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Voices from another Side:

The Host Members' Perspectives on an International Partnership of a Short-Term Study Abroad
Program in Hong Kong

by

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A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

As universities and colleges send thousands of students to study abroad each year, there are many issues and concerns as well as benefits and challenges for study abroad students and sending institutions that have been identified in current empirical studies and scholarly literature. However, little research has been done to examine international partnerships and the impacts of study abroad programs from *host members' perspectives*. Designed as a qualitative research study, a case study methodology was utilized to gather in-depth information in order to gain insights into host members' cultural perceptions and experiences interacting with study abroad students in an established international partnership between a host organization in Hong Kong and a sending institution in Canada. Guided by two overarching research questions, detailed descriptive data were collected from 16 semi-structured one-on-one interviews and three subsequent focus group meetings with a total of 23 participants at the host organization. Findings from this study highlight the complexity in international partnership development that requires each partner to understand and accept the cultural differences from their own cultural lenses. Also, this study reveals that host members' cultural perceptions have the potential to influence their decision-making and their experiences when working with others who are from a different cultural context. The implications of this study's findings not only indicate the important social, cultural and organizational factors that have influenced different stages of a partnership development, but also contribute to our understanding of how host members' perceptions of their own and other cultural similarities and differences contribute to an increased cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity at the host organization when hosting the study abroad students.

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To my mother,
Who inspired me to be anyone I want to be.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

With increased student global mobility due to immigration and economic development around the world, higher education institutions (HEIs) are under constant pressure to equip students with intercultural understanding and knowledge to enable them to study and work in international contexts (de Wit, 1999). In many HEIs, internationalization has evolved from a marginal activity that added value to a central and core organizational value and this has implications for planning and educational practices at individual, institutional, and governmental levels (de Wit, 2008). As a result, internationalization in higher education becomes a process that “serves as a cornerstone and initial building block that allows people to develop skills and tools that will become necessary for surviving in a globalized world” (McCabe, 2001, p. 142). In this process, the objectives of internationalization, such as promoting language proficiency, cross-cultural understanding, and an awareness of one’s own ethnocentric tendencies, can be promoted through activities at home as well as through internationalization abroad, which includes all forms of cross-border programs, courses, and projects (Knight, 2006). Thus, cross-border education, including the mobility of students, teachers, and programs across national boundaries, not only contributes to the increasing internationalization of education, but is also considered as “the best visible example of globalization of higher education” (Varghese, 2008, p. 11).

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2011), student mobility worldwide has increased from around 1.1 million students in 1980 to 3.4 million in 2009. The large growth in numbers has been reflected in both national and regional educational policies in which student mobility is generally regarded by policymakers as a positive and desirable strategic approach for internationalizing higher education (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2012). However, due to

different underlying philosophical and moral values as well as different motivations to internationalize, some scholars agree that cross-border education, including study abroad and exchange programs may reflect either the principles of mutuality and equality or the commercial principles of profit and gain (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Because post-secondary institutions engaged in promoting student mobility have so many different purposes, objectives, experiences, and outcomes related to their study abroad programs, it is important to understand the complex issues involved in the interconnected relations among the major players of study abroad programs, including the sending institution, the student, and the host organization (including educational institutions, non-profit communities, or private organizations). However, most empirical research on international education and study abroad focuses on perceptions, motivations, and outcomes of study abroad *for students and sending institutions*. Little empirical research has been done to examine the issues involved in international partnership development between the sending institution and host organization, as well as in hosting study abroad programs from the perspectives of *host members*. For example, what motivates the host organizations to build international partnerships with sending institutions? What impacts do study abroad students and programs have on the host organizations? As collaboration and reciprocity with host organizations are central to the success of study abroad programs, this research intends to fill the void in international education literature by providing the missing voices of host nationals and organizations in a study abroad program and to gain insight on international partnership development between a western HEI in Canada and a host organization in Hong Kong through detailed descriptive empirical data reported in the study. In this chapter, the research purpose and questions, theoretical framework,

significance and limitations of the study are discussed. Also, the definitions of the terms used in this research are provided.

1.1 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to examine the host members' perspectives on an international partnership with a Canadian sending institution as well as their experiences of hosting a short-term study abroad program in Hong Kong. Based on the relevant empirical research, researchers have identified many benefits for study abroad students and sending institutions. The benefits for students who participate in study abroad programs include intercultural development, enhanced learning of academic materials, personal and professional growth, and appreciation and respect for differences of others and other cultures (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Rexeisen & Al-Khatib, 2009; Zhao, Meyers, & Meyers, 2009). Also, the sending institutions benefit from increased student retention and employability, faculty participation, and financial contributions through study abroad programs (Altbach, 1991; Ebbeck & Russo, 2007; Flack, 1976). However, unlike other international education activities such as faculty or student exchange, study abroad programs have specific challenges and many of these challenges directly affect the relationships between the host organization, the student, and the sending institution. One of the challenges is that study abroad programs are diverse and individualized (Dickey, 2008). Variations include the locations and lengths of the study abroad programs, differences in academic program structures and requirements, and the diversity of the student population (AUCC, 2007a; Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2009). Therefore, each study abroad program must address the issue of creating a strong partnership with the host organization individually. The second challenge is associated with specific time constraints within the study abroad programs. Developing a relationship with different

stakeholders in the host organization takes time. Since most study abroad programs are short-term, from as little as a few weeks to a few months in duration (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2011a), it is difficult to develop harmonized relationships between the sending institution, the student, and the host organization. The third challenge to study abroad programs is the occurrence of culture shock when the student arrives in the host country (Ryan & Twibell, 2000). Culture shock can isolate a student to the detriment of the learning outcomes of the program. The intercultural sensitivity and knowledge of both the host culture of individual students and of the sending institution also have an impact on the relationship developed with the host organization.

Since Canadian universities and colleges are sending thousands of students each year to study abroad, the lack of empirical research on the effects of study abroad programs on host organizations has implications for how HEIs can further build and sustain partnerships with organizations or institutions abroad both now and in the future. In the current literature on study abroad and international education, little empirical research has been done to examine host organizations' experiences of hosting study abroad programs and their perspectives on international partnerships with sending institutions across different geographical, language, social and cultural contexts. As a response to gaps and silences regarding impacts of study abroad programs on host organizations, this research is an attempt to explore and to understand the complex issues involved in the interconnected relationships among the three key players (*the sending institution, the students, and the host organization*) in study abroad programs by focusing on host organization members' perceptions and experiences with both the sending institution and the study abroad students.

1.2 Research Questions

The focus of this research is to explore: (1) the host members' perspectives on an international partnership with a sending institution, and (2) the host members' experiences regarding the impacts of hosting a study abroad program at both individual and organizational levels. More specifically, this study examines an international partnership established between a Canadian public higher education sending institution and a private bilingual kindergarten and nursery school in Hong Kong, which acts as a host organization by providing study abroad opportunities for Canadian students enrolled in the sending institution's Early Childhood Education (ECE) program. Although this international partnership is a specific and unique example of a study abroad program established between a Western sending institution and an Eastern host organization, this study focuses on the exploration of real-life contexts, circumstances and history that impacted the partnership development with a Western sending institution from the host members' perspectives. Thus, the findings have the potential to deepen our understanding of various social, cultural and organizational factors that may positively or negatively impact international partnership development with higher education institutions.

This research study also explores different stakeholder perspectives on an international partnership held within the host organization. Based on the current literature, the interrelationships among the *sending institution*, the *students*, and the *host organization* and the main issues including *internationalization*, *international partnership* and *study abroad* (identified between the players) are illustrated in Figure 1.

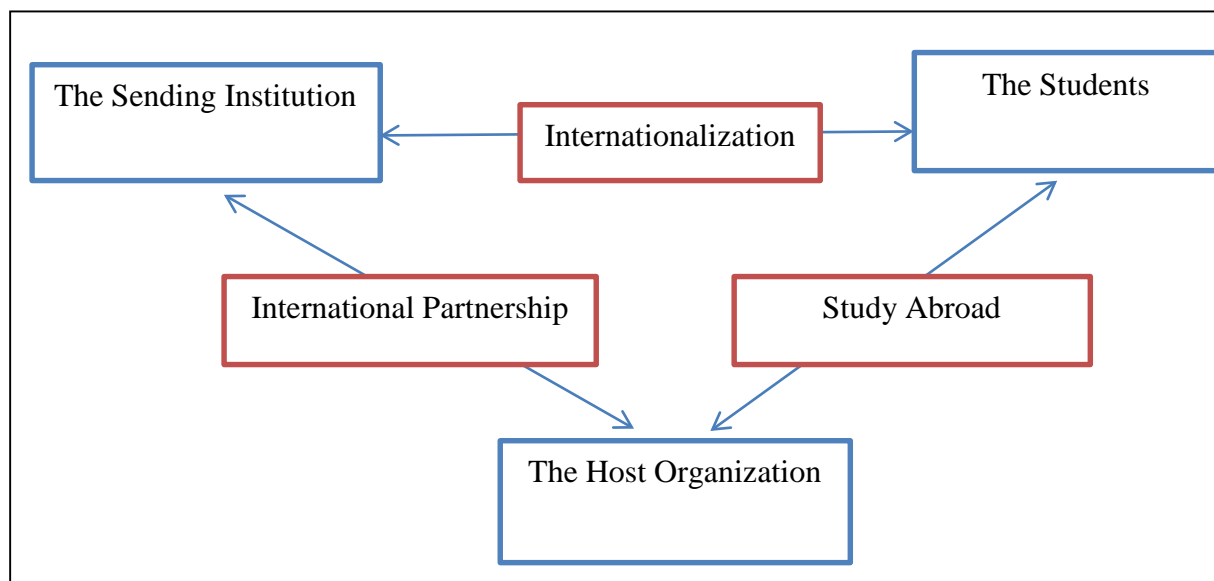


Figure 1. Main players and issues in the study abroad program.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the main players in the study abroad program include the *sending institution*, the *students*, and the *host organization*. The main shared issue between the *sending institution* and *host organization* is an international partnership that involves multiple stages of development, including the initiation, implementation, and sustain or termination stage. For the *sending institution* and *students* who participate in study abroad programs, the main concern is internationalization at the sending institution, which relates to strategies such as promoting an internationalized curriculum, increasing the sending institution's reputation, and developing intercultural sensitivities and international competencies for their students. The connection between the visiting *students* and *host organization* is the study abroad program. The study abroad program not only impacts the study abroad students at both the personal and academic levels, but may also influence each individual as well as the organizational services, functions, and culture in the host organization.

Thus, this research not only focuses on the host members' perspectives on an international partnership with a Canadian sending institution, but also examines the impacts of

hosting study abroad students at both individual and organizational levels in the host organization. There were two overarching research questions and three sub-questions for each question that guide this study:

1. How do people in the host organization perceive the international partnership with a Canadian sending institution?
 - a) What motivates the host organization to develop and maintain an international partnership with a Canadian HEI?
 - b) Are there host organizational factors that influence the initiation, implementation and sustain stages of the international partnership? If so, how?
 - c) Are there cultural factors evident in the partnership that influence the initiation, implementation and sustain stages of the international partnership? If so, how?
2. What are the perceived impacts that the study abroad program has on the host organization at both individual and organizational levels?
 - a) How does the presence of Canadian study abroad students affect members of the host organization who have extended contact with them?
 - b) How does the presence of Canadian study abroad students affect members of the host organization who don't have extended contact with them?
 - c) What are the perceived benefits and barriers for the host organization in this study abroad program?

From a social constructionist point of view, Gergen (1994) suggests that “the terms and forms by which we achieve understanding of the world and ourselves are social artifacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people” (p. 49). Situated in an international context, the host members' experiences with the Canadian study abroad students are

built upon and filtered through their cultural perceptions and personal values. The issues involved in international partnerships and study abroad programs are complex not only because the key players come from different nations, but also the underlying social and cultural factors that influence how the players interact with each other.

In order to build authentic relationships between international partners, it is important to promote mutual understanding from each side. Therefore, this research does not attempt to measure the impacts of a study abroad program on the host organization. Rather, as a doctoral dissertation, this research is an exploratory single-case study to examine host members' perceptions regarding what are the complex issues involved in a study abroad program within the host cultural and organizational contexts, and to identify emerging themes that may advance future research. As a qualitative research study, the findings from this study have the potential not only to reveal the full descriptive contexts of various factors that may influence people's experiences and perceptions about the international partnership with a Canadian HEI, but also to provide in-depth examination of interactions between people's perceptions and actions in a specific social and cultural context - Hong Kong.

1.3 The Case and the Three Players

The case being studied was a short-term (4 weeks) study abroad program offered as an international field placement to students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program at a large, urban Canadian college (referred to as "the College" hereafter) located in an Eastern Canadian province. In March 2009, the College formed a partnership with a private bilingual (Chinese and English) kindergarten and nursery school in Hong Kong. Since then, the host organization has agreed to host up to 12 study abroad students from the ECE program at the College to complete a for-credit field placement each year for four weeks in the month of May

and June in Hong Kong. After the examination of general information related to the three key players in the study abroad program, the context in which this case study was situated is described in detail. The descriptive information about the case context provides specific information about the characteristics of each player, the length of time for the partnership has been in place, the staffing involved, and the internal and external changes that have happened in both the College and the host organization over the years.

1.3.1 The profiles of three key players in the study abroad program.

The students. In this study, the students who participate in the study abroad program were all enrolled in the ECE program at the College. As a large urban higher education institution, the College has over 16,000 full-time students and 35,000 continuing education students enrolled in more than 130 programs leading to various credentials, including diplomas, certificates, bachelor degrees, and post-graduate diplomas. The College has three campuses, all located within a large urban center in the province. There are more than 1,000 full-time students enrolled in the ECE program that offers both two-year diplomas and four-year bachelor degrees in the field of ECE, and most of them come from the urban city or immediate surrounding areas. After completing their programs, most students are expected to work with children aged from 0 to 12 in a variety of public or private settings, including childcare centers, early learning kindergarten classrooms, family resources and recreational programs, nursery schools, and before- and after-school programs, but some students continue their academic studies in universities or in other college programs. While enrolled in the ECE program at the College, students are required to complete up to 3 field placements to demonstrate their ability to meet different competencies in transferring theoretical knowledge to applied practice when working with young children in various settings. Therefore, the international field placement is offered as

the third and also the last field placement to students who have completed all required coursework in the program and are expected to graduate once they successfully complete the requirements of the last field placement in Hong Kong.

The College. The College, and the ECE program in particular, has had experience working with non-postsecondary partners in domestic local communities for many years. The types of partnerships established between the College and local partners vary significantly, depending on the partner organization's type (public or private), the operational style (non-profit or for-profit), and whether or not the organization is regulated by the provincial Ministry of Education. The diversity of College to local partnerships reflects the aims of the community college model which is to “develop programming that directly responds to labour market needs, and provides college graduates with the combined theoretical knowledge and practical skills required for successfully gaining employment that contributes to economic development” (Hatton & Schroeder, 2009, p. 501). Also, the partnerships at the College reflect a great diversity in settings where ECE students are expected to find employment opportunities upon graduation. Many local partners not only provide the opportunities for the College students to practice their skills in order to meet the requirements of field placements that are set out by the Ministry and supervised by the College, but also are potential employers who hire the ECE students and graduates for part-time or full-time employment. As globalization becomes a reality that impacts all aspects of social, economic, and political environments at individual, institutional, and societal levels, it seems logical for the College to expand its partnerships internationally when opportunities arise. In this case, the ECE study abroad program in Hong Kong has been in operation at the College since 2009.

The host organization. The host organization is a private educational organization accredited by Hong Kong Education Bureau that provides bilingual (both Chinese and English) pre-primary education to young children aged 2-6 in Hong Kong. Using an immersion bilingual language model, the children are taught by two teachers whose mother tongues are either English or Chinese (e.g. Cantonese or Putonghua/Mandarin) in each classroom at the host organization. Thus, the English teacher and the Chinese teacher are working as teaching partners with a group of young children throughout the school year from the beginning of September to the end of July. As a private bilingual kindergarten, the host organization hires its employees from various cultural, linguistic and national backgrounds including Australia, New Zealand, the USA, the UK, Canada, China and Hong Kong. In the host organization, most English teachers come from Western English-speaking countries and Chinese teachers are mostly from Hong Kong or mainland China. Although Cantonese and Putonghua/Mandarin are both Chinese languages with different dialects that are distinct and not mutually intelligible when speaking, the written Chinese language remains the same for all Chinese dialects. The dominant Chinese dialect in Hong Kong is Cantonese, but Putonghua/Mandarin is an official dialect in mainland China. With increased economic, political and cultural activities between Hong Kong and China and demands from parents, the host organization offers two bilingual Chinese/English streams including the Cantonese/English stream and Putonghua/English stream to young children.

The host organization opened its first campus in 2000 and by 2010 it had expanded to four campuses serving over 1,500 children in Hong Kong. A few highlights of the programs offered by the host organization include (a) a child-centered thematic activity-based approach, (b) two bilingual immersion programs (Cantonese/English and Putonghua [Mandarin]/English) programs that are co-led by an English teacher and a Chinese teacher in order to provide a

balanced bilingual immersion environment, (c) a school-based curriculum development team to develop proprietary teaching aids, reading books, textbooks, and take-home activity kits that reflect children's school-life experiences. As an international partner with the College, the host organization is not only seen as a field placement site and a potential employer to ECE graduates, but also acts as a host who makes arrangements for accommodation, transportation and communication for the study abroad students in Hong Kong.

1.3.2 The international partnership.

The international partnership was first established in March 2009 with a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the senior administrators at both sides, which spells out the roles and responsibilities for the College and the host organization. According to the partnership agreements, the College is responsible for setting the requirements for the field placement and granting the credits once the students are successful in meeting the credentialing requirements. Since the College sends ECE faculty members to provide support and supervise the students' performance at each placement site in Canada, a faculty member would also accompany a selected group of students (up to 12 students) to the host organization in Hong Kong each year. Some responsibilities for the ECE faculty member who accompanies the students to Hong Kong include, but not limited to the following: (a) taking a lead role in informing and selecting students for the international field placement at the College; (b) coordinating with the host organization regarding the logistics of hosting the students and the faculty member in Hong Kong; (c) supporting students to meet the requirements of field placement and evaluate students' performance with feedback and inputs from their supervising teachers at the host organization.

Over the years, this international field placement has gained popularity among the ECE students, and the number of students who are interested in participating in the study abroad

program has increased steadily. For example, there were 28 students who were interested in completing their last field placement in Hong Kong in 2013, but only 12 students were selected and later two students withdrew from the study abroad program due to personal and financial issues. To maximize the number of students who can participate in the study abroad program and to ensure the successful completion of field placement abroad, the ECE program sets out selection criteria and procedures, so the interested students need to demonstrate that they are both academically and financially capable of completing the last field placement before graduating from the College. The study abroad students are selected based on their overall scores that consist of previous field placement performance, academic records such as Grade Point Average (GPA), interviews with a group of ECE faculty members, and a demonstration of financial capability for study abroad. From its inception in 2009 to 2013 when this research study took place, the College has sent three administrators to visit the host organization in 2009, 2010 and 2013, and three faculty members who accompanied and supervised a total of 37 students for the four-week field placements at the host organization in Hong Kong.

On another side, due to operational considerations, the host organization agreed to host up to 10 students each year when the partnership was established in 2009. In 2011, however, the host organization agreed to host up to 12 students from the College after its fourth campus was established in 2010. The host organization is responsible not only for finding the suitable placement locations for the ECE students based on the requirements from the College, but also for making sure it is in compliance with the regulations and laws in Hong Kong when hosting the study abroad students from Canada including visa, insurance, health and safety requirements. Also, the host organization is responsible for arranging accommodation and transportation as well as for providing support for both the study abroad students and the supervising faculty

member from the College to ensure successful field placements in Hong Kong. Because of its bilingual teaching environment, the host organization assigns an English teacher as a cooperating teacher who is responsible for modelling teaching techniques and providing feedback to the study abroad student who is placed in her/his classroom. As a teaching partner in the same classroom, the Chinese teacher does not work directly with the study abroad students but may provide support and cooperation when needed. The host organization also assigns a supervising principal to support the study abroad students and their cooperating English teachers, and to coordinate with and provide feedback to the College faculty member regarding the study abroad students' performance at the host organization. As a potential employer to ECE graduates, the host organization offers employment opportunities to study abroad students upon the completion of field placement in Hong Kong. For example, the first cohort of three students went to Hong Kong in May 2009 and completed their last four-week field placement before returning to Canada and graduating in June 2009. One of the students subsequently returned and worked as an English teacher at the host organization.

1.4 Definition of the Terms

In this research study, clarification of terms is critical, as many words are used interchangeably in the international education research and literature. Some concepts stem from fields other than education fields, including the social sciences, business, politics, economics, and so on. The definitions of the terms used in this study are presented here.

1. *Globalization* refers to a worldwide phenomenon that includes “the widening, deepening and speeding up of world-wide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life” (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999, p. 2). Also, it includes sets of processes that “generate transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity,

interaction, and the exercise of power” (Held et al., 1999, p. 16). Globalization impacts all aspects of social, cultural, political, and economic conditions of individuals, communities and societies. Inevitably, higher education is subject to changing global trends in technology, communication, and transportation.

2. *Internationalization* in this study refers to the international dimension of higher education. Despite some similarities and interconnectedness between internationalization and globalization, internationalization is seen as “more oriented toward bilateral and/or multilateral processes involving knowledge of specific countries, which leads to the development of business, educational, social and cultural relationships” (McCabe, 2001, p. 141). Internationalization of higher education not only includes a series of international activities, services, and programs offered to students and teachers both at home and abroad, but also means promotion of international cooperation, intercultural understanding, and global-mindedness.
3. *International Education, Cross-Border Education, or Transnational Education* is broadly defined for the purpose of this study as any educational experience that promotes the development of international attitudes, awareness, and understanding by participating in international activities, programs, or international development projects offered by an education institution (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). In this study, these terms are used interchangeably.
4. *International Partnership* refers to a relationship between a higher education institution and an overseas partner based on mutually agreed objectives and goals in delivering international activities, programs, or projects. The key features involved in international partnership include mutually agreed objectives, shared resources and responsibility,

collaborative decision-making, and synergistic interactions (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011).

5. *International Student Mobility* refers to the worldwide flow of students enrolled in higher education programs and their movements between countries. AUCC (2007a) states that “international student mobility is one of the cornerstones of the growing internationalization of Canadian universities. It encompass both international students attending Canadian institutions and Canadian students going abroad for academic credit while registered at a Canadian institution” (para. 1).
6. *Study Abroad Program*. The AUCC (2007a) definition of a study abroad program is the definition adopted for this study as an “out-of-country academic experience undertaken by an institution’s full-time students for credit” (p. 3). There are various types of study abroad programs available in Canadian universities and colleges, including (a) academic course work for undergraduate and graduate exchange students; (b) internship or co-op placements for academic credit; (c) international field or summer schools; (d) field work or service learning placements; (e) students involved in international development projects; (f) semester abroad programs for credit (excluding exchange students); and (g) other opportunities, such as undergraduate or graduate students participating in international research (AUCC, 2007a, p. 3-4). In this study, the study abroad program refers to a fieldwork placement that is required for academic credits in a Canadian post-secondary institution. Due to the variations in program length, a *short term study abroad program* is defined as a program abroad that students complete in less than 8 weeks (IIE, 2011a). Since the length of the study abroad program in this research is less than four

weeks, it is considered as a *short-term study abroad program*. Three key players involved in a study abroad program and in this research include:

- a. *The Sending Institution*, which is a Canadian higher education institution that markets the study abroad program, selects, and prepares students, and supervises and evaluates students' performance in order to grant academic credits;
- b. *The Student* refers to a Canadian student who meets all eligibility criteria to study abroad and is selected to participate in the study abroad program as an atypical field placement required in fulfilling his or her academic requirements; and
- c. *The Host Organization* refers to the organization that hosts Canadian students in the study abroad program in Hong Kong. The host organization is a privately owned company that is registered with the Hong Kong Education Bureau and offers bilingual (both Chinese and English) preschool and kindergarten education to children aged 2-6 across its four campuses. In some study abroad programs, the hosts for study abroad students are also HEIs in other countries. However, this is not the case in this research study.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Theories that guide the understanding and valuing of experiential learning, such as internship, fieldwork, or co-op placements are rooted in constructivism. From the constructivist perspective, learners are viewed as independent constructors of their own knowledge and their learning is socially constructed and based on their previous experiences (Noddings, 2007). John Dewey (1963) proposed that experience is created through interactions between the learners and the environments in which they are situated. Since education and learning are social and interactive processes, the international field placement has the potential to provide students with

an opportunity to communicate and construct common values and knowledge in a learning experience that is real and significant for their lives. From a social-cultural constructivist point of view, Lev Vygotsky (1997) further argued that learners' knowledge is shaped by their interactions with the world as well as with the people and it is influenced by culture and environment. Since study abroad students constantly interact with the environments in their host country, these interactions have the potential to shape the experiences of people in the host organization as well. Also, because knowledge is co-constructed by the students and the environments they are in, people in the host organization may not only contribute to the individual knowledge construction of the student, but to the creation of their own unique experiences through these social interactions.

When developing an international partnership, both social and cultural factors are important in the process of knowledge construction and decision making as "learning is viewed as a process of active knowledge construction within and from social forms and processes" (Adams, 2006, p. 246). Deeply rooted in social psychology, the post-Vygotskian scholars believe that individual participation in sociocultural interactivities and shared meaning-making contributes not only to learn something new, but to create a specific realm of action that leads to human adaptation (Stetsenko & Arieviditch, 1997). Through a social constructionist lens, human understanding of meanings and concepts are seldom value-, context-, and culture- or history-free. Thus, the goal of a social constructionist inquiry is to reveal the relativist, sociocultural meanings of complex social phenomena that are varied with concrete cultural and historical contexts.

Despite different constructionist approaches that range from discourse analysis to reflective ethnography representing diverse perspectives from various disciplines (Potter, 1996), in this research study, the cultural perceptions and personal experiences of members in the host

organization revealed the sociocultural contexts and conditions in which people react to and make decisions about the international partnership with a Canadian higher education institution. Through reflective deliberations, Gergen (1996) suggested that “people in relationships move toward collective agreements on what is real, rational, and right, and articulate these agreements in their forms of language” (para. 22). This research study gave members of the host organization an opportunity to share their interpretations of their experiences, and to critically examine their interactions with Canadian study abroad students and with the Canadian sending institution. Guided by the social constructionism framework, questions were formulated to investigate the host members' perceptions and experiences within specific social, cultural and organizational contexts both individually and collectively through one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Furthermore, this study has the potential to promote jointly constructed understandings of international partnership development between the sending institution in Canada and the host organization in Hong Kong by “provoking cultural dialogues, challenging traditional understandings, and furnishing information directly relevant to its investments” (Gergen, 1996, para. 22).

1.6 Significance of the Research

With increased global mobility in the job market and an increased demand for specific skills and knowledge from university and college graduates to work in international contexts, it is imperative for students to develop global perspectives as well as the skills needed to function in multicultural and multilingual environments. The demand for post-secondary institutions to identify appropriate international locations and to partner with organizations and institutions abroad has become both an opportunity and a challenge for many institutions. In order to establish and sustain international partnerships with various organizations in different social and

cultural contexts, higher education institutions need to consider not only the complex issues involved with three key players in study abroad programs, but also different social, cultural and organizational factors that may have impacts at different stages of international partnership development.

Using the case study methodology, this qualitative research study collected detailed descriptive data so that this researcher could engage in an in-depth analysis of the multiple factors involved in hosting a short-term study abroad program in Hong Kong, and to examine the international partnership from the host members' perspectives. Guided by the research questions, this research study adds the host members' perspectives to our understanding of study abroad programs. By examining the perceptions and experiences that these host members had in an international partnership with a Canadian higher education institution, this research has the potential not only to add the voice from the members of host organization that has been almost silent in the literature of study abroad and international education, but also to reveal some important features of the sociocultural contexts and conditions in which an international partnership may be successfully established.

1.7 Overview and Limitations of the Research

This research study was designed to gain richer, deeper and critical understandings of a host organization members' perspective on an international partnership with a Canadian sending institution, and to examine the impacts of a short-term study abroad program on the members of the host organization individually and the host organization as a whole. In short, this study examines the complex issues involved among the three key players in a study abroad program from the host members' perspective. In order to gain insights into the host members' perspectives and experiences, a single-case study methodology was chosen to gather in-depth

information regarding those perceptions. As such, there may be limited generalizability of the study outcomes to other study abroad contexts. However, the findings may have the potential to complement and enhance existing literature on international education and to inform both future research and institutional practice with programs like the one examined here, and to advance research attentive to the host organization members' perspectives.

In this study, the unique characteristics of each key player in the study abroad program also may have potential impacts on the outcomes of this research. The sending institution is an urban, large, publically-funded Canadian higher education institution with a focus on teaching and student success. The interpretation of the research outcomes may be different for other higher education institutions, depending on their unique institutional characteristics, such as public or private status, degree granting status, student enrolment numbers, geographic locations, and teaching or research intensity. Also, only a limited number of students from the Canadian sending institution are able to participate in the study abroad placement each year due to limited capacity to accommodate all interested students in the host organization in Hong Kong. The students who participate in the study abroad program from the Canadian sending institution have to demonstrate that they are financially and academically capable of completing their field placement abroad through a competitive selection process. Therefore, the selection process may create bias against students who may not be academically or financially ready for the study abroad experience. In turn, it may also influence the interactions between study abroad students and people in the host country, as well as the overall impact of the study abroad program on the host organization.

In addition, the researcher's bias needs to be recognized, and attempts to reduce this bias were incorporated throughout the study. Using a social constructionist theoretical framework,

the researcher is seen as a “passionate participant” in the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The personal experiences, worldviews, assumptions, and personal biases of the researcher may have influenced her view of the value of the international partnership and the impacts of the study abroad program. The researcher’s position and involvement in the study abroad program with both the study abroad students and the members of host organization may have the potential to bias the questions used in interviews as well as the interpretation of research results. In order to monitor and control researcher biases, Johnson (1997) suggested that researchers need to “actively engage in critical self-reflection about [their] potential biases and predispositions through reflexivity” (p. 284). In order to maintain objectivity and to reduce potential researcher biases in the research process, it is important for this researcher to acknowledge and be explicit about her philosophical assumptions, personal values, and biases through a critical self-reflection as discussed in the following section.

1.8 Researcher’s Position and Involvement

The researcher in this study is a faculty member who teaches in the ECE program in the sending institution. This researcher was educated in both China and Canada and has had experiences working in various professional fields as a medical practitioner in China, a registered early childhood educator as well as a certified primary teacher (K-6) in Ontario, and a faculty member in a post-secondary institution in Canada. The educational experience gained in two countries that differ greatly, not only in language and culture but also in pedagogy and world views, has shaped the researcher’s own philosophical dispositions. As a result, the researcher has personally benefited from an international education with increased second language ability, intercultural sensitivity, and broadened world views. As a faculty member in a Canadian post-secondary institution, the researcher is a passionate promoter of international education for

Canadian students and an advocate for building international partnerships at Canadian post-secondary institutions.

This research study had its origins in the researcher's genuine interest in international education in higher education, as well as her dissatisfaction with the available literature on this topic, which is almost silent on the perspective of the host organizations or institutions in regards to building international partnerships with the sending institutions. Although this research study examines an international partnership established between the Canadian sending institution that the researcher currently works in and a host organization in Hong Kong, the case was selected for study because it has merit in illuminating the complex issues among three key players in a study abroad program located in different geographical (e.g. Canada vs. Hong Kong), language (e.g. English vs. Chinese), cultural (e.g. the West vs. the East) and organizational (e.g. a publically funded HEI and a private organization) contexts. According to Yin (2009), one of the rationales for conducting a single-case study is when the case "serves a revelatory purpose" (p. 54) when a researcher has "an opportunity to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to social science inquiry" (p. 48).

As a case study, this research examines the host members' perspectives on an international partnership in a study abroad program in the social and cultural contexts of Hong Kong. Creswell (1998) suggests that gaining access to the research site and establishing rapport with individuals in the case being studied are important for a case study. As a faculty member, the researcher was involved in the initial process of developing the study abroad program and establishing the partnership with the host organization from December 2008 to June 2009. According to the partnership agreements, the study abroad program is administered collectively by the ECE program faculty members at the College. However, the researcher's involvement in

the study abroad program at the initiation stage of partnership between the sending institution and the host organization had added value to this research because of the rapport established with key personnel in the host organization. In qualitative research, access to individuals for study often begins with a "gatekeeper, an individual who is a member of or has insider status with a cultural group" (Creswell, 1998, p. 117). The key personnel in the host organization not only have invaluable experiences and insights about the international partnership and the study abroad program, but they also are the key informants who can lead the researcher to other informants for this study.

Born and raised in China, the researcher has a good understanding of Chinese culture in general and a strong command of the Chinese language in reading, writing, and oral communication in Mandarin. The researcher's understanding of Chinese culture as well as good command of both Chinese and English languages enabled her to engage people in the host organization in ways that were sensitive to their cultural and linguistic needs during interviews and to detect potential translation errors in the data analysis stage. However, the researcher needed to be aware of her own cultural perceptions, personal values and biases when designing interview questions or analyzing and interpreting data. Throughout the study, the researcher completed regular reflective exercises such as field notes, personal diary and journal entries to record and reflect on the process of this research. These reflective exercises were critically examined and discussed in the data analysis process to help the researcher acknowledge and be explicit about her own perceptions and values.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The three main issues (*internationalization, international partnership, and study abroad*) identified among the three key players (*the sending institution, the students, and the host organization*) in the study abroad program helped to guide and structure the literature review in this research. As illustrated in Figure 1 and discussed in the previous chapter, these issues are interconnected because the decisions or actions of each player may produce different outcomes or reactions from other players. The literature review provides a general context for what has been already written related to international partnerships and study abroad in higher education, which are the main foci of this research study. Current literature and empirical studies were reviewed with three primary areas of focus: internationalization in higher education, international partnership development, and post-secondary student mobility and study abroad. By examining some of the key issues existed in the field of international education and study abroad in higher education, the literature review provides both the focus and context to guide the research study's design and implementation.

2.1 Internationalization in Higher Education

Situated in the international contexts, there are many driving forces behind the development of international partnerships between HEIs and overseas partners. What are the rationales, approaches, and motivations for HEIs to engage in a process of internationalization? What are the differences between globalization and internationalization? What are the strategies that HEIs use to promote internationalization on campus? In this section, the literature review examines various aspects of internationalization in higher education and discusses general approaches to internationalization at post-secondary institutional levels with a special focus on

Canadian universities and colleges. By examining the literature on internationalization, the key terms used in this study are further grounded and clarified.

2.1.1 Globalization and internationalization in higher education.

Globalization and internationalization are discussed as being two different but dynamically interrelated concepts used frequently in the scholarly literature and research.

Marginson and van der Wende (2009) provide the following observations on the two concepts:

Globalisation and internationalisation in higher education are potentially conflicting, while at the same time interactive and mutually generative. For example in higher education policy, one possible response to the globalisation of societies, cultures, economies and labour markets is to take measures encouraging a more controlled internationalisation of higher education, rendering institutions more effective in response to the global challenge; as by definition, internationalisation is a process more readily steerable by governments than is globalisation. (p. 23)

As a broad but inevitable force driving internationalization in higher education, globalization brings both challenges and opportunities to HEIs in the process of transformation. According to Knight (2004), the proposed working definition of internationalization focuses on the process in which the international, intercultural, and global dimensions are integrated into all aspects of higher education, including its purpose, functions, and delivery. Thus, the international dimension not only relates to other aspects of higher education, but is also sensitive to global changes, such as emerging new information and communication technologies, increasing international trade, and labor mobility, as well as increasing private investment and decreasing public funding for education (Knight, 2004).

In response to globalization, HEIs are constantly expanding their international involvement with increasing cross-border educational and research activities (Olcott, 2009). For many HEIs, internationalization has become a central or core value in institutional strategic planning and higher education leaders are striving to internationalize their institutions for different rationales including economic, political, academic, and social/cultural reasons (Altbach & Knight, 2007; de Wit, 2008; Knight, 2004). Internationalization not only requires concerted efforts at both the institutional and individual levels, but also needs support at the national and sector levels through policy, funding, and regulatory frameworks. At the institutional level, Knight (2004) summarizes six approaches to internationalization:

1. The *activity approach* focuses on specific activities, such as study abroad, curriculum and academic programs, student and faculty exchanges, institutional linkages and networks, development projects, and branch campuses. This is the most common approach to internationalization and highlights the efforts that higher education programs or institutions initiated.
2. The *outcomes approach*, previously called the competency approach, focuses on implementing internationalized curricula, activities, and programs to reach desired outcomes, such as increasing student competencies, increased institutional profiles, and establishing more international agreements and partners or projects.
3. The *rationales approach* focuses on explicit policy statements at both the country and institutional level about the rationales driving internationalization. The rationales for institutions include building international profile and reputation, enhancing student and staff development, generating income, increasing cultural diversity, building

- strategic alliances, and increasing research and knowledge production through international collaboration.
4. The *process approach* focuses on the integration of the international dimension, including a variety of curricular, extracurricular, and organizational activities as well as institutional policies and procedures into the daily operation of higher education.
 5. The *at home approach* refers to internationalization efforts that concentrate on the development of a culture or climate on campus that promotes and supports intercultural and international understanding through campus-based activities.
 6. The *abroad (cross-border) approach* describes the internationalization efforts on delivering educational programs across borders. The programs are delivered through a variety of delivery modes, such as face-to-face, distance, and e-learning, and through different administrative arrangements, including franchising, twinning, and branch campuses.

The six approaches proposed by Knight (2004) illustrate the complexity involved in integrating internationalization with higher education. Internationalization not only includes multiple players, such as individuals, institutions, and governments in various international activities, programs, and partnerships, but it is also influenced by the rationales and outcomes at individual, institutional, and national levels. As the most common type of approach to higher education institution's internationalization plan, international activities such as study abroad help students, programs and institutions engage in a process of transformation from a local focus to a broader international perspective. However, the process of internationalization in HEIs is not a straightforward or linear process, and institutions are often engaged in international collaboration and cooperation in order to achieve their goals and objectives of internationalization. A question

that many institutions face is how to translate their institutional commitment to internationalization into comprehensive and practical strategies to guide the transformation of their institutions.

2.1.2 Internationalization in Canadian universities and colleges.

According to a 2009 national survey on internationalization at Canadian colleges, many colleges were engaged in different areas of internationalization, including internationalization policies, international mobility of Canadian students, faculty, and staff, recruiting and integrating international students, internationalization of curriculum, delivery of programs and services abroad, and international cooperation projects (ACCC, 2010). The main reason for colleges to internationalize was to “prepare students to succeed in and contribute to the global economy and [to develop] international competencies in students” (ACCC, 2010, p. 12). Similarly, Canadian universities also reported that the top three reasons for internationalization were (a) to prepare internationally knowledgeable graduates, (b) to build strategic alliances and partnerships with key institutions abroad, and (c) to promote innovation in curriculum and diversity of programs (AUCC, 2007b, p. 3). The key rationale for Canadian universities and colleges to engage in internationalization, then, has been clearly focused on the desired outcomes and competencies, so that students and graduates will be able to succeed in an increasingly globalized world.

As an increasing number of Canadian businesses are operating and competing in the global marketplace, the demand for Canadian HEIs to deliver education and training programs to prepare more internationally-sensitized employees to work in different cultural contexts has increased significantly. Thus, it is increasingly important for Canadian post-secondary students to develop international competencies, including global understanding, critical thinking skills, and intercultural communication skills while studying in their programs. Despite an increased

interest in internationalization, Canadian colleges had only 1.1% of full-time students participate in out-of-country learning experiences in 2007-2008 (ACCC, 2010). While Canada's share of international students grew from 4.8% in 2000 to 5.5% in 2008, only 44,883 Canadians, representing fewer than 2% of full-time students, were pursuing degrees abroad in 2009 (CBIE, 2009; OECD, 2011). The main challenge identified by Canadian colleges with respect to providing international learning opportunities for students was the lack of financial resources, especially with little funding from the federal government or corporate sponsors to support college international activities (ACCC, 2010). Examining the effects of Canadian federal government's foreign policy to Canadian higher education from mid 1960s to 2008, Trilokekar (2010) noted that the federal government's insufficient funding and limited international scholarship opportunities for Canadian students had influenced and impacted the university internationalization initiatives. Despite of growing interest among post-secondary students and faculty in global issues, Canada federal government's approach to the internationalization of higher education reflects "an increased emphasis on trade and economic policy in keep with Canada's overall foreign policy objectives as observed from the character of institutional international partnerships: the countries with which Canadian universities develop international linkages, the nature of program activities, and the methods of program evaluation and assessment" (Trilokekar, 2010, p. 142). The lack of policy directives and financial resources to support international activities has resulted that fewer Canadian HEIs are motivated and actively engaged in exploring opportunities to build international partnerships for Canadian students to study abroad.

On another hand, the number of international students who study in Canadian universities and colleges continues to grow and there were 218,000 international students representing 5% of

post-secondary student population in Canada in 2010 (CBIE, 2009; OECD, 2011). However, when comparing Canada to other developed countries, Canada is well behind Australia (21.6%), the United States (18%), the United Kingdom (15.3%), Austria (15.1%), Switzerland (14.9%), and New Zealand (14.6%) on international student market share in higher education (OECD, 2011). Since the international students contribute to the Canadian economy by an estimated \$6.4 billion per year to the country's GDP, the Canadian federal government has begun to increase its support to attract international students by building and promoting a Canadian brand and by marketing Canadian post-secondary education abroad (ACCC, 2010; Trilokekar, 2010). Across the nations, the economic rationale has clearly driven many Canadian HEIs into an increased global competition to attract international students. However, some scholars argue that one of the misconceptions of internationalization in higher education is the assumption that increased international students population on campus will promote more internationalized curriculum and institutional culture on campus (Knight, 2011; de Wit, 2011). The tensions between domestic and international students may increase as unequal access to programs and limited social interactions between the domestic and international students do not promote any deep engagement with the institutions. The researchers also cautioned that the presence of disproportionate number of international students in some academic programs could lower academic standards and have negative effects on the internationalization of existing mainstream curriculum, which may create tension between the incomes received from international students and the quality and ethics of education offered at institutions (McGowan & Potter, 2008).

According to Kreber (2009), universities in the Western countries have experienced increased demands for higher education, particularly from countries with less well-developed higher education systems, which boost institutions' budgets as government funding continue to

decline in these countries over the past decade. Despite the fact that internationalization has become increasingly economically motivated, some scholars argue that internationalization in higher education should be "a cooperative effort with its rationale based primarily on political, cultural, and academic arguments" (Kreber, 2009, p. 4). Regardless of which rationale is behind the HEIs' motivation for internationalization, the pressure to internationalize and the challenges faced by many HEIs in the process of internationalization have implications for students, faculty members, and the institutions while engaging in international activities and working with partnering organizations abroad. The commitment to internationalization and the organizational structures that support the implementation of various international activities at HEIs are needed when facilitating cooperation and relationship-building with international partners. So, questions such as how to establish and sustain international partnerships between HEIs and their overseas partners across different political, social and cultural contexts, and how to identify new needs or opportunities that lead to refinement and further improvement of international activities and programs will require research to explore these complex issues from multi-players' perspectives and identify factors that may impact international partnerships at individual, institutional and national levels.

2.2 International Partnerships

For many Canadian universities, the main reason for embarking on internationalization activities is to "build strategic alliances and partnerships with key institutions abroad and to promote innovation in curriculum and diversity of programs" (AUCC, 2007b, p. 3). Developing international partnerships not only provides students with opportunities to participate in various types of international educational and cultural exchange programs, but also facilitates collaboration and cooperation for faculty, staff, and administrators in research, program delivery,

and projects with other institutions/organizations across borders. However, developing international partnership involves a complex and multifaceted process that requires concerted efforts based on resources available at individual, institutional, and governmental levels. In this section, the literature review examines international partnership as an internationalization strategy in higher education, and identifies different types of and motivations for international partnerships. The benefits and challenges in developing international partnerships are also discussed.

2.2.1 International partnership as an internationalization strategy.

By examining a broad range of publications since the mid-1990s, Kehm and Teichler (2007) identified seven themes in the research and studies of internationalization in higher education, and they are: (a) mobility of students and academic staff; (b) mutual influences of higher education systems on each other; (c) internationalization of teaching, learning, and research; (d) institutional strategies of internationalization; (e) knowledge transfer; (f) cooperation and competition; and (g) national and supranational policies as regarding the international dimension of higher education. Of the seven themes, the formation of strategic alliances between partners has an overarching importance as it is reflected directly or indirectly in almost all of the themes. The presence, as well as the collaboration and cooperation of the partners are critical to the success of cross-border activities undertaken by HEIs (Kehm & Teichler, 2007). International partnerships not only support student and faculty mobility, academic teaching, and research and knowledge transfer, but they also contribute to institutional strategies of internationalization, as well as to international cooperation and competition.

Building a strategic alliance is essentially a business strategy. In the context of higher education and international cooperation, strategic alliance for HEIs is defined as:

any collaborative relationship between a local university and an overseas counterpart, which may be public or private, encompassing agreements to co-operate in joint activities such as the development of on-shore or off-shore offerings, teaching, research and consultancy, technology, marketing new or existing courses to a new market, that has led to financial consequences and/or some kind of actual exchange of staff/students between the partners. (Saffu & Mamman, 1999, p. 281)

Driven by the reduction in government funding for higher education in many countries, and also by the desire to remain globally competitive in their teaching, research, and service missions, HEIs are increasingly engaged in the development and delivery of transnational or cross-border programs with external partners.

Today, HEIs form linkages and build partnerships with other institutions as well as with public or private organizations across national borders so they are able to compete globally for funds as well as for students and faculty members (Chan, 2004). The race to build strategic alliances and to deliver education services across national borders has intensified across the continents. In 2002, the New Zealand Ministry of Education completed a study examining the growth of offshore education programs offered by New Zealand public tertiary education providers. The findings from this study indicated that the offshore programs offered by New Zealand tertiary education providers increased from 6 programs in 1997 to 63 programs in 2001 and that the student enrolment in the offshore programs had increased from 380 in 1997 to an estimated 2,200 in 2001 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002). In Australia, there were over 100,000 international students studying post-secondary courses and qualifications were offered by Australian universities in 48 countries in 2006 (IEAA, 2008). In 1999, Canadian universities offered a total of 268 academic programs offshore and among all of the program

delivery modes, the distance education programs and joint programs (programs are jointly developed and delivered by Canadian and local instructors) were the two most popular forms of offshore programs (Knight, 2000).

The increasing massification and marketization of higher education has transformed higher education from being a “public service driven by professionals” to a “market-driven service” that can be purchased and traded in an international market (Chan, 2004, p. 34). The market orientation of higher education has also changed the nature of international cooperation. Central to their own existence and success, HEIs need to respond to the concerns and needs of students, parents, and employers and at the same time to maintain effective marketing and external relations (Chan, 2004). International cooperation and strategic partnership alliances have become important parts of a higher education internationalization strategy “not only for academic reasons but also to enhance their influence, visibility, and/or market share” (Denman, as cited in Chan, 2004, p. 35). However, international partnerships vary in the different types and forms, as well as in the motivations and perceived benefits which may impact the process of internationalization that many HEIs are engaged in.

2.2.2 International partnership: the types, benefits and challenges.

HEIs have had a fairly long history of responding to and collaborating with external stakeholders, businesses, communities, and government agencies at local, national, and international levels. According to Sakamoto and Chapman (2010), higher education cross-border collaborations have moved from primarily instructional and curricular arrangements to increased focuses on research and technology initiatives, institutional capacity building, faculty development, and quality assurance. Drawing from the literature, the key features of an international partnership include: (a) objectives or goals that are jointly agreed upon; (b) shared

resources and synergistic interactions among partners; (c) shared responsibility and collaborative decision-making; and (d) shared accountability for outcomes and results (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011; Hatton & Schroeder, 2009). Partnerships are formed based on the expectations that the relationships will bring benefits for each of the partners through integrated services and resources and that through synergistic interactions the partnerships can help to achieve certain outcomes that are difficult or impossible for each partner when operating alone. However, Foskett (2005) cautions that “the terms and conditions under which the agreement [for partners] to work together are made can produce very different results and the nature of overt or covert power relationships that exist can also impact on the relationship” (p. 252).

For HEIs, there are diverse partnerships established with different partners, including partnerships between institutions of higher education (Hatton & Schroeder, 2009; Olcott, 2009; Trim, 2001), with communities or non-governmental organizations (Strier, 2011), with businesses or employers (Foskett, 2005), with international or supranational education organizations (Chan, 2004), and with government agencies (Brinkerhoff, 2002). In a study of overseas partnership activities in 22 Australian universities, Saffu and Mamman (1999) found that most of the universities surveyed had at least five different partnership alliances and that multi-country and multiple alliances were common for Australian universities. Researchers have identified many reasons why it is beneficial for universities to collaborate with external partners, such as other educational institutions, businesses, or government agencies. For example, in business practices, forming international partnerships or strategic alliances allows business enterprises quick access to foreign markets and builds market dominance by enabling them to maintain their competitive advantage through reduced costs and risk sharing with partners (Saffu

& Mamman, 1999). Thus, HEIs are taking advantage of international partnerships to both bring value and to build an economic competitive edge on the world stage.

There are many perceived benefits for HEIs to form partnerships with one another or with other sectors. Researchers have identified some of the benefits, which include attracting students from other geographical regions, increasing access to human, financial, and intellectual resources otherwise unavailable, integrating different perspectives and knowledge into innovative programming, pooling resources to enhance creativity and innovation, connecting with communities and businesses, learning from each other's professional expertise, and potentially increasing influence on government policy (Hatton & Schroeder, 2009; Strier, 2011; Trim, 2001). Investigating the perceived benefits of a collaborative partnership between a higher education institution and a charitable employer organization for undergraduate curriculum development, Foskett (2005) found that there are both *intrinsic benefits* (that come from the organizational environment) and *extrinsic benefits* (from the external environment) for each partner and that these benefits are perceived differently by the various stakeholders involved. However, the perspectives of different stakeholders involved in a partnership have not been well studied or documented in the current literature.

Despite the fact that international partnerships help HEIs to build their competitive advantage, there are also many challenges facing higher education leaders, international education managers, and practitioners within these partnerships. Summarizing the findings from the previous studies, Ayoubi and Massoud (2012) list the following obstacles to international partnerships: the selfish behavior of the partner, trust amongst partners, financial obstacles, cultural issues, historical barriers, different objectives and missions, power imbalance between the partners, poor communications, time and resources needed, quality obstacles, and student

factors (pp. 339-340). Also, challenges may arise from different stages of partnership development from initiation and implementation to termination of the partnership (Amey, 2010). For many Australian universities, the two most significant problems encountered in developing international partnerships with overseas partners were “cultural differences” at the initiation stage, followed by bureaucratic obstacles as well as the differences in objectives and goals of the partnership (Saffu & Mamman, 1999, p. 284). Echoing these findings in another study, Heffernan and Poole (2005) suggested that “developing and managing effective relationships between partners is arguably among the most important [challenges]” (p. 227).

Developing and managing international partnerships is a complex process and one often complicated by the added demands of collaboration across different linguistic, social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. A number of key factors that are important in building successful international partnerships have been identified in the literature, including mutuality and organization identity, effective communication in a timely manner, trust and commitment, adequate resources, appropriate decision-making models, cultural sensitivity, and understanding of organizational culture (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Trim, 2003). Through multiple case studies examining the relationships between Australian universities and their offshore partners in Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong, Heffernan and Poole (2005) found that developing effective international partnerships depends on “the development of effective communication networks and structures, the building of trust between partners, and ongoing demonstrations of commitment to the relationship” (p. 243). Through an in-depth examination of an international partnership between a Canadian community college and a Chinese university, Hatton and Schroder (2009) further suggested that to build and manage international partnerships successfully, higher education leaders need to consider other factors, including “long-term

funding availability, staff continuity, purposeful partner selection, international adaptability and willingness to accept risk” (p. 510). These factors illustrate the complexity and challenges involved in developing international partnerships, but to a certain extent, they also suggest potential strategies for HEIs who want to work effectively with international partners.

Working with international partners to deliver cross-border activities, programs, and research is a complex enterprise for higher education institutions. In a review of the literature in this area, there appeared to be an underlining assumption that various types of international partnerships and motivations for the HEIs to form strategic alliances are similar to those in business practices. However, it is unclear what motivates other organizations, such as private enterprises, corporations, or non-governmental organizations to establish partnerships with HEIs, or what cultural and organizational factors might influence the different stages of partnership development between two partners located in different geographical, political and social contexts? These questions also helped to guide this research in selecting an appropriate case to study so that different perspectives on international partnerships can be explored between a HEI and a non-HEI organization located in different geographical regions of the world.

2.3 Study Abroad

In 2009, there were almost 3.7 million students studying abroad and universities in the United States, the UK, Germany, France, and Australia attracted more than two thirds of the total number of foreign students studying in the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries (OECD, 2011). The income from foreign students not only contributes to a good share of the university budget, but also brings economic benefits to the receiving countries. Despite the large number of students who study in a foreign country, the percentages of mobile students and non-mobile students in most countries remain fairly small, with an

average of 2% across the world (Rivza & Teichler, 2007). Students from the developed countries seem to be less mobile than those from the developing countries. In the case of the United States, although it is the most popular destination country for attracting large numbers of foreign students, the number of American students who participate in study abroad programs is disproportionately low at only 1.4% of the total U.S. higher education student population in 2008-2009 (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2012). Generally speaking, economically less developed countries tend to be the *importers* of higher education services from the developed countries. Of the 1.5 million foreign students studying in the OECD countries, more than half come from non-member countries (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002).

According to Kehm (2005), there are two important goals of international student mobility: (a) broadening the individual horizon while developing flexibility as well as social and cultural knowledge to be able to adapt or act appropriately in unfamiliar situations, and (b) acquiring a number of qualifications that lead to increased employability and perhaps an international career. However, there are divergent purposes and rationales for the different actors involved in various forms of international student mobility, including short-term study abroad, exchange, community service learning projects, and so on. As a widespread phenomenon in higher education, the trends of international student mobility continue to change due to the fact that globalization enables us to communicate with people around the globe, to travel relatively inexpensively to remote places, to engage in discussions about international discourse, and to overcome barriers and challenges in a collective way. The changing trends of international student mobility have, therefore, presented challenges as well as opportunities to HEIs in their efforts to remain globally competitive and to attract the best talents from around the world. In this section, the literature review discusses the different types of and changing trends

in international student mobility. Also, the challenges and ethical concerns for hosting study abroad programs in developing countries are also discussed.

2.3.1 The types of student mobility and changing trends.

In the last four decades, international student mobility has experienced major increases globally, with the number of international circulating students growing from approximately 250,000 in 1965 to an estimated 3.7 million in 2011 (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2012). According to Rivza and Teichler (2007), there are two types of mobility movement including “*vertical mobility*”, where students move from developing countries to economically more advanced and academically superior countries, and “*horizontal mobility*” that offers students an opportunity to “widen the horizon through experiencing contrasting academic environments and to enhance [their] intercultural understanding” (p. 458). The *horizontal mobility* is often referred as “temporary mobility” since it involves a short period of study rather than study for a whole degree program. The *vertical mobility*, however, usually offers students a higher level of quality in academic study or in an area of specialization that may not be available at home, and it may also be considered as a possible first step towards migration by some mobile students (Rivza & Teichler, 2007). At institutional level, HEIs often promote the vertical mobility through bilateral or institutional partnerships with other institutions by offering academic programs abroad or recruiting international students to programs on campus. Many HEIs also encourage horizontal mobility by promoting study abroad opportunities for domestic students to broaden their horizons while also immersing themselves in international contexts.

The “push and pull” factors in international student circulation depend on variables that are beyond the control of individuals who want to study abroad or of the institutions that may want to host them. These variables, including visa regulations, immigration policies, rising

tuition fees, and an improved quality of higher education in the home country, influence whether or not the students may study abroad and in which country (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2012). In recent years, the traditional powerhouses of international student mobility represented by the economically advanced countries have faced increasing competition from emerging economies like China, the Russian Federation, Singapore, and Malaysia (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2012). The patterns of international student circulation and flow are changing as the number of foreign students studying in the United States continues to decline, while New Zealand, France, Italy, and South Africa have improved their shares in the study abroad market (OECD, 2011; Varghese, 2008). With the growth of education “hubs” in the Middle East and Asia, there are also more destination options for mobile students. In 2005, China, as a top exporter of students to foreign countries, was overtaken by India for the number of students studying abroad (Varghese, 2008). Instead, China began to receive a greater inflow of foreign students, especially from the countries in the region such as Japan and Korea, as well as from other parts of the world (IIE, 2011a). Therefore, it is difficult to classify a country as either a net exporter or an importer of students, since there is a constant flow of international students around the globe. In the case of the United States, although it has remained the top host country in the last couple of decades, it is also the third highest sending country to China and the ninth highest sending country to India (Lee, Maldonado-Maldonado, & Rhoades, 2006).

In the recent decades, the demands of the knowledge economy and the aging population in Europe, North America, Japan, and many other developed countries have increased competition among these countries, not only to attract, but also to keep, highly skilled human resources and top talents for their economic growth. International students and scholars as the highly trained and qualified people can provide the knowledge and skills on which nation states

rely for their economic development (Pan, 2010). As a vital component of increasing human capital, the movements of international students intensify the competition between and among countries. Developed countries must compete with the traditional sending countries and with emerging economies in Asia, Latin America, and Africa where economic growth and development are dependent on the reverse flow of international students as well as on the increased domestic capacity in higher education. Although both the vertical mobility and horizontal mobility help shape HEIs' internationalization strategies, most of the literature on study abroad focuses on the general trends at macro level by tracking changes between countries and regions. There is limited research that differentiates and compares the two types of mobility at institutional or individual level.

2.3.2 The challenges and ethical concerns.

Since globalization has encouraged both student mobility and professional labor mobility within and between countries, the diversity of cross-border education in terms of the actors involved, types of education provision, delivery methods, and rationales have made it difficult and challenging for higher education providers to maintain "the credibility of higher education programs and qualifications" (Knight, 2006, p. 389). One of the concerns related to international student mobility is the imbalance in mobility flows between countries. The large inflows or outflows of students certainly have many social, economic, and political implications for the countries involved. A large inflow of foreign students to a country with small academic resources and support networks may create tensions between foreign students and a country's own nationals, as there may be limitations of access opportunities for the locals, especially in the fields of study that may be critical to the country's social and economic development (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2012). The large outflow of students from developing to developed

countries has become a particular concern among the developing countries. However, some researchers argue that global student flows do not occur in only one direction, based on the analysis of statistical data on international student mobility (Lee, Maldonado-Maldonado, & Rhoades, 2006). In a more recent study, Pan (2010) observed three trends in the international flow of human capital both to and from China including (a) the increasing outflow of Chinese students to developed countries, (b) the increasing return of foreign-trained Chinese nationals to work in China, and (c) the increasing inflow of international students to attend universities in China (p. 260). The changing trends and challenges in international student mobility have raised some ethical concerns, especially with an increasing flow of students moving from developed countries to study in the developing countries. Since there is limited empirical research and only a small amount of literature examining the reverse flow of students to developing countries, the discussion are drawn from available literature that primarily focuses on U.S. students who study abroad in the developing countries.

Taking a critical stance, Bolen (2001) argued that education has become one of the pre-packaged experiences that consumers (students) can buy, and study abroad programs in particular have become a commodity on the international market that offers not only the educational components, but arrangements for food, lodging, and visits to popular attractions in the host country. The commercialization of study abroad experiences and the embedded consumerism in the attitudes that students, parents, institutions, and governments have toward international education have created dilemmas and tensions in working with international partners. The purchasing power of the study abroad programs may affect the educational culture and quality in other countries, especially in economically less developed countries. Examining the work-study abroad courses in international development studies, Epprecht (2004) criticized

the issue of entitlement that many exchange students feel as the “paying customers” as they assert their rights to expect services, which can be inappropriate in many developing countries, including the right of access to computers, to resources, and to staff time (p. 695). The demand from study abroad students can place a greater stress on the limited local resources and unwittingly pass the cost of service onto host organizations in the developing countries. The consumerist mentality also brings the threats to the fundamental mission of engaging students in meaningful intellectual and intercultural experiences that study abroad programs intend to offer.

In the United States, more than 50% of study abroad programs are less than eight weeks in duration (IIE, 2011b). There is a danger of “academic tourism” as students seldom get the opportunities to immerse fully and to feel a sense of belonging to their host communities (Ogden, 2008). While more and more short-term study programs move from the traditional European countries to nontraditional destinations in non-European, non-English speaking, or non-industrial developing countries, Woolf (2006) expressed his disapproval of the “language of tourism” as study abroad in nontraditional locations is seen as “a means of exploring an ‘exotic’ location for purposes that demote the academic content to a secondary status” (p. 136). The push for study abroad in nontraditional locations also raises questions of resource implications in potential host communities, as well as possible social and cultural impacts on those communities. Study abroad programs hosted in developing countries often take place in an environment of un-balanced power relations associated with geopolitical issues regarding colonialism and imperialism between developed and developing countries. These geopolitical issues affect the relations not only between the sending institutions and host organizations, but also between students and host nationals. Without a clear understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts in Africa, for example, McGladdery and Hudson (2000) noted that many students from developed

countries bring a strong emotional urge and an unrealistic hope that they can help the host communities.

Although a large amount of the international literature on study abroad focuses on U.S. students, the issues raised are also likely applicable to study abroad students from other developed countries as well, including Canada. As study abroad students interact with people in host countries on a daily basis during their stay, the impact of their behaviour may positively or negatively affect their relationship with the host organization and ultimately influence the partnership between their home institution and the host organization. After reviewing the current literature, it is observed that most empirical research on international education and study abroad focuses on the perceptions, motivations, and outcomes of study abroad for students and for sending institutions (see examples in Epprecht, 2004; Ogden, 2008; McGladdery & Hudson, 2000). There is a void in the field of international education research related to the voices of host nationals, institutions, and communities that are not heard and whose perspectives that are not represented in the international literature. Thus, it is important that HEIs need not only to examine study abroad approaches and program structures critically to ensure meaningful opportunities for students to engage with host communities, but also to understand the potential impacts of study abroad programs on host organizations in order to build successful international partnerships.

2.4 Conclusion

The literature review has identified the key issues in both international partnership and study abroad program within the context of internationalization at higher education institutions. However, most literature and empirical research focused on and were largely written from the perspectives of HEIs in the Western, developed countries, such as the United States, Australia,

the UK and Canada. It is not clear how institutions or organizations in developing countries or in different geographical regions view their partnerships with institutions in developed countries. Also, most of the available literature is concerned with the issues of internationalization and international partnerships at a macro level, covering topics such as trends in cross-border education, international marketing and ranking, international trade and finance, quality assurance, institutional governance, and strategic planning (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Ayoubi & Massoud, 2012; Brinkerhoff, 2002; Chan, 2004; Knight 2006; Marginson & van der Wende, 2009; Trim, 2003). As there are many players and multiple stakeholders either directly or indirectly involved in designing, implementing, and maintaining various stages of an international partnership, how does the international partnership impact students, faculty, and staff at both partnering institutions? What leadership, structural features, and socio-cultural practices are needed to support the development of international partnerships? How do cultural and organizational factors impact different stages of partnership development for the partners located in different geographical and social contexts? How does student mobility such as study abroad impact partnership development and internationalization at HEIs? These questions are still unanswered and require research in order to contribute to a fuller understanding of the complex and evolving issues in international partnership for higher education.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

The purpose of this research study was twofold: (a) to explore the host members' perspectives on an international partnership with a Canadian sending institution, and (b) to examine the impacts of hosting a short-term study abroad program on the host organization in Hong Kong. As noted in the literature review, little research has been done to examine the host perspectives on different stages of international partnership development with HEIs, and on the impacts, as well as the benefits and challenges, of hosting study abroad programs. As a qualitative study, this research is theoretically grounded in social constructionism, which suggests that each individual constructs a unique version of reality through social interactions and reflections (Kim, 2001). Case study methodology was selected to approach the research problem from a holistic perspective and to gain an in-depth understanding of the case contexts and its meaning for those involved. The findings therefore have the potential to contribute to our understanding about the complex issues involved in short-term study abroad and international partnership development in higher education. This chapter outlines the rationale for choosing a single-case exploratory study methodology in order to respond to the research questions proposed and subsequently describes the methodological stages involved in the research process. Also, this chapter provides a description of the case site and context, the participant selection and sampling procedures, the process of data collection and analysis, and it identifies the scope and limitations, as well as the ethical considerations that were required for this study.

3.1 Research Methodology: Case Study

As a research methodology, the case study approach refers to “a group of methods which emphasize qualitative analysis” (Gable, 1994, p. 113). Yin (2003) suggests that case studies are appropriate if the objective of the research is to study contemporary events and to capture the

richness of organizational behaviour. Case study, as a research methodology, first emerged from the discipline of anthropology and then later became commonly used in the fields of medicine, social work, psychology, and other social sciences (Johansson, 2003). Yin (2009) states, that case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). Merriam (1998) viewed qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic, and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources” (p. 29). Case study focuses on understanding the dynamics of a “case” by using a multitude of data collection methods in its natural context (Eisenhardt, 1989; Johansson, 2003). A case study is not only an attempt to understand a temporally, spatially, or socially bounded set of events, but it might also contribute to the construction and validation of theoretical propositions (Levy, 2008). As a research method, there are variations within case studies, including exploratory, explanatory and descriptive case studies (Yin, 2009). The aims of case studies may include: (a) providing a description of a case in depth within its associated context, (b) testing theory in a specific case context, or (c) generating new theory or contributing to a process of theory building, based on information emerging from the data (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Both Yin (2009) and Merriam (1988) agreed that case study is an appropriate research methodology, especially when it is difficult to separate the phenomenon’s variables from the context. However, Yin (2009) not only discussed how case study methodology can be applied to broad areas of inquiry, but also demonstrated how theoretical concerns can shape or be integrated into case studies. Stemming from lack of research on host perspectives in the literature

of study abroad and international partnerships, a single-case exploratory study guided by Yin's case study approach was chosen for this research as it provides a deeper understanding of multiple perspectives through the lens of social constructionism on an international partnership established for a study abroad program between a Canadian college and a private organization in a specific social and cultural context - Hong Kong. As Yin (2009) states,

The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events-such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries. (p. 4)

When considering the case study method in a research study, Yin (2009) proposes three conditions: (a) the research questions focus on "how" or "why" questions, (b) a contemporary set of events is being investigated, (c) the researcher has no or little control over actual behavioral events (p. 13). In this study, the three conditions to justify the use of case study method were met, because: (a) the research questions for this study focused mainly on "how" and "what" questions in order to explore the important contextual conditions for developing an international partnership and hosting a study abroad program in Hong Kong; (b) the contemporary phenomenon of international partnership and study abroad in higher education was the focus of the study; (c) the researcher had no influence on the behaviours of host members in the host organization. Also, the researcher had sufficient access to research site, and to the participants, as well as multiple sources of evidence such as documents and records that are important to increase reliability of the case study. The research design of this exploratory single-case study and the iterative phases between the development of instruments and data collection and analysis are described in more detail in the following sections.

3.2 The Case Study Design

According to Yin (2009), the design of an empirical case study includes five components: (1) a study's questions, (2) its propositions, if any, (3) its unit(s) of analysis, (4) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (5) the criteria for interpreting the findings (p. 27). In the current study, the nature of the research questions led to the use of an exploratory case study as the researcher considered not just the voice and perspective of each host member, but also of the relevant groups of host members (such as administrators, English teachers, and Chinese teachers) and the interactions between them by hosting the study abroad program through an established international partnership with a Canadian sending institution. As an exploratory single-case study, this research may also have had "a legitimate reason for not having any propositions" (Yin, 2009, p.28). But the purpose of this research focused on an empirical investigation of host members' perspectives on international partnership in a study abroad program within its real-life context in Hong Kong.

According to Yin (2009), the unit of analysis for a case study is related to how the case is defined and how the relevant information can be collected on individual or individuals based on the research questions and study propositions. In this study, an international partnership developed between a Canadian sending institution and a host organization in Hong Kong for a short-term study abroad program was the single case being studied. Since there are three key players involved in the study abroad program, understanding the international partnership development from the host members' perspectives is the focus of the study. Therefore, the unit of analysis in this case study was the host organization, which includes multiple stakeholders within the organization including the administrators, the teachers (English or Chinese teachers), and administrative staff who have different perspectives on the international partnerships with

Canadian sending institutions, and different experiences when hosting Canadian study abroad students in Hong Kong. As an exploration of a "bounded system [that] is bounded by time and place" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61), this single-case study was bounded by the time from which the international partnership was established in 2009 to the time when the data was completely collected in June 2013. Also, the case is bounded by the spatial and social context in which the study abroad program is situated – Hong Kong. The unit of analysis, the case context and the interrelationships among the three key players are illustrated in Figure 2.

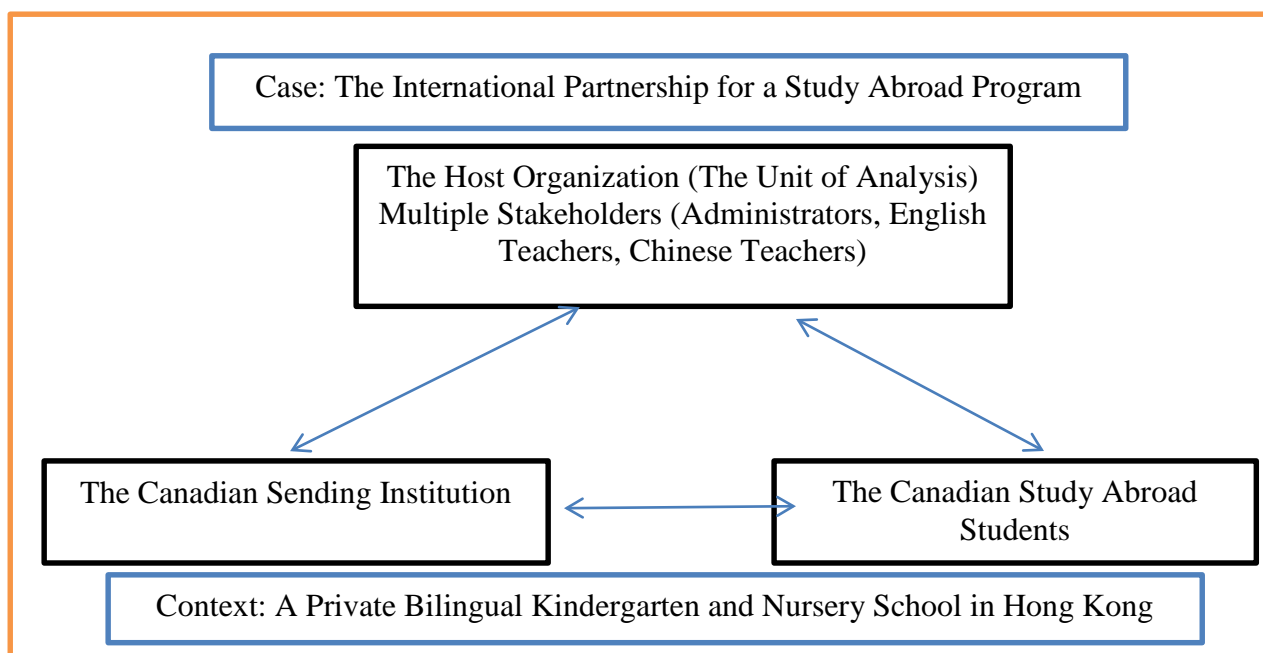


Figure 2. Case study methodology: the case context and unit of analysis.

The last two components of case study design focus on how to link data to propositions and how the criteria for interpretation of the findings are represented in the data analysis and report of research findings. The discussion of research findings and the themes that emerged from the data analysis are discussed in detail in the Chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis. In this case study, it is important to understand the social and educational contexts in which the host

organization is situated. As a private bilingual kindergarten and nursery school in Hong Kong, the case context discussed below provides the descriptive background information, and illustrates the conditions in which the host organization is expected to operate within the Hong Kong kindergarten and primary education systems.

3.3 The Case Context

Because the host organization is a private bilingual kindergarten and nursery school for children aged 2 to 6 years old in Hong Kong, its curriculum and teaching approaches are restricted by the social and educational policies that the Hong Kong government sets out. According to Hong Kong Education Bureau (2013), the government agency responsible for educational policies and legislation and overseeing the implementation of programmes from pre-primary to tertiary level in Hong Kong, all kindergartens in Hong Kong are privately run and are registered under the *Education Ordinance*. Most of the kindergartens operate on a half-day basis, offering upper kindergarten, lower kindergarten and nursery classes. The inspectors from the Education Bureau visit kindergartens regularly to give advice to principals and teachers on curriculum, teaching approaches and school administration to ensure the quality of the programmes. When Hong Kong children reach the age of 5 years 8 months or older (as of the 1st of September), they are eligible to participate in the *Primary One Admission System* to be admitted into the *Primary One* [P1, is equivalent to Grade One in Canada] of a government or an aided primary school.

According to the Hong Kong Education Bureau (2014), the *Primary One Admission System* provides choices for children to apply to primary schools in or outside of the area in which they reside. The *Primary One Admission System* includes two stages: the *Discretionary Places Admission* stage and the *Central Allocation* stage. In the first *Discretionary Places*

Admission stage, the schools select P1 students based on certain criteria or use a Points system. However, each school is assigned a quota to allow *up to 50 percent* of its total P1 students to be admitted into schools based on the category they are in or on their scores on the Points system. There is no test or interview allowed in the *Discretionary Places Admission* process. In the second *Central Allocation* stage, the Education Bureau uses the computer-programmed central allocation according to school location and parental choices to assign all child-applicants to a P1 placement in one of the government or government aided schools. However, the *Primary One Admission System* only applies to the government and aided primary schools in Hong Kong. Since there are four types of primary schools in Hong Kong, the other two types of primary schools including the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary schools and private primary schools that are excluded from the *Primary One Admission System*.

In Hong Kong, the four main types of primary schools include: (a) government schools, (b) government aided schools, (c) the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, and (d) private schools. According to Hong Kong Education Bureau (2014), the *government schools* are operated by the government with no tuition fee required from the students. The *government aided schools* are fully subsidized by the government, but these schools are mostly run by local charitable and religious organizations. Both the government schools and the government aided schools use the local curriculum and only children who are Hong Kong residents are accepted to both government and government aided schools. There are no tuition fees required to attend both the government school and the government aided schools.

However, the other two types of primary schools, including the DSS schools and the private schools, cater to different children and families who live in Hong Kong, and a fee is required to attend these schools. The DSS schools were introduced to the Hong Kong primary

education system by the government in 2001 in order to "enhance the quality of private school education in Hong Kong" (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2014, p. 2). The DSS schools receive some subsidies from the government for the local students they admit but they can also charge tuition fees in order to cover the full cost. According to the Hong Kong Education Bureau (2014), the DSS schools have more autonomy and flexibility in designing its curriculum, determining school fees and entrance requirements than the government aided schools. The private schools in Hong Kong consist of both local and international schools, which target different groups of children. Most of the children enrolled to private local schools are local children and Cantonese is the major medium of instruction for many schools. Most of the private international schools use non-local curricula, but local children can also apply to these schools. The private schools are run by various private organizations and do not receive any government subsidy, so they are free to decide the tuition fees as well as the curriculum used in each school.

It seems that there are different choices for Hong Kong parents to choose from when their children are ready to go to primary schools for P1. However, for many parents, the *Primary One Admission System* may not respond well to their choice of schools and their children's needs because of the restrictions with the quota, the Points system and the computer-programmed central allocation process used for admission to the government schools or the government aided schools. The existing *Primary One Admission System* and the different reputations amongst the four types of primary schools seem to impact Hong Kong parents' views of the purpose of pre-primary education and their choices of kindergarten for their children. Serving young children from age 2 to 6 in Hong Kong, the host organization, as a private kindergarten and nursery school, must be sensitive and responsive to the changes introduced in the Hong Kong

educational system, as well as to parents and families' reactions to these changes in the wider society.

3.4 Participant Selection and Recruitment

According to the governance model used at the host organization, the overall organizational decisions are made by three key decision-making bodies: the Board, the School Executive Committee (SEC), and the Curriculum Team. The Board is the governing body of the host organization and consists of one chairman and one supervisor. The SEC consists of the supervisor, principals, the director of human resources and administration, deputy principals, and the deputy curriculum development director. The Curriculum Team consists of the curriculum development director, principals, head-teachers, grade coordinators, and teachers. The SEC meets bi-weekly and curriculum team meetings are held monthly. The total number of staff in the host organization is 129, including 95 teachers (32 Cantonese teachers, 30 Putonghua teachers, and 33 English teachers), eight administrators, 14 helpers (or classroom assistants), and eight administrative support staff. Understanding the organizational governance and structures in the host organization helps to both identify the positions of the key informants and also to determine the criteria for participant selection. Figure 3 illustrates the organizational structures in the host organization.

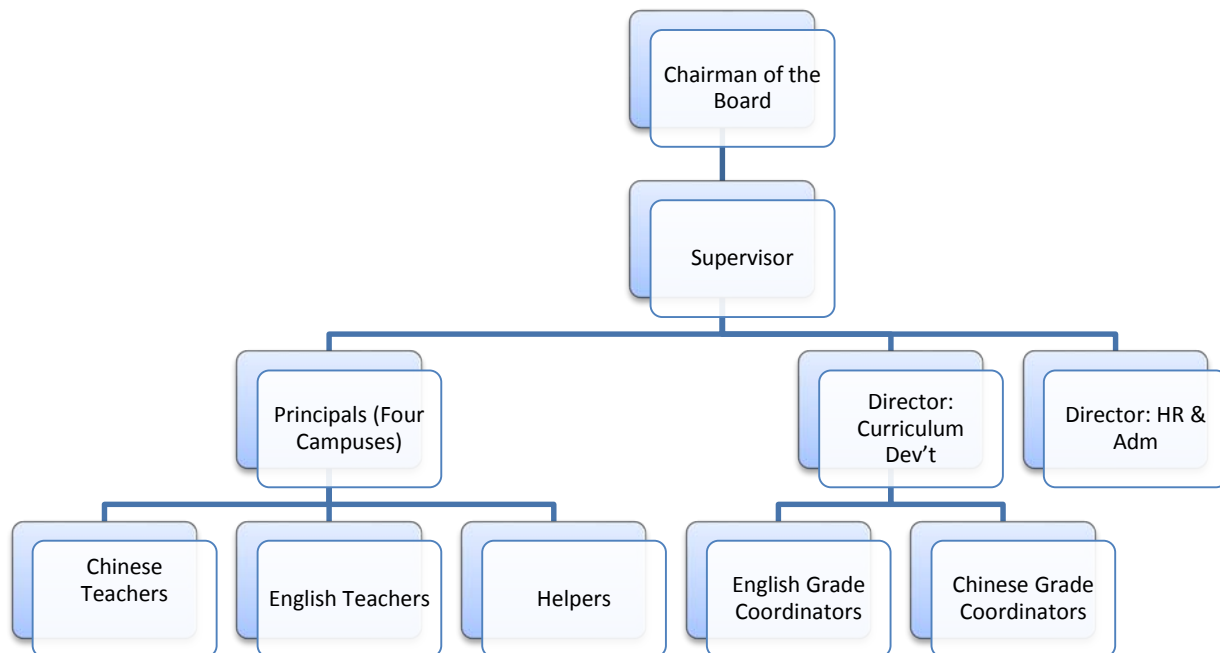


Figure 3. Organizational structure of the host organization.

Participant selection began with key informants in the host organization. As Merriam (2001) defined, the key informant is a “key person who is considered knowledgeable by others and [who can be asked] for referrals” (p. 83). In this case, the key informants included two senior administrators at the host organization who were involved in the development and implementation of partnership with the Canadian sending institution. The researcher met one of the key informants in Canada when the international partnership was first established in 2009. The researcher then contacted the key informants in October 2012 to express her intention to conduct a research study at the host organization in order to understand the host members' perspectives on the international partnership and the impacts of study abroad program on the host organization. An overview of the proposed research study, including the objectives of study and methodology was sent to the key informants electronically. Following subsequent email communications, the researcher was able to answer questions about the research study and gained support from the key informants to access the documents and records at the host

organization. Gaining access to the host organization and the support from the key informants was important for this case study. Otherwise, the researcher would not have had sufficient access to potential data, such as host organization's documents and records, or the ability to conduct interviews and focus groups, or make observations at the case site to illuminate the research questions.

The two key informants who participated not only were very knowledgeable about the current status and operations of the organization, but also, having been closely involved in the development or implementation stages of this partnership, had the broader perspective and insight of both the study abroad students and the College. Thus, the analysis of the documents and the referrals made by these two key informants helped the researcher use purposeful sampling to identify potential participants for her study who were involved in the formation and development of the international partnership and who had regular interactions with Canadian study abroad students at the host organization. Purposeful sampling is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2001, p. 61). As the researcher was interested in exploring the perceptions and experiences of people in host organization on the international partnership and the impacts of hosting the study abroad program, three criteria were used in the participant selection, and they are: (1) participants must be a current employee of the host organization; (2) have knowledge about the ECE short-term study abroad international partnership; (3) have direct contacts with Canadian study abroad students. Based on these criteria, a total of 16 participants were selected based on the referrals from the key informants. The participants were contacted electronically with a Letter of Invitation for One-on-One Interview (see Appendix A) and asked if they would be interested in participating in the study, so

the date and time for an interview could be arranged at their preferred locations. Each participant was also informed of the objectives of the study, the potential time commitment and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice, prior to the commencement of the study. All 16 participants agreed to have one-on-one interviews with the researcher at a time and location that was convenient for each of them. The one-on-one interviews were conducted in English as all 16 participants were able to communicate fluently in English with the researcher. At the end of each interview, the participant was invited to participate in a focus group meeting that was scheduled at a later date. All of the interview participants accepted the invitation and gave the researcher their verbal confirmation for future participation in a focus group meeting.

Since the host organization is a private bilingual school, each class is taught by one English teacher and one Chinese teacher (either Cantonese or Putonghua teacher). Unlike the English teacher, the Chinese teachers do not have extended contact with the Canadian study abroad students, but the presence of the Canadian students in the same classroom may have potential impacts on the Chinese teacher who is a teaching partner to the English teacher. As the current study was interested in exploring the impacts of study abroad program on the host organization at both individual and organizational levels, the experience of Chinese teachers was valuable as it added another voice and different perspectives to the research problem. Therefore an invitation for participation in a focus group meeting was sent electronically to Chinese teachers who were teaching partners of English cooperating teachers who had the Canadian study abroad students in the same classroom. A total of seven Chinese teachers including four Cantonese teachers and three Putonghua teachers responded and agreed to participate in the focus group meeting.

At the host organization, there are two Chinese language streams including the Cantonese stream and the Putonghua (Mandarin) stream offered to the children who are enrolled either in an English/Cantonese class, or an English/Putonghua class. So the Chinese teachers who speak Cantonese may or may not have the ability to communicate fluently in Putonghua (Mandarin). Vice versa, the Putonghua (Mandarin) teacher may not have the ability to understand and respond to Cantonese orally. In order to facilitate a focus group meeting in which the participants could use a language that they felt comfortable with, a short questionnaire was developed to collect demographic information as well as the language preference for the focus group meeting. A Letter of Invitation for Focus Group Participation (see Appendix C) written in both English and Chinese languages, along with a short questionnaire were sent out electronically to the Chinese teachers who had had Canadian study abroad students in their classroom in the current year or in the previous years. With the responses from the 7 Chinese teachers who agreed to participate in the focus group meeting, the preferred communication language indicated on the returned questionnaire includes both Cantonese and Putonghua (Mandarin). As a facilitator of the focus group meeting, the researcher is fluent in speaking both English and Putonghua (Mandarin), but does not have a good command of Cantonese in oral communication. In order to facilitate the focus group meeting with Chinese teachers, an interpreter who is fluent in both English and Cantonese was invited to join the meeting in order to assist the researcher to both translate the focus group questions orally from English to Cantonese and also the participant's responses from Cantonese to English.

Thus, the data collection at the case site included one-on-one interviews with 16 participants and a total of 23 participants in three focus groups: the administrator group (n=8), the English teacher group (n=8) and the Chinese teacher group (n=7). All one-on-one interviews

and two of the focus groups (the administrator group and the English teacher group) were conducted in English with the researcher, but the Chinese teacher focus group was conducted with a mixed use of English, Cantonese and Putonghua languages, with both the researcher and an interpreter translating between English and Cantonese languages during the meeting. The participants in each focus group were informed the objectives of the study, their rights as participants to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty prior to the commencement of each of the focus group meetings.

3.5 Data Collection

As a qualitative single-case study, the design of this study is based on the idea of qualitative research being a process that requires an active relationship between the researcher and data, and involves concurrent data collection and analysis (Tesch, 1990). In this study, the development of instruments and data collection and analysis took place simultaneously in three phases, in which themes or ideas gleaned from the previous phase were refined in the later phases of research. Creswell (1998) states that a holistic analysis of the multiple sources of data has the potential to provide a detailed description of the issues that emerged in the study and to construct theory by recognizing patterns of relationships as well as underlying logic within the case. In this study, multiple sources of data were collected including documents and archival records from host organization and Canadian sending institution, as well as interviews and focus groups with the participants from host organization. Using multiple sources of data increases the reliability of the data and the process of gathering it as a "triangulation of evidence" for this case study (Tellis, 1997, para. 41). In addition, the researcher made observations and field notes, such as details about the physical environment of host organization, classroom layouts and so on during the site visits to the host organization. The interviews and focus groups were conducted in

the offices, the classrooms or meeting rooms at host organization at a time that was convenient for the participant, and in a location where a private meeting with the researcher could take place without interruptions. The three phases of the data collection are described in detail here.

The first phase of this study was designed to enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts of the international partnership and study abroad program by immersing herself in the analysis of various types of documents, including *public documents*, such as announcements, newsletters, archival records, memoranda, administrative documents, and other organizational reports, and *private documents*, such as letters and email correspondences between the researcher and the participants. Yin (2009) states that systematic searches for relevant documents in case studies help researchers not only to corroborate information from other sources, but also to be able to make inferences from documents for further investigation. In order to collect rich and relevant information to address the research questions, both public and private documents as described above were reviewed and considered. The document analysis was conducted in this phase in order to help the researcher identify key players involved in the study abroad program, to establish baseline information or criteria for participant selection, and to develop protocols and refine questions for one-on-one interviews based on the information emerged in this process.

In this phase, the formation of research questions and development of protocols for data collection were completed. In order to guide the development of research questions, the researcher collected and reviewed documents that are related to the international partnership between the Canadian sending institution and host organization since its inception in 2009. Also, the researcher was engaged in an extensive review of scholarly articles and empirical research studies in the relevant fields of studies including education, business and social sciences, and on

the topics such as international education, international partnership, higher education governance and leadership, study abroad and higher education student mobility, experiential learning and so on. Furthermore, unstructured interviews or conversations and email communications were conducted with individuals who had had some connections (either past *or* current) with this international partnership at both sides. Through a systematic review of scholarly literature and research, the researcher was able to identify the void in the current empirical research and confirm the needs for undertaking a research study that explores the host perspectives on international partnerships and study abroad programs. Based on information that emerged from the document analysis in this phase, the researcher not only gained an understanding of the case context and operational processes of the study abroad program, but was also able to identify the key informants, build rapport with personnel at host organization and get permissions for collecting data from one-on-one interviews in the next phase of the study at host organization in Hong Kong.

The second phase of the research process involved preparation for data collection and conducting semi-structured interviews at host organization's location. Yin (2009) states that "interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or behavioral events; well-informed interviewees can provide important insights into such affairs and events" (p. 108). For the purposes of this study, the semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from the participants. According to Patton (1990), the semi-structured interview uses pre-determined interview questions that are asked in an open-ended format. As participants are asked the same questions in the same sequence, it increases the comparability of the responses, reduces interviewer effects and bias, and facilitates organization of data collected (Patton, 1987). Through the key informants identified in the first phase,

purposeful sampling was used to identify other participants who had some involvement in the international partnership or had experience in the study abroad program at host organization for the one-on-one interviews. A total of 16 one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants at the host organization in May 2013. The semi-structured interviews followed a set of predetermined questions (see Appendix B) based on the protocols developed, and each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes in length. During the interviews, the participants were invited to reflect on their perceptions of both Canadian and Hong Kong cultures, their views of children and childhood in Hong Kong, their experiences with the international partnership and their interactions with Canadian study abroad students. The use of open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity not only for a detailed description of each participant's experience, but also for unexpected and unanticipated responses from the participants. At the end of an interview, each participant was asked to identify whether they had an interest in participating in a subsequent phase of the study, which included participation in a focus group meeting with other participants who hold similar roles in the host organization (e.g. the administrators or the English teachers). Based on the themes that emerged from semi-structured interviews, a protocol for focus group meetings was developed for phase three of this research.

In this phase, the researcher also made observational notes of the physical environment, the context of the setting, the participants, their roles and the interactions that took place during each interview. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed entirely by the researcher. These interview transcriptions were then sent to each participant individually for "member check". The participants had the opportunity to review the interview transcriptions in order to check the accuracy of information, to provide their feedback, and/or to add information

that might be missing. The continuous involvement of participants helped to further validate the accuracy of the data collected and to increase the construct validity of this research study.

The third phase of the data collection included three focus group meetings with three distinctive groups at the host organization. Focus groups as a research method is used to “gather rich, descriptive data in a small-group format from participants who have agreed to ‘focus’ on a topic of mutual interest” (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p. 90). In this study, the focus group meetings were conducted to gather information from participants who held different professional roles in the host organization in order to understand their collective perspectives on the international partnership and the study abroad program being studied. As a “socially-oriented research procedure”, the focus group meetings “accurately reflect people’s genuine thoughts and feelings about a subject than that obtained through individual interviews in which respondents feel forced to answer with, perhaps, insufficient time to consider all the issues” (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p. 93). Since the interview participants were selected based on their involvement in the international partnership and/or direct contact with the study abroad students, it was also important to add different perspectives from host members who did not have extended contact with the study abroad students and/or who had limited involvement with the international partnership. In this study, people in the host organization were invited to participate in one of the three focus groups based on their professional roles and their levels of interaction with Canadian study abroad students. Therefore, the focus groups were conducted with a total of 23 participants in three distinctive groups, including people who are decision makers (the Administrators, n=8), people who interacted with Canadian study abroad students regularly (the English Teachers, n=8), and people who did not interact with Canadian study abroad students extensively but were present in the same classroom with the Canadian students (the Chinese

Teachers, n=7). Each focus group meeting was facilitated by the researcher and lasted approximately 90 minutes in length. All meetings were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed. Due to the multilingual environment at the host organization and each participant's language ability, the focus group meetings for both Administrators and English Teachers were conducted in English only. However, the focus group meeting for Chinese Teachers was facilitated by the researcher with help of an interpreter, and three languages (English, Cantonese and Putonghua/Mandarin) were used in the meeting. The recording for the Chinese Teachers focus group meeting was first transcribed in both Chinese and English, and then the entire transcription was translated to English for data analysis. The focus group meetings not only provided the participants with the opportunity to communicate their thoughts about the international partnership and to share their experience as a host to Canadian study abroad students, but also enabled them to compare individual thoughts and experiences with people who shared a similar professional role at the host organization. Guided and informed by social constructionism, the focus group meetings served both as a process for validating the data from the interviews in group settings, and also as a means to help each participant construct and create their own unique experience through interactions based on common interests and assumptions.

Overall, the three-phase approach to the data collection provided the opportunity for the researcher to explore multiple sources of information, to engage in a reflective process of identifying the primary themes emerged throughout the phases, to involve participants in the data validation process, and to provide a descriptive account of the perceptions and experiences of participants in a specific social and cultural context - Hong Kong. Throughout the three phases, the researcher was engaged in an analytical and reflective process in order to identify emerging themes and provide critical reflection on the data collected. This process not only provided the

researcher with opportunities for a continued refinement of research focus, but also allowed time for the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of participants' experiences at host organization. Because all interview participants also participated in the subsequent focus group meetings, the development of trust allowed both the participants and the researcher grow in their degrees of comfort when exploring complex issues involved in the international partnership and the study abroad program in this study.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected from each phase of this study were analyzed systematically and recursively. In qualitative research, the process of data collection and data analysis are recursive and dynamic procedures that shape one another simultaneously. As the data were collected, the researcher looked for underlying patterns and conceptual categories in an attempt to understand the meanings and connections of shared human experience. Seidel (1998) suggested that qualitative analysis is a progressive process involving an active relationship between the researcher and data, which shapes how the data is collected, reflected on, and then reported. In this study, the data collected were reviewed and analyzed in four stages, with the primary focus being on data collected from the 16 one-on-one interviews and three focus group meetings.

The *first stage* of data analysis involved transcribing and translating the entire interview and focus group recordings to word documents in participant's native languages, including both English and Chinese. The first transcription produced true verbatim transcripts with all spoken words, non-verbal utterances such as "uhms" and "uhs", filler phrases and sounds recorded on a digital audio recorder. Then, the researcher engaged in a few cycles of reading of the transcripts from each participant's interview and three focus groups, and then made clean verbatim transcripts with non-verbal utterances, filler phrases and conversational confirmations by the

interviewer taken out in the final transcription of the data. After the interview data was transcribed, the transcription was sent to each participant via email so the participants were able to check the interview transcriptions for accuracy and to provide feedback on the contents. Once the member check with participants was completed, the Chinese transcripts were translated into English by the researcher. During this process of data transcription and translation, the researcher was not only fully immersed in reading the contents of interview data, but the initial impressions of data was also noted and documented in a separate document.

The *second stage* of the data analysis involved developing a descriptive framework around how the case study was organized by identifying and categorizing the themes emerging from the data, and then organizing these themes into broad thematic categories. During this process, the data was organized into two broad categories: the *participants' perceptions* and the *participants' experiences*, based on the comments from the participants depending on whether a perception (whether the participant believes or thinks about an issue or a phenomenon) or an experience (when the participant describes a fact or gives an example of what happened) was described. Then, the participants' perceptions were further categorized based on their experiences with the international partnership development or with Canadian students when hosting the study abroad program. Based on the areas identified in the literature, the data relating to the international partnership development were organized into three themes based on the three stages of *partnership initiation and motivation, implementation* and *future development*. For the impacts of hosting Canadian study abroad students, the data were organized into two themes based on whether the impact is at the *organizational level* or at the *individual level*. Through this classification process, the data were categorized into five themes that provided a rich context for

understanding the experiences and perceptions discussed by the participants in the interviews and focus group meetings.

The *third stage* of data analysis involved the coding of the entire data set and then identifying the connections of these codes to the five identified themes. The coding process and the use of categorical aggregation is discussed by Stake (1995) as a process of drawing meaning across multiple instances of data in order to articulate examples of specific phenomenon relevant to the research problem. The data were coded and organized using the *Nvivo10* software and analyzed for categorization and frequency. Using this method, 57 codes were developed and categorized into five themes that were identified in the earlier stage of the data analysis. Some examples of codes and their relevant themes are illustrated in Table 1.

The *fourth stage* of data analysis used an application of inductive analysis to analyze the major themes emerged from the data. In this stage, the participants' perceptions and experiences were compared both internally, in relation to how the data was understood in context, and externally, in relation to how was data understood through comparison. Then, the codes were compared across each of the five themes and were analyzed to identify the similarities and differences, as well as the patterns and variations among the various sources of data. The constant comparison of data helped the researcher to identify common patterns, which had the potential to bring value in capturing the shared, central and core experiences of participants (Patton, 1990).

The use of this progressive approach to data analysis, which included a recursive analysis of a variety of data sources, allowed the researcher to engage in an ongoing process of interpretation of the information sources and to identify evidences needed to support a particular theme. This process further ensured the credibility and reliability of the findings, and the

accuracy of the information provided since the information was drawn from multiple sources of information, individuals and processes (Creswell, 2005).

| Themes | Codes | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Perceptions | Experiences |
| Partnership Initiation and Motivation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectations for children in Hong Kong Perceptions about Canada and Canadian culture HK Educational System Social factors that motivate partnership Cultural factors that motivate partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impressions of Canadian Institution Personal connections with Canada |
| Partnership Implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Role and involvement Expectations for the role Perceptions on cultural similarities Professional connections Professional attitudes in ECE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logistic issues Strengths of the partnership Benefits of the partnership Challenges of the partnership |
| Future Development of the Partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural learning Contributions to ECE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote cultural exchange for Chinese staffs Improve communication Preparation for Canadian students Support for English and Chinese teachers |
| The Impacts on Host Organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions on Canadian HK Educational system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational culture Curriculum development and teaching |
| The Impacts on Host Individuals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectations for children: -changing family structure -parenting styles and discipline -respect and expectations for teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and discipline |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views of childhood : -lack of play -children are happy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural learning |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approaches to ECE: -focus on formal education -behaviour and mannerism - Play is not valued as academic performance -Constraints in the host organization -Positive cultural learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workload |

Table 1. Sample themes and code list

3.7 The Scope of the Study and Ethical Considerations

This case study focused on the participants' perspectives and perceptions of an international partnership with a Canadian sending institution and the impacts of hosting a study abroad program at a host organization through an in-depth examination of host members' experiences. The scope of the research is limited to the temporal, spatial, and social contexts in which this case is bounded and situated. When examining the impacts of this study abroad program, it was important to acknowledge that the Canadian students who participated in the study abroad program interacted not only with teachers, staff, and administrators at the host organization, but also with children and on some occasions with parents. Through the Canadian students' interactions with children and parents, the study abroad program may also have direct or indirect impacts on the broader communities in the host country. However, the scope of this study is limited *to the investigation of the impacts of the study abroad program on the host organization*. Therefore, the impacts of the study abroad program on the children, the parents, and their communities are **not** included in the scope of this research.

Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the University of Calgary's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB) prior to the data collection. Therefore, all elements of the research were aligned with the ethical review protocol set out by the University of Calgary's CFREB, and there were minimal risks involved for participants in this study. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were provided with the opportunity to withdraw at any time. Participants were provided with time to review the Consent Form and the opportunity to discuss any questions they had at the beginning of interviews and/or focus group meetings. Participants' written consents were obtained prior to the commencement of data collection.

The collection of data for this study was undertaken solely by the researcher and remained confidential throughout the data analysis, as all data, including the audio recordings and transcripts, were secured in a locked facility and all electronic information collected was stored in files protected by passwords and was only accessible to the researcher. Each participant remained anonymous and a pseudonym was assigned to protect confidentiality of the participant. Also, as required, the data and documentation collected for this study will be archived and retained for ten years after the study is completed and then will be permanently erased or shredded.

Since this study examined people's perceptions and experiences in a host organization in which its employees come from different linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds, intercultural sensitivity to the needs and values of each participant were of the utmost importance in this research. To lessen the intrusive nature of the study, the interviews and focus group meetings were scheduled at a time and location that were convenient for and accessible to the participants. Although many employees in the host organization are able to communicate in English, the letter of invitation for interviews and focus groups were written and provided in *both* English and Chinese languages. Since the researcher is competent in reading, writing and communicating in English and Chinese (Mandarin), the participants were able to choose a language in which they felt most comfortable in communicating and expressing their thoughts and opinions in interviews and focus group meetings.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

This chapter discusses the study's findings, based on the descriptions of the experiences and perceptions of participants from the host organization in 16 semi-structured one-on-one interviews and three focus group meetings. As detailed in Chapter 3, all interviews and focus group meetings were conducted and facilitated by the researcher at the host organization in Hong Kong in May and June, 2013. The discussion of research findings is guided by the theoretical framework of social-cultural constructionism, which suggests that people's knowledge and perceptions are shaped not only by their interactions with other people but also by the culture and environment that they are in (Vygotsky, 1997). As an exploratory single-case study, the findings provide a voice for the participants from the host organization as they reflect on their perceptions and experiences on the international partnership with a Canadian sending institution, as well as on their perceived assessments of hosting study abroad students at both individual and organizational levels. In order to provide detailed, relevant and descriptive information regarding the contexts and conditions in which people at the host organization make decisions about and react to the international partnership with Canadian sending institution and their role as a host to Canadian study abroad students, the analysis of interview and focus group data addresses the two overarching research questions:

1. How do people in the host organization perceive the international partnership with a Canadian sending institution?
2. What are the perceived impacts that the study abroad program has on the host organization at both individual and organizational levels?

4.1 Research Questions and the Categories of Findings

The first research question focused on participants' perceptions of the international partnership. Three sub-questions were explored: (1) the motivation for the host organization to develop and maintain the international partnership; (2) the organizational factors that influence the development of the international partnership; and, (3) the cultural factors that influence the development of the international partnership.

The second research question focused on the perceived impacts of hosting the study abroad program on individual host members and on the host organization. The three sub-questions explored were: (1) the impact of hosting Canadian study abroad students on people who have extended contact with them; (2) the impact of hosting Canadian study abroad students on people who do not have extended contact with Canadian study abroad students; (3) the impact of hosting Canadian study abroad students on the host organization, in terms of both benefits and challenges.

Guided by these research questions, the findings from the data are organized into three categories. The first category focuses on the *participants' cultural perceptions and their roles and involvement* in the study abroad program. This includes but is not limited to, an exploration of the participants' roles and years of involvement in the study abroad program, their perceptions of Canadian and Hong Kong culture, as well as their views of children and early childhood. In this study, the participants' cultural perceptions and personal values are central/ important to understanding how they make decisions about the international partnership and how they react to and interact with Canadian study abroad students. From a sociocultural perspective, people's experiences are constructed in specific cultural and historical contexts and, therefore, the in-depth exploration of people's cultural perceptions in *Category 1* provides the fundamental

information to not only understand the social and cultural contexts in Hong Kong, but also illustrate the connections between people's perceptions and their experiences when working with people from different cultures.

The second category explores *participants' perceptions of the international partnership* by focusing on their experiences in three partnership development stages including *initiation, implementation* and *future development* of the international partnership between host organization and Canadian sending institution. The findings in *Category 2* addressed the first research question and its three sub-questions in this study, and identified the organizational as well as the social and cultural factors that motivated the host organization to initiate and to develop this international partnership with a Canadian post-secondary institution. Reflecting on their experiences, the participants identified both the benefits and challenges involved during the years of implementation, and made suggestions for the future development of this international partnership.

The third category examines *the perceived impacts of the study abroad program on the host organization, as well as on the professional lives of the participants* by exploring the participants' experiences of hosting the Canadian study abroad students in Hong Kong. The findings in *Category 3* provided answers to the second research question and its three sub-questions by describing the participants' experiences and identifying the emerging themes to understand the impacts of hosting the study abroad program at both the *organizational level*, which explores the impacts on organizational culture, organizational growth and improvement, curriculum development and quality of teaching at the host organization, and also at the *individual level*, which explores the impacts on an individual's workload, cultural learning, teaching practices and professional relationships.

In order to explore the complex and interrelated issues involved in international partnership development and hosting of a study abroad program, the findings are organized into three categories as discussed above to illustrate the underlying social and cultural factors that influence how the three key players (*the sending institution, the students and the host organization*) interact with each other. An overview of the categories of findings related to the research questions is presented in Figure 4.

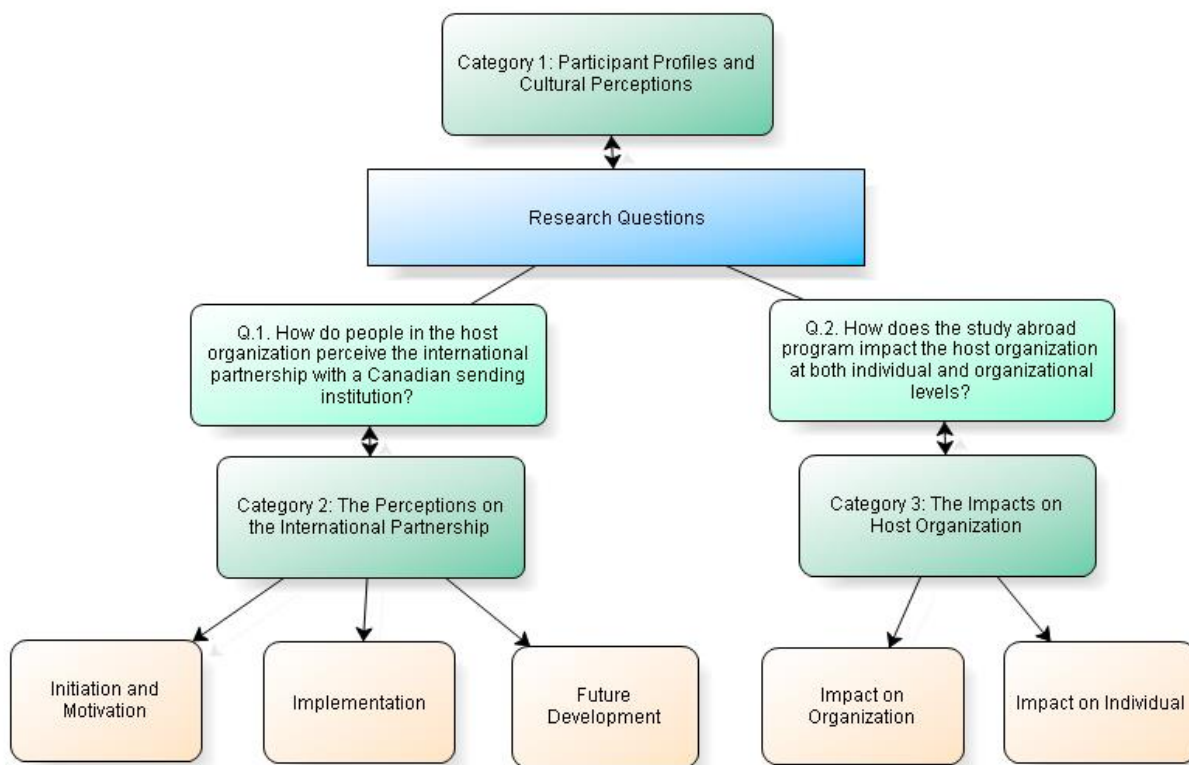


Figure 4. Overview of the categories of findings

As illustrated in Figure 4, *Category 1* explored the participants' cultural perceptions of both the host (Hong Kong) and the sending (Canada) countries, and provided in-depth examination of interactions between people's perceptions and actions within a specific cultural context - Hong Kong. *Category 2* and *Category 3* provided answers to both research questions by identifying emerging themes on how participants' cultural perceptions affected their

experiences in the international partnership development and their interactions with Canadian study abroad students at the host organization.

4.2 Category 1: Participants' Profiles and Cultural Perceptions

There were a total of 23 participants in this study, including 8 administrators and 8 English teachers who shared their personal experiences in both semi-structured one-on-one interviews and in focus group meetings, and 7 Chinese teachers who only participated in one focus group meeting. Since the participants' positions and involvements in the international partnership influenced how they perceive their roles and how they interact with Canadian study abroad students at the host organization, the focus group meetings were conducted with three groups of individuals: the *Administrators*, the *English Teachers* and the *Chinese Teachers*, to reflect a variety of perspectives from the host organization. As a bilingual kindergarten, the host organization hires its employees from various cultural, linguistic and national backgrounds. Based on the data, there were some different personal characteristics among the participants in these three groups in terms of the country of origin, the native language spoken, years of employment at the host organization, and involvement with the international partnership and/or Canadian study abroad students.

4.2.1 The roles and the cultural backgrounds of participants.

Administrators. For the participants who hold the administrative positions, in both interviews and focus groups (n=8) all participants were Hong Kong citizens who were born and raised in Hong Kong. Although Cantonese is their first language and mother tongue, they were fluent in reading, writing and speaking English. Since the host organization was established as a private bilingual kindergarten and nursery school in 2000, the length of employment for the administrative participants varies from one year to over 13 years at the time when the data was

collected in May 2013. Three administrative participants had the longest employment at the host organization – they had been there since 2000. One administrative participant had only joined the host organization in 2012 but had played a key role in facilitating the study abroad project for the 2013 group. Other four administrative participants had 8-10 years of employment at the host organization. A majority (6 of 8) of administrative participants had been directly involved with this international partnership, and all of them had various levels of contact with Canadian students (e.g. from providing support on curriculum to direct communication with the students regarding the logistic issues) since the study abroad program began in 2009.

The roles that the administrative participants had played and their involvement in the partnership with Canadian sending institution were clearly defined by the position that each participant held. The Supervisor is one of the founding members of the host organization and the one who initiated and established the international partnership for the host organization with the Canadian sending institution in 2008. The Principals from four campuses agreed that their role is to help Canadian study abroad students adapt to the environment at each campus and to support their teaching in the classroom. The Director of Human Resources and Administration describes her role as "to help the students with the logistics for them to come [to Hong Kong]...there are a lot of logistics, like visa applications, the accommodation, how to help them to adapt to this environment, let them know something about Hong Kong" (Nancy, Administrator, Interview, May 13, 2013) . The Director of Curriculum Development assists the study abroad program by providing curriculum and lesson plan information to the Canadian students. One of the administrative staff was a Chinese teacher in a classroom as a teaching partner with an English teacher who hosted Canadian students for two years, thus her perspectives and experiences as

both an administrative staff and a Chinese teacher added to the diverse views of the Chinese host members at the host organization.

English Teachers. For the English teachers who participated in both interviews and focus groups (n=8), six of them were from Canada and two were from the United Kingdom. In terms of the ethnicity of the English teachers, there were three Caucasians, four Chinese, one South Asian. English is the first language and mother tongue for the majority of English teachers (6 out of 8), however, two English teachers also speak Cantonese as they were born in Hong Kong and raised by Cantonese-speaking parents in Canada and the UK. In terms of the years of employment, the English teachers represented the newest employees at the host organization as their years of employment at the host organization range from one year (n=3), two years (n=4) and six years (n=1). As foreign nationals, the English teachers working at the host organization were offered an employment contract for up to two years with the possibility for renewal at the end of contract period. However, most of the English teachers (n=5) interviewed were new to the role of being the cooperating teacher for the Canadian study abroad students when the data was collected in May 2013. Two of them had been the cooperating teacher since 2012 and one had been the cooperating teacher since 2010.

Choosing a new English teacher to be the cooperating teacher for the Canadian study abroad students seemed to be a common practice at the host organization because the native English teachers who teach internationally tend to move frequently. The age group that the English teachers teach also influences the decision of where to place Canadian study abroad students in the classroom at host organization. Working with children from age 2 to 6, there are total of four age groups including Pre-Nursery (PN, 2-3 year old), Kindergarten 1 (K1, 3-4 year old), Kindergarten 2 (K2, 4-5 year old) and Kindergarten 3 (K3, 5-6 year old) at the host

organization. As one of the most experienced English teachers, Lucy has been teaching at the host organization for six years. She believes that both her teaching experiences as well as the age group that she teaches are the deciding factors for placing a Canadian study abroad student in her classroom, and she explains:

Because there's a high turnover within schools, especially for native [English] teachers some times. So, I think at that point I was just the most experienced or the one who they thought that it would work best in that classroom...this year I'm teaching K1 and K2, but K1 and PN levels seem to be kind of the easiest way to accommodate the [Canadian] students. (Lucy, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013)

Chinese Teachers. The Chinese teachers were not selected for the one-on-one interviews because they did not meet the criteria for participant selection as they did not have extended contact with the Canadian study abroad students and had limited experiences or involvement with the international partnership with Canadian sending institution. However, the presence of Canadian study abroad students in the same classroom that the Chinese teachers share with the English cooperating teachers may have impacts on the professional lives of Chinese teachers. Therefore, a group of Chinese teachers (n=7) was invited to share their experiences in a focus group meeting in order to add their perspectives regarding the impacts of study abroad program on their professional lives at the host organization. Four Cantonese teachers and three Putonghua/Mandarin teachers participated in the focus group. All Cantonese teachers were born and raised in Hong Kong. The three Putonghua/Mandarin teachers had the residence status in Hong Kong but had grown up in mainland China. As a group, the Chinese teachers had limited ability to communicate and express their thoughts effectively in English in a focus group meeting. Thus, the focus group was conducted in the participants' mother tongues in both

Cantonese and Putonghua, as well as in English. The years of employment of the Chinese teachers ranged from 2 to 7 years, and many had between 2 and 5 years of experience in hosting Canadian study abroad students in their classrooms.

The diverse roles that each participant played, and the years of experience that each participant had with regard to this international partnership and hosting of the Canadian study abroad students brings different perspectives to this study. As a bilingual kindergarten, the multilingual environment at the host organization requires people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to work together. The perception of the host culture in Hong Kong, as well as the perception of the Canadian culture, influenced how the host teachers and Canadian students interact with each other, and how the host members view their experiences with the Canadian sending institution and the Canadian study abroad students. Although the positions and the years of involvement differed significantly among the participants, it also reflected the diverse experiences that people had with the international partnership and the study abroad program at the host organization. As this study explores the host organization's perceptions of the international partnership and their experiences with Canadian study abroad students, the participants' responses suggest that participants' understanding of their roles in the study abroad program, their cultural backgrounds, their perceptions of the Canadian and Hong Kong cultures, and their views of children and childhood have both shaped their interactions and have also helped them to construct their experiences with Canadian study abroad students and with the sending institution.

4.2.2 The perceptions of Canadian and Hong Kong cultures.

The perceptions of Canadian culture. At the host organization, many English teachers came from Canada as "it is about half of them [English teachers at host organization] or slightly

less than half, come from Canada" (Nancy, Administrator, Interview, May 14, 2013). It was not a surprise that six of the English teachers interviewed were also Canadians. The positive perceptions of Canada are also reflected in the interviews with administrators at the host organization.

Administrators. The favourable perception of Canada and Canadians by the administrators may be influenced by the fact that all but two administrators (n=6) interviewed have visited or lived in a Western English-speaking country before. Also, five administrators have visited Canada, either to visit family and friends or for vacation or work. For the administrators who have visited Canada before, the general perception of the country and of the Canadian people they encountered is quite positive. The commonly used words by the administrators when describing Canadians include: open, more relaxed, friendly, polite, and easy to approach and communicate with. Many administrators also mentioned personal connections to Canada through families or friends who immigrated to Canada, and their perceptions about Canada are influenced more by the stories and experiences shared by their friends and families. Nancy has friends who returned to Hong Kong after living in Canada for many years, so she has heard about Canada from the stories shared by her friends, which shape her perceptions about Canadian culture. "In Hong Kong there are a lot of people that migrated to Canada, so it maybe from them, [who] influenced my perspective on Canada or Canadian culture." (Nancy, Administrator, Interview, May 14, 2013)

However, for other host staff who do not have personal connections with Canada or the opportunity to travel to a Western English-speaking country, their perceptions of Canada and Canadian culture come not only from how Canada and Canadians are portrayed in the media and movies, but more from their interactions with Canadian colleagues. Emily believes that her

perception of Canada is based on her personal experience working with the Canadian English teachers at the host organization, and she explains:

...because I have some [Canadian] co-teachers, we work with them every day, so I have a better understanding of what the Canadian looks like. I think they are very relaxed and easy going, and they will voice what they think. (Emily, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013)

When talking about the Canadian culture, the administrative participants often compared Canadian culture with American culture. Nikki suggested that her perceptions about Canada and Canadian culture come from her own learning and her personal connections to the country. Nikki recognized that much of the learning for her in the field of early childhood education came from the United States, which is a country that many Hong Kong people feel its culture is quite similar to Canadian culture. According to the responses from the administrative participants, it seems that the culture of Western English-speaking countries is quite similar to what has been portrayed in the movies or in the media. Emily believes her perception about Canadian is also shaped by the news she hears from around the globe, "because it's global and I think...we get the information [about Canada] from the news. So...I just get the full picture about what the Canadian look like" (Emily, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013).

Overall, the perception of Canada and Canadian culture for the Hong Kong people working at the host organization is quite positive. Canadians are seen as being relaxed, flexible, open-minded and easy to work and communicate with. Canadian culture, however, is not differentiated from, but seen as similar to, other Western English-speaking countries such as the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom by many Hong Kong people.

English Teachers. At the host organization, the English teachers are recruited from many English-speaking countries including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. The Canadian English teachers who live and work in Hong Kong interact not only with the local Chinese people, but also with English-speaking colleagues from other countries. Therefore, it is important to explore how Canadian teachers perceive their home country and its culture while living so far away in a foreign country. It is also important to see how English teachers from other countries perceive Canadians in order to understand the interactions among the English teachers, as well as between the English teachers and Hong Kong people.

There were six Canadian English teachers who participated in the interviews, and half of them were Chinese-Canadians who grew up in Canada but returned to Hong Kong to teach. Flora was born in Hong Kong but immigrated to Canada with her family when she was nine years old. When she graduated with her Bachelor's degree in Canada, she returned to Hong Kong and received the Hong Kong Certificate of Education (CE) Teacher Certificate before teaching as an English teacher at the host organization. Vera and Emma were born in Canada and were raised by parents who immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong many years ago. Although these three Chinese-Canadian teachers all grew up in families with Chinese traditions and they all had family ties with Hong Kong, their perceptions of Canada and Canadian culture were not much different from other Canadians working in Hong Kong. All six Canadian teachers commented that Canadians are more laid back, friendly, polite, like to help others, are multicultural and are accepting of different cultures and races.

As Canada increasingly becomes more diverse with people who have migrated from countries around the world, one of the characteristics of Canadian culture that most Canadian teachers mentioned in the interviews is that it is multicultural. As Lucy explains:

I grew up in a very multicultural neighborhood... so we had, there were people like in my high school, in my elementary school from all kinds of different cultural backgrounds. So I actually noticed that it reflects that quite well, [because] the [study abroad] students that do come here that they're not all Caucasians. I think that the students that come are quite a good representation of Canada, or at least of where I'm from. (Lucy, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013)

As the sending institution is located near the most diverse and multicultural city in Canada, the student population reflects the diverse population that the institution serves. As Lucy observed, the multi-ethnicity of study abroad students represent the multicultural reality of the Canadian society.

For the non-Canadian English teachers, the Canadian culture is perceived as similar to English culture and the Western culture in general. Both Amanda and Susan are from the United Kingdom. When asked about the Canadian culture, they compared the Canadian culture with the Hong Kong culture and indicated that Canadian culture is very similar to the English culture. Amanda offers her opinion, "I think it [the Canadian culture] is quite similar to the English culture...quite open, open-minded and I feel like maybe they have a similar approach to teaching as we do in England, compared to Hong Kong" (Amanda, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013). Amanda and Susan have never been to Canada and they commented that their perceptions of Canada and Canadian culture came from the media and the interactions with Canadians through work or travel.

Although Canadian culture is perceived as being one of the Western English-speaking cultures not only by Hong Kong people, but also by non-Canadian English teachers, Canadians are perceived as being friendly, relaxed, open-minded and more accepting to different races and cultures than people from other Western countries. When asked to describe the differences between the Canadian culture and Hong Kong culture, the participants made sharp contrasts between a Western culture and an Eastern culture. The perceived cultural differences between the host and sending countries are discussed in the following section.

The perceptions of cultural differences between Canada and Hong Kong. All interview participants agreed that the Canadian culture and Hong Kong culture are vastly different in many areas, including lifestyle and religion, mannerisms, language, family relationships, and the work environment. When comparing the Hong Kong culture with the Canadian culture, many participants described Hong Kong as a fast paced city with high demands for accomplishment, a strong emphasis on competition, especially in the work environment, and high standards for achievement. Four main themes emerged from the participants' responses, which include the perceived cultural differences in: (1) lifestyle and mannerisms; (2) language and communication; (3) work environment and authority; (4) family relationships and parenting styles.

Lifestyle and mannerisms. The lifestyle is different as Hong Kong people's work day often ends late, therefore the shops and restaurants are open late in order to accommodate the needs of Hong Kong people for food, shopping and entertainment after work. The public transportation operates from early morning until late at night and the taxis are available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Although there are people who practice different religions in Hong Kong, the dominant religion is Buddhism. There are more than one million followers and many well-known Buddhist temples in the city. However, some administrative participants believe that

Hong Kong people are more accepting and adaptive to the Western food and religions than Canadians would be to the Chinese food and religion when living and working in Hong Kong. Emily noted "when we go out to try different types of food, for the Canadian they will pick what they normally had before; for the Hong Kong people, they will try new things whether they have had them before or not" (Emily, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013).

One interesting comparison comes from the Canadian English teachers on differences in mannerisms between the Canadian culture and Hong Kong culture. As most Canadian teachers perceive Canadians who are polite, friendly and always willing to help others, the mannerisms of people on the Hong Kong streets came as a complete shock for some Canadian teachers when they first arrived in Hong Kong. As a Canadian, Tania had a bad impression of people's mannerisms in public when she first arrived in Hong Kong because "I found [that Hong Kong people are] very rude, so, no opening the door, just very self-centered. I guess it'd be where [in] Canada they're very [polite], they open doors for people..." (Tania, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013).

Mannerisms on the Hong Kong streets may not be well perceived by Canadian teachers; however, Leanne believes that the politeness and courtesy displayed by Hong Kong people is different when she is seen as a Western Caucasian English teacher working at the host organization. She explains:

They are polite, they're courteous but they are different, it's not like on the street it won't happen. It's more, like most parents they'll respect me, or people in the street will, if they see me in the elevator, they'll treat me better, because they assume I'm an English teacher, which is viewed as a really good thing here. But for some of the other teachers who aren't as obviously English teachers like I am. I'm a Caucasian female. It's pretty

much what I'm here to do. But someone who is Chinese Canadian, and [when] they come over, they may not get treated the same way, and people will be rude, or stare, or just not be as polite. (Leanne, English Teacher, Interview, May 15, 2013)

The Chinese culture holds education and teachers in high regard. However, the English language used for communication with local people also contributed to an elevated respect for Caucasian English teachers in Hong Kong. The perception of language spoken by English teachers of different ethnic backgrounds seemed to explain the reason why Leanne has been perceived and treated differently than her Chinese-Canadian colleagues. Thus, the participants shared different views on how English is perceived based on their ethnicity and on the impact that the use of English has on their interactions with local people and with Canadian study abroad students.

Language and communication. For a Chinese-Canadian English teacher who only speaks English, language is a big issue for Emma, since the expectation for a Chinese-Canadian is different for a Caucasian Canadian. As a Chinese-Canadian English teacher, Emma was born and raised in Canada and English is her first language. However, because Emma physically looks Chinese, the expectation from many Hong Kong people is that she should be able to speak or read Chinese. So Emma had not been as lucky as her colleague Leanne who received an elevated respect for being English teacher as a Caucasian, rather she felt that she was discriminated against by the local people in Hong Kong. Emma describes her experiences in Hong Kong as an English-speaking Chinese-Canadian and she explains:

When I speak English, they [local people] kind of looking at me, and then sometimes it's like either they don't know how to respond or they don't know what to say and they'll look at someone else to talk to me. But it's just sometimes it does get really hard because

I've not really comfortable speaking Chinese. Sometimes I have to say the simple words that I know how to really pronounce. I would have to speak Chinese, but it's still the same back home [in Canada] and here. There is still expectation because I am Chinese, [so] you should have been brought up by Chinese parents so they should have taught you, but that's not the case. And it makes it harder too because here everything is in Chinese, and it's written in Chinese, like even when I go out with friends for dinner. We have the menu in a Chinese restaurant, or somewhere that's mainly Chinese, we can't read the menu, so we're like okay, can you give us an English menu? And they usually look at us, like what? And then they comment to us in Chinese, they're like you can't read Chinese? So, I'm not comfortable with them but they do expect we can read it at least so they kind of make fun of us or mock us in a way when we actually try to order, so we are looking at the pictures and try to point to it. (Emma, English Teacher, Interview, May 21, 2013)

However, for other two Chinese-Canadian English teachers and one Chinese-British English teacher who participated in the interviews, the language is not an issue as they are able to communicate in Chinese with the locals. For Caucasian English teachers, regardless of where they come from, the language of communication is not seen as a barrier for them because English is widely spoken and understood in Hong Kong. Amanda explains:

I haven't found the language to be a barrier because most of the co-teachers speak fairly good English, up to a level that you could communicate with quite easily. And outside of the school, and just out in Hong Kong in general I think they've had, there's been so much Western influence here, compared with maybe China. So I think there's a lot, you know most of the people here speak a certain level of English so that's not a barrier. (Amanda, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013)

In Amanda's view, not only is the language spoken not seen as a barrier, but it is a bridge to bring cultures together. Coming from the United Kingdom, Amanda's commented on how the English language brings Hong Kong closer to the Western cultures. She explains:

I think the language does bring the cultures together. In Hong Kong, because from what I've understood from being here, since they are not part of the British government anymore, there is a lot of the Hong Kong people [who] are very proud to be from Hong Kong, to [be] Hong Kong Chinese, and not [Chinese] from mainland China. So I feel that maybe the Hong Kong people are more inclined to be more proud of the western [culture] as their English language compared to being linked with [the West] more than China. So I think there are definitely more similarities between Hong Kong Chinese people and the West. Because all the roads in Hong Kong have got English signs, most of the shops have English signs; the only difficulty is with taxi drivers [laugh], when you can't say it in Chinese. (Amanda, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013)

Since all administrative participants are fluent in both Chinese (Cantonese) and in English, none of them described the language as a factor that contributes to the cultural differences between Canadian and Hong Kong citizens. Instead, because of its British influence as well as the lifestyle choices, many Hong Kong families have maids or domestic helpers living in the house when they have young children. Many maids or domestic helpers come from Philippines where English is also widely used, so some Hong Kong children are exposed to the English language environment at home. Therefore, children's ability to understand and communicate in English is seen as a help for Canadian study abroad students or English teachers to quickly build relationships with children at the host organization. As a principal, Deb explains:

Because [of] Hong Kong students'[children's] family backgrounds, usually they have maids [at home]. Their communication language is Cantonese, of course, but about half [could also] speak English because they work together with the overseas helpers. So the children, they do have a basic knowledge of English. So I think it's easier to adapt with the Western teachers. This is a benefit and an easy way to let [Canadian study abroad] students get used to their environment, because they can communicate with the young child. (Deb, Administrator, Interview, May 20, 2013)

Regardless of their ethnicity and their ability to speak English and/or Chinese languages, the English teachers feel they are highly respected by Hong Kong parents when they teach at the host organization. In the interviews, many participants have also recognized that the work environments as well as the work expectations are different between Canada and Hong Kong.

Work environment and authority. There are many cultural differences in the work environment and in authority between Canada and Hong Kong that were mentioned by both the administrators and the English teachers. Cherie believes that the lack of social security for retirement has contributed to the hardworking environment in Hong Kong and he explains:

Hong Kong people tend to work harder or [are] more committed to their work. Canadian people to me, I think they do have a balance between work and life. The Hong Kong people, especially when you are in some sort of managerial position, Hong Kong people tend to give up their private lives for the work...because the norm here is that, if you are a managerial person, your usual working hours are much longer. So, that's the working environment in Hong Kong. Also, in Hong Kong, you have to fight for your career path, because there's no social security here to retire. (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013)

In the Hong Kong culture, authority is highly respected and often unchallenged. Therefore, there are different views on authority as many English teachers do not interact with authority as most Chinese staff would at the host organization. The different communication styles reflect different cultural understandings and expectations in the work environment. Emily reflected on how different the Chinese staff and Canadian teachers express their opinions, "for the Eastern one (staff), they are more reserved and they never voice out what they think. For the Canadians, they would tell you what they want" (Emily, Administrator, Interview, May, 9, 2013). Amanda also observed the different ways that Chinese teachers communicate with the authority at the host organization and she noted that:

In the working environment, the difference is that you're not freely spoken to especially like people who are higher than you...I think for Chinese teachers, I feel [that] they have more respect [for the authority], and they just respect that there are differences, whereas I think that the authority here make the Westerners feel like they can speak to them more freely and on a sort-of equal level compared to the Chinese teachers. (Amanda, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013)

The expectations for English teachers to communicate openly with those in positions of authority at the host organization illustrated the cultural differences in communication with respect to authority between the Hong Kong culture and the Western cultures.

Family relationships and parenting styles. For many English teachers, one of the differences between the two cultures is the family relationships. Hong Kong people are seen as more family oriented or close-knit than Canadians. Tania believes that the Hong Kong people are "more family oriented than Canadians and they really look out for their family" (Tania, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013). Drawing on her own experience growing up in a Chinese

family in Canada, Emma feels that the family relationships have changed based on her observations of the children and their families in her classroom and she notices that:

Well because I grew up in a Chinese family and my father's side is in Vancouver, we have a family kind of bond there. So in Hong Kong too, you can see a lot of family bonds. But I've noticed also lately, because, from my kids, a lot of that kind of traditional family, family first kind of thing is kind of going away because of work, where a lot of the parents are working for their child to get an education...from what I've seen in the classroom (cause that's where I am most of the time), a lot of the parents aren't there for their child as my parents were for me. So from my experience that's what I see, a lot of [parents] pushing their child to do more extra-curricular [activities] and making sure that they get into a good school. So, that's a major difference. (Emma, English Teacher, Interview, May 21, 2013)

The differences in family relationships and parenting styles are also reflected in the divergent views on children and childhood between the Canadian and Hong Kong culture. The insights that the participants shared regarding their views of children and childhood in Hong Kong are explored in the next section.

The perceptions of cultural similarity between Canada and Hong Kong. Many participants believe that the host culture and the sending culture are very different and that the similarities are difficult to find between an Eastern and a Western culture. However, a few participants believe that the similarity that enables Hong Kong Chinese and English teachers from the western countries to work together at the host organization is their passion to teach and to work with children. Emily believes that "both the [English and Chinese] teachers work very hard...and they will try their best to teach in class. I think this is a similarity" (Emily,

Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013). Reflecting on her experience as a Chinese teacher, Kate agrees that, "I think both of us [Chinese teachers and English teachers] are serious about teaching, serious to what we are designing, to what we are thinking to do in this system" (Kate, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013). As an English teacher, Vera also shares a similar view, "we want to see the kids do well. We want them to adjust, be adjusted and balanced, and I think that both sides should want that too" (Vera, English Teacher, Interview, May 22, 2013).

The attitudes towards work and the professionalism displayed in the workplace are also recognized as one of the similarities between Canadian and Hong Kong people. Cherie describes:

I think Canadian and also Hong Kong people, they are very serious about being something, [and] they want to achieve something. That is similar. Also I think the Canadian people respect others, like Hong Kong people- we do respect others. That is similar. The attitude [of] seriousness, I think that's a similarity and I think Hong Kong people are also like Canadian people [who] are humble...I think also, Hong Kong people have some sort of western kind-of thinking. That may be another similarity. (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013)

It seems that dedication and commitment to teaching, as well as the passion to work with young children connect the host staff and Canadian study abroad students and to respect each other at the host organization. Regardless of the differences in their perceptions of the two cultures, the teachers and staff want to provide an environment that is the best for Hong Kong children to learn and grow. However, the environment for Hong Kong children to grow in is also shaped by many social, cultural and economic factors in Hong Kong. Further exploration of the interview participants' views on children and childhood in Hong Kong help shed some light on these factors.

4.2.3 The views of children and childhood in Hong Kong.

The expectations for children in Hong Kong. In the last few decades, Hong Kong has enjoyed strong economic growth in the region, and parents' attitudes towards their children's education have also changed. As Hong Kong parents believe that children who attend kindergarten are better prepared and stand a better chance to be admitted into the elite primary schools, their attitudes toward early childhood education have changed. As Cherie explains:

In recent years, they [parents] change a little bit on their views [of ECE], and on the importance of ECE. One of the key turning points as I mentioned is because about 10 years ago, we have [introduced] the DSS schools, the Direct Subsidy Schemed schools and also the private schools. During these 10 years, more and more elite schools, they changed to either private or DSS schools. The parents understand that if their child wants to get a good education, they have to put more emphasis on their kindergarten years or on the preschool years, so that they've changed the attitude towards the ECE. That [ECE] is becoming more important. In fact in the past one or two years, they even put their child to those playgroups starting from one year [old] because now getting into a good kindergarten is not easy. So we're [experiencing the pressure that is] going down from primary education. (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013)

In the interviews, some participants spoke at length to explain the education system in Hong Kong and its impact on the host organization's teaching and administrative operations. As a principal, Ann sees the increasing demands from parents to prepare kindergarten children for the P1 selection process and she explains, "if parents prefer to get into a better primary school, then they have to get into an interview for admission, that's why we have to prepare for them [for the P1 interview]" (Ann, Administrator, Interview, May 20, 2013).

Many participants, especially the Chinese staff members, agree that education is considered to be the most important gift that parents can give to their children in the Hong Kong culture. When asked why Chinese parents want to send their children to the elite primary schools with fees instead of going to the government or government aided schools that are free, Cherie explains:

In fact the Hong Kong people, if they can afford to, they will give the best education to their child. They will spend their every penny [to send their child to the best school], so the school fee is not the major concern to them...maybe this is another cultural kind-of thing because Chinese people, they really want the best in terms of education for the child. So, for those parents who suppose they [their children] have a better chance to be accepted by those top universities, [for example], if you graduated from Hong Kong University, then probably you stand a better chance to be employed by those big companies. (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013)

The pressure coming from the *Primary One Admission System* has been felt not only by the parents who want the best primary education for their children, but also by the kindergarten teachers and staff who are conscious of the requirements of P1 interviews and who are expected to prepare young children to perform successfully at the interview so they can be admitted to an elite primary school. Since most of the criteria used for the P1 interview and selection at these elite schools are academically focused, it significantly impacts the curriculum and teaching methods used in the Hong Kong kindergartens. For teachers, many of them felt torn between what they believe is the best teaching practice with young children and what they have to do to get the children into the elite primary schools.

Many participants mentioned that the expectations for children to perform and to achieve at a young age have shaped the education system in Hong Kong to be academic-based and outcome driven. However, the expectations for children are also shaped by other social and cultural factors, including family structures, parenting styles, parents' beliefs and their views of teachers in their child's education. Also, the influence of other parents has fueled the competitiveness, not only amongst the parents, but also between the children. Kate shares her view on the competitiveness and pressures from Hong Kong parents for young children, as she describes, "I think Hong Kong parents see the children as their future, the *parents'* [emphasis added] future, so most of the time the parents wish their children to have a good future, good career and make a lot of money in the future, and it is very competitive" (Kate, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013). Not only do Hong Kong parents compare their child with others, but children are also conscious of where they stand amongst their peers. As parents become more educated, the Hong Kong families tend to have fewer children with a better economy to support children's education. The changing family structure in Hong Kong also impacts how children behave and interact with teachers at school.

According to the interview participants, many Hong Kong families have fewer children than did the previous generations, and many have only one child because of the parents' choice, the economic pressures and the expectations to provide for their children. Many families rely on domestic helpers or grandparents to look after the children in pre-primary years, as both parents need to work in order to provide the financial support for education, health and retirement needs. It seems that Hong Kong parents are investing in their children from a very young age, because they would give everything to the child so the child will have a good life in the future. Thus,

parents seldom discipline their children because they want their children to appreciate the love they have given to them.

In the interviews, the English teachers and Chinese staff expressed different views on the affection and discipline that Chinese parents displayed toward children. For Chinese staff, it seems that the concern for children's health and well-being is the highest priority for Hong Kong parents and teachers. Many Hong Kong participants explained why Hong Kong parents are so concerned about hygiene and keeping their children clean when they are at schools. Emily explains:

[There are] different expectations towards their hygiene [from English and Chinese teachers]. Also they [parents] were saying you [children] cannot kiss the other people, because sometimes they [children] would be very happy, and some of the kids, they kissed each other [laugh]. The western teachers will think, well they are so lovely. But we [the Chinese staff] will ask them [children] to stop, [because] you cannot do this [kissing each other]. I think just hug is OK...but we don't encourage that. (Emily, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013)

The concerns of hygiene and discouraging children's expression of affection through kisses or touch seem to leave an impression of being strict, stern and unaffectionate when Chinese teachers interact with children. However, the respect for teachers from Chinese parents is very high in the Hong Kong culture. Speaking from a Chinese teacher's perspective, Kate explains, "Because parents hope their children can be more academic...how to teach all depends on the teacher and the school curriculum, [and parents also expect teachers to know] how to teach me to teach my kids...so the teacher's role is very important" (Kate, Administrator, Interview, May 9,

2013). As a Canadian English teacher, Vera has discovered that the respect and expectations for teachers are very different between Hong Kong and Canada and she notes:

Parents, once they find out that you are a teacher; then it's so different. They look at [the teacher] not like a human, you are like an angel [so] that you can guide my children in every way, not just academics but also life skills. They really rely on that teacher to help with discipline. (Vera, English Teacher, Interview, May 22, 2013)

Not only do Hong Kong children take their teacher's advice seriously, but their parents also frequently seek guidance on parenting issues from their child's teachers. The respect and trust that Chinese parents place in their child's teachers have made some English teachers feel both honoured and sometimes uncomfortable to provide parenting advice that they do not have much experience with.

For many English teachers, the first impression that they have of the children in the host organization is related to discipline. Susan reflects on her experiences and explains:

I've taught in schools or observed in schools, in kindergartens in UK, and the difference [between Hong Kong and UK] is completely and dramatically different. [In the UK, children] they're still kind of almost crawling around playing, and playing is the main thing. Well, and then I came to Hong Kong, the difference is that they are kind of being taught or trained. When they line up, they have to line up right in a straight line and then stand up very straight, properly. The discipline is I think the major thing [difference] as an example...I asked [the Canadian student teachers] what was your first impression when you came to this school? And they said the discipline. That's the first thing they said, which was exactly what I thought when I first came. So children here, I'm just going to summarize, that adults expect more from children in terms of their behavior, in terms

of their thinking, their ability to achieve or do things. So that is the main difference between Hong Kong and the West. (Susan, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013)

The views on childhood in Hong Kong. Because the participants work with pre-primary aged children, many of them expressed their concerns about the lack of childhood for young children in Hong Kong. For many English teachers, the most important aspect of childhood is the opportunity for children to engage in free play, and to socialize with their peers in unstructured environments. Some Hong Kong participants agree that children in Hong Kong do not play much in unstructured environments. In fact, formal learning has become the normal childhood that most Hong Kong children are accustomed to. Because children who spend their weekdays at the host organization are engaged in a structured learning environment, some English teachers are concerned about the lack of play, especially the outdoor play for the Hong Kong children.

Although many participants, including the Hong Kong staff and English teachers, have expressed their concerns about the lack of free play in early years for young children in Hong Kong, the children seem to be happy coming to school to learn every day. Susan believes that Hong Kong children appear to be happy with their learning because they do not have any comparisons with other children who may have different childhood experiences; therefore, coming to schools for a formal education at a young age is an expected norm for many children in Hong Kong. As a principal, Ann believes that the reason why children are happy and enjoy learning in the school is because the learning environments at school have been carefully set up to respond to the children's needs. However, Ann also expressed concerns about parents' high expectations by overloading children with extracurricular activities after school.

The English teachers also agreed that Hong Kong children seem to enjoy learning in a structured environment. Amanda echoed Ann's comments and she thought that children enjoy

learning at school, but that the children's extracurricular activities after school may deprive them of the opportunity for free play. Also, Lucy commented on the English curriculum, such as phonics, that Hong Kong children were introduced to that seems to engage the children and let them have fun while learning. Also, the children seem to have a genuine interest in learning despite many adults feeling that they do not play enough.

It seems that all 16 interview participants agree that the expectation of what young children are capable of and how children spend their childhood are largely influenced by the social and cultural factors, including the educational policies, economic development and cultural expectations in the Hong Kong society. With parents' changing attitudes towards ECE and the strong emphasis on preparation for primary education, the academic-focused and outcome driven approaches that the host organization has adapted seem to contradict the play-based learning and other approaches used in many western countries.

By examining the participants' understanding of different approaches used when working with young children in Hong Kong, five themes emerged from the participants' responses: (1) the focus of ECE is formal education; (2) teaching also emphasizes children's behaviours and mannerisms; (3) play is not valued as much as academic performance; (4) there are many constraints in learning environments; (5) there are commonalities among different approaches in ECE. These approaches to early childhood education and the five themes are explored in detail in the following section.

The approaches to early childhood education in Hong Kong. The approaches to working with young children in early childhood at the host organization often contradict what Canadian study abroad students have been taught and many English teachers are accustomed to in their home countries. The themes emerged in this study illustrate the participants' views on

different approaches to early childhood education in the social and cultural contexts of Hong Kong.

The focus of ECE is formal education. Unlike in many western countries where the focus of early childhood education consists of not only educating but also caring for children's emotional and social development, the early childhood education in Hong Kong *primarily* focuses on the education component. Many interview participants, especially the Hong Kong staff members, view their organization as a pre-primary school offering formal education to children from as early as age 2. They believe that the early start of formal education for young children has demonstrated that children are capable of learning at higher levels.

Many Hong Kong staff shared their beliefs that young children are capable of learning and following instructions in formal schooling at a very young age. The competitiveness of the P1 interviews for the elite primary schools has also pushed many children to demonstrate their cognitive, language and perhaps aesthetic abilities beyond what many Western English teachers would expect for children of the same age group in their home countries. The expectations for children to follow instructions and to produce the desired academic outcomes seem to put a lot of pressures on both teachers and children.

In formal schooling, some English teachers have suggested that the pressure and expectations for children to do well does not only come from parents, but also evolves with the culture that demands its young citizens to try hard and do well. In order to perform well at the P1 interviews, the children are expected to not only demonstrate their academic performance, but also to display appropriate behaviours and mannerisms when interacting with the interviewers. Therefore, the emphases on children's behaviours and mannerisms are incorporated into the curriculum and in daily routines for pre-primary children in Hong Kong.

Teaching also emphasizes children's behaviours and mannerisms. The expectations for children's behaviours and mannerisms are not only firmly rooted in the Hong Kong culture, but also are strongly reinforced by the parents and teachers who want the children to be successful in P1 interviews so they will be on route to a good education and perhaps to a good life later on. Therefore, these behavioural expectations are incorporated into the delivery of the curriculum as well as in the daily routines when children are expected to follow the rules throughout the day, and the teachers are expected to reinforce the rules whenever necessary.

In the host organization, children are expected to line up properly and to use proper manners when meeting people who are older than they are or who are in the authority positions. Realizing the importance of behavioural expectations for Hong Kong children, Vera reflected her attitude changes, and explained:

Because you're in this Kindergarten, you see, [children are] lining up properly, pushing the chairs, but does that get you into a really great primary school? Okay, perhaps. But then does that help you along in life? Is it so important that you must stop 8 times to say goodbye to 8 different teachers? And how is that going to [help them] really? Little things like that where we will never focus on it in Canada, [but] that is very important here. And so that was something that my student teacher had asked me, is this important? And I actually took a step back and I said, if you had asked [me] 3 months ago I would have said no. I would have thought this was silly, this is a waste of time, but now, understanding this whole interview process for K3 and P1, yes it is important. As silly as this whole...it is important. It's important for this culture. It's important for them to move along into good schools. (Vera, English Teacher, Interview, May 13, 2013)

It seems that both academic performance and behavioural expectations are the foci of the curriculum for kindergarten children in Hong Kong. When asked about how play is valued and incorporated into the kindergarten curriculum and its implementation at the host organization, the feedback from the interview participants illustrates not only different attitudes towards play, but also the reality of teaching and delivering the curriculum in Hong Kong.

Play is not valued as much as academic performance. When comparing the kindergarten curriculum in Hong Kong and Canada, all interview participants agreed that the Hong Kong curriculum is academically focused and outcome driven, whereas Canadian curriculum focuses more on the learning processes. Flora shares her view that:

I think for education, Hong Kong is very academic-based. They teach this because they want to achieve this by the end of the school term. It's more the outcome [driven as] they're more interested in outcome. But in Canada they're more focused on the learning process, so they will really take the time for children to have more time to elaborate and to teach the concept. [In Hong Kong], you need to finish this concept by this week, and next week they need to move on to another concept. (Flora, English Teacher, Interview, May 16, 2013)

Also, the attitudes towards play have changed as Hong Kong parents compete with each other trying to send their children to elite schools at a young age. As the child's academic performance is highly valued in the interview and selection process, play is often seen as a waste of learning time by many parents in Hong Kong. Also, children are very busy, as their days are packed with learning activities during school hours, as well as extracurricular activities after school. For many parents, extracurricular activities are considered as play and enjoyment for children because they are not learning academic subjects such as language and mathematics. When asked

why parents put their children into many extracurricular activities after school, Flora explains that getting the extracurricular activity certificates will help children to demonstrate additional skills they have acquired and to increase their chances for good education and good career in the future when competing with their peers.

Although parents may not view play as a valuable component for children's growth and development, the teachers who are trained as professionals understand the importance of play in children's development, especially in the early years. When asked how play is incorporated into the curriculum, Emily agrees that children do not have much time to free play. As a principal, Nikki believes that children get some time to play as the curriculum at the host organization provides about 20 minutes per half day for children to engage in gross motor activities or have choices in play. Some teachers also agree that play is incorporated into the curriculum as children learn the academic subjects through play. Unlike Canada, where play is seen as the opportunity for children to make their own choices and to explore the environment, children's play in Hong Kong is seen as structured and purposeful during the school hours. For many teachers, when children are playing with toys or manipulatives, the teachers have to assess the children's skills by observing how children play with materials and how they interact with each other.

Both the administrators and the English teachers recognized the importance of play for young children, especially in the pre-primary years. However, the host organization faces the constant pressures from parents who want teachers to devote their time entirely to academic teaching. Although the host organization has tried to educate parents and to help them understand the importance of play, Emily thinks that the methods used are not effective. The host organization needs to not only follow the government regulations, but also there are many

constraints for the administration and operation of a bilingual kindergarten, including the half day structure for classes, the class sizes, parents' concerns for hygiene, limited space for indoor and outdoor activities and so on.

There are constraints in learning environments. When comparing the approaches to early childhood education in Canada and Hong Kong, Nancy noticed a few constraints that do not allow the host organization to adapt a western approach in the Hong Kong environments and she explained:

In Canada there are a lot of natural places , parks and everything, they just let the children go and play and run, where in Hong Kong, you can see that in our centers, we are all indoors and even though we call it a playground it's small, and children take turns [to play in the playground]. Also, in Canada I know all of the centers are [offering] full day [programs]. In Hong Kong, we don't have a full day [program]. It's in just one of our centers that we have full-day classes, but just two full-day classes only. Why? Because first of all, the regulations to set up a full day kindergarten rather than half day kindergarten are different, [it requires] a lot of set up like for the sleeping area and we need to take care of the meals, it's very complicated. So that's why I think in Hong Kong, you [the parents] send your child for only half day, and in the three hours, we just focus on their learning. (Nancy, Administrator, Interview, May 14, 2013)

Speaking from an English teacher's perspective, Lucy believes that her teaching is constrained by the large class size (approximately 30 children per class) as well as by the limited teaching time when working with a group of pre-primary children every day. Emma also agrees because of the large class sizes in Hong Kong, her teaching methods, especially her discipline methods, are different from teaching in her home country - Canada. "The way that I would manage a class

here is totally different from what I would do at home [in Canada]. So, if you do to go to my class and I raise my voice, or I'm trying to give warnings to a child, it's different from what I would do back home, because the class size is different" (Emma, English Teacher, Interview, May 21, 2013)

Many interview participants shared Hong Kong parents' concern of children's hygiene at school, as well as its impact on the curriculum planning and delivery at the host organization. The concerns about hygiene have also reflected a deep worry about children's health and safety from Hong Kong parents. As many families have only one child, how to help children stay healthy and keep them safe during the school hours are the top priorities for teachers and administrators at the host organization. Therefore, there are environmental constraints that prevent teachers from fully implementing the curriculum due to the factors that may pose a risk for children's health or safety in the environment such as weather, lack of physical outdoor space, mosquitoes and so on.

There are commonalities when working with young children. Despite many differences in approaches to early childhood education between Canada and Hong Kong, some English teachers feel that they have learned some good strategies that may complement their own teaching when they return to their home countries. Having witnessed the outcomes of high expectations placed on young children in Hong Kong, Amanda reflects on her experience working with children in England, and she now believes that a combined approach may work better for children. She explains:

I think in Hong Kong the children, particularly from my experience in the pre-nursery, a lot is expected of them and there's more of a focus on discipline. Maybe compared to England and Canada, children at the age of two and three aren't expected to sit down and

listen to a twenty minute lesson, whereas here the children are expected to do that, and the fact that they can do that makes me think sometimes maybe in England and Canada people don't expect enough from the children. At the same time I think [that] children here, they don't have much opportunity to play and develop through that [play]. But I've been surprised with how much a two year old knows and can do, just from them having a little bit more pressure on them from a little bit earlier age. But there's so much competition out here with what schools to get in, so there's a lot of pressure put on the child from very early on. (Amanda, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013)

Through the exploration of participants' views on children and childhood in Hong Kong, the participants provided detailed explanations not only on the current kindergarten and primary education system in Hong Kong, but also on the pressures that come from the *Primary One Admission System* and from parents who want to send their children to good primary schools. Despite most participants recognize that there are many differences between the Canadian and Hong Kong culture, they also realize that many social and cultural factors have contributed to the construct of a unique environment they are currently living and working in.

In summary, the participants reflected on their personal experiences either as administrators or English teachers and shared their views on working with young children in Hong Kong, which were influenced by many social and cultural factors including family structures, parenting styles, parents' beliefs on teaching and learning, and expectations on children and their teachers. As professionals who work in the field of early childhood education, the participants also critically examined the approaches to ECE in the Hong Kong context and identified the key issues as well as the constraints in the curriculum when teaching pre-primary children at the host organization. The emerging themes illustrated the participants' cultural

perceptions and personal values in specific social, cultural and historical contexts when working with young children in Hong Kong. The understanding of participants' cultural backgrounds, their perceptions of Canadian and Hong Kong cultures and their views of children and childhood provides the fundamental information in order to identify the connections between people's perceptions and their experiences when working with the Canadian sending institution and the study abroad students.

4.3 Category 2: The Perceptions of the International Partnership

The findings related to the perceptions of the international partnership are based on the personal reflections from the one-on-one interviews, as well as from the collective sharing in three focus group meetings. According to the literature, there are three main stages of partnership development: the initiation, implementation and sustaining stages. Therefore, the findings for this area are discussed based on the participants' experiences and perceptions of different stages of the partnership. The participants' experiences with the partnership were also limited or shaped by the professional role of each participant at the host organization. Neither the English teachers nor the Chinese teachers were directly involved when the partnership was first established. However, as a host to the Canadian study abroad students, the English and Chinese teachers shared a *general* impression of the partnership and its impact on their roles at the host organization. On another hand, most of the administrators had direct experiences with the partnership, either by working directly with the Canadian sending institution, or by being involved in the decision making body of school executive committee (SEC) at the host organization.

Based on the interview data, the host administrators shared a positive impression of the Canadian sending institution. The positive perception of Canadian culture, as well as the first

impression of the Canadian sending institution, seemed to help the host organization make the decision to commit to the partnership with a Canadian institution. Cherie comments:

We always find that Canada is multicultural and it's easier to work with [Canadians]... So we are a small, it's easy for us to communicate...I have had sometimes not a very good experience in the past with those Americans and according to my experience, they are less flexible to adapt to local cultures. And for British, maybe it's because, they have been here [Hong Kong] for a hundred years and they have been here to take the leadership and lead Hong Kong people. So, they have the attitude, seeing Hong Kong people are a little bit on the lower ground. That's our experience and that's my perception on Canadians. (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013)

From the host members' perspectives, the cultural perceptions and the first impression of the partner are two important factors that influence the host administrators' decision on whether or not to pursue a partnership with an institution abroad. Also, there are other organizational and cultural factors that contribute to developing a partnership with an overseas institution that trains the English-speaking early childhood educators.

4.3.1 The initiation of the partnership.

The motivation and purpose of the partnership. When both the administrators and the English teachers were asked about the purposes of the partnership, many believed that the partnership would help the host organization hire new English teachers or identify potential English teachers who might consider teaching at the host organization after completing one month practicum in Hong Kong. According to Nancy, this was the original purpose for the host organization, as it was hoping to hire quality English teachers who are trained to work with

young children in the preschool years by establishing a partnership with the ECE program at a Canadian institution. Nancy explains:

At that moment [beginning] we thought, from this international program [partnership], we want to recruit teachers from Canada, from your institution or other institutions. At that moment, we thought is a pretty good way because first of all, the students can come to our school and then they know that there are cultural differences. But through this program, they have the opportunity to be here and then find out whether it's suitable for them [to teach at the host organization] or not. So at that moment it was, for our organization, the main purpose why we want to have this international program. (Nancy, Administrator, Interview, May 14, 2013)

Since the partnership was established in 2009, the host organization has hosted more than thirty Canadian ECE students from the Canadian sending institution for placement, but only three had returned to teach at the host organization after graduation. Many participants agreed that the recruitment of new English teachers through this partnership had not been realized at the host organization. Although the original purpose was not realized, Cherie believed that this partnership had benefited everyone involved and that it might eventually help the host organization to realize its original goal of hiring quality English teachers from Canada. As he explains:

We want to keep this relationship because we feel that by doing this, we can help provide some opportunities for some non-Hong Kong people [so] that they can explore their venture here in Hong Kong. So I think, offering the practicum opportunities to the students [from Canada] by itself, is meaningful. It's meaningful to the ECE because I observed that most of the Canadian students, once they've been here they have opened

their eyes and their minds, and said that oh, it's so different. It's so different here, and most of them, they understand there's no good and bad. We are different. We are living in different places so education is different. So that by itself drives us to carry on with this scheme. Also because the institution is a large tertiary institution in Canada, we want to have some sort-of input from the institute, so we want to explore more how we can benefit each other. We want to have more [teachers], because for the diploma students, usually they will finish their diploma and then they go to university for the ECE degree, but we hope to keep contact with them. So, eventually maybe we have a pool that's large enough, or maybe eventually we want to extend our connection with them, so every year maybe one or two, two or three of them may be interested to come back. So that's my perception or my expectations. (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013)

Over the years, this partnership has evolved from its original purpose of hiring English teachers. From the perspectives of the administrators, the English teachers and the Chinese teachers, the partnership serves many other purposes that have benefited the host organization. Many participants shared Cherie's comments and believed that the purposes of this partnership include: (1) helping the host organization identify potential employees or hire English teachers directly from the Canadian students who completed their placement at host organization; (2) providing the opportunities and experiences for Canadian study abroad students to teach and work outside of their home country; (3) providing opportunities for the staff at host organization to exchange ideas with Canadian students and to learn from each other; (4) helping children and parents be open and change their attitudes towards different cultures and races; and, (5) communicating internationally by building the partnership with a post-secondary institution overseas. Based on

the participants' responses, there were also cultural factors that influenced the host organization's decision to initiate this international partnership with a Canadian institution.

The cultural factors that influenced the partnership. Unlike Canada, as a country of immigrants from around the world, people in Hong Kong are homogeneous ethnic Chinese with a unique history and culture. For many Hong Kong parents, the English teachers were perceived mostly as Caucasians from the UK when Hong Kong was ruled by the British government for about one hundred years. Although there are now many foreign nationalities working in Hong Kong, the majority of Hong Kong children do not have opportunities to meet or to interact with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The partnership not only brings more English-speaking teachers to the host organization, but also exposes the children and staff to teachers with different skin colours who come from different ethnic backgrounds, which represent the multicultural reality of Canada. For many children and parents that the host organization serves, the partnership has helped change their attitudes from rejecting teachers of different skin colours to becoming more acceptable to the different races and cultures. A few participants shared their observations of this attitude change over the years. As a principal, Nikki shared her experience that:

I remember one of the teacher students before, she is not like you and me, her skin color is different [black]. So I remember the little children, they felt scared. They talk to their [Chinese] teacher, “she is dirty”. [Because] they don't see much [of people with different skin colours] especially in the school, that's why [they made that comment]. [The partnership] is good, I mean for our students to know different people, and to learn that people, they are different. (Nikki, Administrator, Interview, May 15, 2013)

During the focus group meeting, a Chinese teacher, Sandra, also shared a similar story of how children reacted to an English-speaking teacher who wore hijab and she explained:

I don't have a practicum teacher in my classroom this year. I had one last year. However, the practicum teacher from last year wasn't the traditional sense of [English teacher], how you say...her dress and skin colour is not what we usually see that kind. It seems to be from a country I can't tell, that from where people's head is wrapped in a scarf. The children were surprised at the beginning, perhaps a little scared, too. They didn't want to speak to her at first, but later, when they found out that she spoke English and her temper was the same, then slowly, they begin to talk more. They asked her a lot of questions, but the questions were quite different from those they asked an ordinary English teacher. The questions are mostly where you are from and what differences between yours and our country. This is not the same as the former English teacher we had before. So for the children, they think this one was not an English teacher at the beginning, because they feel this one looks different from other teachers. But gradually they began to accept that she is the English teacher, and at the end, they think she is a special teacher. (Sandra, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

Hong Kong parents also react to the non-Caucasian English teachers that the host organization hires. Since the establishment of this partnership, the administrators and the Chinese teachers have noticed the attitude changes from children and parents who have seen and interacted with many English-speaking teachers who are non-Caucasians from Canada. Kate believes that the partnership helps the host organization become more international and she explains:

I think Hong Kong is not international enough, but it is getting better. When I first came here [the host organization] about 7 years ago, I taught a class of 2 years old. At that

time, our children were afraid of my [teaching] partner, the English teacher, because she looks different...But now, I taught the 2 years old again last year, they are not afraid, not any more. Perhaps they have already seen foreigners before, so I think there are differences...we need to be international, so the children shouldn't be afraid of the skin colors. If you don't accept the person based on the first impression, but you can accept him once you get to know the person. For children, it is learning opportunity too. (Kate, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013)

Nikki agrees, and as a principal, she has witnessed that parents begin to accept non-Caucasian English teachers and feel comfortable for their children to interact with Canadian study abroad students. She believes that:

Actually I think it [the partnership] is one more opportunity to open our door to accept something different from other countries. Also it will let parents know that we're open, and allow our students, our little children, to meet different friends. If we invite more different [races] teachers and students into our school to [introduce to] the parents and children, they will have different things to learn. (Nikki, Administrator, Interview, May 15, 2013)

Many parents have recognized the importance of English for their children's education and future careers in Hong Kong. The Chinese/English bilingual model used at the host organization, the parents' demand for high quality English teachers, the desire to become more open and more international are some of the cultural factors that perhaps drove the host organization to seek an international partnership with an oversea institution. From an organizational point of view, the development of this partnership was primarily driven by the needs to hire high quality English teachers from a pool of Canadian study abroad students who come to the host organization for

placement. Although the original purpose had not been fully realized, many participants believed the partnership would help attract other Canadians who might consider teaching in Hong Kong.

Sarah explains:

I think because every year there are students coming in for the practicum, they will bring their ideas and we will tell the students from Canada so they will know more about our school. Also it [the partnership] has the purpose, to attract more people to come and they're willing to work in Hong Kong. I think, they [the candidates] will think [the host organization] is good because a Canadian student has come to do a practicum before. So I think [the Canadian students] bring the message to their friends. Because I think the Canadian people may be not very familiar with Hong Kong kindergartens, they don't know which kindergarten is good or better and how they operate. (Sarah, Administrator, Interview, May 21, 2013)

Also, the development of this partnership has provided opportunities for the host members to work with a post-secondary institution overseas. The success of this partnership has led the host organization using it as a model and trying to develop other partnerships with different institutions. Driven by the demand for more and quality Chinese Putonghua teachers at the host organization, Cherie believes that, "maybe another way is that we may look for establishing some kind of relationship with the Chinese university, so that we can source some of the good Putonghua teachers in a similar way [as the partnership with the Canadian institution]" (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013). In order to manage the human resources and maintain the quality in teaching, the need for hiring quality English teachers is an ongoing issue for the host organization. Nancy believes that although this partnership does not fill the immediate needs

for hiring new English teachers, it is a long term relationship that may help the host organization have access to a pool of quality English teachers who are specialized in ECE in the future.

4.3.2 The implementation of the partnership.

The experience of working with the Canadian sending institution was reported positively by the host staff, especially by the administrators who work closely with the faculty members and administrators at the Canadian sending institution. The support of faculty members to this partnership and their consistent communication seemed to help maintain the relationship between the host organization and the Canadian sending institution. When dealing with the many logistical issues involved in the implementation of the partnership, Nancy commented on the openness and cooperation she received from the Canadian sending institution as she explained:

I think I've mentioned many times that it's easy to communicate with the faculty members, all the people who deal with this program starting from the first time. Even though there are logistics [issues], they [the Canadians] are so cooperative. (Nancy, Administrator, Interview, May 14, 2013)

Sarah also enjoyed her working relationship with the Canadian sending institution and explained:

I think it is a good [partnership]. It's because the institution has given us much support during the arrangement. We needed the help to know how to coordinate all the paperwork [for visas] and how to invite the students to the interviews, so we can [get to] know each other. I think the institution has given us a lot of support. We go through many emails, and the response is very fast. (Sarah, Administrator, Interview, May 21, 2013)

The organizational factors that influence this partnership. When asked what made this partnership successful, the administrators identified the following factors that had influenced this

partnership: (1) both institutes share resources; (2) being open to changes and new ideas from both sides; (3) being supportive and easy to communicate with the personnel at each site; (4) the attitudes from both sides are open and willing to try new things; (5) the opportunity for the host organization to engage in research with the support of Canadian students and with expertise from the faculty members at the Canadian sending institution; and, (6) having the native English teachers at the host organization as a role model for Canadian students to gain international teaching experience in Hong Kong.

It seems that the success of this partnership depends on two important factors: *the personnel at the each side*, and *the resources that each partner shares and contributes to this partnership*. The attitudes, communication styles and their contributions to the field of ECE are the common characteristics shared by the personnel at each side. Emily believes that "the strength is the attitudes from both sides, because both of us are willing to change and willing to try new things"(Emily, Administrator, Focus Group, May 27, 2013). Cherie also shares his reflection on how this partnership has changed from its original purpose and notes:

In retrospect, our original plan was a mechanism to equip the quality teaching [at the host organization]. As I mentioned in the interview, after [hosting the students for] one or two times, we realized that by actually having those students coming to Hong Kong and doing placement in itself, is a rewarding objective, because we can do something good to the ECE field worldwide. I think that we have fulfilled the objectives of this partnership by giving a good experience to the students. (Cherie, Administrator, Focus Group, May 27, 2013)

Also, the resources shared by the partners and the expertise that each partner contributes to the partnership made this partnership successful. Deb commented on having native English teachers

as cooperating teachers who are not only the role models but also provide support for Canadian study abroad students as one of the strengths in human resources at the host organization and she explained:

The strengths from [the host organization] I think is the human resources, because not many Kindergarten have a certain amount of native English teachers [they are also referred to as NAT teachers]. Of course if students come to Hong Kong to do the practicum, they need some teachers to take care of [them] and [to] communicate [with]. So the NAT teachers, they understand about cultural differences, because it's not easy for the students. The [NAT] teachers can share their experience and they can help [by] telling their students what's going on. So I think this is the strength for us. (Deb, Administrator, Focus Group, May 27, 2013)

Kate commented on the resources and expertise that each partner contributed to make this partnership more mature, and she reflected, "In Hong Kong, we have this kind of teacher from another culture to help us to do some research with the children. I don't think many schools have such a mature partnership, so this is our strength" (Kate, Administrator, Focus Group, May 27, 2013). As a principal, Ann also agreed that this partnership has allowed the host organization the opportunity to engage in research with the support from Canadian students and faculty.

The views and values of the partnership. When asked how this partnership is valued at the host organization, all participants agreed that the host organization has allocated resources and put a lot of efforts to ensure the partnership is and will continue to be successful. From a perspective of English teacher, Tania has seen that hosting the Canadian students has become "part of their routine that they have people coming in, so I'm sure they value them" (Tania, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013). Not only did the partnership benefit the

administrative and teaching staff, Nancy also described the indirect benefits for the children and parents at host organization and she said:

We still treasure this partnership and in fact it doesn't give us a lot of problems because of this program. When you have the [Canadian] students placed in the classroom, they help [in the classroom], and they're not giving trouble to the teachers and to the students. Also indirectly, maybe it's beneficial [to children] because they have the opportunity to have an extra English teacher [in class]. Also indirectly it is a good thing for our parents, because every time we would introduce them [the Canadian students] and telling them this year we have so and so, and give them a whole list. For them, of course it is indirect benefit [as] most of the parents will treat us [the host organization] better and be friendlier because of this program. (Nancy, Administrator, Interview, May 14, 2013)

During the focus group meetings, the administrators suggested that they believe that this partnership has helped raise the status of the host organization among other Hong Kong kindergartens because the host teachers and staff are working closely with a Canadian institution. Nancy spoke about this partnership with a pride, "[what is] the most proud for me is [that] we have this project realized. I understand that in Hong Kong not many kindergartens like us have this kind of international partnership. So it is the most proud thing for me" (Nancy, Administrator, Focus Group, May 27, 2013). Having an international partnership adds an international element and helps the host organization stand out from other local kindergartens in Hong Kong. As a principal, Ann describes the impact of the partnership on children and teaching staff at the host organization and she notes that:

I was asked by some principals of other kindergartens. They always ask how you can equip the NAT teachers [the native English teachers]. In the beginning I said we went to

Canada and now we have a partnership with [a] Canadian institute. They [the other principals] quite admired what we have done...Also [for] the teachers and the children we can see that they learned from each other and get along well. We can see, even though they [the Canadian students] are a stranger, a foreigner [to children], they get along well. So I think they [the children] are comfortable [with Canadian students]. (Ann, Administrator, Focus Group, May 27, 2013)

The partnership provides more opportunities for Chinese staff at the host organization to interact with English-speaking study abroad students and to practice their English communication skills as the host organization hopes to become more internationalized. The impacts that this partnership has on individual teachers and their teaching in classrooms are discussed later in this chapter.

4.3.3 The future development of the partnership.

As the host organization has successfully hosted 5 groups of Canadian study abroad students since 2009, the participants identified many benefits as well as some challenges when working with the Canadian sending institution and Canadian study abroad students. During the interviews and focus group meetings, the participants candidly shared their experiences and provided suggestions on how they would like to see the partnership continue to grow in the future. In this section, the findings focus on the benefits and challenges of the partnership, as well as suggestions made regarding the future partnership development.

The benefits of partnership for the host organization. All participants agreed that this partnership brings direct and indirect benefits for everyone involved in it, including the children and parents that the host organization serves, the teachers and staff at host organization, the Canadian study abroad students, and two partners in this partnership. The comments and

feedback from the participants often reflects the different roles and experiences that each participant had with this partnership. Overall, the administrative participants viewed the partnership as an opportunity for Chinese teachers and children to learn English, for the host teachers to take on leadership roles, for the host organization to become more international, for interacting with an institution in Canada, and for increasing manpower in the classroom. The English teachers also saw the benefits of this partnership, as it helps them share their experiences with someone and feel proud to watch Canadian students learn and grow. The Chinese teachers believed that the partnership benefits the children, the teaching staff at the host organization and the Canadian study abroad students.

Providing the learning opportunities for each other. One of the benefits that all participants recognized was that the partnership provided learning opportunities for *everyone* involved. For Sarah, she believes that this partnership helps the local teachers to exchange ideas with Canadian students, so, "it will widen their knowledge. They can see from different perspectives to do a different teaching style. So it's a learning opportunity for our teachers" (Sarah, Administrator, Interview, May 21, 2013). Emma also echoed that the partnership allows people from different cultures to interact with each other and to communicate in different languages, as "there are benefits with having anything that's overseas, and trying to coordinate the time to have people interact with each other; working with different people and communicating in different languages also benefit us" (Emma, English Teacher, Interview, May 21, 2013). For Tania, the partnership offers an opportunity for people from other cultures to experience teaching in Hong Kong. She believes, "one of the benefits definitely is having people from another culture to see what's going on here [in Hong Kong]" (Tania, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013).

Improving teaching quality in the classrooms. Although the original purpose for the partnership was to hire quality English teachers, many participants noticed that the partnership helps improve the quality of teaching in the classrooms at the host organization. Another benefit that the participants recognized is that the partnership helps children interact and practice English communication skills with Canadian study abroad students in the classrooms. As a Chinese teacher, Lola believes:

The biggest benefit is the language skill improvement, because for kindergarten children, they have room for improvement especially in English oral communication at this young age. I think the Canadian students who come to Hong Kong to teach children English with proper pronunciations, so the children have more opportunities to practice [speaking English]. (Lola, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

Since the teaching styles differ significantly between the Chinese teachers and English teachers, the children may benefit from different teaching methods. Lily shared her observation that:

Because Chinese teachers and English teachers have different customs and traditions, so they can share some interesting and fun things and children will like it. For example, today we discussed the transportation theme, so they [the English teacher] brought some pictures from other countries such as the sled pulled by dogs to share [with children]. So they [the children] feel very happy and I feel this way is a very good thing. (Lily, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

The new ideas and different teaching styles that Canadian students bring to the host organization may also help refresh some English teachers' teaching styles and improve the quality of their teaching, as well. As a Chinese teacher, Gloria shares her opinion that:

Some of the English teachers in our school have been teaching with us for a while, so they may have picked up on some of our Chinese teacher's [teaching styles]. In other words, perhaps something they learned in their countries has been changed by us. So when there are new practicum teachers at school, it might help them remember what they learned before, or what they wanted to do in their own ways in teaching, instead of trying to teach like us. It will help them improve their quality of teaching. (Gloria, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

The English teachers also agreed that the Canadian study abroad students help them improve their own teaching in Hong Kong. Tania shared her experience in the focus group meeting and said:

I think the strength is basically there are two different teaching styles. So you're learning the Hong Kong way, and we might have forgotten what's going on in Canada, the way that they teach. So it's kind of a nice little collaboration [with what] they get to bring. The biggest strength is that they get to learn a different sort of teaching method and style, then bring that back to [form] their own style, and maybe combine the two of whatever works for them. (Tania, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Promoting cultural learning at the host organization. One of the benefits that many participants witnessed is the changing attitudes from the Hong Kong children and parents towards different cultures and ethnicities over the years. The Chinese teacher Wanda believes that "the benefit is on the cultural learning, we learn the differences" (Wanda, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013). As an English teacher, Lucy observes:

As you can see, it's a good opportunity for our students [children] to be introduced to people from different countries, especially if they know their teacher is from Canada or

whatever, they can get a better grasp on people coming from different countries. A lot of these children understand the idea of different countries even at a young age, because maybe their parents are in a field where they're traveling a lot or they're pilots or stewardesses. So I think that it's helpful for them and they can meet different people from different backgrounds and different cultures. (Lucy, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013)

During the focus group meeting, the English teachers shared their observations on how children reacted differently to their Chinese teachers and English teachers. As a Chinese English teacher, Susan noticed that "[When] a Caucasian teacher comes in [to the classroom], I've noticed that some children were nervous being with her, but to see that they really have built up the confidence to talk and to play with her, I think that is a good thing" (Susan, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013). Leanne also shared a similar experience that children tend to warm up to Caucasian English teachers much slower than to their Chinese teachers in her classroom and she notes:

Because I teach PN, we have had quite a few Chinese student teachers in our classroom this year. So now we have a Caucasian student teacher in our classroom. You know with the Chinese student teachers, they were fine with them. There were no issues. But when mine, the Caucasian one came in there, there were a few students who were still leery of her, even though they've been with me all year. But they warmed up very fast [to the Caucasian student teacher], and it was a lot faster than they warmed up to me. It took some of them 3 months before they got comfortable around me. But they didn't warm up for her as fast as they did to the other ones, the Chinese teachers. (Leanne, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

The Chinese teachers also observed that children express themselves differently when interacting with teachers from different cultures. Dona shares her experiences and notes that:

The partnership is good for the children to learn different cultures, because Canadian students bring the culture from their country. Also, children learn how to express themselves differently because different nationalities express themselves differently. So the children will learn from different teachers from different countries and they have one more teacher to help them. (Dona, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

Contributing to the field of ECE. Many participants expressed a pride as they believed that their involvement in this partnership has contributed to the preparation of future early childhood educators and to the improvement of the quality and development of ECE field. For some English teachers, being the cooperating teachers who provide the mentorship to Canadian study abroad students added a pride to their own professional practice. Emma feels that "the thing that I'm most proud of is being able to share my experience with someone else, and trying to share what I would do and reflect on how you can and how he can improve"(Emma, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013). Also, watching the Canadian students learn and grow from the beginning to the end of the placement has made Leanne feel proud as a cooperating teacher and she explains:

What I'm most proud of is watching how much they [the Canadian students] change from day one to the end, because the ECE in Canada is a lot different than this school is set up. Canada would be more like, 'I'll learn by play', and here we actually have objectives that we're teaching, so they [the Canadian students] didn't have teaching experience in that capacity when they got here. It [made me proud] just watching how much they pick up

from the first day to the end of the placement. (Leanne, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Tania echoed Leanne's comment. Also, she felt that her feedback and constructive criticism helped the Canadian students grow, "I'm really proud just to see how they've taken those criticisms and adapted them to their lessons; they've just kind of grown" (Tania, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013).

From the administrators' perspectives, the partnership has contributed to the ECE field by providing an opportunity for Canadian students to learn about the culture and working in the ECE field in Hong Kong. The feeling of making an impact on Canadian students and making a contribution to the ECE field has seemed to motivate the host organization to continue with this partnership. Cherie explains:

Another thing I think I'm proud of this partnership arrangement for is the feedback from the Canadian students...most of them, they share [with us] that it's an eye-opening experience and it's a life changing experience for them. It changed their way of seeing things. It changed their attitude, and even their educational value. So that's making me strive to go on with this arrangement. (Cherie, Administrator, Focus Group, May 27, 2013)

The challenges of the partnership. When asked about the challenges of the partnership, both English and Chinese teachers reflected primarily on their experiences interacting with Canadian students as cooperating teachers in the classroom. Therefore, the teachers' experiences will be discussed in the *Category 3* when the impacts of hosting Canadian students on individual's professional lives are explored in details. At the organizational level, the challenges

of implementing this partnership include both the logistic issues and the issues relating to the curriculum delivery at the host organization.

The logistical issues for implementing the partnership. As the host organization has agreed to host up to 12 Canadian study abroad students each year, the concerns of increased workload for the host teachers and staff were raised by the participants in both interviews and focus group meetings. Cherie shares his concerns and explains:

The human resources [to support the partnership] is the cooperating teachers, the supervising principal and some of the HR and Admin staff here, they provide the logistical arrangements like accommodations and visas. Some of those things, apart from the financial resources, take a bit of workload for those people. (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013)

Despite the potential increase in workload for some staff at the host organization, the biggest challenges seem to be the accommodation and budgetary concerns for the host organization as it is a challenge to find suitable accommodations for the Canadian faculty and students each year. Also, the yearly increase of rent in Hong Kong has brought budgetary challenges for the host organization since it provides some financial support for Canadian students and the Canadian sending institution. Nancy believes that the accommodation is the biggest challenge for the host organization and she explains:

For the logistics, of course we need to take care of the visa, which now is not the first time so it's not that difficult as long as we've got all the necessary documents, so it's not that complicated for this part. But it seems [that] it's a bit difficult to find accommodation this year or last year, because the rent in Hong Kong is getting more expensive. (Nancy, Administrator, Interview, May 14, 2013)

Some participants also shared that the support for the partnership has become part of the job for the principals, "because they [the principals] always have the responsibility to help, to recruit more qualified teachers. So they will ask the teacher to support this program. They will assign a teacher to help the practicum students to adapt to this school environment, and get more knowledge of our school structures" (Sarah, Administrator, Interview, May 21, 2013)

The constraints in supporting Canadian students in classrooms. One of the challenges identified in supporting this partnership is to share the physical space with Canadian students in a small classroom. As each class is taught by one or two Chinese (either Cantonese or Putonghua) teachers and one English teacher, adding one extra teacher to a small classroom could be a challenge for the children and all the teachers in the classroom. Tania finds it challenging to share her limited space with a Canadian study abroad student and she claims:

You've got one extra person, I don't want to say a kid, in the room, but you have one extra adult in the room with you in a small classroom...So for me, it is difficult having a student teacher in there, because I'm sharing space [with] her, so that's my only downfall with it. (Tania, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Another challenge is the tight and fast-paced daily schedule for the teachers. Vera explains:

The whole challenge of getting used to this pace [in the teaching schedule] is very demanding. I mean not just for the [Canadian] students. When I was coming here, it took me a while [to get used to]. It's been 10 minutes, okay, [you have to move to] the next lesson. So for the [Canadian] students that are coming, they see this very fast schedule and there's not much flexibility for the scheduling because of the space that we have for the school. We have 8 other classrooms multiplied by 3 teachers for each, then that scheduling includes the toilet time and the play area time, so you really cannot lag

behind. You know our room is shared with not just our room's teachers, but another K2 class uses our room when we're in music or out in the play area, for their circle time. So, it was a challenge to have the student teacher catch up to the pace with me. (Vera, English Teacher, Interview, May 13, 2013)

Due to the tight daily schedule and fast pace of delivering the curriculum, Kate felt that Canadian students did not get the opportunity to be fully engaged in the classroom and she explained:

What I just said for this partnership, one thing we hope to reach is to facilitate the exchange, but in the end, they are the practicum students, they don't participate enough in the classroom. If you want to give them more involvement, it is not working because our courses [schedules] are very tight, [and there are] a lot of things to teach and students need to [be] assessed on so many objectives. So it's difficult, but this is a problem of space, [which] that space is really not enough and this is the challenge. (Kate, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013)

The suggestions for future partnership development. In the one-on-one interviews and focus group meetings, the participants were asked to provide their suggestions on how to improve or continue developing this partnership. Based on the data, four main themes have emerged, which include: (1) facilitating a reciprocal exchange between the host organization and the Canadian institution; (2) improving communication among the English teacher, the Chinese teacher and the Canadian student; (3) preparing Canadian students to know about the Hong Kong educational system and teaching in the host organization before arrival; (4) providing support for English and Chinese teachers who are working closely with Canadian students;

Supporting cultural exchange for Chinese staff. Many participants, especially the Chinese teachers and administrators, suggested that the partnership has provided a great opportunity for

Canadian students to learn the Hong Kong culture. But for many administrative staff and Chinese teachers, they felt that it is important for them to have an opportunity to go to Canada to learn about Canadian approaches to ECE and to understand the cultural context where the Canadian students come from. Kate suggests, "I think we can send our Chinese teachers to Canada to see and to facilitate the exchange. Now we are only hosting the [Canadian] students, we haven't visited them [in Canada]" (Kate, Administrator, Focus Group, May 27, 2013). In the focus group meeting with Chinese teachers, Dona also echoed Kate's suggestion and said:

I feel if there is an opportunity to visit Canadian child care centres and to learn how teachers teach in Canada, it would be great. Then we will know more about the Canadian culture that Canadian students bring, and why they teach that way because they are always different from our Chinese teachers...So perhaps this kind of opportunity can let us learn the differences. (Dona, Chinese Teachers, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

Agreeing with her colleagues about the importance of understanding Canadian culture and Canadian ECE, Lily suggests another way to provide the opportunity for the host organization staff to learn, and she explains:

I don't know how Canadian ECE teachers work in Canada. If there is a documentary or video clip for us to know how teaching is done for a day in Canada, we can better assist or help the students' work if we know the procedures and conditions they come from. (Lily, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

Improving communication among the English teachers, Chinese teachers and the Canadian students. Although the communication between the host organization and the Canadian institution has been efficient, it seems there are many issues regarding how English teachers and Chinese teachers are communicated with respect to their roles when hosting the

Canadian students in classrooms. The English teachers felt that they did not have the opportunity to get to know the Canadian students before they arrived in their classroom. Tania suggests that the English teachers should have "some more time beforehand to meet with the students. Just for a little bit, maybe having some sort of a tea party, or meet and greet" (Tania, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013). As a principal, Ann also agreed that providing time for the English teachers and Canadian students to get to know each other at the beginning would help them build personal connections. She suggests "when the teacher first came in to our campus, if we have a tea gathering beforehand with their cooperating teachers, it would be better because they can free chat and they get used to each other" (Ann, Administrator, Interview, May 20, 2013)

For Chinese teachers, communication was the top issue identified in the focus group meeting. Since the English teacher and Chinese teacher not only share the same classroom, but also coordinate their teaching schedules throughout the day, it is important for the Canadian students to communicate with Chinese teachers. Lola observed that most Canadian students "communicate with English teachers mostly on lessons and teaching, [but] for managing the children or safety issues or other activities, they also communicate with Chinese teachers" (Lola, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013). Also, Gloria points out that:

We [Chinese teachers] all want to know what they [the Canadian students] want or what they want to do. Sometimes when they prepare for some activities, in some ways, we also need time to cooperate with them sometimes. So I think it is important for them to communicate with us. In the classroom, we often have to discuss with the English teacher about the teaching time. Now we have one more teacher in class, so the time is tight. We need to know what they need to do. If we have more information, we can better support them. (Gloria, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

Dona shares her concerns about the communication problems between the Chinese teachers and Canadian students, because "actually I don't know sometimes if they [the Canadian students] would like us to help them, but they might not feel comfortable ask us to help" (Dona, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013). Lily believes that the Canadian students need to communicate more details about their teaching so the English teachers and Chinese teachers can better support them when implementing their lesson plans and activities with children and she suggests:

If she [the Canadian student] communicates with the English teacher first or meet with both the English teacher and me, then tell us what she would like to do tomorrow and what will the procedure be, I will give her advice on how to prepare in advance...It will be better if everyone can sit down to talk it out...so I think the detailed communication is very important. (Lily, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

Preparing Canadian students to understand the Hong Kong culture and its educational systems. Many participants agreed that many Canadian students felt shocked when they arrived in the classroom at the host organization. The differences between Hong Kong and Canada in cultural expectations for young children, in the approaches and methods used in teaching, and in the goals of kindergarten and primary education, are difficult for the Canadian students to understand and adjust to during the one-month placement. Therefore, the preparation for Canadian students to learn these differences before they arrive in Hong Kong is very important for mitigating some challenges and running a successful study abroad program.

As an English teacher who has taught at the host organization for many years, Lucy had some unpleasant experiences with some Canadian students, as a cooperating teacher in the past. The biggest concern she had was to be judged by the Canadian students about her teaching style

without an understanding of the Hong Kong cultural and educational contexts. Lucy explains, "I think the only thing that I found challenging is being judged by people who are coming, teachers who are coming here just for a one month experience, and they don't really get the full feel of what it's like [teaching in Hong Kong]" (Lucy, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013). Lucy also suggested that the Canadian students should be prepared to see "what they're going to expect" - the real teaching in Hong Kong. At the focus group meeting, Lucy also shared a different experience that she had with one of the Canadian students and she explained:

I think that the preparation is probably one of the more important one. I found it different this year than the previous years, whereas I found students were a little bit more prepared for what they were going to encounter, what they were going to see. They were better prepared that the teaching style here is the exact opposite of what you're being taught home. So I didn't feel judged as I'd felt in the past by some of these student teachers. It seemed to help them adapt a little bit more, at least with my teachers anyway. (Lucy, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

The Chinese teachers also shared their suggestions on the preparation for Canadian students.

Sandra suggests:

I think they need to have a general understanding of us before they arrive. For example, what topics we are teaching, so she can plan what she wants to do. That plan should be communicated to both the Chinese teacher and the English teacher, so we can find ways to support her...So when she arrives, the adjustment period may be shortened. (Sandra, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

During the focus group discussions, some participants suggested that Canadian students need to receive the information about Hong Kong kindergarten, about the different roles and the responsibilities of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong. Nancy explains:

In Canada, I think most of the childcare center is full day. For the Canadian childcare workers, they have to take care of not only teaching, [but] they have to take care of everything in Canada. In Hong Kong, because first of all, we are half day kindergartens, also for [our staff] we call [them] teachers, usually we don't call them child care workers, and their task is quite different from child care workers. So it is one thing that they [the Canadian students] need to know. The second thing is, because especially for our K2 [4-5 years old] and K3 [5-6 years old] classes, in Hong Kong most of the kindergartens, not only us, we focus mostly on the academic, especially in K2. For K3 we have quite a lot of the homework and classwork to do within those 3 hours [when children are in school]. So maybe some teachers from Canada, they really cannot get used to it, or really find that it is pretty shocking for them. So I think [the preparation] on that thing is not only a general education in Hong Kong, but mainly focus on kindergarten. (Nancy, Administrators, Focus Group, May 27, 2013)

Providing support for the English and Chinese teachers. During the interviews and focus group meetings, some English teachers expressed their frustration on not knowing clearly what their roles and expectations of being the cooperating teachers were. Communication of the expectations for working with the Canadian students seemed to be limited as many English teachers wondered about what they could do to support the Canadian students. Emma suggested that improving communication and creating opportunities for English teachers to connect with Canadian students would help, and she explains "we're the teachers, we're the ones that need to

monitor how they're doing, and we need to know what we're teaching too. So it's that communication part that needs to be really worked on" (Emma, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Leanne suggested providing English teachers with guidelines of what the Canadian students need to follow for their placement, so she could better support them in the classroom. Tania also agreed that a guideline would help her to know "what we need to be looking for and things to tell them. For someone who's never had someone in my class, [I need to know] how the standards are different" (Tania, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013). Emma also wanted to know more about the program that the Canadian students came from and she suggests:

I also think it's beneficial for us too to know more about their program, a little bit more, and how it's set up. Because I do not have a clue what they have. I know that, [the principals] told us that they gave them [the Canadian students] lesson plans. They have it and they have to follow by it. But I didn't know how much they knew what was going on. (Emma, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

The perceptions of the partnership are also determined by the role that each participant played and the experiences of interacting with the Canadian sending institution and study abroad students.

In summary, the initial development of the partnership was primarily driven by the host organization's need for quality English teachers who have knowledge and training in early childhood education. However, the positive perceptions of Canadian culture and a good impression about the Canadian sending institution also played an important role for the host organization to pursue a partnership with a Canadian institution. During the years of implementation, the effective communication, continuous support and resources contributed by

each partner have created opportunities for people to exchange ideas, learn about each other, share resources and expertise, and collaborate in research projects. All participants recognized the value of the partnership as well as the direct and indirect benefits for the teachers and staff, the children and parents at host organization. Although there are challenges with logistics and curriculum delivery at the host organization, the participants have offered suggestions that will help the partnership continue to grow and develop.

4.4 Category 3: The Perceived Impacts of the Study Abroad Program

The first impression of Canadian students was generally good, according to the participants who interacted with them in the host organization. Sarah shared her first impression about the Canadian students, "I think the students are friendly and easy to approach, and it's not much difficult to have communication with them" (Sarah, Administrator, Interview, May 21, 2013). Over the years, the host organization had realized that the Canadian students needed to understand the differences between Canadian and Hong Kong pre-school education to reduce their cultural shock and to have more realistic expectations when living in Hong Kong. Cherie noted:

In the past few years we have come up with some sort-of experience that we have to emphasize the differences [between Canada and Hong Kong]. Because [for] the first few groups, some of them may feel a little bit overwhelming, that it is so different. When we start to interact with all the students, we always, from two or three years ago, emphasize the differences. So this is very important. They have to expect in terms of their accommodations, [as] it's very small. It may not be even a [size of] kitchen in their home, and the whole apartment [is very small]. In terms of the people here, they walk very fast,

and they have all kinds of things that they may need time to adjust to. (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013)

The adjustment to the Hong Kong way of living and teaching may not be easy for some Canadian students. Being thousands miles away from home and from their families and friends in Canada, some Canadian students experienced homesickness or emotional issues during the one month placement period. As a principal, Nikki shared her experiences and noted:

Everyone is unique, but what they taught and what they shared [with us] is from their hearts. So it's good to know how they think [about teaching] between [Canada and Hong Kong]. [However], some students do have their emotions and [feel] homesick and are not willing to stay, and some of them may feel challenging and exciting. So, how do we deal with the different feelings and [help them] to develop positive attitude to stay until the last day? That is what I think and indeed it happens every year. (Nikki, Administrator, Interview, May 15, 2013)

Also, the mental health and emotional issues that the Canadian students had in Canada could be triggered or worsened by the added stresses of cultural shock or homesickness when living in Hong Kong. Working with a Canadian student who had emotional problems was a challenge for Susan, who was the cooperating teacher, and she commented:

Last year was quite a challenge, [as] the student teacher I had [who] had emotional problems. So I had to spend extra time ensuring whether she was okay, and [it] kind of made me worry. I guess the challenge [is related] as in health-related things, and looking after her that way. The stress seemed to make her quite upset, and she also said it was due to homesickness. It just pretty much stayed the same [during the whole placement] and she made it quite clear that she didn't want to come back, due to the fact that she

couldn't stand spending such a long period of time away from her family. (Susan, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013)

The challenges in dealing with Canadian students' health and emotional problems were felt by other participants. Although most of the Canadian students adjusted well into living and working in Hong Kong, as a principal who has the responsibility to look after the Canadian student assigned to her campus, Ann remembered the challenges that she had to deal with when one of the Canadian students who had health and emotional issues, and she explained:

It's a girl [the Canadian student], and she is not feeling well and I don't know what to do. I have to take care of her because she's only one [who] takes medicine last year. We found out that later because she didn't tell me [that she took medication]. It's from her roommate [who] let us know. That's the challenge that I have, because that we have the responsibility to look after the girl. It is a young girl and we are very concerned about that. So that's why I have to talk to the girl [but] sometimes she doesn't want to [talk] either. Then we're saying [to her that] you have to take the medication. I'm not sure whether you know about [the student's] health problems, [but] I think it's better if we know beforehand [so] it is easier. (Ann, Administrator, Interview, May 20, 2013)

The host members' experiences of hosting Canadian study abroad students has indicated the importance of preparing the Canadian students to understand the differences in cultural expectations between the two countries and to address potential health and emotional issues before arriving in Hong Kong. Although many participants have recognized the value that people at the host organization have benefited from this international partnership, hosting the Canadian students not only impacts the daily operations and the organizational culture at the host

organization, but also affects the professional lives of host members who interact with the Canadian study abroad students.

4.4.1 The impacts on the host organization.

Three themes emerged from the one-on-one interviews and focus group meetings when the participants were asked to share their perceptions on *the impacts on the host organization* when hosting the Canadian study abroad students. The three themes indicate that the perceived impacts are on: (1) the organizational culture; (2) the curriculum development and the quality of teaching; and, (3) the organizational growth and improvement.

The impacts on organizational culture. The energy and attitudes that the Canadian students bring to the host organization have not only impacted the teachers and children that they directly come into contact with, but have also influenced the organizational culture in the host organization. Cherie shares his opinions that:

In terms of [the impact at the] organizational level, obviously they [the Canadian students] will come and we would have [assigned] teachers to take care of them so that's a little bit of, I won't say workload, but it's the more interactions. And [it is] the fact that I can see that it's a good atmosphere for cooperating teachers that there are students following them. Probably there are some motivations that they [the English cooperating teachers] have to do better because somebody's learning from me, so that is one of the good aspects of it. Usually the Canadian students, they are positive and they're willing to learn. They have some sort of impact on the teaching teams in the school because you have some new buds, although temporarily, but [they are] still kind-of a new person. Seeing them at school [may] have motivated you [with a] kind-of attitude [to feel] that's good. Another thing is that [the children] they're happy to have another teacher and they

want to make friends with them [the Canadian students]. They feel excited, that's the good thing for the students [the children at the host organization]. (Cherie, Administrator, Interview, May 22, 2013)

Not only did the Canadian students change the atmosphere of the host organization, the presence of Canadian study abroad students on campuses also made the host organization become more diverse and open to different cultures and ethnicities. Most of the administrators and Chinese teachers agree that the Canadian students help the host organization become more international, as the host staff and children interact with Canadian students who are from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The impacts on curriculum development and overall quality of teaching. As the Canadian students are required to meet the requirements of the ECE field placement in order to receive the credits needed for their graduation, they are expected to make daily lesson plans and implement developmentally appropriate activities for young children in their classes. The Canadian students bring different teaching styles and ideas to engage and interact with children in their own lessons. So being a host to a group of Canadian students each year provides opportunities for the host organization to improve its curriculum and overall quality of teaching.

As a curriculum development team leader, Emily would "try to incorporate some of the art and craft activities that [the Canadian] students provide to us because they would choose the best lesson plans to do the task in the classroom practice, so I get some thoughtful insight from them" (Emily, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013). The impact that the English teacher Flora felt from the Canadian students was the "teaching techniques and their creativities", as they use a less academically focused teaching approach (Flora, English Teacher, Interview, May 21, 2013).

All the English and Chinese teachers who participated in the interviews and focus groups agreed that the biggest impact is the improvement of children's learning in the classroom. Leanne shared her opinions and commented:

From what I see, does it impact each individual classroom? For sure, I think it's always good for the students [children] to have different teachers because of how students [children] learn differently. Teachers teach differently, so the students [children] are getting more opportunities to learn from different ways. They get to learn through different pathways, and get to learn from different people, because sometimes it's boring to see the same teacher day after day after day. That's why [the Canadian] teachers make things exciting. Having that second English teacher in the room definitely impacts the students that are in that classroom. (Leanne, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Although most children are excited with a new English-speaking teacher in the classroom, Emma noticed that the interactions with Canadian students could change some children's behaviours in her classroom, and she explained:

It's nice to have a different person in the room, so they [children] can actually interact with someone else and try to have communication. It's kind of funny because some of the students [children] also regressed because those are the shy ones, and when someone else came into the classroom they were kind of a little less open [than] when they [the Canadian students] weren't there. So it's interesting to see how the dynamics of children, and how the influence of someone else affects how they react with others. (Emma, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Many participants believe that the presence of Canadian students not only improves the overall quality of teaching in the host organization, but also has some impact on the discipline methods for the young children. However, the discipline methods and the behavioural expectations for young children in Hong Kong often come as a shock to teachers from other countries. As a cooperating teacher, Susan described the shock that she had experienced when she first taught in the host organization and said:

Because where they're [Canadian students] coming from, they are shocked [by how] you're [disciplining the children by] doing this way. Why are you getting them to all line up to go to the washroom? And why do you have to discipline them when they're not sitting properly? They seem like [that] they are trying to take in and accept and just have an open mind about how we teach. I'm not sure of how they feel, but when I first moved to Hong Kong is when I first got this job, so I was still very new to the culture. Even though I had been back [to Hong Kong] for the holidays, but to actually work and experience what it is like, I can say that I was amazed, impressed and shocked when I was in town. So, if these Canadian students feel the same thing, I am not surprised at all. (Susan, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013)

Due to different cultural perceptions of children and different discipline methods used in Hong Kong, some participants, especially the English teachers, had to be careful about how they discipline children in order to avoid leaving wrong impressions with the Canadian students. Flora explains "because here discipline is very important, when the student teacher is here, I try not to raise my voice too loud [so] that won't scare them [the Canadian students]. The children were a little bit more relaxed because they know there's another teacher here" (Flora, English Teacher, Interview, May 21, 2013). Susan agreed with Flora's comments but she also wondered:

I have to watch how I would discipline the children, like maybe my tone, so I don't scare the Canadian students because I can imagine that they would find us probably a bit too strict for that age group. But I don't know if they really understand [why I discipline].

(Susan, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013)

The ways that Canadian students interact with children, the friendly approach and the individual attention given to the children also made some host teachers reflect on their own communication styles and their interactions with children. When asked if having a Canadian student in her classroom changed her ways of interacting with children in the classroom, Kate reflected on her experience as a Chinese teacher and thought that she had become more relaxed in her teaching, but her method of discipline remained firm, and she explains:

Because this is Hong Kong, if I want things to be done, I will be firm. I will tell the children, if I want you to stop you stop. But if no matter what I tell them and they don't listen, for example, you see the student teachers call them but the children ignore them, I don't like that...[the Canadian student teachers] they [are] just like friends with the children. When I was in K2 (4-5 years old), you find that their [the Canadian student teachers'] conversation [is] really different from my conversation with the kids. They're very relaxed, just like friends talking [about] a lot of things I will not talk [like that] with my kids. I [try to] learn from them this way. (Kate, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013)

The impacts on organizational growth and improvement. Since the host organization welcomed the first group of Canadian students in 2009, the teachers, the children and the parents expect the arrival of a group of English student teachers in May every year. Nikki explained that hosting the Canadian students is like "a month long event that happens every year. So the

teachers get used to the arrangement [when] meeting with them, and let them join our staff birthday party. So it is habitually happened" (Nikki, Administrator, Interview, May 15, 2013).

Ann echoed:

I think the teachers get used to the practicum student every year. Maybe the first year they're quite concerned about what we have to do. Now they get used to and [it is] just one more thing [they do as cooperating teachers]. I can say parents respect the school [for hosting the Canadian students]. If they have any concern they will come to me because we're open. (Ann, Administrator, Interview, May 20, 2013)

Deb also witnessed the change of attitudes from the host teachers over the years, and explained that "they're [the host staff] used to them [Canadian students], and they've been welcoming and helpful as well, because they do know what's going on. [It is] not really [to] ask somebody to look at [judge] them, but [to] helping them" (Deb, Administrator, Interview, May 20, 2013)

It seems that hosting the Canadian students has helped the host organization grow and improve over the years. From the arrival of the first group, the administrators and teachers have witnessed many changes at the host organization, and they believe that people have built more confidence in the study abroad program as the mutual respect has grown stronger. Emily noted:

I think the mutual respect between each other is much stronger. At the very beginning, sometimes we would think, maybe this is not that nice or maybe we can do better. [But] after a few years, I mean it's four, five years, I think for the [Canadian] students, they will be more confident [in the study abroad program]. Maybe they would reject [Hong Kong] in the first year, [because] my mom doesn't want me to come to Hong Kong. [But now] it happens maybe because we have past experience [of successfully hosting the Canadian students]. It is safe and it is okay, and the people [in Hong Kong]

are okay, so students are more confident to participate in this kind of project.

(Emily, Administrator, Focus Group, May 27, 2013)

4.4.2 The impacts on individuals at the host organization.

The English cooperating teachers and their Chinese teaching partners felt the most impact as they host the Canadian students in their classrooms and interact with them on a daily basis for one month. When interacting with the Canadian students, most of the participants interacted with the Canadian students face-to-face on campus at the host organization. The supervising principal and some cooperating teachers used email to provide feedback to the Canadian students' activities and lesson plans. Interestingly, some English teachers also used cell phones and text messages to communicate with some Canadian students outside of the school hours. Based on the data from the one-on-one interviews and focus groups, four themes emerged, which include the perceived impacts on: (1) the workload; (2) cultural learning and exchange; (3) professional teaching practices; and, (4) building professional relationships for the host staff.

The impacts on workload. Many English teachers and Chinese teachers reported that the presence of Canadian students in their classrooms helped reduce their workload or had made their work with the children much easier. Many Chinese teachers commented on the Canadian students who took initiatives helping out in the classroom. Dona was happy to have an extra pair of hands when the Canadian student came to her classroom, and she explained:

Actually I feel there are more positive effects [of having the Canadian students in the classroom]. Because in my class of 2-year-olds, there is one more teacher taking care of the children and communicating with the children and it feels like one extra pair of hands. So children are better taken care of. (Dona, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

For many English teachers, sharing their teaching schedule with the Canadian students also decreased their workload. Vera explained, "My workload decreased because that was like shared management. It helped me be more aware of what I needed to be doing because I had to make sure that you [children] were doing this and that, so that made me to have better time management in myself" (Vera, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013). However, Susan believed that her work was shifted when the Canadian student took over some of her teaching time, and she commented:

My teaching decreased because they're doing that. While they were teaching...I would spend that time doing my portfolio [for the children]. So I wouldn't be done putting my artwork in it [the children portfolio], if they hadn't been here. So I definitely think it [my work] shifted and allowed me time to do that. (Susan, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

A few English cooperating teachers who had a great experiences with their Canadian student teachers felt strongly that their work was decreased and that they enjoyed the collaborative teaching partnership with the Canadian students.

However, the timing of hosting the Canadian students every May in the classroom may add some stresses and workload for the cooperating teachers at the beginning when the Canadian students first arrive at the host organization. As Leanne explains:

This is such a different environment than schools in Canada. We are always busy, and we always have lots of things to do; and in the beginning, so getting things sorted out with a student teacher adds an extra hour of work or more onto our plates. (Leanne, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Also, some English cooperating teachers were asked to provide extra help for the Canadian students to make their stay in Hong Kong more pleasant. Some English teachers had volunteered their time to show the Canadian students around, to answer their questions about food, transportation and shopping. Tania felt that hosting the Canadian students had taken her personal time away from her friends and other things she would like to do, and she noted:

The barrier with us is our time. I have my own friends and everything down here. I don't need to be out babysitting them [the Canadian students]. From personal experience, I took them out the other night because they didn't really know the area that they were living in. So I took them around the area, but that's on my own time. I didn't get paid extra for it or anything like that. So, I just think a lot of the times it's just expected, so that's a barrier. (Tania, English Teacher, Interview, May 20, 2013)

Some English teachers did not feel that having the Canadian students in the classroom decreased their workload. After hearing about their colleagues' experiences, some reflected on their own teaching styles and their mentorship with the Canadian students. Vera felt that she had difficulty releasing the control of her classroom to the Canadian student teacher, so having the Canadian student might have increased her workload, and she claimed:

Sometimes I'm worried a little bit and that's where I get that anxious kind of feeling. If he's [the Canadian student teacher] doing something and it was going the wrong way, I'm at the back [watching] and I hovered for the first 2 weeks. I shouldn't have done that, I realize after I was talking to Leanne. I thought the release of control of my room is very hard for me. (Vera, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

The impacts on cultural learning and exchange. For many Chinese teachers, hosting the Canadian students brings them the opportunity to learn about Canadian culture and to share ideas

that they have never thought of or experienced in their own culture. However, this was less evident for the English cooperating teachers and many administrative staff who had visited or studied in the English-speaking countries in the West. According to Emily, hosting the Canadian students provided the opportunity for her to compare the curriculum used in the East and the West, and she noted:

They [Canadian students] are quite good. Actually they are creative. It's because I think the culture is different. Even though sometimes when the Chinese teachers did the same thing, they would not have that kind of effect. But for the Western teachers, even though [their work may] not [be] that beautiful but it is very useful...I think they would like to try their best to demonstrate what they learned from the [Canadian] college, so some of their work was really good and they learned quite fast. (Emily, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013)

Kate believes that "in Hong Kong, the Chinese teachers always welcome foreigners because we need to learn a lot of things from them, not only English but also their ideas, their creativity and their culture" (Kate, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013). Also, many Chinese teachers shared their admiration for the Canadian students' ideas and creativity during the focus group meeting. Katie agreed that, "because there are more English teachers in the classroom, sometimes they may not be coming from Canada, but from different countries, we can learn from their cultures" (Katie, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013).

When hosting the Canadian students in their classrooms, Chinese teachers also had the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching. The interactions with Canadian students made some Chinese teachers reflect on their own experiences growing up in Hong Kong and their cultural

expectations of children and childhood. Kate believes that her cultural perceptions of children and childhood has changed as a result of her interactions with Canadian students, and noted that:

I see the Canadian teachers, when they grew up, they are different from us. For example, [when] they do things, they are more relaxed but can achieve. But we are very nervous sometimes. Actually they are very effective [but] seem very relaxed...I think to look at the childhood, [I believe] sometimes to let them [children] play and explore different things [may] not damage them. They are not damaged. They are Okay. So you see they [Canadian students] have a different quality. You might see those [Canadians] play this game, but they might have developed a lot of things in the play process [that] you do not know. I see our children, they do not play, or don't have a lot of time to play, or you may play but [there are] not a lot of space for you to play. I feel that the children in Hong Kong don't have much flexibility, maybe because of their schedule [as] their schedule [does] not [have] enough space to let them think or let them plan for themselves. (Kate, Administrator, Interview, May 9, 2013)

The impacts on professional teaching practices. The hosting of Canadian students has impacted how teaching is conducted in the individual classrooms. Often, teaching is shared on a tight schedule by two to three teachers within three hours in each class at the host organization. With the arrival of the Canadian students in the classrooms, the English teachers and the Chinese teachers had to adjust their own teaching in order to support the Canadian students. Emma explains, "because our schedule is really packed, it is even [worst] having our practicum student trying to fit into our schedule...so that really has to do with time and space in our lesson plan, especially when we share the class with someone else [Chinese teachers]. (Emma, English Teacher, Interview, May 21, 2013) However, for some Chinese teachers, they felt that the

Canadian students are a big help for them. Katie describes her experience because "they [Canadian students] are very easy to adapt into our class" (Katie, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013).

Another impact on individual teacher's teaching practices is the discipline methods used in the classroom. Having been a cooperating teacher for a couple of times, Susan felt that she had to "tone down for them [Canadian students]; I actually have to change the way I teach because of their presence" (Susan, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013). The behaviours that children are disciplined in Hong Kong seemed quite incomprehensible for the Canadian students. Lucy explains that:

Just to explain, we're not screaming at the students [children], we're not disciplining them physically or anything like that, but maybe they'll have to step out of the classroom, maybe they'll have to step out of the circle, [when] they're not sitting properly or they have been spoken to about sitting properly, different things like that. Because they need to learn these things in order to advance themselves in the next two years of education that they need to go to [P1 interviews]. And it [the P1 interview] doesn't exist in Canada. (Lucy, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013)

The different cultural expectations on children's behaviour and the discipline methods used by the English and Chinese teachers at the host organization sometimes may leave wrong impressions for the Canadian students. The expectations of children's behaviour in Hong Kong are very different from what the Canadian students understand from their own experiences growing up in Canada. Many cooperating teachers believe that they have to explain and help the Canadian students understand the true expectations of Hong Kong educational system. Lucy felt

that she had always been judged by the Canadian students because of the discipline methods she used in her classroom, and she explained:

My perception of them [Canadian students], once they've left, sometimes I felt that they've judged me based on their experience in my classroom. Maybe they've seen [that] I've gotten upset at a student over something that they think is very minor... When I first came here I was very similar [to these Canadian students], I was very shocked at [how children were disciplined]. But I've realised that this is just kind of how the education system works [in Hong Kong]. It's not just the school, but it's their very high expectations for children at a very young age. (Lucy, English Teacher, Interview, May 14, 2013)

For Chinese teachers, watching how the Canadian students teach and interact with children also improves their own teaching in the classroom. Lola reflected her experience as:

For us, the Chinese teachers, I personally feel that I've learned something new when the [Canadian] students come to my classroom. Maybe because you lose fresh feelings or excitement, you are teaching the same thing over and over. So I feel these students are young and they are willing to try things and they often bring new experiences to the children. So I learn by watching how they interact with the children, in fact we can also interact more with the children in the classroom. (Lola, Chinese Teacher, Focus Group, May 31, 2013)

The impact on building professional relationships. When the Canadian students interact with the children, the teachers and staff at the host organization, they build not only professional relationships but also personal connections with local people and other teachers from different countries. Susan believes that "just getting to know them [Canadian students] is good, [because] you get to meet a friend" (Susan, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013). The friendly

approach that the Canadian students use in their interactions with young children helps them quickly adapt to the classroom. Lucy observes that:

I think that, especially when you work with kids, you have an inherent love for working with children. I find that when the students come, they instantly fall in love with the children. But our students, the kids really like attention, they can be quite friendly. They're used to a lot of English being spoken in the classroom, and sometimes at home with their helpers. So I think that they are able to connect quite well with the [Canadian] students, quite easily. Sometimes it takes a few days [for the children] to warm up, but in my experience noticing these students they bond with the children quite easily. (Lucy, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Many Chinese teachers and administrators agreed that children develop friendships with the Canadian students during the one month placement period. Nikki believed that hosting the Canadian students not only provided more opportunities to "open our door to accept something different from other countries", but also allowed the children to "meet different friends [the Canadian students]" (Nikki, Administrator, Interview, May 15, 2013). Amanda also agreed that "it is good for the children and some of the other teachers to interact with the [Canadian] students. I think you can form a friendship with these teachers here" (Amanda, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013).

Some English teachers not only act as cooperating teachers in the classroom, they also built personal connections with the Canadian students outside of the school. Since the English teachers come from different countries, Amanda believes that it is natural for the English teachers to offer help to the Canadian students to adapt to living and working in Hong Kong, and she notes that:

I think, particularly in Hong Kong with the young people who have moved there and live there, it's very open and unique [for] you [to] offer your [help], if you live there. Say, if you meet someone that's not from there, you're very willing to help them, show them around. Because when you've moved somewhere and you know the area very well, you're very willing to help. (Amanda, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Living in the same area as the Canadian students, Tania had taken the time to show the Canadian students around, so "they know and they can find their way" (Tania, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013). However, some English teachers also expressed their concerns on how to balance the expectations of maintaining a professional mentorship of being cooperating teachers and their desire for building personal connections and friendships with the Canadian students.

During the focus group meeting, Tania shared her feelings and noticed that the Canadian students often asked many questions that were not teaching related, but were more about living in Hong Kong. Tania explains, "I feel this is where that friend kind of [relationship is] like, [as] I get more questions about Hong Kong and things that they need to know outside of [the school] than teaching" (Tania, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013). When asked if they would prefer to maintain a professional relationship or a more personal friendship with the Canadian students, most English teachers agreed that they would like to develop a friendship with the Canadian students, especially when they were all living in a foreign country. Leanne shared that she enjoyed the personal involvement with the Canadian students. However, she wished that she could also be more firm and professional when addressing issues relating to teaching with the Canadian students.

Tania also realized that the Canadian students who are completing an international placement would have different needs than those who worked in Canada, so the role and

expectations for the cooperating teachers should include a good relationship, both professionally and personally. She explains:

I think here you need to have both [professional and personal relationships] because they're in another country. If I was in Canada and they were my student teachers in Canada, it'd be a completely different story. But they're in a different country, you want them to experience, have the best experience they can for the 3, 4 weeks that they're here. So you have to have a little bit of both in order to make it work or else they would be lost. As I said if they didn't have us to ask questions [about] the surrounding area, they would be lost or just not have the full experience that they need. (Tania, English Teacher, Focus Group, May 30, 2013)

Overall, hosting Canadian study abroad students has impacted the organizational culture, the curriculum development and overall quality of teaching at the host organization. The arrival of Canadian study abroad students each year has not only changed the atmosphere of the host organization, but also changed the attitudes of host staff, children and parents toward different cultures and ethnicities. Over the years, it is noticed that the host organization has become more open and diverse as the host staff and children welcome Canadian study abroad students into the classrooms each year. However, hosting Canadian students has also impacted individuals at the host organization in terms of the workload, the reflection on one's own culture, the teaching and discipline methods used in classrooms, and the opportunities to build personal and professional relationships with Canadian study abroad students.

Chapter 5 Discussion of Research Findings

This chapter provides a discussion of the key findings of this study and explores the connections between host members' perceptions of an international partnership and their experiences in a study abroad program in Hong Kong, while comparing to themes that emerged in this study with relevant literature on international partnership and study abroad in higher education. This study also responds to the two original research questions, which were: (1) how do people in the host organization perceive the international partnership with a Canadian sending institution; and (2) what are the perceived impacts that the study abroad program has on the host organization at both individual and organizational levels? The themes that emerged from the research findings discussed in Chapter 4 provide answers to each research question and also to two topic areas that were not anticipated at the beginning of this study: (1) how host members' cultural perceptions influence the international partnership development with the Canadian sending institution; and, (2) how host members' cultural perceptions impact their experiences as hosts to study abroad students.

In this Chapter, the first area discussed includes: (a) the factors that influence the initiation of an international partnership development from the host members' perspectives, (b) the factors that motivate the host organization to seek an international partnership, (c) the factors that influence the implementation stage of partnership, and, (d) suggestions for future development of the partnership. Based on the participants' cultural perceptions, various social, cultural and organizational factors were explored and compared in order to understand the complexity involved in the international partnership development between the host organization and the Canadian sending institution.

The second area of discussion explores how the cultural perceptions of those involved from the host organization influence their experiences when interacting with Canadian students, and also how the study abroad program impact the host site at both the organizational level and individual level. When hosting the study abroad program, the interactions with Canadian study abroad students impacted not only the organizational culture, but also host members' individual cultural learning and professional lives at the host organization. Based on the emerging themes from the findings, the benefits and challenges of this partnership are discussed in light of the existing scholarship on international partnerships in higher education.

5.1 Research Question 1: Cultural Perceptions and International Partnership Development

As detailed in Chapter 1, this study was guided by the social constructionist approach, which suggests that people's learning or experience is shaped by their interactions with other people, as well as with their environment that also has its unique social and cultural elements. Within this framework, individuals are seen as being active learners who construct knowledge based on their prior experiences and who use cultural tools (e.g., symbols, language, and culturally situated rules or systems) to function in their social milieus (Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998). Therefore, when discussing the research findings, it is important not only to take into account the interplay of individual, interpersonal and social/cultural factors from the participants' experiences, but also to question what social and cultural conditions have made this partnership both possible and necessary.

As the host organization is a Hong Kong-based organization that offers a multilingual (English, Cantonese and Putonghua) environment and also hires its employees from different countries, the host members' perceptions of a culture are largely influenced by observing the behaviours of others, and then reflecting on their own personal beliefs and values. According to

Schein (2010), culture is manifested through its artifacts (e.g., visible structures and processes, or observed behaviour, and so on), its espoused beliefs and values, and its basic underlying assumptions, including unconscious or taken-for-granted beliefs and values. From a sociocultural perspective, internationalization is both an individual and a social process in which people are transformed while shaping the world in the social practices of human relationship and community. Therefore, in this study the cultural perceptions and personal experiences of people in the host organization are the keys to understanding how they react to and make decisions about this international partnership with a Canadian sending institution.

5.1.1 Factors that influence the partnership initiation.

From the host members' perspectives, there were various social, cultural, and organizational factors that influenced the development of a successful international partnership. The perceptions of the sending partner's culture may have had direct impacts on the host organization's administrative decisions on whether to pursue an international partnership with people from a different culture. Based on the findings from this study, the initial stage of the partnership development at the host organization was influenced by three key factors: (a) positive perceptions regarding the sending country and its culture, (b) host members' personal connections with people in the sending country, and, (c) good first impressions regarding the sending institution. During this stage, the key personnel from each side of the partnership played important roles in making the decision on whether or not to pursue the partnership and whether to continue to work with each other in the future. According to the research literature regarding such partnership initiations, there are challenges associated with the initiation of an international partnership between higher education institutions and organizations. Examining the literature about international partnerships in many Australian universities, the researchers identified that

the "cultural differences" were a significant problem encountered by the two partners in the initiation stage (Saffu & Mamman, 1999, P.284). This study confirms that people's positive perceptions of the partner's culture were one of the factors that lead the host organization to pursue the partnership with the sending institution.

In this study, when examining each participant's perceptions of Canada and Canadian culture, it is interesting to note that the host members who had visited Canada or had experience living in an English-speaking western country were quite positive about Canadian culture. For the host members who did not have such experiences of visiting Canada, their perceptions of Canada and Canadian culture were mostly influenced by movies or media where the representations of Western culture, especially in English-speaking countries, seem quite similar to each other. However, for people who have personal connections to Canada through families and friends, the perceptions about the country and its culture are influenced more by stories and experiences shared by their friends and families than from the media or movies. Therefore, the host members' perceptions of Canadian culture are not *only* shaped by personal experiences and individual encounters with Canadians, but are also influenced by the images and stories of how Canada is represented in the popular media and movies.

The perception of Canadians as being open, relaxed, friendly, and easy to approach and communicate with was later confirmed through the host staff's interactions with Canadian sending institution and Canadian study abroad students since 2009. However, the host members' perception that the Canadian culture is similar to English culture and other Western cultures in general did not recognize that Canada is a country of immigrants and that one of the key characteristics of Canadian culture is multiculturalism. The lack of understanding of the multicultural element in the Canadian culture later contributes to the challenges experienced by

people in the host organization during the implementation stage of partnership, such as how to deal with Hong Kong children's reactions to Canadian study abroad students who come from different ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds.

From the research literature, a number of factors were identified as being important when building a successful international partnership in higher education, including mutuality and organizational identity, effective communication in a timely manner, trust and commitment, adequate resources, appropriate decision-making models, cultural sensitivity, and understanding of organizational culture (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Trim, 2003). By exploring the host members' cultural perceptions, this study has not only confirmed that cultural understanding and cultural sensitivity are the important factors in partnership development, but has also identified that the personal connections with and positive perceptions of the sending partner's culture are the keys to the initiation stage of international partnership development. In this study, the personal connections that some host members had with Canadian not only contributed to their positive perceptions on Canadian culture, but also helped them to understand the organizational structures and academic programs offered at the Canadian higher education institution. Also, the host staff members' first impressions of the organizational culture and communication style at the Canadian partnering institution, which may confirm or contradict people's original perceptions of Canadian culture, could also lead to administrative decisions on whether or not to engage in further development of an international partnership, or to terminate a potential partnership.

5.1.2 Factors that motivate the partnership development.

In this study, the views of children and childhood from the participants were explored in depth, as this is an area that connects all three key players in their professional field of study -

early childhood education. Traditionally, the early childhood education field emphasizes both "education" and "care" components when providing services to young children and their families. However, as a private bilingual kindergarten, the host organization is inevitably also impacted, in this case, by the social and cultural changes in Hong Kong. The changes introduced by the Hong Kong government with a new type of arrangement called the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools being added to the primary education system over a decade ago has clearly impacted the Hong Kong kindergartens, including those managed by the host organization. The changes in the Hong Kong educational system, the expectations for Hong Kong children to compete, and the demands for quality kindergartens from Hong Kong parents have created the current social and cultural conditions, which, in turn, drove the host organization to seek partnership opportunities abroad.

It seems that the changes in the Hong Kong primary education system provide parents with more choices of which primary school to send their child to when the child reaches the age of six. However, the *Primary One Admission System* and the different reputations amongst the four types of primary schools in Hong Kong have created a highly competitive primary admission process for parents who want to send their children to the elite primary schools, which are the DSS schools and private schools where the students are selected based on their academic performance and interview outcomes. The competition for admission to elite primary schools has also put a lot of pressures on the Hong Kong kindergarten system. To remain competitive, the host organization has to offer a quality kindergarten program that not only meets parents' expectations but also produces the desired outcomes related to the number of children being accepted to the elite primary schools through the P1 admission process.

Both the changes in the Hong Kong educational system and the parents' expectations for their children to perform in the P1 selection process illustrated the social and cultural contexts that motivated the host organization to seek opportunities to attract quality English teachers who are trained to work with young children of pre-primary age groups from an English-speaking country. Therefore, the original purpose for the host organization to initiate and develop an international partnership with a Canadian institution that offers a training program in early childhood education is driven not only by their organizational needs to hire English teachers, but also by the social and cultural conditions in which the host organization is situated. More specifically, this study has revealed that the purpose of pre-primary education is highly sensitive to the social and educational changes in a society, at least in Hong Kong.

5.1.3 Factors that influence the partnership implementation.

Based on the research findings, the host members' perceptions of the similarities between Canadian and Hong Kong cultures contributed positively to the implementation of partnership with the host organization. Although many participants believed that the cultures of two partners are very different, as one represents the philosophical beliefs, customs and traditions of the East and another one represents the West, the similarities that enable the host staff and Canadian study abroad students to work together are their professional attitudes when working with young children as well as their dedication and commitment to the field of ECE. During the implementation stage, there continues to be effective communication between the key personnel from both partners, which supports the study abroad program on yearly bases.

Recognizing that both host teachers and Canadian study abroad students are teaching professionals who are passionate to teach and work with young children, the attitudes towards their work and the professionalism displayed in the work place have helped the host staff to

focus on the impacts of their work on children because they *all* want to provide an environment that is best for Hong Kong children to learn and grow. Regardless of the cultural differences, the host staff and the Canadian study abroad students are all dedicated and committed to teaching and helping children grow. Thus, the respect they demonstrate for each other as professionals working in the field of ECE allows the host staff to build a trusting relationship with other ECE professionals from other countries. Although people at the host organization recognize that the original purpose for establishing this partnership with a Canadian institution has not been fully realized, they feel proud that they have contributed to the personal and professional growth of Canadian study abroad students who will soon graduate to become professionals working in the field of ECE. The host members shared their feelings of self-fulfillment and their pride in making lasting impacts on the Canadian students by implementing the partnership and hosting the study abroad program in Hong Kong.

In the literature, the factors for developing effective international partnerships depend on the effective communication, trustful relationship, and an ongoing commitment to the relationship between two partners (Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Hatton & Schroder, 2009). This study has not only confirmed the importance of communication, trustful relationships and ongoing commitment between two partners during the implementation stage of the partnership, but also identified the fact that the perceptions of cultural similarities and the connection of professional identities between two partners also contributed to the development of a successful international partnership.

Over the years, the host organization has realized that this partnership brings many direct and indirect benefits to individuals in the organization and to the organization as a whole. From the host members' perspective, the international partnership has benefited both of the partnering

organizations as well as the key players involved in this study abroad program, including the host staff, the Canadian study abroad students, and the children and parents that the host organization serves. The benefits for the host organization and its staff include: (a) providing learning opportunities to improve English and develop leadership skills, (b) promoting cultural learning, (c) improving the quality of teaching at the host organization. At the organizational level, this partnership has benefited the host organization by providing learning opportunities for the children and host staff, especially the Chinese staff, to practice their English and to develop friendships with people from a different country. For the English teachers, this partnership provides them an opportunity to practice their leadership skills as they take on the role of being the cooperating teachers for Canadian students. As mentors to Canadian study abroad students, the English teachers have someone to share their professional experiences with and they feel proud to watch how Canadian students learn and grow as future professionals while completing their last field placements in Hong Kong.

Another benefit for the host organization is that the partnership promotes cultural learning through hosting a group of Canadian study abroad students each year. The host staff has recognized that this partnership not only impacts the organizational culture, but also influences attitudes toward different cultures and ethnicities at the host organization. Over the years, the host staff has witnessed the changing attitudes from the children and parents as they become more open and more accepting to different cultures and people from different countries. Although Hong Kong children still react differently to their English teachers and Chinese teachers, the partnership has provided opportunities for children to interact with more Canadians who are from a culture that is different from their own. By providing the cultural learning opportunities for its staff, the organizational culture has changed as the host organization

becomes more open and more international as it welcomes a new group of Canadian study abroad students each year.

Improving the quality of teaching in the classroom has been identified as one of the benefits from this international partnership. Since the teaching styles differ significantly between the Chinese teachers and English teachers, the children have benefited from experiencing different teaching methods and techniques used by the Canadian students who are the second English teacher in the classroom. Also, the creativity and different approaches to teaching that Canadian students demonstrated in their lessons have inspired the host teachers to adopt new ideas and to reflect on their own teaching practices. At the organizational level, the partnership offers its teaching staff opportunities for professional development through exchanging ideas with Canadian students, and thus improves the overall quality of teaching at the host organization.

Despite of many benefits for the host organization and its staff, there are also challenges for the host organization to deal with, including the logistical issues for implementing the partnership and concerns for its curriculum delivery in small classrooms and tight teaching schedules. Finding accommodations for the Canadian faculty and students has been increasingly challenging for the host organization, as the yearly increases of rent in Hong Kong have created financial challenges for both partners. Another challenge in supporting this partnership is that the host teachers need to share their limited physical space with Canadian students in small classrooms. Also, the fast-paced teaching schedules at the host organization do not allow many opportunities for Canadian students to fully participate in the classroom. Many of the challenges will require both partners to work collaboratively and creatively to find solutions for the future development of the partnership.

5.1.4 Suggestions for future development of the partnership.

As the partnership continues, the host staff has offered suggestions on how they hope to improve and continue developing this partnership in the future. Four suggestions emerged, based on the data collected through the one-on-one interviews and focus group meetings, which include: (a) more collaborative exchanges between the two partners, (b) better communication between the host teachers and Canadian study abroad students, (c) better understanding of Hong Kong educational system and the cultural differences between host and sending country for Canadian study abroad students, and (d) more support for host staff who work closely with Canadian study abroad students.

The first suggestion is to facilitate more collaborative and reciprocal exchanges between the host organization and the Canadian sending institution. As a host to Canadian study abroad students, the host members' cultural learning is primarily based on their interactions with a group of Canadian students each year. The host members, especially the Chinese teachers, would like to have a reciprocal exchange opportunity to allow them to visit the Canadian sending institution for professional development in the field of ECE and to gain a better understanding of Canadian culture and ECE practices in Canada.

The second suggestion is to improve communication at the individual level, especially between the Canadian students and the host teachers. Although there is effective communication between the key personnel at both sides, there are many issues identified with regard to how English and Chinese teachers communicate with respect to their roles in hosting Canadian students in classrooms. The improvement of communication for the host teachers would not only have the potential to help to build professional relationships between the Canadian study abroad

students and the host teachers, but also would make it easier for the host teachers to coordinate their teaching schedules and to better support the Canadian students' teaching in the classroom.

The third suggestion is to prepare Canadian students to understand the cultural differences between Canada and Hong Kong, as well as providing them with a more updated knowledge of the Hong Kong educational system and what ECE teaching is required at the host organization. The host members have realized that the lack of understanding of cultural differences on the part of the Canadian students often leads to culture shock for these students when they arrive at the host organization. The different cultural expectations for young children, the different approaches and methods used in teaching, and the different goals for kindergarten and primary education all make it difficult for the Canadian students to understand these differences and to adapt to living and working in Hong Kong within their one month placement. Therefore, the opportunity for Canadian students to learn about these differences *before* they arrive in Hong Kong is very important for mitigating some of the challenges and for running a successful study abroad program at the host organization.

The last suggestion identified is to provide support for the host teachers who are working closely with Canadian study abroad students. As many English teachers are 'expats' who have moved to Hong Kong to teach English on contracts, there are constant changes of the cooperating teachers for Canadian study abroad students at the host organization. Some English teachers have expressed their frustration such as not knowing clearly what their professional roles and supervisory expectations are for being the cooperating teachers for the Canadian students. The support for the host teachers from both the host organization and the Canadian sending institution could also help to improve communications and provide clear guidelines for

what the placement expectations are for Canadian students, and how the host teachers can help support their teaching in the classroom.

Overall, this study has discovered that positive perceptions regarding the partner's culture, good first impressions and subsequent effective communications are all important factors when initiating a short-term study abroad international partnership. The motivation for a partnership is not only driven by the organizational needs of the host site (for example in this case, hiring quality English teachers), but is also influenced by the social and cultural conditions of the society in which the partner is situated, in this case, Hong Kong. In this case study, the current changes to Hong Kong's primary education system and the competition and pressures to offer quality kindergarten programs have driven the host organization to seek the opportunities to find quality English teachers. Although the original purpose of hiring quality English teachers was not realized through the establishment of partnership with a Canadian institution, the perceptions of cultural similarity, the perceived contribution to the field of ECE and the connection of professional identities have helped the host organization make decisions to continue with the partnership. Therefore, from the host members' perspectives, people's cultural perceptions have played an important role in all stages of partnership development. The more cultural understanding and professional connections that are developed between the two partners, the more likely the partnership will continue to grow despite some challenges involved or maybe with some changes from its original purpose. Although there were challenges in the implementation stage of the partnership, the host members have recognized the benefits of having an international partnership for teaching staff, children and their parents. The suggestions for more reciprocal exchanges between two partners, as well as more support for host teachers and more preparation for Canadian students in the study abroad program will aid the future

development of the partnership and will enhance the experiences of both the host teacher and future Canadian students.

5.2 Research Question 2: The Impacts of Hosting the Study Abroad Program

Most literature on study abroad program focuses on issues and concerns, as well as on the benefits and challenges of the study abroad program, based on the sending institution's and study abroad students' experiences. Much of the previous empirical research has overwhelmingly supported the findings that participating in study abroad not only increases students' cultural awareness about the host culture, but also enhances their understanding and appreciation of their home culture (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, & McMillen, 2009; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Kokko, 2011; Lumkes, Hallet, & Vallade, 2012; Stachowski & Mahan, 1998; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). However, little research has explored the perceptions and experiences of *host members* when interacting with study abroad students, or on host organizations or institutions. In this study, the host members' perceptions of the sending institution and the Canadian culture, and their experiences when interacting with Canadian students in the study abroad program were explored in depth through one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Based on the findings from this study, the host members' perceptions of Canadian culture were confirmed or revised through their interactions with the Canadian study abroad students. The presence of Canadian students influenced the organizational culture when the students brought energy, new ideas and fresh ways of working with young children to the host organization. However, the host members' perceptions of the cultural differences between Canada and Hong Kong and the lack of understanding of these cultural differences by the Canadian study abroad students have created both challenges and learning opportunities for the host staff, which have, in turn, also impacted

their personal experiences and professional lives when hosting the study abroad program at the host organization.

5.2.1 The impacts on organizational culture.

Canadians, as perceived by the host members, are people who are open, relaxed, friendly, polite, and easy to approach and communicate with, and who are not afraid to voice their opinions. The energy and attitudes that the Canadian study abroad students bring to the host organization have not only directly impacted the teachers and children in individual classrooms, but have also influenced the organizational culture in the host organization. The presence of Canadian students has changed the atmosphere of classroom, and has also made the host organization become more diverse and open to different cultures and ethnicities.

The experiences that the host members had with Canadian students seem to fit well with the general perceptions of Canadians, as well. However, when living in a country that is thousands of miles away from home and being surrounded by a culture that is vastly different from their own experiences, many Canadian students experienced various degrees of homesickness or emotional issues during their stay in Hong Kong. Although most of the Canadian students ultimately adjusted well to living and working in Hong Kong, the mental health and emotional issues that Canadian students had in Canada could be triggered or worsen by the added stresses of cultural shock or homesickness when living abroad. The experiences that host members indicated that they had had when dealing with Canadian students with respect to health and emotional issues made the sending institution even more aware of the importance of preparing study abroad students to understand the cultural differences between the host and home countries, as well as of providing on-site support and addressing potential health and emotional issues *before* arriving in the host country.

The literature examining post-secondary students' experiences when living abroad has confirmed that many study abroad students experience some degree of stress and cultural shock, and that the cultural adaptation process may pose additional health risks, which could prevent the students from fully participating in cultural integration and learning experiences abroad (Chiu, 1995; Ryan & Twibell, 2000, Twibell, Ryan & Limbird, 1995). Although this study did not examine the study abroad students' experiences, the experiences shared by the host members participating in this study have confirmed that it is not uncommon for the host members to deal with study abroad students' health and emotional issues when the students live so far away from their home country. However, in this case study, the onsite support of a faculty member from the Canadian sending institution may also have contributed to a relatively low occurrence of serious health and emotional problems experienced by Canadian students in this particular study abroad program, as only one case of such issues has been reported in the five years that this program has been operating. The roles and responsibilities of the accompanying faculty member, as indicated in the Memorandum of Understanding between the host organization and the Canadian sending institution, include not only coordinating the study abroad program between the Canadian sending institution and the host organization, but also providing onsite support for students who may experience culture shock and homesickness while living abroad. The findings indicate that it is important for both the sending institution and the host organization to know if a student has pre-existing health or mental health issues and to communicate clearly in order to make sure there are both preventative and emergency plans in place to prevent and deal with any serious incidents that may occur in the host country.

From a sociocultural perspective, the host members' perceptions of Canadians would also potentially influence how they approach and interact with Canadian study abroad students. The

host staff's experiences would then likely either confirm their perceptions or their perceptions could be revisited or modified based on their interactions with Canadian study abroad students. In this study, the host members' experiences with Canadian study abroad students confirmed their original perceptions of Canadians. Furthermore, the host members' experiences described in the study abroad program also illustrate that interacting with people from a different culture provides the host members with more opportunities to learn the Canadian multicultural reality, to expose children and parents to Canadian students of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and to become more culturally diverse and more accepting of cultural differences.

5.2.2 The impacts on host staff's individual experiences.

Literature on study abroad programs has consistently shown that many study abroad students experience changes in the areas of linguistic, cultural, academic, personal, and professional/career development (Bacon, 2002; Teichler, 2004; Wilkinson, 1998). But how much the students benefit from study abroad depends on various factors, including their prior level of language proficiency, knowledge of the host culture, degree of adjustment abilities, personality, and personal health, as well as race and gender (Bacon, 2002; Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Twombly, 1995). Culture, as a concept, is a complex but integral part of the study abroad experience. From a social constructionist perspective, study abroad programs provide the students "live in" experiences leading to, hopefully, deeper and richer understanding of another culture that is different from their own. In this study, the cultural differences between the host country - Hong Kong, and the sending country - Canada, demonstrate a sharp contrast between a Western culture and an Eastern culture, which differ significantly in many areas such as lifestyle, religion and personal beliefs, language, family relationships, societal expectations and values. Over the years, the host organization has realized

that understanding the differences between Canadian and Hong Kong cultures helps to reduce culture shock for study abroad students, so they can have more realistic expectations when living in Hong Kong. The findings from this study have indicated that hosting the Canadian students impacts the host's organizational culture as well as the individuals who interact with students at the host organization.

During the study abroad experience itself, there are concerns and issues related to perceptions and cultural clashes between the students' home culture and the host culture. In this study, the host members' perceptions of cultural differences are related to mannerisms, different views on authority, family relationships and parenting styles, and language issues, as well as cultural stereotypes of difference races. As a fast-paced city with a large population living in a limited physical place, the mannerisms displayed on the Hong Kong streets sometimes shocked some Canadian teachers and study abroad students when they first arrived in Hong Kong. Despite different cultural norms of behaviour, the different mannerisms between Hong Kong and Canada are also influenced by the environmental factors and societal expectations, including the lack of physical space, a high demand for accomplishment, a strong emphasis on competition, especially in the work environment, and high standards for achievement in Hong Kong. Without a good understanding of these environmental factors and societal expectations, Canadian students may develop different perceptions and feelings about the Hong Kong people (e.g. being rude, not holding the doors for people and so on), which could also impact how they interact with the host staff and local people.

From the host members' perspective, the limited space available for both personal and public use in Hong Kong has created discomfort for some English teachers as they lost some personal space when hosting Canadian students in their small classrooms. Also, the lack of

outdoor space, the limited number of public parks and playgrounds, and the weather conditions in Hong Kong also contributed to the environmental and societal constraints that prevent children from engaging in outdoor activities. For the host teachers who interact with Canadian students, there are also tensions and personal judgements made by some students who have concerns for children who lack the opportunity to play, and for the appropriateness of using an academic-focused curriculum for pre-primary aged children based on their own understanding of play and their own experience of growing up in their home country - Canada.

In the Hong Kong culture, authority is highly respected and is also often unchallenged. In this study, it was noted that the English teachers and the Chinese teachers seem to hold different views on authority, which resulted in different communication approaches used by the teachers. For example, the English teachers and Canadian students are more likely to challenge the rules and express their opinions more freely than are the Chinese staff members when communicating with the people who are in management positions at the host organization. The different communication approaches reflect different cultural understandings and expectations in the work environment. Perceived as authority figures in a classroom, teachers are also highly respected by the children and parents in Hong Kong. Therefore, while the Chinese teachers may be perceived as strict and unloving as they seldom show their love and affections towards children through physical contact, such as hugs and kisses, the English teachers and Canadian students are likely to be seen as children's friends who care for and play with them. Also, the differences in family relationships and parenting styles are reflected in divergent views on children and childhood between the Canadian and Hong Kong cultures, which inevitably bring challenges for the host members to deal with related to different societal values, cultural expectations and different approaches in working with children.

Based on the findings from this study, it is interesting to note that language is not perceived as a barrier for communication for Canadian study abroad students in this study abroad program, despite the fact that Cantonese is the main language spoken in Hong Kong. Because of its historical past as a former British colony and its current status as one of the international financial centres, English is used as a language of business, and it is widely spoken and understood in Hong Kong. Despite its reputation as an international financial centre with a large number of expats who reside in Hong Kong from all over the world, Hong Kong is still a homogeneous city and home to a majority of ethnic Chinese, and most Hong Kong residents, especially children, do not have experience in interacting with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Since hosting the study abroad program in 2009, the host members have witnessed many changes in the attitudes of the children and the parents towards different ethnicities, cultures and races.

From the host members' experiences, the different perceptions of culture have brought them opportunities to learn, to share new ideas and to reflect on their own cultural beliefs and practices. According to Stachowski and Sparks (2007), the contrasts between home and host cultures help people acquire the "perspective consciousness" that encourages not only further insight into self, but also into the "other" while facilitating the development of cultural sensitivity. In this study, it is confirmed that the cultural differences not only promote cultural learning for the host members, especially the Chinese staff, but also help change cultural stereotypes and foster cultural sensitivity for local people when hosting the study abroad students. However, the change of cultural perceptions and the impact on personal beliefs are less evident for the host members who have lived in or have visited English-speaking countries in the West. As most host members perceive Canadian culture as one of the Western cultures, learning

the differences between an East and a West culture perhaps happens when people first come into contact with a culture that is different from its own, however, their cultural perceptions continue to be shaped based on their personal experiences and interactions with people from other cultures.

Overall, hosting Canadian study abroad students at the host organization provides both challenges and learning opportunities for the host staff. On one hand, the different perceptions on people's mannerisms and different communication approaches with authority figures could result negative perceptions and attitudes toward the Chinese host staff, as they are perceived as being too strict, less friendly and unaffectionate when working with children. Canadian study abroad students may make assumptions and personal judgements based on their own experiences without fully understanding the environmental, historical, cultural and societal factors that shape people's behaviours and influence the teaching practices at the host organization. So one of the challenges for the host staff is to help Canadian students understand the cultural differences between their home culture and the Hong Kong culture, and to develop realistic expectations for living and working in a culture that is so different from their own. On another hand, the differences between the host and home culture also provide opportunities for host staff to learn about different cultures, to interact with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and to reflect on their own cultural beliefs and practices. Also, hosting the Canadian study abroad students has not only impacted the host staff, but has also influenced the attitudes and perceptions of children and their parents toward people from different cultures or ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, as a host to the Canadian study abroad students, there seems to be an increased cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity not only for the host staff but also for the children and parents in the host country as well.

5.2.3 The impacts on host staff's professional lives.

The different cultural perceptions also impact the host staff's professional lives, including their workload, teaching and their professional relationships with Canadian study abroad students. Since there are limited empirical studies examining the impact of study abroad programs on host organizations, the findings from this study add new knowledge to the literature by suggesting that the presence of Canadian study abroad students in the host organization has not only influenced host individuals' experience of learning about different cultures, but has also impacted many areas of the host staff's professional lives.

When exploring the host staff's perceptions of their workload when hosting the Canadian students, many participants felt that having the Canadian study abroad students in their classrooms reduced their workload and made their work easier with children. The Canadian students were seen as an extra pair of hands for the classroom teachers as they often take initiatives to help out in the classroom. However, the timing of arrival for the Canadian study abroad students may add stress and workload for some English teachers, as they are also busy with many other activities assigned at the host organization. Also, some English teachers were asked to provide extra help and assistance for the Canadian students during their stay. The extra help for Canadian students often requires English teachers to volunteer their personal time to answer questions and to make Canadian students' stays in Hong Kong more pleasant, which not only adds to the teachers' workload but also has an impact on their personal lives.

As a host to a group of Canadian students each year, the biggest impact that the host staff identified is on children's learning, curriculum development and teaching quality at the host organization. The Canadian students in the host's individual classrooms are seen as a second English-speaking teacher for children who will have more opportunities to communicate in

English, to interact with people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and to benefit from different teaching styles. Thus, the host members agree that the children have benefited the most from this study abroad program, as their learning is enhanced by having the Canadian students in classrooms. Since Canadian students bring different teaching styles and different approaches to engage and interact with children in the classroom, the host teachers also benefit from learning new teaching techniques and creative ideas by observing the Canadian students' teaching and then reflecting on their own teaching practices. However, the tight teaching schedule and the expectations of the curriculum at the host organization also made it difficult to accommodate another teacher's teaching, so both the English and Chinese teachers have to adjust their own teaching schedule in order to support Canadian study abroad students. As the host organization has its own curriculum development team, the new ideas and creative teaching techniques that Canadian students brought with them sometimes inspire new curriculum development and also to reflect on and/or to revise the existing curriculum.

Although most children are excited with a new English-speaking teacher in the classroom, the presence of Canadian study abroad students could influence some Hong Kong children's behaviours to approach and interact with a new and foreign teacher in classroom. So, another impact that Canadian students have on individual teachers' teaching is the discipline methods used in the classroom. The ways that Canadian students interact with children, and the friendly approach and individual attention given to the children also made some host teachers reflect on their own communication styles and their interactions with children. However, some English teachers also had to change their ways of interacting with children, and especially their tone of voice and the discipline methods used when the Canadian study abroad students were present in the classroom. The different expectations about children's behaviour and the discipline

methods used by the host teachers sometimes leave negative impressions with the Canadian students, because most of Canadian students' understanding and perceptions of how children grow, as well as their expectations of children's behaviours, are based on their own cultural experiences of growing up and going to school in Canada. Also, many host teachers felt that they needed to explain and to help Canadian students understand the expectations of Hong Kong educational system so they are not shocked by the different behavioural expectations for young children in Hong Kong.

Another impact that hosting the Canadian students has had on the host staff's professional lives is the relationship that Canadian students build with the children, the teachers and staff at the host organization. The host members agree that the children benefit from the friendships that they have developed with Canadian student teachers as they learn to accept people of different ethnicity from other countries. For many Chinese staff, the presence of Canadian students provides them with the opportunity to not only practice their English and to learn about Canadian culture, but also to expand their professional network and build personal connections with future ECE teachers from Canada. For the English teachers who are expats living and working in a country that is very different from their home countries in the West, the arrival of Canadian study abroad students reminds many of them their own experiences when they first arrived in Hong Kong. The presence of Canadian students not only brings a connection to the home culture that many English teachers have left behind, but the culture shock and challenges that Canadian students experience while living and working in Hong Kong also prompts the English teachers to offer help and to share their own experiences in cultural adaptation with Canadian students. For Canadian students completing an international field placement, the friendships developed with children and host staff helps them better understand

the host culture and could also facilitate a deeper cultural learning as they interact with both the expats and local people in Hong Kong.

Overall, the host members have recognized that most of the challenges that Canadian students faced in an international placement are related to their lack of understanding of cultural differences between the host and home cultures, and to the different societal expectations and approaches to working with children. The differences in cultural perceptions between the host culture and the sending culture have also impacted the professional lives of host staff.

Furthermore, the biggest impact of hosting Canadian students is on how teaching is conducted at the host organization. Children and teachers at the host organization benefit greatly from the different teaching techniques, creative ideas and different communication styles that Canadian students bring to the host organization. However, the lack of understanding of the Hong Kong educational system and different cultural expectations for children's behaviours has created some challenges for the host members and the need to deal with Canadian students' negative impressions on the discipline methods used in the classroom and sometime judgements about the professional conducts of host teachers.

5.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine both how the host members' cultural perceptions impact a study abroad program international partnership between the host organization and the sending institution, *and* how the perceptions of host members have impacted their experiences when hosting Canadian study abroad students. Developing international partnerships for exchange and study abroad programs not only requires cultural understanding and cultural awareness from each partner, but it also needs the key players involved to understand the differences using their own cultural lenses. In this case study, the

partnership was formally established after the key personnel from the host organization visited the sending institution in Canada, and the relationship was built through the initial face-to-face meetings with faculty members and administrators at the Canadian sending institution. The connections and relationship building by the key personnel on both sides of the partnership have created mutual understandings for the partners to be open to dialogues about cultural differences and to take on any future challenges in their partnership.

During the implementation stage of the partnership, the cultural perceptions and shared learning from the key players, including the host staff, the Canadian study abroad students, and the faculty members and administrators at the sending institution have played significant roles in shaping this partnership and influencing people's experiences in the study abroad program. Although the original goal of the host institution to hire additional quality English teachers was not realized through the establishment of this partnership with a Canadian institution, the perceptions of cultural similarity, the perceived contribution to the field of ECE and the connection of professional identities have contributed to the host organization's decision to continue with this partnership. As the partnership continues, more collaborative and reciprocal exchanges are needed to enhance host staffs' cultural learning and professional development. Therefore, from the host members' perspectives, their cultural lenses and perceptions have played an important role in all stages of partnership development, and the cultural similarities and professional connections contribute to the continuous development of the partnership.

In this study, the host members' experiences of hosting Canadian study abroad students illustrate that the cultural differences create both challenges and learning opportunities for the host staff, children and parents at the host organization. This study has also noted that it is important for Canadian study abroad students to understand, as much as possible, prior to arrival,

the cultural differences between their home culture and the host culture, and to develop realistic expectations when studying abroad. From the host's perspective, the interactions with study abroad students from a different culture have contributed to changes in people's attitudes toward different cultures, thus it may also increase the cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity for staff at the host organization. However, the presence of Canadian study abroad students has also led to changes in organizational culture as the host staff and Canadian study abroad students are engaged in a process of cultural learning and professional growth when interacting with each other. The impacts of study abroad program on the host organization are shaped by the cultural perceptions of the similarities and differences between two partnering cultures, as well as by the professional connections shared by host staff and study abroad students.

Chapter 6: Implications and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings of this study and discusses the implications of the findings related to the host members' cultural perceptions and experiences in an international partnership for a study abroad program with a Canadian sending institution. This summary is framed by an analysis of the primary research questions and identifies the contributions of the results to scholarship relevant to the international partnership development and to study abroad programs in higher education. The chapter also identifies the limitations of this study and makes recommendations for future research on international partnership development for higher education institutions.

6.1 Key Findings and Implications

According to the current empirical studies and literature on international partnership and study abroad, there are many issues and concerns as well as benefits and challenges for study abroad students and sending institutions (Amey, 2010; Chan, 2004; Foskett, 2005; Hatton & Schroder, 2009; Saffu & Mamman, 1999). However, little research has been done to examine the impacts of study abroad programs *from the host members' perspective*. Thus, this qualitative single-case study was designed to explore the host members' perspectives of an international partnership with a Canadian sending institution, and their experiences of hosting Canadian study abroad students at the host organization in Hong Kong. In this study, the culture perceptions of each partner have played a significant role in shaping the development of the international partnership and the individual experiences of people who interact with each other in the context of such a study abroad program. As such, this study has explored various social, cultural and organizational factors that have influenced the host members' perceptions of the international

partnership and their experiences as hosts to the Canadian study abroad students. Thus, this study provides critical responses to two broad research questions, which were:

1. How do people in the host organization perceive the international partnership with a Canadian sending institution?
2. What are the perceived impacts that the study abroad program has on the host organization at both individual and organizational levels?

To answer these questions, 16 participants who hold various positions at the host organization participated in semi-structured one-on-one interviews and shared their experiences and perspectives on the international partnership of a study abroad program. Then, based on emerging themes from the interviews, three focus groups, with a total of 23 participants, were conducted to provide the opportunity for participants to share their collective perspectives on the international partnership and the impacts of hosting the study abroad program had on their professional lives and on the host organization as a whole.

Results from the study highlight the important role that host members' cultural perceptions have played in different stages of international partnership development at the host organization, and how the cultural perceptions held by the host members provide both challenges and learning opportunities for all members who are involved in the study abroad program. As *Figure 5* illustrates, there are implications of the key research findings from this study for the international partnership development and for understanding the impacts of study abroad program on the host organization.

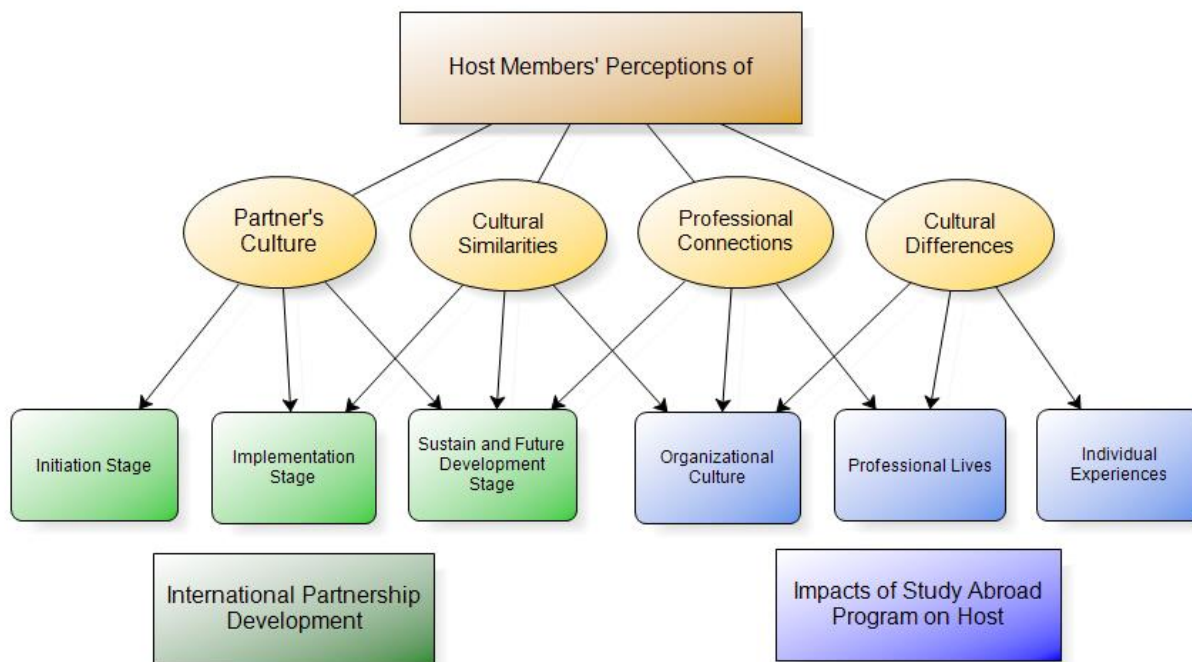


Figure 5. Summary of key research findings.

In *Figure 5*, the host members' perceptions were explored in four main areas: (a) how each *partner's culture* is perceived, (b) what *cultural similarities* are perceived between the host and the sending partners, (c) what *professional connections* are identified between the host organization and the sending institution, and, (d) what *cultural differences* are perceived between the host and the sending partners. In this study, when examining how host members' cultural perceptions influenced both the partnership development with the Canadian sending institution and their experiences when hosting a study abroad program, the key findings indicated that host members' experiences are *closely* linked to their personal cultural perceptions when working with others who are from a different cultural context.

Based on the discussions of research findings, this study identified three key findings that contribute to a successful *international partnership development* in this case study as illustrated in *Figure 5*:

1. Positive perceptions of each partner's culture *do* facilitate international partnership development at *all stages – initiation, implementation and sustainability*.
2. Perceptions held by each partner regarding cultural similarities between two partners' cultures seem to foster and to enhance the *implementation and continuous development of a partnership*.
3. Professional connections between two partners help to set the goals for, to modify or to initiate *future partnership development*.

Based on the findings from this study, the host members' experiences with Canadian study abroad students are influenced by the professional connections as well as by the perceived cultural similarities and differences between the host and sending countries. From the host members' perspective, the *impacts of hosting a study abroad program* also depend on three key factors as illustrated in *Figure 5*:

1. The host's *organizational culture* is influenced through cultural learning (of both cultural differences and similarities) and professional connections when interacting with study abroad students.
2. *Individual experiences* in hosting a study abroad program are *most* likely to be influenced by the cultural differences perceived by the host members and the study abroad students.
3. The *professional lives* of the host staff are *most* likely to be influenced by the professional connections and their perceptions of differences between the two partners' cultures.

The implications of these findings for international partnership development and hosting the study abroad program are discussed in detail in the following sections.

6.2 Implications for International Partnership Development

The experiences shared by host members about the issues and concerns at different stages of partnership development are important contributions to the scholarship on international partnerships in higher education because they indicate that each partner needs to understand and accept the cultural differences that may or may not be evident based on their own cultural knowledge. Examining the interconnectedness of the three key players in a study abroad program, the findings from this study describe some further details of the complexity involved in international partnership development between two partners, especially when partner cultures are seen as being significantly different from one another. Also, this study has identified that perceptions of cultural and professional similarity may help to connect the partners as professionals, thus contribute to the continuous development and growth of their partnerships.

The first implication of these findings is that positive perceptions of each partner's culture facilitate international partnership development at *all* stages. Since the perceptions of the other partner's culture may contribute to a partner site's decision of whether to pursue an international partnership, developing personal connections with people who live in a different culture may also contribute to more positive perceptions of the other partner and its culture. Based on the research findings, this study reveals that not only both cultural understanding and cultural sensitivity from both partners are important factors in partnership development, but personal connections and positive perceptions of the each partner's culture are also crucial to the relationship building and partnership development required for a successful study abroad program.

The second implication of the findings from this study is that perceived cultural similarities between the partners' cultures *do* enable further understanding and continuous

development of the partnership. In this study, the professional attitudes and the dedication and commitment to the field of ECE contributed to the professional connections developed between the host members and the Canadian study abroad students. The respect for each other as professionals working in the same field enabled all of the players involved in this study abroad program to build trustful relationship so that they could learn from and with one another. In the literature on international partnerships in higher education, effective communication between partners, as well as being committed for the partnership are identified as important factors that contribute a successful international partnership (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2012; Hatton & Schroder, 2009; Hefferman & Poole, 2005). Based on the host members' experiences in this study, it is noted that effective communication should not be limited to the key personnel between two partners, but should also include other staff members who are involved in the partnership development so they can clearly understand their roles and expectations of their involvement in the study abroad program.

The third implication of the findings from this study is that professional connections can help the partners to identify goals or possible factors to consider when modifying the existing partnership or initiating future partnerships. Although the motivations for higher education institutions to engage in international partnerships may vary significantly, international partnerships have the potential to bring benefits and to assist the partners to achieve their own educational outcomes. While the cultures of the partners may differ significantly, the resources and shared professional expertise of the partners contribute to both the organizational growth and professional development for each partner. Also, the enhanced professional connection between the partners helps and facilitates other internationalization activities for the partner institutions.

Overall, the implications for international partnership development indicate that positive perceptions of each partner's culture can be promoted through opportunities to build personal connections with people from the host or sending country. In this study, despite challenges in the implementation stage of the partnership, the host staff are motivated and committed to the partnership because not only did they recognize the benefits of such partnership to individuals and to host organization as a whole, but the partnership also brings professional and leadership development opportunities for the host staff when they interact with study abroad students. Therefore, it is important to engage and to motivate host staff when implementing an international partnership by communicating clearly an understanding of their roles and the expectations of their involvement in a study abroad program, and by providing support for them to fulfill these expectations. Thus, the implications of the findings of this study not only indicate the important social, cultural and organizational factors that influence the initiation and implementation of a partnership, but they also contribute to our understanding of how cultural perceptions have influenced the decision making and people's experiences at different stages of international partnership development.

6.3 Implications for Hosting a Study Abroad Program

While there is certainly much literature and many studies on international education and study abroad in higher education, very few studies have focused on the perceptions and experiences of host members or have examined the impacts of study abroad programs on host organizations. Through an in-depth examination of host members' perceptions and experiences of hosting a study abroad program, the findings from this study indicate that host members' cultural perceptions have influenced their experiences when hosting study abroad students from a different cultural context.

The findings of this study indicate that, at the organizational level, the organizational culture of the host site is likely to be influenced by the interactions between study abroad students and members of the host organization. In this study, the host members' experiences illustrate that interacting with study abroad students who represent different ethnicities has the potential to change host members' attitudes toward others and may encourage them to be more open to cultural and/or ethnic differences. Based on the findings from this study, it is also revealed that study abroad students may not only influence the organizational culture by bringing new ideas and energy to the host organization, but also help to promote cultural diversity and cultural understanding at the host site through their daily interactions with host members, and in this study, also the perceptions of children and parents.

The second implication is that, at the individual level, the host members' experiences in a study abroad program are likely to be influenced by the perceived cultural differences between the partners. Without an understanding of perceived cultural differences between the partner sites, study abroad students may develop different perceptions of the host site's organizational and national culture which could impact how they interact with host staff and host nationals when living / studying abroad. Hosting study abroad students may create challenges for the host organization, including helping study abroad students to understand the historical, cultural, environmental and societal factors that shape or influence the activities taking place at the host site, and to develop realistic expectations for living and working in a culture that may be very different from their home culture. However, these cultural differences also provide learning opportunities for the host site to better understand their own cultural beliefs and practices. Thus, cultural differences may contribute to increased cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity for the host members, as well as for the students from abroad.

The third implication of the research findings is that the differences in cultural perceptions between two partners impacted the professional lives of host staff, including their workload, professional practice and professional relationships with study abroad students. Host staff may experience an increased workload as they may provide extra help and explain the local culture in order to help study abroad students adapt to living in the host country. Thus, the sending institution and the host organization need to be sensitive to the workload that host members are assigned when hosting the study abroad students. In this study, the study abroad students' lack of understanding of cultural differences, societal expectations and environmental constraints in the host culture seems to contribute to the challenges in building professional relationships with host staff. However, being a host to study abroad students also provides opportunities for host staff to take on leadership roles with study abroad students, and to reflect on and to improve their professional practices while benefiting from the creativity and different ideas and knowledge that study abroad students bring to the host organization.

From the host members' perspectives, the findings of this study indicate that hosting a study abroad program may have the potential to impact the organizational culture, individual host members' experiences and their professional lives through daily interactions with study abroad students. At the organizational level, the interactions with study abroad students have the potential to not only change the atmosphere of host organization, but also to influence host members' attitudes toward a different culture and ethnicity over the years. Again, it is evident from the findings that there is an increased cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity for host members at the host organization when hosting a study abroad program with students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

6.4 Generalization of the Findings and Limitations of the Study

This study was designed to gain an understanding of host members' perceptions and experiences regarding an international partnership and to examine the impacts of a short-term study abroad program at both the individual and organizational levels for the host site. As a qualitative research study, a single-case study methodology was used to gather in-depth information from the host site in order to gain insights into host members' perceptions and experiences of hosting a study abroad program. However, there are limitations concerning research using the case study methodology which include the issues of generalizability of results, data validity, researcher bias, and overall study objectivity (Tellis, 1997; Yin 2009).

As in all empirical research, the criteria for judging the quality of a case study were *construct validity* (referring to developing a set of operational measures for the concepts being studied), *internal validity* (which seeks to establish a causal relationship and it applies for explanatory or causal studies only and not for descriptive or exploratory studies), *external validity* (whether a study's findings are generalizable beyond the immediate case study) and *reliability* (whether the operation of a study can be repeated with the same results) (Yin, 2009). In this single-case study, the *construct validity* was established through the use of multiple sources of evidence and establishing chain of evidence through data collection, and asking key informants and participants to review the transcribed interview drafts. Yin (2009) suggested using multiple sources of evidence including documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artifacts to ensure construct validity. This research study used various types of documents, archival records, focus groups and interviews, as well as some direct observations of the host organization when the researcher was collecting

data on site. As an exploratory single-case study, the *internal validity* that seeks to establish a causal relationship between /among cases is not applicable for this case study.

The *external validity* is more difficult to attain in a single-case study, as the issue of generalization is a frequent criticism of case study research especially for case studies that have "small sample" or use single respondent. Yin (2009) refuted this criticism by presenting a well-constructed explanation of the difference between analytic generalization and statistical generalization:

...case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample", and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). (p. 15)

Stake (1995) also argued for a "naturalistic" generalization from case studies as he expected that "the data generated by case studies would often resonate experientially with a broad cross section of readers, thereby facilitating a greater understanding of the phenomenon" (cited in Tellis, 1997, para. 11).

The *reliability* in this case study is addressed by the development of a formal case study protocol that guided the researcher in carrying out the data collection with procedures and general rules that focus on the topic of this current study. The case study protocol include the formation of case study questions, the development of interview and focus group protocols, the data collection plan including preparations prior to the site visits and protocols for conducting interviews and focus groups, the use of analytic strategy to analyze the data and reporting the case study evidence through development of conclusions, recommendations and implications.

Since study abroad programs vary significantly in terms of duration, purpose and the geographic location, many issues and concerns identified from this study's four-week short-term study abroad program may or may not be applicable to other study abroad programs. As a single-case study, this research study had a defined boundary with specific time as well as the spatial and social contexts (e.g. Hong Kong) in which the data was collected. Therefore, the findings may or may not be similar to findings from other short-term study abroad program contexts that involve the three key players including a sending site, study abroad students, and an international receiving site. The findings do contribute, however, to addressing a gap in the existing literature on international partnership and study abroad programs in higher education from the host members' perspectives and also provide information that could inform other institutional study abroad programs and practices.

In order to address researcher bias, the researcher constantly engaged in a process of critical self-reflection throughout the study in order to explore her own professional and personal beliefs and assumptions regarding why these Canadian study abroad students held the perceptions they did regarding their own and others' cultures. Also, the researcher used the "member check" after the data was transcribed so that the participants had the opportunity to check the accuracy of the information, provide feedback and to add information that might be missing in the data. The continuous involvement of the participants in this study helped to promote further dialogue between the researcher and the host members, and promoted a better understanding of this study abroad program for both the researcher and for the host site, as well.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

This study examined the interconnectedness among the three key players in a study abroad program *from the host members' perspective*. Through an in-depth examination of host

members' perceptions and experiences, this study not only contributed to our understanding of important social, cultural and organizational factors that could potentially influence international partnership development, but also indicated that people's experiences are closely linked to their personal cultural perceptions when working with others from different cultural contexts in study abroad programs. Therefore, this study has potentially made an important contribution to the research literature by adding the voices of host members through sharing their perceptions regarding the international partnership and their experiences in hosting a study abroad program.

However, the study abroad program examined in this study is an international field placement for students enrolled in one Early Childhood Education Program at a Canadian post-secondary institution. This field of study in early childhood is particularly sensitive to local and national social and cultural changes due to the characteristics of its work with very young children and their parents. Perhaps, study abroad programs in different professional fields may or may not be as sensitive to the different perceptions of partners' organizational culture and to the issues around cultural differences associated with the study abroad students as in this case study. A comparative study of international partnership development in different professional fields or disciplines may help shed lights on these issues.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the case selected for this study because it has the potential in illuminating the complex issues among three key players in a study abroad program in different geographical (Canada vs. Hong Kong), language (English vs. Chinese), cultural (West vs. East) and organizational (a public institution vs. a private organization) contexts. In order to expand our understanding of how host site and/or students' perceptions of local, national and/or international cultures influences their experiences in study abroad programs, it would be interesting to compare the impact of study abroad programs in different countries and in different

social, cultural or organizational contexts, or to compare multiple case studies of study abroad programs to identify the impacts of various cultures on international partnership development.

6.6 Conclusion

The significance of this study is its contribution to developing a deeper understanding of how host members' cultural perceptions inform international partnership development and influence their experiences when hosting and/or participating in a study abroad program. As Canadian universities and colleges continue to send thousands of students each year to study abroad, the interactions between the study abroad students and host members will have both positive and/or negative impacts on the organizational culture as well as on the professional lives of individuals at the host site, and then ultimately influence the partnership between the sending institution and the host organization. Building a successful study abroad program requires collaborations and an agreed upon reciprocity between the partners. Therefore, it is important for higher education sending institutions to not only understand the potential impacts of study abroad program on the host site, but also to identify factors such as cultural similarities and professional connections that will help build and sustain international relationships with organizations or institutions abroad. The findings from this study have the potential to add to the literature and to the understanding of the impacts of a study abroad program on host members as well as on the host organization and perhaps most importantly, to identify factors that have the potential to benefit future students who study abroad, and the institutions or organizations that both send and host them.

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Appendix A: The Letter of Invitation for Interview

(English)

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am conducting a research study titled *Voices from Another Side: A Host Organization's Perspectives on International Partnership in A Study Abroad Program* as part of my Doctor of Education in Higher Education Leadership at the University of Calgary, in Alberta, Canada.

As you are probably aware, your organization has been involved in an international partnership with a Canadian higher education institution (HEI) by hosting Canadian study abroad students in May every year since 2009. Therefore, your organization is considered as a host organization to Canadian study abroad students and an international partner to the Canadian HEI.

Working with Canadian study abroad students and the Canadian sending institution, your perceptions and experiences about the international partnership and the study abroad program will help shed light on the complex issues that involve three key players in a study abroad program including the sending institution, the students, and the host organization. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine various perspectives and experiences from people in your organization in order to gain insight on the international partnership with the Canadian sending institution, and to understand the impacts of the study abroad program on you as an individual as well as on your organization in general. The findings from this research may have the potential to strengthen the reciprocal partnership between your organization and the Canadian sending institution. As an exploratory study, this research may also contribute to a theory-building process to examine the complex issues in study abroad programs for future research.

In the next few weeks, I will be conducting one-on-one interviews to gain insight of people's experiences and perceptions in your organization on issues relating to the international partnership and study abroad program. Because of your involvement in the international partnership and/or with Canadian study abroad students, your name has been referred to me as a potential participant who could share personal insight about the international partnership and/or who has had experiences working with Canadian study abroad students in different settings. Whether you decide to participate in this research or not, your participation will remain completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone in your organization. If you would like to share your experience and to participate in a one-on-one interview in this research, you will be asked to provide your consent in writing before the interview commences. The interview will be conducted in a location and time that are convenient for you and you can choose to be interviewed in either English or Chinese. The interview will take about one hour to complete.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw, your responses will be completely removed from the study. Your responses will be anonymous and no personal or

identifying data will be linked to your responses. You will be invited to provide a pseudonym at the beginning of the interview to keep your personal identity confidential. The risks associated with your participation are minimal. During interview, you may decline altogether, or decline any questions that you don't want to answer without any negative consequences.

If you have any questions about this research in general or about one-on-one interview method, please contact Yalin Gorica by email at ygorica@ucalgary.ca.

Thank you in advance for your time in this research. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Yalin Gorica

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

The interview will be conducted in a location that is convenient for the participant. The researcher will first introduce herself and provide an overview of the research to the participant at the beginning of the interview. The participant will be invited to provide a pseudonym by which he/she will be referred to in the final write-up of the study in order to keep his/her personal identity confidential. The participant's written consent will be obtained prior to the commencement of the interview.

The interview questions are developed as a general guide for semi-structured interviews and some questions may need further probing during the interview. Based on the literature reviews on international education and study abroad, the interview questions are grouped in the following areas:

- 1) General and Introductory Questions
- 2) Cultural Perceptions and Approaches to ECE
- 3) International Partnership
- 4) Hosting the Study Abroad Program

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

General/Introductory Questions:

1. Could you please tell me about your role and involvement in the study abroad program between the Canadian institution and your organization?
2. How long have you been involved in the study abroad program between the Canadian institution and your organization?

3. How did you first become involved with this study abroad program?
4. Are you involved with other partnership arrangements or programs at your organization?
If so, how does your involvement differ between programs?

Cultural Perceptions and Approaches to ECE:

5. Could you please tell me what you think about Canada and Canadian culture in general before the international partnership was established between the Canadian institution and your organization in 2009?
6. What social and/or cultural factors had contributed to your perceptions about Canada and Canadian culture in general?
7. Based on your perceptions about Canada and Canadian culture, how are they different or similar to the Hong Kong culture?
8. Have your perceptions about Canada and Canadian culture changed after the international partnership established in 2009? If so, what factors have contributed to the change? If not, please explain why.
9. According to research, the ideas about children and childhood, as well as the approaches and curricula used to educate young children differ significantly between countries. How are children and early childhood viewed in Hong Kong?
10. In your view, how is the approach to early childhood different between Canada and Hong Kong?
11. Does different approach to early childhood have impacts on the interactions between the Canadian study broad students and you?
12. Does different approach to early childhood have impacts on the international partnership between the Canadian institution and your organization?

International Partnership

13. Could you please share with me the experience you have had with regards to the international partnership with the Canadian institution?
14. From your perspective, what is the purpose of developing a partnership with the Canadian institution? Has the purpose been realized at your organization?
15. Are there any organizational factors that influence the initiation, development and sustain stages of the international partnership?
16. Are there any cultural factors that influence the initiation, development and sustain stages of the international partnership?
17. Based on your experience, what resources (financial, human resources, etc.) have been allocated to support this partnership?
18. How is the international partnership valued and maintained at your organization?
19. Has the international partnership impacted your organization in areas such as teaching, curriculum development, and organizational culture? If so, how?
20. Are there benefits of having an international partnership with a Canadian institution? Have these benefits been realized at your organization?
21. Are there any challenges you have experienced in developing and maintaining this partnership? If so, please tell me about them.
22. If there is anything you would like to change in this international partnership, what is it? Why?
23. What have you learned from your experience and involvement in this partnership? What would you do differently next time?

Hosting the Study Abroad Program

24. Your organization has been a host to Canadian study abroad students since 2009. Could you please share your experience with regards to your interactions with Canadian students?
25. What are the ways of communication that you have used with the Canadian institution and/or Canadian study abroad students?
26. Has your interaction with Canadian study abroad students impacted your cultural perceptions and personal values about children and childhood? If so, how?
27. When hosting the Canadian study abroad students, have you changed the ways of interacting with children in your work? If so, how?
28. From your perspective as a _____ (describe the role of the participant, such as teacher, administrator, etc.), how has the study abroad program impacted your organization?
29. What changes have you seen in your organization over the time since you have been involved with this study abroad program?
30. Based on your experience, what are the benefits and barriers for your organization to host the Canadian study abroad students?

Appendix C: The Letters of Invitation for Focus Group

The Letter of Invitation for Focus Group Participation

[ENGLISH]

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am conducting a research study titled *Voices from Another Side: A Host Organization's Perspectives on International Partnership in A Study Abroad Program* as part of my Doctor of Education in Higher Education Leadership at the University of Calgary, in Alberta, Canada.

As you are probably aware, your organization has been involved in an international partnership with a Canadian higher education institution (HEI) by hosting Canadian study abroad students in May every year since 2009. Therefore, your organization is considered as a host organization to Canadian study abroad students and an international partner to the Canadian HEI.

Working with Canadian study abroad students and the Canadian sending institution, your perceptions and experiences about the international partnership and/or the study abroad program will help shed light on the complex issues that involve three key players in a study abroad program including the sending institution, the students, and the host organization. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine various perspectives and experiences from people in your organization in order to gain insight on the international partnership with the Canadian sending institution, and to understand the impacts of the study abroad program on you as an individual as well as on your organization in general. The findings from this research may have the potential to strengthen the reciprocal partnership between your organization and the Canadian sending institution. As an exploratory study, this research may also contribute to a theory-building process to examine the complex issues in study abroad programs for future research.

In the next few weeks, I will be conducting focus groups to gain insight of people's experiences and perceptions in your organization on issues relating to the international partnership and study abroad program. If you would like to share your experience and to participate in a focus group in this research, please complete a brief questionnaire included in this letter. The questionnaire seeks demographic information such as your role in the organization and your contact with Canadian study abroad students. The questionnaire has ten questions and will take about 2 to 3 minutes to complete. The questionnaire data will be used to ensure the participants in each focus group share similar characteristics. For example, people who have extensive contact with Canadian students may be placed in a group different from those who do not interact with Canadian students. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and I will be the only person who has access to the information you provide.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your consent prior to joining the focus group. Please kindly review the Consent Form included in this letter. You will also be asked to complete and sign the Consent Form before the focus group commences. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw, your responses will be completely removed from the study. Your responses will be anonymous and no personal or identifying data will be linked to your responses. The risks associated with your participation are minimal. You may decline altogether, or decline any questions that you don't want to answer during the focus group.

If you have any questions about this research in general or about the focus group research method, please contact Yalin Gorica by email at ygorica@ucalgary.ca, or by phone 905-469-9605.

Thank you in advance for your time in this research. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Yalin Gorica

Questionnaire for Focus Group Participation

1. **What is your gender?**
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

2. **What age group do you fit in?**
 - a. 20-25
 - b. 25-35
 - c. 35-45
 - d. 45-50
 - e. 50 and above

3. **What is your first language?**
 - a. English
 - b. Cantonese
 - c. Putonghua
 - d. Others, please describe _____

4. **What is the highest education level you have obtained?**
 - a. High School Diploma
 - b. Vocational or College Diploma
 - c. Bachelor Degree
 - d. Master's Degree
 - e. Doctoral Degree

5. **Please choose a description below that best describes your role in your organization:**
 - a. Principal
 - b. English Teacher
 - c. Cantonese Teacher
 - d. Putonghua Teacher
 - e. Others, please describe _____

6. **How many years have you been working for this organization?**
 - a. 1-2 years
 - b. 3-5 years
 - c. 5-8 years
 - d. 8-10 years
 - e. More than 10 years

- 7. How many hours do you interact with Canadian study abroad students on average in a week?**
- Not at all. I don't interact with Canadian students
 - 1-5 hours a week, or approximately 1 hour or less a day
 - 5-10 hours a week, or approximately 1-2 hours a day
 - 10-15 hours a week, or approximately 2-3 hours a day
 - More than 15 hours a week, or more than 3 hours a day
- 8. In what way do you interact with Canadian study abroad students?**
- I oversees the students' performance as a principal
 - I am a supervising teacher to the student(s)
 - I am a teacher working in the same classroom with the student(s), but I don't supervise the student(s)
 - I interact with the student(s) outside of the classroom
 - I do not interact with the student(s) at all
- 9. Since 2009, how many Canadian study abroad students have you interacted with?**
- None
 - 1-2 students (including the students who arrive in current year 2013)
 - 3-5 students
 - 5-10 students
 - More than 10 students
- 10. Which language do you prefer to communicate with the researcher during the focus group?**
- English
 - Cantonese
 - Putonghua
 - Others, please describe _____

The Letter of Invitation for Focus Group Participation

[CHINESE]

尊敬的先生/女士, 您好!

我叫郭雅琳, 现正在就读加拿大卡尔加里大学的高校领导专业的博士生. 我的博士论文的学术研究主题为: 来自另一侧的声音: 一个留学项目接待机构对留学项目及国际伙伴关系的观点和看法.

正如您可能知道, 您的学校与加拿大的一所高等学校建立了国际伙伴关系. 自从2009年以来, 每年五月您的学校都会接受加拿大学生前来学习. 因此, 您的学校被视为加拿大留学生的接待机构, 也是加拿大高校的国际合作伙伴.

由于您的工作涉及到与加拿大留学生或加拿大派遣高校的合作, 您的看法和经验将有助于揭示关于国际合作及留学项目的三个主要成员, 包括派遣机构, 学生和接待机构之间的复杂关系. 因此, 本研究的目的是考察您学校里的不同人的观点和经验, 以便深入了解与加拿大派遣机构的国际合作伙伴关系, 并了解这个留学项目对您个人及您的学校机构的影响. 这个研究的结果有可能会加强您的学校与加拿大派遣高校之间的相互合作伙伴关系. 作为一个学术探索研究, 这项研究可能还有助于在理论建设过程中, 为今后进一步了解复杂的留学问题的研究作出贡献.

在未来的几个星期里, 我将在您学校进行研究焦点小组的访谈, 以便了解学校人员对国际伙伴关系以及留学项目的观点和经验. 如果您决定分享你的经验并参加本研究焦点小组, 请填写附在这封信后的一份简短的问卷调查表. 该问卷旨在了解您的一般信息, 比如您的职业以及与加拿大留学生的联系程度. 这个问卷有10个问题, 需要大约2-3分钟即可完成. 调查问卷的回答将被用来确保每个小组的成员都有相似的经验. 例如, 与加拿大留学生在有密切联系的人将会被安排在同一焦点小组, 而与加拿大学生工作联系不密切的将被安排在另一个小组. 您的谈话将被严格保密. 我是唯一有权访问您所提供的信息的人.

如果您同意参加, 您需要在焦点小组开始前在同意书上签字. 在焦点小组开始前, 您会有时间仔细阅读关于这个研究项目的同意书并签字. 您的参与是完全自愿的, 您有权利随时退出这项研究. 如果您决定退出, 您的一切资料及回应都将从这项研究清除. 您的回答将是匿名的, 没有任何的个人识别信息与您的回答相联系. 参与这项研究的相关风险很小. 在您参与焦点小组的过程中, 您可以拒绝回答其中的一些您不愿意回答的问题, 甚至拒绝回答所有的问题.

如果您对这项研究, 或者是关于焦点小组访谈的方式有任何的疑问, 请联系郭雅琳的电子邮件: ygorica@ucalgary.ca, yalin.gorica@sheridancollege.ca, 或电话: 905-469-9605 (加拿大).

我提前谢谢您在这个项目里贡献的时间. 非常感谢您对我的研究的大力支持.

诚挚的,

郭雅琳(博士候选人)

焦点小组参与人问卷调查表

1. 您的性别?
 - 1) 男性
 - 2) 女性

2. 您的年龄适于以下哪一组?
 - 1) 20-25岁
 - 2) 25-35岁
 - 3) 35-45岁
 - 4) 45-50岁
 - 5) 50岁以上

3. 您的母语是?
 - 1) 英语
 - 2) 粤语
 - 3) 普通话
 - 4) 其它, 请描述_____

4. 您的最高教育程度/文凭是?
 - 1) 高中毕业文凭
 - 2) 技术学校或专科文凭
 - 3) 本科学位
 - 4) 研究生学位
 - 5) 博士生学位

5. 您在学校的职位或工作岗位是:
 - 1) 校长
 - 2) 英语老师
 - 3) 粤语老师
 - 4) 普通话老师
 - 5) 其它, 请描述_____

6. 您在学校工作了多少年?
 - 1) 1-2年
 - 2) 3-5年
 - 3) 5-8年
 - 4) 8-10年
 - 5) 10年以上

7. 每周你平均用多少时间与加拿大留学生交流?
 - 1) 没有. 我从来没有与加拿大留学生交流过.
 - 2) 1-5小时/周, 或者大概每天不到1小时.
 - 3) 5-10小时/周, 或者每天1-2小时.
 - 4) 10-15小时/周, 或者每天2-3小时.
 - 5) 每周超过15小时, 或者每天超过3小时.

8. 您在那方面与加拿大留学生交流?

- 1) 我作为校长,负责学生的全面表现.
- 2) 我是学生的班级指导老师.
- 3) 我与学生在同一个教室教学,但我不是指导老师.
- 4) 我与学生在课堂外交流.
- 5) 我从来没有与加拿大学生交流过.

9. 自从2009年以来,您与多少加拿大留学生交流过?

- 1) 没有
- 2) 1-2个学生 (包括2013年刚抵达的学生)
- 3) 3-5 个学生
- 4) 5-10个学生
- 5) 10个以上学生

10. 在焦点小组访谈中,您希望用那种语言进行交流?

- 1) 英语
- 2) 粤语
- 3) 普通话
- 4) 其它, 请描述_____