canada in a discourse regarding their challenges and successes, and could be, thus, a precursor to further study and a reference for the development of policies in the field to enhance the experiences – academic and social – of international students studying in Canada.

Another limitation of this study was that the questionnaire and follow up interviews were only offered in English, so it may be that some of the students who struggled with language self-selected themselves out of the study – leading to the low frequency of language reported as a challenge to academic and social success. The final limitation that I would like to discuss is that there was great subjectively in the answers, so when a student reported, for example, they did not have many Canadian friends, there was no definition of friend, in terms of closeness or frequency of contact, so “friend” was a subjective term that may have cultural implications.

As both FNT and INT are helpful to use as theoretical frameworks to examine the experiences of international students in Canada, they can also be used by those who design orientation and integration programming for international students to assist in developing competence in sensitizing concepts to ensure that international students’ needs are being met in a respectful way and that the students themselves are developing the tools they need to communicate successfully in their new environment. Using intercultural adaptation and communication theory as the foundation for developing programming for international students, both orientation programming and academic support, is essential to ensure that the international students are supported during these transformative processes. All stakeholders at institutions, including faculty, staff and other students, require competence in managing intercultural
interactions in order to create the optimum environment for international students. It is important then to engage them in a dialogue of what it means to be an interculturally effective person and to provide opportunities to develop this competence. In doing so we may be able to create an environment which has a positive effect on the self-confidence of the international student, feeling they are understood and given a sense of belonging, which will encourage them to engage more in their host environment, and take more chances, socially and academically, helping students to develop and strengthen characteristics that have been identified as leading to more successful and rewarding experiences.
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APPENDIX A

Standardized Questionnaire

**Demographic information:**

- Year of study
- Program of study
- Institution
- Home country
- First language
- Accompanying family members
- Study in Canada prior to starting degree
- Age

The following questions are to be answered on a five-point Likert Scale, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “completely disagree” to 5, being “completely agree”.

**Perceived Discrimination:**

I believe I am treated differently by my professors because I am an international student.

1. I believe I am treated differently by the Canadian students because I am an international student.
2. I believe that being treated differently indicates discrimination at my campus.
3. Canadians discriminate against those who are from other countries.
4. I don’t believe that I face discrimination at my institution.

**Social Skills and Support:**

5. I am able to participate in social activities with Canadian students.
6. I am able to participate in social activities with students who are the same culture as I am.
7. I am able to participate in social activities with other international students who are from a different culture than I am.
8. I choose not to participate in social activities with Canadian students to avoid embarrassment.
9. I regularly speak in class, to either answer questions or participate in a discussion.
10. I participate regularly in clubs and associations at my university.
11. I use the academic support services that are available at my university.
12. I have a good mixture of Canadian and same culture friends.
13. In Canada I have at least one close Canadian friend that I can share personal information with, such as my academic performance, family or relationship issues.
14. In Canada I have at least one close friend from my own culture that I can share personal information with, such as my academic performance, family or relationship issues.
15. I feel that if I encounter a personal problem, I have people in Canada that I can go to for support and advice.
16. When I have a personal problem, I do not ask anyone else for support and advice.

**Motivation:**

17. I chose to study in Canada to please my parents.
18. I chose to study in Canada because it will gain me respect from others back home.
19. I chose to study in Canada in order to meet my career goals.
20. I chose to study in Canada in order to meet my immigration goals.
21. If I am not successful in my studies in Canada, I will feel like I have disappointed my family.
22. Before coming to Canada I had definite career goals.
23. I am not sure what career I will have after graduation.

**Sociocultural Adaptation:**

24. I avoid interacting with Canadians as much as possible.
25. I am able to speak with a professor about a challenge I am having in class.
26. I choose not to speak in class to avoid embarrassment.
27. Canadians are very rule focused.
28. Canadians don’t respect rules.
29. I believe that most Canadian people understand me when I am speaking with them.
30. I prefer to live with students from my own culture.
31. I don’t always understand why Canadians act the way they do.

**Self Esteem:**

32. I often feel depressed or stressed out.
33. Sometimes I feel embarrassed to say what country I come from.
34. I feel I am successful compared to other international students from the same culture.
35. I feel I am successful compared to Canadian students.
36. I don’t feel I am successful.

**Satisfaction:**

37. I am satisfied with my decision to study in Canada.
38. I regret my decision to study in Canada.
39. I am satisfied with my social experiences in Canada.
40. I am satisfied with my academic experiences in Canada.
41. I believe I will be able to achieve my academic goals in Canada.
42. I believe that I will be able to achieve my career goals because of my education in Canada.
43. I believe I will be able to meet my immigration goals in Canada.
44. I am satisfied with my ability to adapt to a new environment.
45. Below are ranking questions, where you are asked to place things in order of importance, with 1 being most important and 5 being least important.
Your purpose in coming to study in Canada:
___ To get an education
___ To pursue immigration to Canada
___ To satisfy my parents
___ To meet my career goals
___ To gain status from people in my home country
___ Other (please explain) ____________________________

The biggest challenge in studying in Canada:
___ Language
___ Academics expectations
___ Cultural Adaptation
___ Financial issues
___ Independent Living
___ Other (please explain) ____________________________

The behaviours that you believe contribute to a successful experience in Canada:
___ Good time management
___ Using the support services the university offers
___ Developing relationships with classmates and other students
___ Working hard
___ Getting involved in campus life
___ Other (please explain) ____________________________

Characteristics that you believe contribute to a successful experience in Canada:
___ Willingness to go out of your comfort zone
___ Ability to admit when you don’t know something and need help
___ Self confidence
___ Accepting that making mistakes is part of the learning process
___ Having a positive attitude
___ Other (please explain) ____________________________
APPENDIX B:

Interview Questions:

1. Has there been a single positive encounter or incident that has affected your experience in Canada?
2. Has there been a single negative encounter or incident that has affected your experience in Canada?
3. What do you feel has been the most challenging thing in studying and living in Canada?
4. How have your perceptions of Canada or Canadians changed since arriving in Canada?
5. You noted that you don’t have many Canadian friends (as noted on their responses to the online survey), can you tell me about that?
6. Is there anything you would like to add or final thoughts that would like to share about how you have managed your experience of studying as an International Student in Canada?