



Staying in Canada: Exploring Successful Adaption and Integration

Stories of Chinese International Students in Nova Scotia

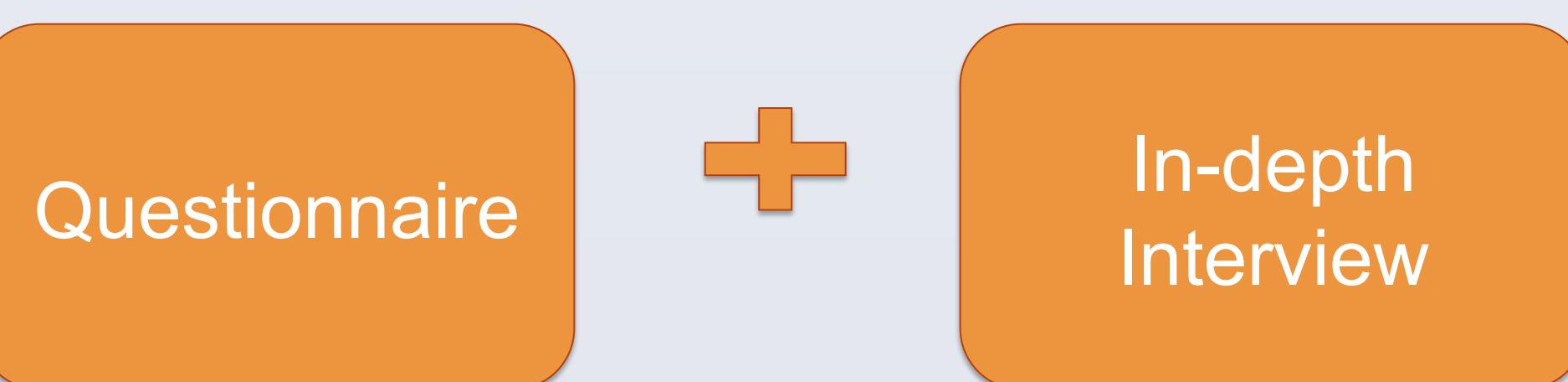
YU-HUI ZHANG
MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

Abstract:

In recent decades, Canada has attracted an increasing number of international students from all over the world. Among those international students studying in Canada, **students from China make up the majority of the population**. Even though Nova Scotia is a smaller province located in the East coast of Canada and had been ignored by Chinese international students and Chinese immigrants in the past, the number of Chinese international students enrolling the universities in Nova Scotia has increased in recent years. Meanwhile, Nova Scotia is in need of more skilled international students to promote the economic growth and prosperity of the province because of a **declining birth rate and an aging population**.

This study focuses on new immigrants in Nova Scotia to explore **the successful transitional journeys from international student to permanent resident** in Canada. The findings not only uncovered the positive successful integration experiences of the participants but also have important implications for retaining more skilled international students to meet the demand of the Nova Scotian labour market.

Method:



- I used a combination method of closed (forced-choice) questionnaire and in-depth interviewing for data collection.
- My study involved **individual interviews with eight participants** who had already graduated from universities in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and who are now employed in jobs, which meet the criteria of IRCC to immigrate to Canada.
- All participants were required to have graduated from universities **within the last ten years** and to be **full time** in the workplace, because not only is ten years long enough to secure full-time work, but it is also still recent enough to allow the participants to recall the reasons why they were hired and why they made their decision to stay.

Table 1:

Name	Years in Nova Scotia	University Attended	Program of Study	Present Employment
Carina	6	Dalhousie University	Management	Executive Assistant & Office Manager
David	11	Acadia University	Business Administration	Financial Planner
Jay	9	Saint Mary's University	Science	Financial Service Manager
Chris	4	Mount Saint Vincent University	Business Administration	Program Coordinator
Jimmy	10	Dalhousie University	Statistics	Research & Statistics Officer
Cedar	5	Dalhousie University	Management	Supervisor
Amy	6	Dalhousie University	Marine Biology & Statistics	Fund Operation Analyst
Jean	7	Saint Mary's University	Commerce	Financial Services Representative I (One)

Table 2:

AGE	20-25	25-30	30+
Total Number	4	3	2

Table 3:

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	UNDER-GRADUATE	GRADUATE
Total Number	8	1

Findings:

Life Experiences

- Willingness to learning the English language and immerse themselves into Canadian culture
- Recommendations from their Canadian high school teachers
- Flexible immigration policies
- Win-win formal agreements between Chinese university & Canadian university

Coming to Nova Scotia

- The essential role of relationships with Canadians
- Individual Resilience

Living in Nova Scotia

- Job opportunities
- Social networks they have developed
- Friendly Nova Scotia people
- Flexible immigration policies
- Unpolluted environment

Staying in Nova Scotia

Learning Experiences

Transformative Learning

Attitudes, beliefs and opinions generated through transformative learning will likely lead to more correct and justified actions (Mezirow, 2000).

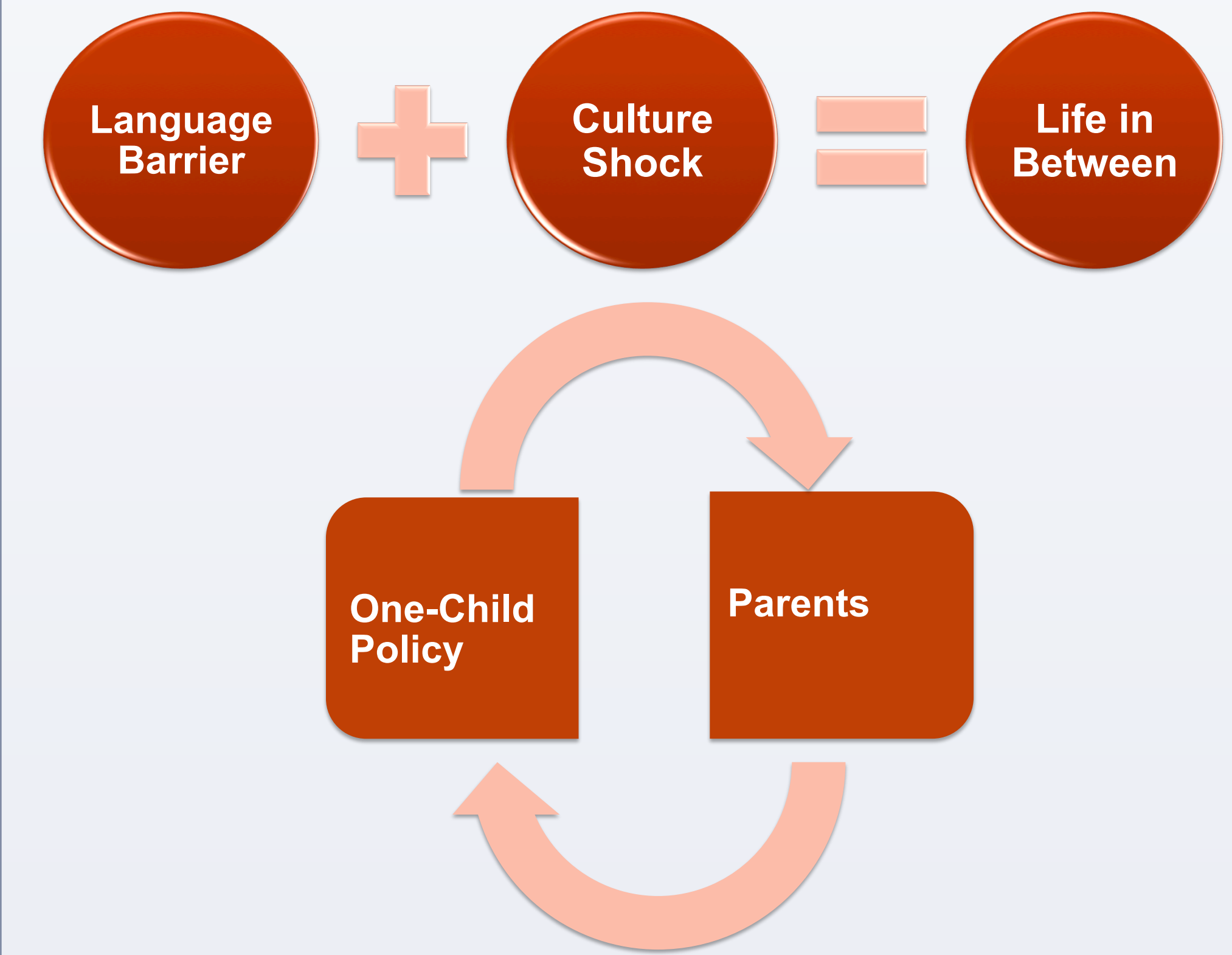
Beliefs, values and attitudes towards life and work have been changed more or less by the mainstream of Canadian culture and Canadian society for the last couple of years.

Self-directed Learning

Cranton (2013) defines that "self-directed learning occurs when the individual has the opportunity and responsibility to make choices and decisions about learning" (p. 100).

Employed different forms of self-directed learning.

Challenges:



Recommendations:

- Take an active part in local activities and events for the purpose of understanding Canadian culture and improving the English language.
- Develop a good relationship with your professors at university. Do not be afraid to ask them questions if you have any problem with your studies.
- Step out of your comfort zone and make friends with people from other countries instead of only gathering and talking with Chinese compatriots.
- Choose to be optimistic when you encounter difficulties and challenges. If needed, seek help from other people.
- Have the intense curiosity towards life and also the attitude of being a true lifelong learning.

Conclusion:

The overall aim of this research is to provide all the "tools" that are required for international students to have a successful transition from student to employee and to immigrant. We should believe that international students can not only make contribution to the economic development of Canada, but also to the culture diversity and societal vibrant.

Acknowledgement:

I offer my sincerest and deepest thanks to my honorable supervisor, Dr. Susan Brigham, who has not only encouraged me emotionally but also inspired me spiritually and academically during my study life at Mount Saint Vincent University. Additionally, I would also like to thank the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia for giving me an opportunity to keep working in the field of immigration and refugees after graduation.

References:

- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress (1st ed., Jossey-Bass higher and adult education series). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. (2013). Adult learning theory. In Nesbit et al. (Eds.), Building on critical traditions, Adult Education and learning in Canada (p. 95-p. 104). Toronto: Thompson.